

Memory: Classification

Blue Knot Foundation summary fact sheet
about the types of memory

- 1** Research shows that there is more than one type of memory.
- 2** Different types of memory are stored in different parts of the brain.
- 3** There are two main types of memory:
 - Explicit memory is conscious and can be spoken in words.
 - Implicit memory is largely unconscious and not expressed in spoken words.
- 4** There are two main categories of explicit memory:
 - Declarative (or 'semantic') memory can be deliberately called up. It helps us share information and can be described as 'cold' for this reason (Levine, 2015).
 - Episodic (or 'autobiographical' or 'narrative') memory is the interface between 'rational' declarative memory and implicit memory. Somewhat spontaneous, vibrant and emotive, it is described as 'warm' and textured (Levine, ibid) e.g. 'I recall the first time I met her...'

- 5** There are two main categories of implicit memory:
- Emotional memory is experienced in our body as physical sensations; it helps us connect with our feelings, and signal them and our needs, and is often triggered by a cue which is either:
 - environmental - smell, sight or sound or
 - situational - anniversary, birthday or developmental milestone
 - Procedural memories are the impulses, movements and bodily sensations which guide our actions and skills to carry out tasks automatically - 'how to'.

- 6** In speaking about memory, the general public, health and legal professionals as well as psychology textbooks (Brand and McEwen, 2014) generally refer only to conscious, explicit memory. Because conscious memory, conscious thought and verbalisation are often more highly valued than implicit memory (Levine, 2015) the vital importance and categories of implicit memory are ignored.

This fact sheet draws on the work of Peter Levine: Levine, P. (2015) Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Further reading on memory is available with the following fact sheets:

- [The Truth of Memory and the Memory of Truth \(including references\)](#)
- [Memory Classification](#)
- [Understanding Traumatic Memory](#)
- [Recovered Memory](#)

