



How To Outsmart Forgetfulness Forever With Superhuman Memory Skills!

Jonathan: Hello Ladies and Gentleman, and welcome to the Becoming Superhuman Podcast. I am your host Jonathan Levi. For those of you who don't know, I teach a course on a web platform called Udemy, which is one of the world's largest online course platforms. It is through that platform and through that platform and through being an instructor that I met my guest today.

Dr. Anthony Metivier is an experienced author, consultant and an expert in the field of memory and learning. Dr. Anthony is a fellow instructor on Udemy and he's been a friend of mine since I originally appeared on his highly rated podcast, the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast. Anthony's innovations in the field of mnemonics helped him teach people all over the world to exceed in academics, learning languages, memorizing poetry and a whole host of other amazing skills. This podcast goes into a lot of different topics and Anthony and I cover a lot of ground from different mnemonics and memorialization techniques all the way to meditation. So now I am very excited to introduce you to Dr. Anthony Metivier.

So Anthony, good evening, welcome to the show. Thank you so much for making the time. I had so much fun with you on your

podcast, the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast. It was one of the things that actually inspired me to do this show, and I want to thank you for that, and I thought it would be really fun to have you as one of our first guests. So welcome.

Anthony: Well thank you for having and I know my audience of the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast really responded well to your interview, and I know it sent some people to your course so it was fantastic.

Jonathan: It did and thank you for that. It was such a blast and I think the audience picked up on that. You and I kind of having this mind meld, and we had a really good time and I'm sure we're going to have a great time on this podcast as well.

Anthony: Yeah, absolutely. I think people really respond to it too because it's not really coming from MENSA or championship stuff, and nothing wrong with that, but it is more down to earth and real application to our studies and so forth from people who use it for those purposes.

Jonathan: Definitely. Actually you have been involved in memory and accelerated learning for a long time. Before I was and also before it became kind of a really trendy topic. Maybe share with our audience the story of how you got into this field.

Anthony: Well it was just happenstance and a very lucky one because I had been in graduate school in Toronto at York University and these hard Toronto winters and something wrong with my biology sent me into a real bad depression. I couldn't think and I couldn't concentrate. I had the weight of

all these exams on my shoulders for my doctoral exams. For people who aren't in a PhD program now or have been, then they would know that there is these committees you have to go and sit in front of and they grill you over hundreds and hundreds of books that you are supposed to have covered, and I could hardly get out of bed. So it was just a crazy time.

To avoid life, to avoid facing all of this and to avoid the horrid pain of cracking another book of obscure French philosophy with terms like architectonic tautology and just things that rattle your brain, I was starting to play with cards and magic tricks. I could focus on that. I could watch these videos. I didn't have to read a book or anything like that. You don't get far in the world card magic without coming across one of the holy grails which is a memorized deck and most people to some kind of trick. It's not really memorized but there is another class of people who actually memorize the deck. There is a whole bunch of different techniques.

I thought no way this is crazy I thought I would never be able to do this because I can't even read. I couldn't even read Harry Potter which is one of the books I had to read for a course where I was a teacher's assistant and barely able to get out of bed for that. I apologize to all of those students that I misdirected with showing up to class unprepared for Harry Potter. In any case, I tried it and it was incredible. It is like a light saber through all that fog and all the inability to concentrate.

That is what really hooked me on memory techniques. It is irrelevant how bad you feel. It is irrelevant how tight you are.

It is irrelevant how hungry you are. You can actually just go to this place in your mind and these images that you have created and they are bulletproof so long as you've created them correctly. That was real miraculous for me.

It has actually helped with a lot of concentration issues and a lot of mental confusion. Those things are still there and I still have to take medicine for them, but these memory skills when used properly just do not fail regardless of what the mood may be or the condition.

I kept using them and studying and I have done hundreds of hours of research, thousands of hours really of application and figuring out the best ways that work. Then through a series of mysterious and unusual circumstances I wound up teaching them at a school and I wrote them down for the students. That wound up becoming a series of books and video courses. That is how I got there.

Jonathan: Amazing, and I assume things kind of turned around in the PhD program once you kind of learned how to use and learn how to process all of that material.

Anthony: Yes, it got kind of ridiculous because then I was saying things like, "Oh, and by the way that's on page 19."

I think for everybody who gets into this stuff there is always a little bit of a showing off period. Nonetheless, it was incredible because I would go to these things and just be able to recall all this information and really crazy stuff. It is a funny story, but when I finally got to my dissertation defense, they call in a

person from outside the University and outside the country if possible and he is called the external-external or she is called the external-external which means they are external to the program and external to the university.

Anyway he came and they were grilling me really hard and they asked some tough questions and there was someone who even wanted to fail me and I knew she wanted to fail me really badly. At the end he said, “You know, you are cooler than Miles Davis. You hardly blinked during this whole thing and all the stress that these people were putting on you.” I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t even really know that much about Miles Davis, but I just thought, “It was memory, man, that’s all it is.” There’s nothing to be nervous about it all.

Jonathan: Amazing, and actually your Magnetic Memory Method rubbed off on me quite a bit. You were one of the people who convinced me to start using these kind of techniques, the spatial awareness techniques to put it into my course and to use it in my own daily life, but maybe our listeners don’t know about the Magnetic Memory Method. They might not be familiar with mnemonics and you and I are telling these awesome stories about them. Maybe we can explain what the Magnetic Memory Method is and explain a little bit about how it works.

Anthony: There is a lot to it and I don’t want anybody to feel cheated if I kind of gloss over certain things but it brings together a whole bunch of elements. The core of it is to actually use locations religiously and make the Memory Palace the

foundation of all this.

Because there are so many memory techniques is there are stairs to heaven (in the Led Zeppelin song) there is just so many. A lot of them just involve just making mental associations and pictures and they are just floating around in the void of your mind. That never worked for me very well.

What always worked very well was combining the basics of memory techniques which are creating exaggerated images and then locating them somewhere so that they could be found and you essentially increase your chances the more that you combine location with these exaggerated images. But then I started to go farther. I thought what if we study this information in a particular way and break it down into components so that you could link sounds with parts of words and create images that are very, very integrally linked to those images and those actions that the images make. Then they are in those locations and make it more and more powerful and it got to like Jedi levels of thinking about this and actually implementing it and applying it.

It is a bit involved to learn and it sounds almost insane, but for the people who use it, they get such amazing results. It is incredible and I have just been super pleased that it wasn't just something in my head but something that other people could use. But there is definitely a formula to it and there is a recipe to it.

I specifically call it a method rather than a system because there is a need for people to adapt it to their own learning style in

their own ways of going about things in their own homes in their own buildings that they are familiar with. So there is universal principles that structure it, but there is a methodology that you need to adapt.

It is kind of like the difference between kung fu or karate and wrestling. You have forms in karate and you have certain if-then, this-that kind of interactions with your enemy. But wrestling is more flexible and wrapping yourself around and innovating on the fly and there is not as many rules as such but there is universal principles. Just so that you could flop around like a fish when you need to and get the job done.

Jonathan: Definitely. I am actually dying of curiosity. How many Memory Palaces do you have? Can you quantify them are you in the hundreds or?

Anthony: Yes there is now 183 actually. Last June was 175 and I added to that since then for some various experiments but there is a go to amount as well. I mean I build some that actually never get used but the actual building of Memory Palaces is an important activity in and of itself even if you don't use them because it just strengthens every other one you have. It strengthens your understanding of how they work and what you can do with them and it's just a great way of preparing yourself. It's like having extra bullets in your gun belt.

Jonathan: Of course. So you are kind of walking around your city or cities that you visit and exploring buildings with that purpose?

Anthony: Yes, a lot of people ask me, you have this idea that we should be having dozens of Memory Palaces. Where are we going to find them all? I always just think, on my street there are still places that I haven't explored. There is like a clinic I could go into that I've never gone into. So if push came to shove there is one, and that's not to mention the dozens of buildings on the streets around me that I have never really gotten exploited. Every time I travel and make special note of the hotels that I stay in because they are all perfect for their own little tiny Memory Palaces admittedly but they can be quite useful. There is another good reason to use Memory Palaces that you build from travel and that is because when we're in novel locations or new locations we've never been to the brain secretes something called norepinephrine that makes things a lot more memorable when we have this chemical rolling around in our brain which tends to happen when we are traveling. Those can become super powerful Memory Palaces if you choose to focus on them in that way.

Jonathan: Incredible, plus the benefit of remembering more of your vacation and that's a huge benefit.

Anthony: Yes, it kind of goes along with that feeling where you feel that you can really remember your first time in the city when you first arrived there. Those first couple of days can be very impactful and that has a lot to do with that chemical.

Jonathan: Incredible. One of the important steps for me when I kind of became what I call a SuperLearner was to understand the differences between working memory, short-term memory

and long-term memory. Now that we understand a little bit about how your method works can you give us an idea of how you managed to create memories that stick not just in your short-term memory, a month or two until you deliver your thesis, but also for years and years and years?

Anthony: That is really quite simple. There is different theories and all kinds of things and one of the guys who had theories that are half-correct and half-tested and debunked and still very interesting one way or another is a guy named [Hermann Ebbinghaus](#).

Ebbinghaus had these ideas like the forgetting curve and he basically suggested there is something called the primacy effect which is that if you were giving a list of words he would remember the first second and third words very well and then maybe the last three and four words very well but in the middle there would be this decay.

I thought about that a lot and tested it and it seems pretty well correct, but I thought there has got to be a way to hack this. So if you had a Memory Palace for example and there were 15 stations you would experience that primacy effect. The way to hack it is to actually go forward through the Memory Palace, go back through the Memory Palace, start in the middle of the Memory Palace go back to the front, and start the middle and go to the end, and the leapfrog over all the stations. You do this about 5 times a day or for a few days.

I mean it sounds kind of weird to be doing this, but how many times you go to the washroom and you could do this with a list

of really important information. I mean that is just to be bulletproof. You can do a lot less but that's just kind the bulletproof thing if it really counts that you have this information.

It is kind of like being a spaced repetition software machine organically and not relying on external technology to do the repetition for you, but deciding what your list is or what kinds of information you are memorizing and actually visiting it intentionally and that is what is going to get it into long-term memory.

Dominic O'Brien has a rule of five but I think the rule of five is not enough. It should be a little more rigorous like five times a day for five days and then after that, once a week for maybe five weeks and something like that and then you are really going to get it into long-term memory.

Jonathan: Wow. So I know you have some very successful book for learning languages and poetry and again, you have been providing me mentorship and guidance in publishing my own book, but what are some other applications that your students use the Magnetic Memory Method for with success?

Anthony: Oh there is so much. For instance, programming languages. I know that is basically language, but the application is quite different in the sense that those are pretty obscure codes and whatnot. Then there is mathematical formulas and just practical things with numbers.

A lot of people couldn't tell you what their credit card number is

for example and that is an incredibly useful thing to know actually. The amount of time you can spend looking for your wallet and digging it out and going back to the computer and typing it out and getting it wrong, you know you can really change your life just by having your credit card number and the amount of time you spend. Yes, there is all kinds of things.

There are people who have used some of the techniques that I teach in my [Names and Faces](#) course to memorize or get a better sense of locations that they had visited so that they can actually go and paint them. That is been an interesting thing that I hadn't heard of before.

Then there is just the general boost in the critical and creative thinking that. People experience because of how the this opens them up to different ways of using their mind and their creative intelligence. So it spills out all over the place.

Jonathan: Definitely. Actually, that raises another question especially talking about creativity and I know some people think creativity is innate. Others understand that it is very largely trained, but my question would be can anyone do this? You know I have some strong opinions on it considering I also teach accelerated learning, but I'm curious to hear whether you have seen a difference in some sort of innate ability and all the students you have worked with or do some people just generally have a better memory out-of-the-box?

Anthony: I don't know if anybody has a better memory out-of-the-box, but there seems to be that phenomenon, there seems to be that feeling. I find that when you ask people who just have

a “natural memory” they usually describe the process that is very close to what happens in mnemonics. They sort of do it anyway without having to train.

It isn't really the case that anybody has some special edge on other people. Because, the people who win all the memory championships, they are as dull as doorknobs without those techniques. They are all great people but they will always be the first person to admit that I couldn't do this without those techniques I'm just a plumber or whatever they may be.

There is nothing particularly innate, but there is one kind of criteria I believe and that is actually wanting to achieve the outcome, and it seems being interested in doing the work and getting a kind of kick out of it. Because if you're not having fun, then I don't think all of the cheerleading in the world is going to get you over the hump of doing something that makes you miserable. I don't understand why it would make anyone miserable, but some people just don't have fun with it, and I have to accept that. I've done all kinds of clowning around and jokes and fun and games and there are still people who don't enjoy doing it. I think that that's really the great divide is having fun are not having fun. That applies to just about anything.

Jonathan: Definitely. One of the things that we added to our course was an explanation of Malcolm Knowles' work. This guy in the 1950s basically figured out that there are six requirements for information to get in and stay in for an adult learner and one of them is do they enjoy the material and do

they have a practical application. Which is to say, you know kids, a lot of kids at a younger age will learn because they are told they have to. With adults it just doesn't work that way. You need to know why you are learning it. You need to feel respected. You need to be able to tie to your day-to-day life and understand how you are going to use it or it's just not going to happen.

Anthony: I think that there is two real things that this reminds me of with adults and not having fun with the memory techniques is because they don't always completely understand why thinking about crazy monkeys cutting cheese off of the Statue of Liberty is going to help them remember something. They also often feel very compressed and restricted, and they don't allow their imaginations to produce that kind of imagery. So they can be quite conservative and that is another sort of issue, but if they allow themselves to relax and have fun, then I think that they will find that their imaginations are much more equipped to create the kind of zany images that become memorable that allow you to encode information in order to have this kind of fun.

Jonathan: Right.

Anthony: It's not that they aren't fun it is just that there are a

lot of barriers to finding them is fun.

Jonathan: I think, honestly, your method added a lot of fun. You and I talked about it a little bit when I was a guest on your podcast and it kind of influenced me. Since then, first off, I have a lot more fun. I am personally learning Russian right now which can be to put it lightly not very fun. But I'm having a lot of fun and I can learn usually about 20 new words in a 20 or 30-minute session. I use is really fun outrageous visual markers that you gave me.

For instance the Russian word for open is открытый. I think about myself with a migraine standing in front of a closed pharmacy just shaking my head in this absolute pain, or I can picture myself with a bullet wound, heaven forbid, and thinking the pharmacy ought to be open because it's critical, right. So with открытый and that's been really helpful. My question and I have a little bit of a personal motive on this, what about learning grammar? I am struggling quite a bit with Russian grammar, and I'm sure you've overcome this in the many languages you teach for your books.

Anthony: With the exception of English I haven't produced anything specifically about memorizing grammar, but the principles are more or less the same. So basically if you had a Memory Palace you wanted to focus on some grammar, the first thing to do would be to figure out what grammar you want to focus on. So instead of being overwhelmed by the giant engines of grammar you just pick one. So for instance declensions of verbs or whatever, and then you start in one corner and you and

you think about how that is declined for that particular piece of language and you follow that linearly.

In Spanish, for example, you have yo for I, and then you have tú for you, and then you have el or ella for he or she and you have all of these things. You put those in corners and then you add the next thing. You know what I'm saying? Like you add what the next word part is. So if you get to ellos which is the last of that list in Spanish then you would see a big sun. So that would be ellos sun. Or tú aires you would see a big statue of Aires in that location doing something really crazy.

Jonathan: How interesting.

Anthony: You know things like that. I am just going to my own Memory Palaces for that and then you go to the next set of principles and you go to the next set of principles and you just lay them out. In essence you make images to create the examples and you create kind of a crib sheet. Then what you do is go out ASAP once you got the stuff in your memory and you start writing sentences. You start speaking. You start listening to the language every day and to add that memorized material to a flow of other encounters. Because the more you include the memory techniques and the memorization process with reading, writing, speaking and listening then you create an ecosystem and things can get very fast after that.

Jonathan: Right, I definitely need to do that. I hadn't thought of actually breaking down the connecting words and stuff like that. In Russian you have I think it is 18 different ways to say "this" which can be very challenging. So I need to start creating

these visual images for each one of those different variants it sounds like.

Anthony: Yeah, I mean that's what I would do and I would have them patterned out against Memory Palace and then do that exact thing, forwards and backwards, from the middle to the front, from the middle to the back and then a bit of leapfrogging from station to station like one, three, five, seven, or two, four, six, eight and you will really get a lot of speed and quickly wrap it into midterm and long-term memory acquisition, and, then again, reading, writing, speaking and listening. You can use all the memory techniques in the world but it is not going to lead to fluency without those other big four activities.

Why that I came up with this is because I am pretty good at those for other four activities. The only problem is I can't remember anything. So it's really been the magic bullet so to speak. I mean it is a magic bullet that takes effort to take it out of your gun belt and put it into the gun enroll the chamber and point it at the target and shoot the gun. That's all effort and so forth, but once that bullet is spinning, I mean that's as magical as it gets.

Jonathan: Right. I had kind of a little bit, kind of not argument but disagreement with my partners when we were building our course because I'm of the belief that people need to understand how it works and people should understand just a little bit of the neuroscience behind mnemonics and how do they work and why does your brain respond to this stuff. Do

you think that that's the case or do you think that it is something like with a good technology product where the confusion and the technicality should be hidden from the end-user?

Anthony: What I had the great honor to interview Harry Lorraine who people probably know that name. He's really one of the kings of the memory-training world, and I asked him the same question. I said you talk in your books all the time about how people don't care about the science they just want to know how it works. I tend to fall on that myself. Although I have had criticism from a podcast listener who said that I have deeply undercut my credibility because of how I dismiss science and the science of memory, but that is not technically true and it is also because I do kind of fall in that camp that if you're interested in the science by all means go and study it, but it in and of itself is not the recipe to get results.

I mean there is no right answer to it but I know for myself when I am reading books and I start getting into memory books and they start explaining to me about why it all works and how it all works in the brain I just skip over it because one thing that is very important actually for people to know is that science is a process. It is in process everything that you read about science is going to be improved upon, it's going to be changed but what is not going to be changed are the fundamental techniques of how memory skills work. They are ancient.

There are innovations that come now and again when somebody comes up with some things that other people can

copy and use for themselves, they are pretty rare but they happen. In principle but universal techniques are not going to change. So again, I don't mean to undercut science but I still fall in that camp that if you're interested in it, there are loads of books about it, but if you want to get the results from memory techniques, the science isn't going to change the fundamental techniques and they are not really going to give you some deep insight about how they work.

What is going to give you insight about how they work is learning them in using them and you are going to learn more from using them than you are about reading them. There is more to movement than meditation and reading about the science is a form of meditation rather than taking action.

Jonathan: Interesting. You mentioned that there are innovations every year in these techniques and I think that that is one of the interesting things. Also you mentioned that these are thousand-year-old techniques and both of those are topics that come up in Joshua Foer's recent book, *Moonwalking with Einstein*. I think that is an interesting book because it has really brought to the mass public the techniques that you have been teaching for years or you know that the Greeks were using 2000 years ago. What do you think about the recent popularity of guys like Joshua Foer or Ed Cooke, some of these memory athletes who are winning champions and stuff like that?

Anthony: Well I think it's fantastic. There is absolutely nothing to criticize although with *Moonwalking with Einstein*, if you go and read the reviews a lot of people are disappointed

that he doesn't actually teach the techniques. He sort of glosses over them but it is really a book of cultural history and this phenomenon of what is sort of an underworld. Not that many people know about memory championships and so forth. It is a really interesting book and it has brought a lot of attention to these ancient techniques.

Ed Cooke also with [Memrise](#) and the things that he does. [There is a really great interview with him recently on Tim Ferriss' podcast that I recommend people listen to](#). At least the first hour, after that they kind of get drunk.

Jonathan: They end up in the woods as that podcast often does, but it is really enjoyable how Ed kind of walks through and he tricks Tim into memorizing this list of really ridiculous stuff.

Anthony: That gets back to the thing about having fun. You've really got to trick yourself into doing it then you see how much fun it is and you get hooked and things really change for you. I think that really what it comes down to, a lot of these people, not Foer or Cooke in particular, but the whole world that has been around for a long time and is just growing and growing, is a lot of people use the word system and there are no systems. There are just methods that allow you to create your own system. I think things would be a lot easier for people if more of these big names in memory would make that clear. So that is really important.

I mean it has just been this kind of idea of it being a system since Giordano Bruno did his stuff in the 16th century. I don't

know if people are aware of him, but he had these really complicated books that he wrote for royalty, or at least so that they would fund the printing of the books, they are always dedicated to royalty, and he just created these massive systems but he just says use these instead of here's the principles behind how I have used these for you can map your own learning style and your own interests in your own homes on top of them. So that is what a lot of these books have been about. They have been about how the other person used them but not extracting the methodology behind it and making that is clear as possible.

Jonathan: I think you are absolutely right. I think the actual nuts and bolts are much more obscure. I mean down to like the nitty-gritty things like what kind of loci or locations or anchor points are better than others? Am I supposed to be storing my memories on a bookshelf or can I put a couple of memories on the bed? It's like to really nitty-gritty details of okay great, I have built my Memory Palace, how do I actually use this thing and what do I put in it and where?

Anthony: Basically that has been the core of my success because I go into all of that stuff in detail. I have written more than 1000 pages just with those specifics about can you use a bed, can you use under your bed, can you go underneath the sheets. I mean every possibility I've gone through one way or the other and yet at the same time hardly a month goes by when someone doesn't email me with some new application that they are using that I never thought of before.

Jonathan: It's interesting.

Anthony: It's pretty crazy.

Jonathan: I'd actually be very fascinated, I assume our audience would be as well, can you walk me through may be one of the first sentences you learned in another language and tell me what words are where out of curiosity?

Anthony: Sentences in another language. Okay. That's interesting because I actually don't normally memorize sentences, just vocabulary, then because I know the grammar it's not that I really memorize phrase. I'm focusing more on vocabulary so nothing leaps to mind, but I can give something in English because memorizing poetry is more where I would use that. I will explain exactly how it works.

There is a famous little book called the Iliad by some guy named Homer. This is a particular translation, this is Dryden's translation, there are others that you will come across is what I'm about to say doesn't quite match what you come across. It says, "Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, O muse, / The vengeance, deep and deadly; whence to Greece / Unnumbered ills arose." It's not even the first sentence, but it's the first major statement.

To do this I created a Memory Palace and actually I was memorizing it to demonstrate to a coaching client I had exactly how this could be done and I used her school, because she had the school, she still has school. I used the coffee room where coffee is made and then decide that there is a wall that has a painting and then there is an office that I sometimes worked in myself and then there was a classroom and that's all that was needed for this particular thing. You want me to go through

that and unpack that and how that works?

Jonathan: Sure, if you don't mind. I find it very fascinating.

Anthony: Here is where I have to actually, because you don't really need the training wheels after a while, but basically what I saw was Brad Pitt who played Achilles in the movie Troy, and he is kicking a pail. So "Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, O muse." He's kicking the pail at the Statue of Liberty who is singing and she gets hit in the head by this pail which makes her feel vengeance, and she's also at the same time digging in the dirt, "The vengeance, deep and deadly;" and throwing it at a map of Greece that has replaced this painting that's on the wall in this school. So "whence to Greece" and then I'm standing at this office door wiping away numbers on the chalkboard. "Whence to Greece unnumbered ills arose."

You might notice that I'm not accounting for every single word in that line but just enough. That's an important question that a lot of people have. Do I have to have an image for every single word? And the answer is no. You just had need to have enough that you want to honor your mind and let it fill in the blanks. You say potato. I say potato. You can fill in the blanks and your mind has that kind of ability so you give it space. As beginners you might want to do word for word but it's really just a simple image. Brad Pitt kicking a pail of Statue of Liberty who is digging in the earth throwing the dirt at a map and I'm wiping away numbers.

Jonathan: I noticed you compressed those symbols. We talk about this a little about this in my course create linkages

between them. So it's not a statue of Brad Pitt and then a statue of a pale but rather Brad Pitt kicking the pail and that's in one location in your Memory Palace.

Anthony: The real secret to it is it is a vignette that is strung along a journey and it has space in it. A lot of people will try to do that same thing inside of a single room or inside of a single image as you are suggesting, but I think that the fluidity comes from giving it space and obviously the entire Iliad would require a lot more space than this one school would offer, but that's just how it works and if you wanted to, then you could find all that space to do the entire Iliad and people do. It is not unusual actually. When you look into it there's all kinds of people walking around with entire books in their head.

Jonathan: Well I think it's interesting that you said "and people do" about the Iliad because people did and one of the things I found so fascinating about Foer's book is he talks about some researchers who figured out that most of Homer's works were written and reproduced for so many years with Memory Palaces. Just by the structure of the text they were able to figure out that you wouldn't really write it this way unless someone was trying to convert it to a visual symbol, and the story would kind of double back on itself if it wasn't being somewhere along the way someone crossed their own memory journey. I think it is so fascinating because these books are known for being huge volumes, very long works that were actually committed for thousands of years to memory.

Anthony: Well sure, there was only eating, drinking, going to

war and memorizing. That's all they had or reciting what they memorized.

Jonathan: It's amazing as a species what we did before we had these tools that in a lot of ways help us but in a lot of ways, who even knows any of their friends phone numbers anymore much less credit card numbers or anything like that. When I was a kid I knew all of my friends' phone numbers and then cell phones came out. So slowly but surely we have completely obliterated the skill of memory as a species and as a culture which is just a shame.

Anthony: Well, but at same time, what is so interesting to me is that it is at the same moment that we appear to be eradicating our memory through technology, that memory techniques have basically come into a Renaissance. It is almost like a tidal wave has built the ship that will save you from the storm.

Jonathan: Well also in Homer's time, someone was very lucky to come across one, or two or three or ten such stories, the entirety of mythology and stuff like that was just about everything they were learning, whereas today I try to read two books a month and I try to read ten blog posts and articles a day. We don't digest and redigest and reprocess the material. We are really going for breadth more than depth.

Anthony: That's true. There was always a saying when I was a student that you are better off mastering one book than knowing 1000. To the extent, and that is a bit exaggerated, but there is that question that I often think about when I read certain things is so much of what I am reading is either ignorant

of or grounded in things that I already know from having a more traditional training. That does come from knowing a few books really well rather than 1000 not so well at all, if you know what I mean.

Jonathan: Actually that raises another question, if I can kind of dig a little deeper into the Magnetic Memory Method. I think there is two ways to organize. Let's say I do a lot of reading about programming and technology in general. I can organize it by here is a book that I read and every single book gets its own palace or I could be grouping, right. So any blog post that I read goes into a palace about Ruby on Rails if it happens to touch on that, just a just as an example. Do you group information book by book in its own palace or do you kind of take subjects and put them into their own palaces and many sources can feed one palace?

Anthony: Well it depends what is going on. When I was studying for my dissertation defense for example, I made Memory Palaces per philosopher. It wasn't as if Jacques Derrida would mention _____ or vice versa that I would somehow have to have this big confusion of what I was going to do. It is they just independent based on who they were and that person.

Incidentally those Memory Palaces had what I call a bridging figure and is bridging figures would be those would be those philosophers and just sort of follow them around through their adventures and to be able to recall the stuff. But in terms of like branching out and having tunnels between this and that, I don't

deliberately build that because it builds itself anyway.

It becomes what I call rhizomatic which a lot of knowledge and education is taught in a top-down tree structure, so you go from the branches down to the trunk and into the roots, but a rhizome is something that is more beneath the earth and spreads out laterally and can even pop up new bulbs in ways that don't even seem connected to the original plant.

It can go up/down, left/right and center, diagonal and all kinds of different kinds of permutations can just pop out at anywhere, but I think that that is best produced by having kind of a grid that you don't deliberately try to interweave too much other than you interweave it based on your understanding of the world around you using those buildings that you know to deliberately create well structured journeys and memorize stuff there and the actual connections will happen on their own.

Jonathan: That is super interesting. Have you ever made a list on pen and paper or on the computer of your hundred and 83 Memory Palaces and what they contain or is that complete blasphemy?

Anthony: Again, that depends on what the project is and it is not blasphemy it is insurance. It is actually the best thing to do because you are getting multiple modalities going at the same time. Basically, you asked me before about midterm and long-term memory and this is basically one really great way to use paper and pen or your computer in combination with these techniques.

Let's say you've got a list of 50 words that you want to memorize and you have a 50-station Memory Palace and you actually have that Memory Palace in your mind and you have it as an Excel file. So 1 to 50 and it lists the station and it lists the words that you memorized and another column lists the meaning of the word (or one or two meanings, you don't want to overburden it at first, you can go back and add later). Then the next column has the record of the image you created.

As you are going along making your associative imagery, you make a record of it you can do it with a pen on paper or you can do it with an Excel file and then you are going to go and remove yourself from that source material. No books, no dictionaries, no computer, nothing. Just you, a piece of paper and a writing device, pen or pencil. Then you reproduce everything from your mind and you go and check it against the record.

Jonathan: Wow!

Anthony: That's the full-bore method. Again, you can do this the forward and back and from the middle to the end and all those different ways that I was talking about but do it on paper completely from your mind and you are achieving multiple things at the same time. You are deepening your knowledge of your Memory Palaces and your memory techniques. You are deepening your knowledge of what it is that you are studying.

You are deepening your ability to use imagination, imagery and actions and you are deepening your discipline to actually sit and be able to reproduce information from your mind and then you are rewarding yourself going back to that list and seeing, oh my

goodness, this is 90 percent correct, 98 percent correct, 88 percent correct and it gives you the basis to make corrections and go back and say, well that man hitting a cat with toast is really not working. I have got to make that cat battle tighter or whatever and you can make corrections and that again makes you more imaginative and it gives you more exposure to what it is that you are trying to memorize. So it is just a completely different way of approaching information and working with information that is fun and exciting and more interesting than just trying to hammer it into your head with pure raw repetition.

Jonathan: I think you have inspired me. I've been working on Russian with the tips you gave me last time but I think I'm going to try to commit it to actual physical locations in a Memory Palace. The only issue is Pushkin, who the Russians love to admire, and they have this saying that "Pushkin is our everything." Their language is what they are most proud of in their culture. The guy knew 50,000 words, which is why there is a lot rumors about him similar to there were about Shakespeare that there could not have been one person writing this work. So I am going to need to really start accumulating quite a bit of Memory Palaces. Maybe one for words that start with O and one for words that start with P and so on and so forth.

Anthony: A lot of people think I'm pretty crazy for suggesting that. But the benefit of doing that is you don't have to learn 50,000 words because when you are using an alphabetized Memory Palace system you are actually studying how those

language works in a much more detailed way to the point that you can just start guessing what words mean. You are not going to be right all the time but your familiarity with the structure of the words and how they are patterned out develops really in this rhizomatic that I was suggesting.

So you can read quite easily and you know we do it in our own mother tongue anyway. We read and go, “Oh, what does that word mean again or I never heard that word,” but you get the context and you just keep going or you make note of it and check it out later. I mean 50,000 words in Russian would be absolutely fantastic but whether it is a requirement to understand Pushkin I don’t know.

Jonathan: I would be happy with 10,000 words at this point. The words, like I said, are only a very small part of the challenge of such a complex language. You mentioned in the beginning of the podcast memorizing cards and I happen to pick up as I was doing my research for this podcast, you actually just released a new course on Udemy on memorizing cards. Tell me about that. I’ve never actually had the motivation to do it myself. I know how it’s done and some of the latest techniques in compressing but explain why someone would want to learn that skill, and why it might appeal.

Anthony: There are lots of reasons why. It is one of those things, again, where it just sounds absolutely crazy. Why would anybody want to do this?

Jonathan: Unless they are going to Vegas, in which case you know if you can memorize four decks of cards in order you

might be in pretty good shape.

Anthony: You would certainly give yourself a small advantage, you know like maybe a 1 to 2 percent advantage but especially if you can do number calculation system as well like with blackjack. I just gave that example from the Iliad and I talked about having space in between things. One thing that makes my card memory a method rather than a system is unique is it teaches you to create that space between things.

It is not necessarily the fastest way to memorize cards and I don't teach it as a speed drill as such, although you will get faster. I teach it as a creativity drill and getting better at using locations in combination with images. So if you are interested in memory techniques, that is one thing that it will help you do. You can apply these card drills to everything else you want to memorize and it is something you can do for 5 minutes before you memorize foreign language vocabulary just to get the mind warm.

There is other benefits also just in terms of being something you can carry around with you to practice and you can get apps for it as well. You are just studying how your mind is working. You are thinking about your creative imagination. . You are applying your creative imagination and there is also so something to the repetitiveness of it. So it is kind of like running where you get to a jogger's high. You train yourself to feel that and you can apply that feeling to other things.

Jonathan: Fascinating. So it's a very good way to practice the entire methodology in a standardized way. Every deck of cards,

you know, standardized deck of cards looks the same, has the same characters and so people all over the world I guess are practicing the skill and it is a great way to develop subsets of that skill that can then be applied to memorizing credit cards and phone numbers. Is that what kind of what you're saying?

Anthony: Yes and the other thing that is neat about it is it is a real nice combination of concrete and abstract things. That is a really great thing to have mastery of especially if you're going to learn foreign language vocabulary and grammar principles. You recognize it, you know what letters are, you know what sounds are, those are the concrete parts and yet what their meaning is completely abstract. So what is the meaning of seven of diamonds, nothing. But you learn to apply meaning to it because you create it through a process into an image and by taking things that are largely abstract and applying imagery to them you get very good very fast at applying that to anything else.

Jonathan: Right and any new piece of knowledge, especially with foreign languages for example, you start out with something like the 7 of hearts that means nothing right now and needs to soon mean something very real and tangible and memorable to you. So I can definitely see how learning to apply that would have huge repercussions, positive repercussions for anything you want to learn.

Anthony: The way I teach it is actually quite different than most people teach it. So definitely explore other things and if you do listen to that Ed Cooke interview and see some of his

videos on YouTube he has a completely different way of doing it and mine is less arbitrary. So if you are into that kind of way that he approaches or the Dominick method of approaching it, that's totally fine but there is a way that is much less arbitrary and based more snugly on principles they can reduce some of that arbitrariness.

Jonathan: very cool. So I really enjoyed it. Actually the last time I listen to your podcast it happened to be in an episode where you shared a message that you had from a student who was really impacted by your methods and I found that (a) to be a really great thing to include in a podcast, but (B) super inspirational. Do you have any recent stories that you have gotten our recent messages that you might want to share about some student's success?

Anthony: I mean almost every day something comes but there was a student who was really stressed out about the exams that he had coming up and it was actually really nice he had never even really bought anything yet but just sort of cobbled everything together from my podcasts and he thanked me and he said, "I got 98 percent on this test and it was just unbelievable." Then he bought my Master Class (www.MagneticMemoryMethod.com) which is not on Udemy but its own separate thing and it was just kind of like this big thank you because of the results that he got from the Magnetic Memory Method.

Yes, there is people all around the world. I heard from a guy in Italy who is just super happy that he is making so much

progress with the dictionary that he got. I suggested that he look at a particular kind of dictionary that he was able to find. It is just incredible. I heard from a law student today who is working on Latin and in order to get a better understanding of the law and he is doing really great. He is even teaching this approach at school now and the dean has invited him to give a presentation about it.

It is really just spreading like wildfire, this particular approach which is great. I am very happy that if it's just even gets interest in memory techniques in and of itself. Because to me that is really the most important thing is that people just start to see the magic and the power of this and just do something because there is so much suffering in the world that has to do with memory and there is so much opportunity that is lost because people cannot achieve their goals without it, and that suffering is simply just not necessary.

Jonathan: Definitely. I also struggled a great deal through high school. To a larger extent, you know when a lot of the memory stuff was happening with when I was a lot younger. I just suffered and suffered through history class and through math class largely because of memory. There is no real teaching of this in academia which I just find mind-boggling. Nobody ever stopped and explained to me that I needed to create visual memories not until after college. I was lucky to run into someone like yourself who is an expert, and I tell the whole story kind of in my courses, but I just think what if I had never encountered this and I went through my entire life thinking that there was this huge barrier to learning. Today I am learning

how to podcast, and I'm learning how to blog, and I'm learning all this different kind of stuff that it doesn't faze me at all to approach a new language in my free time because learning has become this fun, friction-free process, and I just think what a shame that people think they have to suffer to learn.

Anthony: There are all kinds of theories about why schools exist in the first place. I don't necessarily want to get into that. For anybody who is suffering with school, know that there is a light at the end of the tunnel and you can start using these things now to make your school experience a whole lot more enjoyable if you are still somewhere in the middle of the road.

Jonathan: Definitely. I have also heard from a number of my students, if you are dealing in and at traditional academic setting where concessions are made for the fact that learning is very hard for people who do it wrong to be kind of not politically correct. Once you start using these kind of techniques, the kind that you and I both teach, it becomes like fishing with dynamite. At least 98 percent test results are pretty common among people who know how to apply the proper methods and I just think that is so much fun that you probably have students all over the world who are setting the curve and really angering their classmates and it is simple stuff that is accessible online and takes a little bit of training.

Anthony: I think that thing about angering their fellow classmates, one thing that I always try to do in just about every message that I send if you have learned something from this is pass it on because two things happen. You get better at them,

because something taught is something learned twice and you also get to help those other people. There is no competition in the world. People who are tied up in competition are really just hurting themselves.

But fishing with dynamite is a great metaphor and I think that also raises the important thing that you and I as teachers, and if you do take up these skills, becoming a teacher of them is that we really need people who know how to fish and are not waiting for fish to land in their boat. That has really been my great passion in and how I approach teaching in terms of showing how it is done rather than getting a lot of examples on how to do it.

Jonathan: Definitely and that is without a doubt one of the most rewarding if not the most rewarding part of teaching is forget the ego boost, forget all of that stuff is when you get an email from a kid who has been seeing a psychiatrist for years and years about severe ADD and stuff like that and all of a sudden gets to stop seeing that psychiatrist. The psychiatrist cuts him back to once every 2-month meetings because hey, you are getting 90 percent on all of your exams and you are not having suicidal thoughts before every exam. That is a really impactful thing. So what is next for you if you do not mind sharing, what are you working on?

Anthony: I am about to release a book on sleeping.

Jonathan: Really? That is actually another topic that you and I share a lot of interest in. Do tell.

Anthony: Well it is probably one of the more unique books on sleeping that is out there. I've certainly never encountered anything like this and I have been using it for years. The book, and it will eventually be a video course, is called The Ultimate Sleep Remedy, How To Fall Asleep Anytime And Anyplace With Ease, The Life-Changing No-Nonsense Rapid Results Guide To Getting A Better Rest And More Sanity In Your Waking Life which is one of these great long titles.

Jonathan: I was going to say do you have a Memory Palace to remember the title when people ask you at cocktail parties?

Anthony: Well you have to when you write titles that long. Basically, one of the things about a lot of sleep remedy books and training and stuff like that is if they tell you shouldn't stay in bed if you can't sleep and go out of bed until you feel tired and then go back to bed. That is something that I have found that is true to a certain extent, but there is a better way. I talk about that.

The other thing is that there are all kinds of sleep rituals. Like brush your teeth at the same time and go to the bathroom 2 hours before you sleep or whatever. We are not robots. Nobody is going to brush their teeth at the same time every night. What we need is the ability to lay down in bed and fall asleep.

So what I teach is being comfortable lying in bed no matter how painful it is to sit there and not be able to sleep and learn to be comfortable in that situation. That is the true path to sleeping at will basically. Is just to think about sleep completely

differently and think about lying in bed differently. I wrote a whole book about it.

Jonathan: Amazing! I have two questions on that. The first is do you think you can teach to fall asleep sitting up because I'm one of these guys if I am not lying on either my stomach or my side it's not going to happen which makes long haul flights absolutely miserable.

Anthony: Well yes, I think this would work for sitting up and I have sort of used it that way in terms of just being generally relaxed but not as a sleep remedy but I am sure that it will address that need as well.

Jonathan: My second question, and you've already sold me, my second question is are you a believer in in biphasic or polyphasic sleep?

Anthony: I don't know that much about it and I've done some reading about and experiments and so forth. But again, it's kind of one of these things where I'm personally not such a person that has such rhythms and to even try to get on the surfboard and let alone ride the wave is just going to be not something that I would gladly happily do and just the rhythms of my day don't respond it. It would just be a losing battle to do that kind of like hacking.

Jonathan: I have found, specifically in grad school, I found that the nap worked really well but anything above that, you know getting into the two, three, four naps a day just completely wreaked havoc on my lifestyle. So I thought I would

ask if you similarly had experimented with it.

Anthony: Well I certainly have used napping but there is a moment in napping where your brain will start to secrete chemicals that put you into the position of longer-term sleeping so that is why you often feel hung over and worse off than when you went to sleep. I think that meditation has always worked better for me.

Jonathan: You read my mind.

Anthony: But again, it is not like with the clock, ding-ding time to meditate or anything like that. I think that the real power with meditation is actually to meditate all the time. It's like nonstop shopping. You just develop a kind of awareness and of course that awareness is broken but you can get it longer and longer and longer and become more conscious and aware for greater lengths of time and then combine that was sitting. I always loved Alan Watts' idea of sitting just to sit and as being the ultimate meditation.

Jonathan: When you say sit, I mean a lot of meditation enthusiasts use the term "sit" and they actually mean sit meditation. I get the sense that you mean just sit quietly eyes open kind of thing?

Anthony: Yes, because basically what happens if you sit just to sit, then you are going to fall into those other sorts of techniques and strategies anyway. You are going to sit there and you are going to be aware eventually that you are just sitting there and you will start to laugh or whatever and you will

come into basically “enlightenment” and the enlightenment is only 5 minutes away. It is just sitting just to sit and just wait for something to happen. Don’t move until something happens and you will know enlightenment very quickly. At least that is my feeling and I have developed it to a certain thing but I just love these moments where I am just walking around the streets and I went shopping or whatever and I suddenly catch myself not present at all and I just start to laugh because it is just the most hilarious thing to be mindless.

Jonathan: Yes and it is the most common thing on the planet as well. I think in a vast majority of people just by the way we live our lives we spend a lot of our time even once we are aware of presence and mindfulness, we spend the vast majority of our time caught up in a lot of minutia that pulls us out of kind of our present state.

Anthony: There is no one who is free from it but there are varying degrees of freedom and it is definitely worth cultivating because it can really change your life in some very powerful ways.

Jonathan: And your brain, which I think is really interesting and they are starting to do a lot more research. I have my ticklers that send me whenever there is new research about this but they are really starting to understand the neurological changes caused by meditation and presence and even stuff like positive affirmations are literally changing the mechanical structure of your brain. I think that for anyone who is taking anti depression medication or attention deficit medication that

is a really exciting prospect like I can sit for 20 minutes a day and I can change my neurochemistry for free. That has got to be one of the most exciting things happening in science to me.

Anthony: It is actually pretty amazing because you can get free opium and all you have to do is sit for 20 minutes to get it or even shorter periods of time.

Jonathan: Right, without the withdrawal

Anthony: In fact it is totally without the withdrawal. It has the opposite effect. It is give me more withdrawal whatever.

Jonathan: You sit, and when I say sit I mean meditate, eyes closed, focus on breathing kind of thing. Do you sit every day?

Anthony: I do all kinds of things. So I will sit. One of the most powerful medications that I ever learned was the corner exercise which is just to find the corner of something and look at it and then start to be able to look at the space around it and see that air is really a kind of Jell-O that is pushing against everything and that object is pushing against the Jell-O and it is just kind of a neat way to blend yourself into presence in the room and think about that air pressing upon you as kind of like really a Jell-O. Air is an object and in and of itself an object filled with many objects. So I will do that and I also do certain kinds of breathing when I feel like it or I don't and I really like something called psychic nostril breathing which is without using your finger to hold down a nostril, you just imagine the air is coming up your left nostril and out your right nostril and then up your right nostril and out the left nostril and you just

sort of cycle that.

Then you can combine that with something called Pendulum Breathing. Pendulum Breathing is breathing in and then breathing in again and breathing out and breathing out again and you swing your breath that way and you combine those two things together, it's a little bit like syncopated drumming, but once you get used to it is just an incredible thing in and of itself and you don't do it for any kind of end goal. You do it just to do it while you are sitting just to sit in the most incredible things happen.

Jonathan: Right. I think that is really cool because a lot of beginners, myself included, start with a very common meditation practice and you are supposed to sit there just focus on your breathing and inevitably your breathing is not very interesting. So I like the idea of making it a little more interesting. Sometimes my breathing won't captivate my attention so I will listen to our feel my heart rate but I will definitely try that out, in twice and then out twice.

Anthony: What do you think about combining meditation with technology?

Jonathan: You know I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand you have this very pure beautiful practice that is estimated to be about 5000 years old. In a lot of ways it shares that characteristic with the Memory Palace. You don't need a technological innovation to use a Memory Palace. It is something that we as humans have kind of inherited down from

ancestry and I think there is beauty in that. On the other hand, I think it is an amazing way to connect to millions of people and if you look at an app like Headspace or Calm, these apps are all over the news and they are raising awareness and they are creating what some people call the mindfulness revolution. I think that is great. I personally got into meditation because someone told me to try out Headspace and I tried their 10-day trial, at which point I decided that, no matter how lovely Dr. Andy's accent was, I'd probably be better off with just some noise isolating headphones.

But I will tell you one piece of technology that I've been very excited and very disappointed by is kind of home ECG. So I have this had been sitting here that is supposed to measure my brain waves and tell me how I am doing and help me understand the changes in my brain. How are my alpha waves changing? How my delta waves changing over time? I think that is really motivating and really exciting. The technology is definitely not there yet and I'm looking forward to a time when that will be there. But I don't know what you think about it?

Anthony: I am not that big of a fan either but there is some benefit to it sometimes. I really like an app called Stillpoint, which plays three different kinds of sounds and you can mix them. So you have like a baseline, not a bass guitar line, but a baseline sound and then you can add like some sort of heartbeat or something like that and then you can add a periodic ohm are periodic tootle-lou or whatever. You've got different options and when my mind is really sped up, sometimes I will go to that because it is just really pleasant to listen to and really does

provide a point of focus that I may not be able to give for myself.

Jonathan: Interesting. Is it a little bit like binaural beats?

Anthony: Yes, except for without the binaural stuff. I mean I don't know, to tell you the truth, I didn't memorize the packaging when I got it but it really struck me as being quite interesting because it wasn't really in that sort of fringe of science and I'm not that studied in what research they have done but it was just kind of like this is just sounds that you can put together to help you focus and no real claims above that were beyond it.

But you reminded me of something when you mentioned 4000 years of meditation and a lot of people think the Memory Palace technique came from ancient Greece but the reality is that it did, except for that it also came from the ancient East and a lot of the Buddhist meditations used location-based memorization.

Jonathan: Really!

Anthony: For example, I learned a meditation one time and I thought man this is a Memory Palace. I mean it is one of those specific meditations where you are not just sitting to sit but you are actually doing stuff. The teacher said imagine that you are in this temple and at this particular location there is a bridge and as you walk across the bridge you see all these people at the bottom of the bridge and they are throwing stones at you trying to make you fall down. At the other end of the bridge you are at a party and everybody is cheering you on and offering you food

and wine.

Then over at this corner of the temple imagine this big black dog and that dog is always chasing you and that is the representation of death, and then it went on and on. I remember this because I am going through my mind right now thinking of all these things. This is 10 years ago that I had done this meditation and so all of these things represent stuff. Like the people throwing rocks at you are reminding you to remember all of the people you dislike or that you consider his enemies and forgive them. The people at the party are also your friends but you forget them they are trying to poison you with all the good stuff or whatever. And the dog is death literally always behind you and you practice the meditation realizing that death is coming. It is a Memory Palace basically.

Jonathan: Fascinating!

Anthony: And that meditation is thousands of years old.

Jonathan: Amazing! So Anthony I don't want to take up too much of your time. I know you are quite a prolific man and you have very much lived up to your Miles Davis nickname from your PhD dissertation. I know you are doing books. You are doing podcasts, Udemy courses. You also have a Master Course that apparently I really need to check out. If listeners want to learn more about you or maybe start training in the Magnetic Memory Method, where did they start finding all this different material?

Anthony: Well, what I would really like to do is give listeners

to your podcast some worksheets and a free video series which you can find [here](#).

Jonathan: Awesome, that would be perfect. I know that there is so much different stuff that you have put out there and you know thousands of pages on whether or not I should be storing Brad Pitt in my bed that I would love to speed read through so I'm actually going to check that link out myself.

Anthony: Yeah you've just got to decide above the sheets, below the sheets or

Jonathan: I think it depends if it is a female listener or a male listener.

Anthony: Yeah, but for people who are listening to this and who are really interested there are worksheets and there are videos that will make it a lot more concrete and you can see what is going on.

Jonathan: Awesome and we are going to put up notes to all the different resources, some of which I'm going to research myself, different links we talked about, books, stuff like that, it will all be up on our website.

Anthony: Cool.

Jonathan: Awesome. Anthony thanks so much for your time it has been a real pleasure as always chatting with you.

Anthony: Well thank you and keep up all the good work and I

can't wait for the next time.

Jonathan: Awesome take care.