This Man Shows You How To Unlock The Extreme Power Of Your Memory

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The man in question is Nelson Dellis. He climbs mountains, memorizes playing cards underwater and works to solve Alzheimer's by collecting data through the Extreme Memory Challenge. Take it now.

Not only does Nelson use his memory talents to create good in the world, he's also on a mission to help and inspire you to do the same.

Because the fact of the matter is, when you have improved memory skills, you won't be able to stop yourself from contributing to the world at a higher level.

Just remember ...
With Great Power, Comes Great Responsibility

Please enjoy this episode of the Magnetic Memory Method Podcast by downloading the MP3 and listening to it. You'll find the full transcript down below with some links throughout to help continue your education into the world of Extreme Memory Improvement.

Let's get started ...

Anthony: Nelson, it's great to be able to speak with you. I've been following some of the things you've been doing for quite some time. Maybe, just for people who don't know you, give a brief overview of what got you interested in memory and how you came to achieve what you've done and take it to the level of basically bringing social good out of the achievements you've had with memory.

Nelson: Yeah, you know this all started back when my grandmother was struggling with Alzheimer's as she lived in Europe. I wouldn't see her all the time but I think that made a bigger impression on me because I would go visit every six months to a year and she had drastically changed, deteriorated immensely. That made a big imprint on me. Then she passed away the summer of 2009.

At that point, I had kind of dabbled in memory. I decided to take what I had read about and really drive it home and see if I
could, at a young build a strong memory, a healthy brain, and I set the goal of myself winning the memory championship. That seemed like a good milestone to try to get to and to judge, test, and base all of my training scores on. I did, and I got very good at it and all motivated by my progress and eventually I ended up winning the U.S. Memory Championship four times. That's now what I do. I teach people how to unlock their memories.

**Anthony:** That's very cool and you know one of the things that is so extraordinary is that you also turn it into social good, which we'll talk about. Talk a little bit about the book that you're working on and who it is for and why developing memory abilities is so important for the audience that you're creating it for.

**Nelson:** You know I still get a lot of people who approach me and talk about their father, their mother, or grandmother has early onset or has Alzheimer's, and they ask me if it's something that I can train their parents to improve their memory. Unfortunately, I don't know much about that. In my opinion, I think learning these memory techniques is a habit thing. You've got to learn it, I think, at an early age. That is something that just sticks with you.

When you go into your higher education, you already know how to memorize. It is a skill that you were given in school. Right now, obviously, you see if you have a class or a teacher who gives you tips on how to improve your memory you just do it. Memorize this song. You go home. You struggle with it. You repeat it over and over and then you come back and you're
excited and it's the most frustrating process.

What if you lived in an age where your teachers actually had a class or spent some time teaching you memory techniques at a young age? When it would come to that poem or med school textbook that you've got memorize, you would have some toolbox in your brain to figure that out faster and more efficiently. I've been working on a book. I actually wrote a book, it's not published yet for normal people of normal age.

The one I'm really excited about is this one I've been working on for kids which is teaching them memory techniques at a very young age. It's geared towards a first grader in a picture book style. Because I feel like if you can get that in the head of a kid who already has a fantastic imagination and memory, that those things could stick with them and help them be successful throughout life.

**Anthony:** I think that's fundamental because often adults feel that they have lost their creativity somehow. It's pounded out of them through work or whatever the case may be. How do you think the people could resuscitate creativity if they felt that they have lost it?

**Nelson:** I know that feeling. I have felt it myself over the years. A lot of people tell me creativity is hard for me. It is hard for me to do these techniques, for example, which take a lot of creativity and imagination, but I honestly believe that anybody can do this. If you're not good at, or if you think you're not good at being creative, I think it's one of those things it is practice.
I was always pretty good. I was very artistic, but I would still say I'm not the most creative person. I knew a lot of people who were a lot more creative than me. When I first heard about these techniques, a little bit skeptical and maybe thought okay this might not be up my alley or something that I might be good at, but with all the practice I've done, yeah, I'm practicing memory techniques, but for sure I'm also practicing creativity techniques. My mind is, I feel now, way more creative than it was six or seven years ago when I started this.

Anthony: I'm curious about your process if we can talk shop a little bit. One of those issues really is being creative. I've always thought that, and I encountered this in Harry Lorayne is you're just doing associations. At so many levels, creativity really isn't the issue. It's more of being able to pool associations together so like famous actors or politicians or football players or whatever. I'm just curious to what extent you rely on information that you already know like pop culture images, or whatever the case may be, as opposed to things you invent on the fly or fantasy images that are not really reality so to speak.

Nelson: Well, when I train for these memory competitions there's a few events. One of them is the deck of cards. How fast can you memorize them? They give you a massive number and you've got five minutes to memorize as much of it as you can. For things like that, I have systems where they are already set out. I sat down one day and decided to give each three-digit number 000 to 999 a specific person.

When I came up with that list and when I use it, it's all
celebrities, fictional cartoon characters from books, shows, people, friends that I know. They're all associations to things that I already know. There are other events where you have to kind of make stuff up on the fly, for example, a list of words or names. Most of that is where you have to be very creative because you don't know what you're going to get.

You've got to come up with the pictures, but what I do is I'll look at a pair of words or a name and a last name, and I'll come up with that association to something I know but on the fly. If I can't, then I break it down into something smaller that is recognizable. That's always the process is to break it into something I know. It's still a creative process whether you already have associations to things or not because you still have to interweave those images with, for example, a Memory Palace or some narrative that is totally make believe.

**Anthony:** To what extent do you prefer Memory Palaces based on real locations you've actually visited to just made up Memory Palaces, or even based on places that exist but you've never been to.

**Nelson:** Right. I know some people who do all those that you mentioned. I'm more of the real places that I've been to and had a memorable experience there. To me, I love going to these places. I climbed Everest a few years ago, and I have a Memory Palace where I'm on the mountain going through base camp and the higher camps and all that. I love the fact that when I train I get to go to that place. I think that's very important at least for me to make my memories, when I memorize stuff, that
much more memorable. I do know some people who use video game settings or even fictional rooms. They maybe design them on their computer or draw it or whatever. It is not a real place but it works.

**Anthony:** One question a lot of people have is can you reuse a Memory Palace and what's your experience with that?

**Nelson:** When I'm training, I do multiple decks a day so I've got to have a large collection of Memory Palaces. If I were to have just one and I use it over and over and over again, I'm going to get some echoes and some confusion. I'm sure if you practice, you could probably eliminate some of that. I like to have fresh Memory Palaces come competition time. I'll use a few and then leave those alone for a few days while I use other ones and then cycle back to them so that they empty themselves out.

That being said, if I have something that I want to memorize forever so this is what I'm talking about for training is temporary. I'm memorize a deck of cards, I recite it and then I don't really care to keep that particular deck of cards any longer. It's meaningless almost. That's why I cycle through them. If it is some trivia set or something for school or something really important that I want to keep forever, then I typically take or design or find a Memory Palace specifically for that information and I use it only for that. I would never tape over it. I'll just use it as this hard drive, external hard drive, if you will, to store that piece of information.

**Anthony:** How often do you feel you need to revisit or rehearse
that information or to keep it fresh and overcome the forgetting curve?

**Nelson:** You know, probably when you start out review is essential frequently, but over time it's something I – maybe every six months I'll go back and check it out. If there are gaps in it, I can go back and kind of relearn it just to solidify it.

**Anthony:** Do you ever experiment with adding a condition to a Memory Palace so you can reuse it? I'm sure you are familiar with the procedure of taking an original Memory Palace and then having a version made out of ice, a version made out of wood, grass, or maybe there would be a blue version, a red version and a yellow version. You ever mess around with that stuff?

**Nelson:** Yeah, I've heard of that. More like you make it big or you imagine yourself miniature inside of it or something. I've heard of that. I've never actually tried it. I don't know. I just like to do it as real as the place is.

**Anthony:** Right, that's exactly how I like to work as well. One thing too, just if we can be nerdy about this a little bit more, I'm curious do you see yourself walking through the Memory Palace? Do you have a first person viewpoint or is it like a bird's eye view of a blueprint? How is it working for you, or do you do all three in different situations?

**Nelson:** I'm not there. I guess its first person but looking at a location in this Memory Palace and something is happening there. It's not like it's me seeing it. It's just like a security
Anthony: Yeah, that's cool. I mean that is just one question that I get again and again is how that people are supposed to navigate it and how they're supposed to see it. I often try to encourage them to not see it at all but rather think of it as a star in a constellation that you've carefully crafted and reduce the reconstruction of the Memory Palace to the bare minimum so you can focus on those weird and crazy images that you've put there.

Nelson: Yeah, it's an interesting thing. I don't really think about whether I see it or who is seeing it or what angle it is. It's just I just think of that slot, I create the image, and I move along.

Anthony: That must be important for speed since you're often engaging in speed drills.

Nelson: Yeah, when you first start out you linger and you make sure you have it in your head, but as you try to cut down your times to get faster at this process you really have to, like you said, cut these images down to their bare minimum where it's almost just a fleeting part of that image. We were talking about it last week. There was a UK Championship and some of us were saying that it's almost a feeling. When you get fast at it, and that's honestly, we go really fast and sometimes we forget things.

When you have a really good run through say a deck of cards and it's fast, what you'll find is like the images that you were
picturing were just all feeling. There's my dad at this location. It's not him per se at this point. It's the essence of him or I guess how he makes me feel when he's in my presence. Whatever, but he's there. Which is interesting because when I first tell somebody how to do this technique, I tell them to sit there, close their eyes, really imagine your dad, if that's what you're picturing, his hair, how he smells, how he talks, all these little details to make that image memorable. Once you get faster at it, you've got to cut some of that out and really just cling on to the things that are what make it stick.

**Anthony:** One of the things that I think pushes people away from these extraordinary techniques is the element of let's call it rigorous cartoon violence. To what extent do you find that's necessary or are you able to use softer, gentler imagery to trigger the target information.

**Nelson:** Yeah, it's funny. I did a talk once, and I feel like a lot of my images are violent/sexual. I'm not a violent person by nature but my images they tend to be. I was leading an audience through an example and one woman just couldn't get it, and she was like I just can't picture gruesome things. I just can't do it. What she did from then on, she was a very spiritual person, she kind of related it all back to religion and that seemed to work for her.

What I pull from that is that everybody's minds are different. I often encourage that you should go for pictures that are bizarre and silly, over the top and if you can, sexual or gruesome, grotesque in nature just because those stick because of them
being so out there and loud. For me, I think that's an important part. For numbers and cards, I have actions that are violent or sexual for sure.

**Anthony:** But you still manage to be a good citizen of the planet?

**Nelson:** Yeah, I've heard people say I don't want to do that because I feel like it will take over my mind and I'm going to become a bad person, but that never happens.

**Anthony:** Going back to the book for young people and the issue of getting them young to at least have exposure to these techniques, a lot of people ask me and have probably asked you. It's one of the biggest questions. Why aren't these memory techniques taught in school? It's really easy to fall back on the idea, and there's probably a truth to the idea, that we are stuck in a Victorian education system that was designed to create obedient factory workers and so forth. What's you're take on it?

**Nelson:** It's interesting because on the flip side every time I go up to a school or university and I demonstrate or I talk to someone who has seen what I can do and they want me to come talk about it at the school, there's always an excitement for it. They can't believe it's not in their school, that kids don't know about.

But then what happens is, we get down the road, conversations, I do a few little talks and there's times maybe working together involving these techniques into the curriculum and then it falls
It's just a funny thing. I guess memory because it's so abstract I guess in a way and it's not as tangible as say math. You can write your solutions on the board and then the work can stepped out. Whereas memory is very – everybody like I was talking about before is very different. You can't really see how another student is memorizing. You guide them and hope that they're following along.

I don't know if that's the reason why it still hasn't caught on. I've been at this for a number of years and I've had so many people interested and promises and ideas and they just – some have gone through of course but not as many as I would like.

You know at first I did this just because it was a personal thing. I wanted to improve my memory and my brain health. Then I realized it's a bit hard to train when you don't have kind of the end goal. With memory improvement, if I want to have a competition what am I really training for? Yeah to improve my mind, fine, but I'm a very quantities person so how do you measure that. When is it good enough? To be honest, I don't know actually have the answer. But at least with the memory championships I knew numbers and times that I had to achieve in order to be competitive for the title. That kept me very motivated in terms of driving me to compete.

The thing is this stuff is so addicting. Once you realize you have this power to memorize more than you ever thought you could, and then you train and get even faster it, it's a hard thing to let go of and then when you see other people in your circle, your
memory circle improving you want to stay up with them especially when you are already at the top. That's my problem right now. I won it four times, and I keep saying I'm going to stop because I don't want to end up losing. I always wrestled with that problem. Do I keep training? And if I do, I've got to train harder because the competitive levels keep rising versus just calling it quits. I'm just doing it for myself.

**Anthony:** Have you ever plateaued?

**Nelson:** Oh yeah, I'm at a pretty big plateau or I have been this past two years. I think a lot of it has to do with difference in motivation from previous years. Whereas before I never won, I wanted to win, and then I won. I wanted to win again and then I lost the next year so I wanted to come and win that time. Now it's like okay four is a good number. Why would five be any better? Do I really have to train that hard anymore? When you have that feeling that's when you plateau. You're not really trying to find new avenues to get better because where you're at has been good enough. I don't know how I won the U.S. Championship this year because – well I did very well in the names, but something I used to be the best at which is numbers and cards I was okay. **Lance Tschirhart**, another American, he broke the U.S. record 29 seconds in cards which is crazy. I've done that once in training. Then 360 digits, I've done that in training but never in competition. I need to push forward to break this plateau. I'm kind of where I was around 300, around 30 seconds for cards. I need to change some things, which I've started to do and I'm seeing improvements now. It's been a lot
of work to break this particular plateau.

**Anthony:** What does a typical training session look like? Is there a fixed daily routine or how do you drill yourself to reach something like the 30-second area for 52 cards?

**Nelson:** It depends on where I am in terms of what's coming up. Is there a memory competition down the road or is it off-season so to speak. I used to just train always. Like four to five hours a day, I'd do sets of numbers, cards, names, words, just every day. Then I pulled back a bit. I think after I won in 2014 it was the first time I took break and I didn't touch anything for like six months, which made it really had to get back into.

Now that I'm training for [The World Memory Championships](#), which has more different or varying disciplines, I have a lot more to train. I'll kind of split up my weeks by Monday/Wednesday, Tuesday/Thursday and then Friday and one of the weekend days I kind of leave for experimenting and working on systems. All the days I will usually do speed numbers and speed cards, just memorizing cards and numbers.

Then on the Tuesdays and Thursdays, I'll work on the longer disciplines. In the World Championships, they test you for an hour on how many numbers you can memorize and how many packs of cards you can memorize. I work on that. It just ends up being, when I'm really down to it, a five-hour training day.

**Anthony:** Wow! That sounds intense. Given that amount of investment, do you think memory competitions should be included in the Olympics, or do you have any ideas why it isn't
already in the Olympics?

**Nelson:** Yeah, I think so. I think the reason why it's not though is because it's horribly boring to watch. That's not to say that you can't make it exciting. I'm working on that, but the World Championships is extremely boring to watch. I love to compete in it of course, but compared to staring at someone for three days straight for eight hours a day watching them stare at a piece of paper taking tests.

That's not the most exciting sport to watch but there's a memory tournament that I created two years ago called the Extreme Memory Tournament and we try to make it somewhat of a spectator sport. I think we're doing a good job so far.

The XMT, as we call it, is a two-day competition and everything is digital first of all. It's all one-on-one matches. Everybody who is competing is split up into groups kind of like the World Cup. On Day 1, you play everybody in your group in each of the disciplines. There are cards, numbers, words, names and pictures. They are all short disciplines like one-minute memorization.

The cool thing is – so I'm going up against you for example. Let's say we're memorizing a deck of cards. Here we are on our laptops racing through this deck of cards as fast as possible and on the screen it's broadcasted to the audience so people can see exactly how fast I'm going through my deck of cards versus you. Who finishes first and then during recall while constructing those decks, trying to remember their correct order, it's who can get the most right. If we both got it right, who did it faster? It
makes it very visual. It's short. It's exciting. It's this battle. It's not so much test taking anymore versus there's a little bit of strategy involved and it's a lot more exciting that way.

**Anthony:** That sounds like it would be very exciting. Like speed chess basically.

**Nelson:** Yeah.

**Anthony:** Cool, well speaking of the word extreme, and your predilection for names talk about the Extreme Memory Challenge and the research that's going on that you're involved in.

**Nelson:** Going back to this tournament, we started it because this company called Dart Neuroscience, they're in San Diego. They were doing some research with Washington University in St. Louis, and I was part of that study amongst other memory experts. What they're trying to do is to try to find and create a drug that improves memory and brain health and cognition. Not an easy task, but they have a lot of their funds going into a lot of universities for research and they're doing their own research as well. I've worked with them obviously to help put together the tournament.

They were the key sponsor those two years we ran it. They are also working, and I'm helping them with this because I totally want it to succeed, is they developed a memory test. It is long-term memory test, and they're just trying to get a million at least, honestly as many people to take the test as possible. The idea being we're trying to locate or identify people who have
naturally good long-term memories. That's a very rare thing to find. Maybe not even somebody who we'll find, but you will only know if you get enough people. Once we find those people, we'll be able to do a lot of DNA testing to figure out what separates these people from the norm. That's the idea.

It's called Extreme Memory Challenge. It's a pretty easy fun test. It doesn't hurt. It's easy. You're helping research and if anybody is listening to this, I would love for you to just take the test and share it. The more people that take it the better and you can actually see how you compare to me. I've taken the test as well.

**Anthony:** We know that there are people who are extraordinarily good with mnemonics, mnemonists, and are you split testing them so that you have results from people who aren't using mnemonics compared to those who are to take the test.

**Nelson:** At this point, we're just honestly getting as many people to take the test. Once we have people who have scored highly, we'll be more careful in how we weed those people out. That's when we'll investigate further whether they were using memory techniques or not. The goal is to find the people who were not using memory techniques. Right now, we're just trying to get people to do well on the test.

**Anthony:** What do you think about the claims and the studies that say technology is now doing so much of our memory work that we're going in the opposite direction where our memories are degrading? Have you found that for yourself and had that
Nelson: Definitely. The one thing I've learned about memory through this whole journey is that it's attention. That's all it is. When you talk about techniques, Memory Palaces and number systems all you're doing at the very basis of it all is paying a lot of attention to something. You're building this elaborate system for one specific thing. You're sitting there thinking about it really hard. That's paying attention to something and that's what memory is. If you're not paying attention to something, somebody says something that you should remember you're not going to remember it.

This era is all distractions. Just think of when you're out having a conversation with a friend. You usually have your phone out, whether it's on the table or in your hand or in your pocket. It's going off, it's lighting up. Maybe theirs is lighting up too, versus when you would actually go out with someone back in the day, and you maybe didn't have text messages awhile back. You'd have to say we'll meet here at this time. You did and then actually paid attention to that person. That exchange was probably more memorable or easier to remember than ones you have these days because of that technology. I definitely believe that this day and age it is so hard to pay attention to things.

We're constantly being bombarded. It's just making memory that much more difficult. We don't have to use it as much as well, so all that together just kind of makes our memories so along this journey as well I try to figure out a way to give back and to educate people on all the things I have kind of figured
As we talked about before, it's shocking that this stuff isn't in schools and that people don't know about it. We all can do it. It's all latent within us, the skill. I tried to figure out a way. How can I share this with people? I thought okay maybe I can create a blog/website where I post all these kind of tips and talk about memory and how do I make it a little more exciting. I tied it to another passion of mine which mountain climbing.

That's where Climb for Memory came from. I started climbing mountains and updating my blogs about my trips and photos. I was trying to get people to be drawn to the site. Climbing Mt. Everest, things like that, things that people are kind of fascinated by and don't always get the opportunity to learn about. It's kind of a diversion. It's like hey look here, but what you're really looking at is this cause I'm climbing for, which I also happen to know a great deal about it. Here's how you memorize this and that and keep your brain healthy. It was an effort to raise awareness for Alzheimer's and also funds as well.

**Anthony:** If I understand correctly, you're also doing some experiments and as you climb with different altitudes and how your memory responds or is that something you're starting in the future.

**Nelson:** Yeah, I've done that on some of my higher altitude climbs. Since I train all the time. I kept doing it on these long expeditions. For example, Mt. Everest, not many people know but it's a two-month expedition, so you're at high altitude, 17,000 feet or higher for about six weeks there. Your body goes
through some serious changes and near the top of the mountain, you're getting a third of the oxygen you would at sea level. You need oxygen. Your body needs oxygen to function properly and to think straight.

If you ever see these videos online of pilots, they simulate oxygen just dropping. They test them and they just become idiots within seconds. It's crazy. They can't put a square peg through a square hole. They put it through the triangle you know something like that. They can't do basic arithmetic.

For climbers, we spend a lot of time acclimatizing so that when we do get to the top we're not like that. That's not to say we're not stupid but we can think a little better. I've have been testing that with memory. What's surprising to me is I've actually done as good or better as I went up in altitude. I have no idea why, but I just love to test that kind of stuff to see how these techniques fair with the elements.

**Anthony:** They say that norepinephrine is produced in novel situations, which is thought to be an aid to memory, that chemical in the brain.

**Nelson:** Yeah, I've had some thoughts about it, and that's the one that's come up. It's the most extraordinary experience being up there. You put yourself in some really memorable hairy, scary situations constantly for six to eight weeks. You walk away with an experience that is super memorable because of how novel it is, and I'm sure that plays into all your thoughts while you're up there including when I would do my memory training.
**Anthony:** Now you know personally the size and the dimension of Mt. Everest, do you have a sense or a feeling of the size of your memory?

**Nelson:** No, I don't think so. Obviously, it's contained to that thing that's inside my head which has a finite size. But in terms of how many Memory Palaces I can have and how many bits of information I can store there, I have no idea.

I mean there can always be some way that I can press information into bigger chunks and Memory Palaces that, like you said, you know you alter things in your Memory Palace and you can memorize something totally new inside of it. Where is the limit?

These memory competitions are a great example because when they first started in the early 1990s the records there were, at the time, very impressive, but now they are a joke. At the time, you thought okay you can't really go that much faster with a deck of cards and then somebody broke a minute. Now people are getting under 30 seconds like it's the easiest thing in the world and people are approaching the 20 second, people even in training getting 19, 18 seconds.

Now you're like, okay I don't think you can get much faster than that. Who knows, at some point somebody is going to come up with something that allows you memorize a deck of cards in 10 seconds, which is crazy. When does it end? Obviously, you've got to look at the cards so there is a limit to that, but in terms of how much you can store and how limitless the memory is, it's
crazy to think about.

**Anthony:** I have an interview on the podcast with Phil Chambers who is chief arbiter of the World Memory Championships ...

**Nelson:** Sure, yeah.

**Anthony:** He said that they're working on an app (I guess it would be) that's going to be able to show the cards faster than the human hands can move, which it sounds like you already have some version of that if you're doing a digital read of the cards in your competitions.

**Nelson:** Yeah, I mean that's what that would be, right. It's a digital version that you could just click through. There another couple of training sites online that people use, and when we talk about personal bests, who has been able to do this a lot of them are doing faster times on the digital format because you don't have to like thumb through the deck. You're just moving an arrow, clicking an arrow to go to the right and you can go a lot faster.

**Anthony:** I think what he was talking about is that they would set a speed so you would not have any manual control over when or for how long the cards were displayed. Do you think you would be able to handle someone else controlling or an automatic process controlling the duration of the exposure?

**Nelson:** It's all a matter of training. If you tell me you're going to show me a deck of cards, one every quarter second, okay, I'm
going to train that. Maybe I can't do it immediately. Maybe I'll train with – well I can do it in about 30 seconds, so maybe that's approaching a half second per card. I would start there and cut it down.

When you put these boundaries and these limitations is when people suddenly improve. You see somebody run the 4 minute mile for the first time and then suddenly you can do it as well because it's possible or it's a barrier and now people have something to work towards. I don't think it's too hard unless you just don't practice.

That's it. I do a lot of cross training and some of these guys that end up winning, there's a guy named Rich who won four times in a row. I mean these guys just work day in and day out lifting, working out crazy. I love watching videos of him just how he trains and his mentality through it. I think that's the only way to get better is practice with anything, honestly and that's the biggest thing with memory.

People think it's a natural thing or I have some talent for it naturally. Honestly, I don't think so. I think it's training. Yeah, maybe some people need less training to get to where I am or to get even better than me. If you train and you are gung ho and so motivated to do a certain thing, you can do anything.

**Anthony:** Do you have a favorite quote?

**Nelson:** Favorite quote? Yeah, I think every year before the memory championship I always Tweet and stuff. Let me see if I can say it right. It's dumb, it's so dumb, but it's from, what
movie is that? It's one of those movies that came out in the 1990s. It's a spoof.

Anyways, this guy is going out on the football field and he's kind of down on himself. He doesn't believe in himself, whatever. He sits on the bench and Mr. T comes up to him who is this high school janitor and he says before he goes out, he like "Believe in the ball and throw yourself." Which you hear it and it's like he's just saying it backwards.

The guy looks at him kind of confused, but I always loved that because it's kind of true. I think usually you're supposed to say believe in yourself and throw the ball, or whatever it is, and that's how you succeed. I think when you want to succeed you've got to train a lot. You've got to practice properly. You've got to really make this your life if you really want to achieve it.

When it comes down to performing in a competition, it's not about believing in yourself, it's believing in the thing that you know instinctively. You just believe in the ball and you just throw yourself into it. That's what I was saying before. When I memorize and I get a really good time, it's when I thought or memorized the least. It's like I didn't even feel like I was memorizing. It was just so natural. That's what you strive for through your training. That you've done it so many times that it's just a matter of throwing yourself out there and doing what
you know.

**Anthony:** Something really interesting came up when you were searching in your mind for the quote and even the movie that it came from, and I was interviewed myself last night and there's slips of the mind that come. Well, it some book I read at some time at some point, but people seem to expect that people using mnemonics wouldn't have these same lapses.

Do you ever prepare yourself for social situations? Like I presented about language learning and memory techniques at the polyglot conference in Berlin, and I went there prepared because I knew people were going to come up to me and give me some crazy phrase and I would be put on the spot. Of course, I want to demonstrate the validity of these techniques so I was really on the ball. It was successful the whole weekend, but there's this pressure of performance. Do you ever have that or people throw you curve balls to see where you're at? They somehow like in an example where you can't quite recall the name of movie they say come on. What's your experience with that kind of stuff?

**Nelson:** Yeah, over the years I've been caught off guard and kind of made a fool of. I'm not a tape recorder. A lot of these things and you can attest to this, is you've got to turn it off. It's to me a memorizing machine. You've got to be actively doing it. Sometimes I just don't want to do it. I'm tired and don't want to focus and pay attention. I just want to veg out. When I have these talks I have to be on because I want to practice what I preach and I have little tricks that help me.
You know people catch me off guard. Most of all it's just I turn it off. I really focus on being on point. If somebody comes up where they're like hey what was your favorite movie and I'm like oh the one with the memory and I can't remember. It's just I feel like a situation like that kinds of make me seem human and normal which is what people want to see as well. It's nice to see someone who seems superhuman, but on some level if there's too much of that then you almost feel like I can't do that. I think that's actually maybe good to motivate someone. It's like okay. I can do that. It doesn't seem like he's 100 percent but it's still very impressive.

**Anthony:** Speaking about that, a lot of people they doubt themselves, they doubt that it's possible for them. What do you think is just one little thing that a person could do that would give them a quick victory so they have a taste of what's possible?

**Nelson:** I'll give you two things. The first one is pay attention. It's the most elementary thing of course but if I'm telling you that most of memory is paying attention, and you go out and say you have a meeting or a party you're going to, and you tell yourself I'm going to pay attention and remember ten people's names.

That's my goal. Make it a game or something. You will. You will just from the fact that you're telling yourself to do that. You're wired, you're turning it on to complete that particular task. You will perform 100 times better than if you just hoped to remember people's names and you didn't really think about it.

The second thing is the Memory Palace. Think of your house.
It's a quick thing. Think of your house. Start at your front door and whenever you want to memorize a list of things just picture each item along a path of your house. Then when you want to recall it, you just imagine yourself through that house and like you said, you can't forget how to get from your front door to your bedroom or whatever. You will remember what was there. It's surprisingly simple and surprisingly powerful as well.

Anthony: What's the one question you wish that someone would ask you about memory that no one ever seems to narrow in on?

Nelson: Oh, that's good. Another question that people should stop asking me and that's do you play in Vegas? I don't. I don't think it would be much of a help to have a good memory there. What's the one that I hope they would ask me is when can we start training?

Anthony: Very good. This has been a wonderful experience getting to speak with you and I know the people who listen to this podcast are going to love it and find it very inspiring. How can people who want to learn more about you, about Climb for Memory, about the Extreme Memory Challenge and your upcoming book, how can they find you online and get in touch with you and maybe there will be some people who love to ask you about hiring your help as a personal trainer.

Nelson: Yeah, the easiest way is to Climb for Memory. You can contact me through there. There's a lot of information on there about memory and my climbs and stuff like that. Then I have my YouTube channel where there are a lot of videos of my
climbs and little snippets of memory talks that I've done. There's a lot if you just Google memory. You can throw my name in there too if you want to look at something specifically for me. Otherwise, there's a lot of memory resources out there these days, there's no shortage of it.