



This Woman Got So Stressed Out She Forgot Who She Was

HALLOWEEN

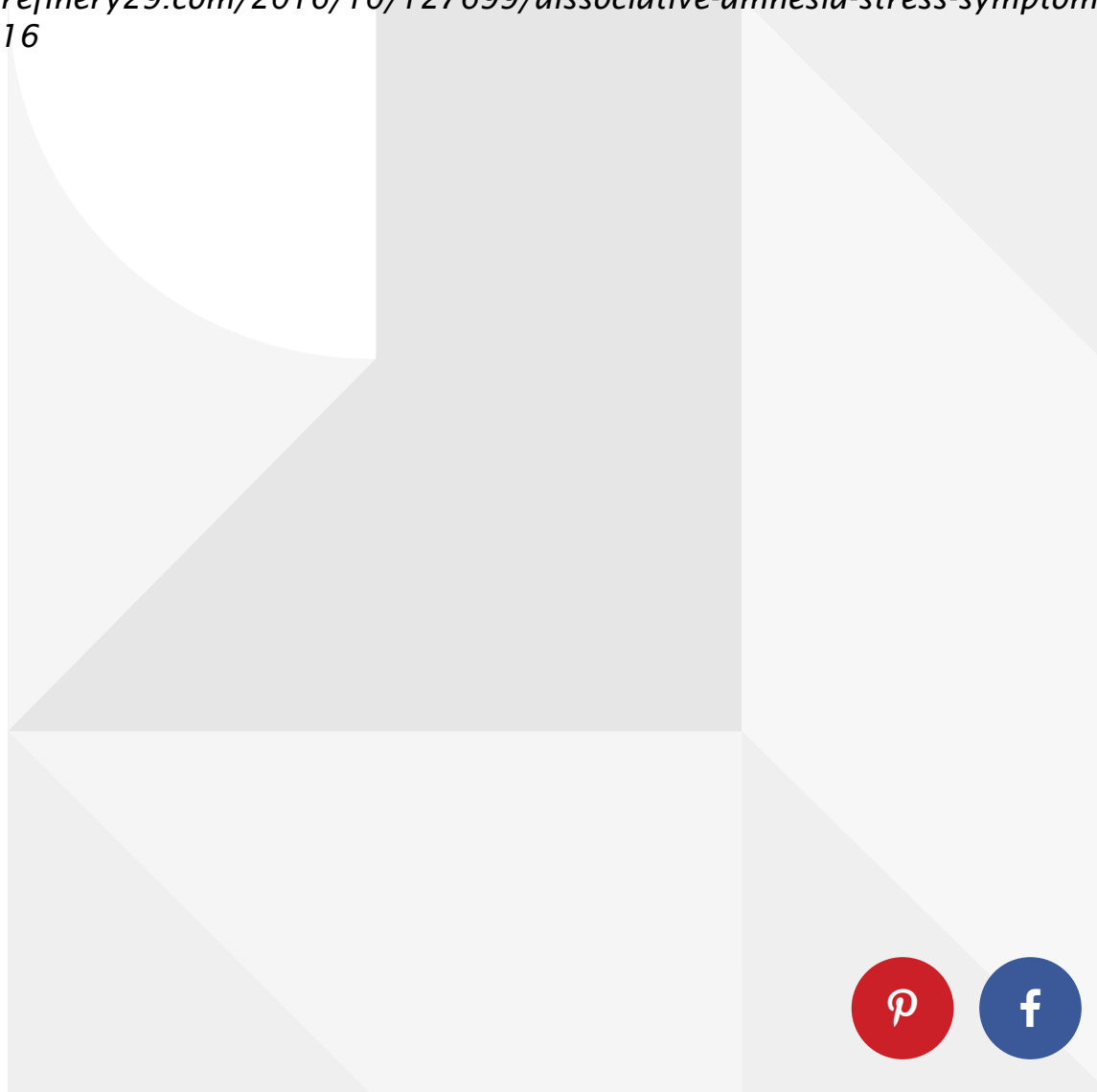
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OCTOBER 26, 2016, 8:15 PM



Retrieved from

<http://www.refinery29.com/2016/10/127699/dissociative-amnesia-stress-symptoms-memory-loss>
on Nov. 1, 2016



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We've long known stress can wreak havoc on your mind and body. It has the potential to hurt your heart, your immune system, and even your memory.

In an extreme case of stress-induced memory loss, a woman in England forgot her name, her husband's identity, and nearly everything else about her life after a nervous breakdown, [*The Daily Mail*](#) reports.

Marie Coe, 55, was working upwards of 70 hours a week in a demanding job running an events company in the U.K., traveling constantly, all while also juggling a family and taking care of her household.

One day, after she'd gone missing for 24 hours and couldn't remember anything, she asked a stranger at a gas station for help. An ambulance came, and she couldn't answer any of the paramedics' questions. After a CT scan revealed no head injuries, the doctors diagnosed her with "stress-induced amnesia," according to [*The Daily Mail*](#).

This is, apparently, a real thing: Memory loss caused by extreme stress or trauma is actually "dissociative amnesia," according to [Merck Manuals](#). It seems to run in families, according to [The Cleveland Clinic](#). It can cause someone to forget everything, as with Coe, or it can concern specific areas of the sufferer's life. Sometimes, a person with the condition will forget who they are and go on to assume an entirely new identity without realizing it (this is known as "dissociative fugue").

When Coe's husband Mark picked her up from the hospital, she had no idea who he was. She didn't even know she was married. "It was terrifying sitting in the car with a strange man who claimed he was my husband," she told [*The Daily Mail*](#).

In a scenario reminiscent of [*50 First Dates*](#), he told her about their relationship and showed her photos of their grandchildren, and they got to know each other all over again — while living together.

"Although it was frightening, it was exciting at the same time. Like a first date," she told the paper. "I looked at Mark's kind face and smiling eyes and knew I could see why the old me had fallen in love with him... We had romantic dinners together and talked and laughed until the small hours of the morning."

She turned to hypnosis and meditation to regain her memory and manage her stress. These

are common treatments for dissociative amnesia, along with individual and family therapy, art and music therapy, and sometimes medication, according to [The Cleveland Clinic](#). The hypnotist explained to her that the amnesia was her brain's way of shutting down when she didn't allow it any other way to rest.

Coe has since learned to practice better [self-care](#). She closed her business and got a less demanding job in order to reduce her stress. "I've realized you can't give from an empty cup, so I look after myself rather than running myself ragged for everyone else's sake," she said.

She still suffers from short-term memory problems, but her long-term memory is back.

The silver lining of all this is that the incident has strengthened Coe's relationship with her husband. "When Mark said he'd look after me in sickness and in health, he really meant it," she said. "When I look back to that day in [the] hospital, I think I'd always hoped that man they were telling me was my hubby, as he was handsome and had a twinkle in his eye. I know he really is the man for me because I fell in love with him twice — and that must mean he's the one."

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