

## Going off-scale: The extreme abilities of Highly Superior Autobiographical Memory

A newly discovered memory phenomenon, **Highly Superior Autobiographical Memory (HSAM)**, has caused us to re-examine our ideas about what the human mind is capable of remembering. People with this rare and fascinating ability can effortlessly span back through decades worth of information to retrieve autobiographical events with remarkable clarity, accuracy, and detail. Remarkably, their memory for non-autobiographical information and other cognitive skills appear to be completely normal. This phenomenon raises many interesting questions, such as: 1) How different is this from other forms of exceptional memory? 2) Is there a cost associated with having excellent recall of personal life events? 3) What are the cognitive and neural bases for this ability? While we are far from having a complete set of answers to these questions, I will share our current results and state of understanding of these individuals' remarkable abilities.

Craig Stark, Ph.D.  
James L. McGaugh Chair in Neurobiology of Learning and Memory  
Professor, Department of Neurobiology and Behavior  
Fellow, Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory  
Ayala School of Biological Sciences  
University of California, Irvine  
[cestark@uci.edu](mailto:cestark@uci.edu)