

Have you ever caught your brain buffering?



After surgery, I was told my husband was being transferred to the *Trauma Center*. I was expecting to hear Intensive Care or Recovery. You would think my brain would go into panic mode, but instead I caught my brain buffering.

The Brain Buffering Effect

I immediately know it's *brain buffering* because it's the same as my computer. That little circle keeps going round-and-round, and nothing is happening. There just isn't any meaningful link to connect to.

The usual mind chatter of thoughts and ideas and ideas comes to a halt. There's only this strange blankness in response to the words "trauma center."

The best I can compare it to being asked a simple question where you should know the answer but nothing comes to mind. Or, when something catches you by surprise and your brain goes blank because it has yet to determine whether it's a good or a bad thing.

However, numerous studies on how the brain responds to reward give us some insight into how this happens. Research indicates that pattern recognition is an important component of learning. As the brain gains more experience with pattern recognition, it anticipates a predictable result, and it even rewards itself with the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine (the feel good response).

In other words, the brain learns to expect a particular pattern recognition is associated with a particular result.

The Starbucks Phenomenon

Imagine as a Starbucks fan, the mere sight of their green and white logo pattern means that you can expect to find Starbucks coffee nearby.

While not to overburden your conscious awareness with each of these connections, your brain creates short-cuts. This helps you navigate through all kinds of life experiences by reducing uncertainty and instantaneously connecting you to these embedded pattern recognitions.

Brain processes Starbucks logo → expectation for coffee confirmed → brain gets a dose of dopamine before the first sip, and you have no awareness of what just happened.

Not a Match

But, what happens when the brain encounters something that doesn't match any pattern recognition?

- It's unable to connect the dots to the expected results
- There's no release of that feel good dopamine
- The brain goes blank
- Brain buffering starts

My brain was caught by surprise by hearing the words "trauma center" and immediately went into buffering mode. It was not what I expected to hear and I had no recognition pattern that matched the circumstances. Instead of just serious accidents, shootings or catastrophic medical emergencies, I later learned that surgery can also require trauma follow-up care.

If you should find your brain buffering, don't panic

Know that your brain is searching for some relevant connection and it's not finding one. Shortly, it will stop buffering as it seeks to get thoughts and ideas flowing again. But, your brain also wants to fill in the blanks. So, it will be on the look-out for a new pattern recognition to associate with this

experience.

That's your brain – always looking for an answer to everything.

If you've experienced brain buffering let us know and leave a comment below.