

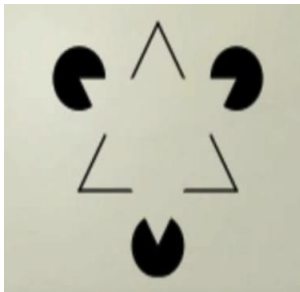
Zeigarnik Effect and Its Implications in Our Day to Day Lives

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You are completely engrossed in watching a movie and to your disappointment; you are left with abrupt end to deal with. Do you find abrupt end of a movie enjoyable? As for me, I am not fond of movies with abrupt tone in the end. What I am left with is an unfinished story to ruminate upon. My thoughts do not permit me to rest until my brain creates a dramatic version of the abrupt end, to bring closure.

Psychologist Bluma Wulfovna Zeigarnik, *founder of Zeigarnik Effect* theorized that human mind hates unfinished tasks. *The Zeigarnik Effect is a psychological phenomenon that states that people tend to remember unfinished or incomplete task better than completed tasks.* It is interesting to know how she produced a novel thought to do series of experiment after experiment. One of her visits to a restaurant prompted her to find the reason behind what she observed. While dining at a restaurant, long back in 1920s, she noticed waiters were able to keep track of complex orders and unpaid bills simultaneously till orders were filled and unpaid bills were cleared. She also noticed that waiters were unable to recall detailed information about orders once bills were cleared. This observation intrigued her to investigate further.



Phenomenon of Zeigarnik Effect in force

The Zeigarnik Effect occurs when interrupted activity may be readily recalled. *People remember unfinished or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks.* It is in force when movie ends abruptly, leaving audience in suspense or may be in shock, when TV shows ends leaving you hanging, along with unfinished story until next episode, when teacher leaves the class by posing perplexing question to ponder on till next class, when relationship ends suddenly without proper closure. Unfinished task incites psychic tension in you, which acts as a persuasive motivating force to complete the task. Brain is constantly reminded of the unfinished task until you complete the task. As soon as task is accomplished, tension is alleviated.

Implication in day-to-day life

Can we apply knowledge of Zeigarnik Effect in our everyday lives? Yes, we can, if we consider few particularly useful **implications** to your advantage.

Overcoming Procrastination

The effect is especially well suited for helping overcoming procrastination. We often put off big tasks that seem overwhelming. However, the Zeigarnik effect suggests that the key to overcoming procrastination is to just get started. The first step could be something small and insubstantial. In fact, it is best if it is something easy. The key, though, is that the task has been started, but not completed. This will take up psychological energy that will lead the task to intrude on our thoughts. It is an uncomfortable feeling that will drive us to complete the task, at which point we can let go and no longer keep the task at the forefront of our minds.

Improving Study Habits

The Zeigarnik effect can also be useful for students who are studying for exams. The effect tells us that breaking up study sessions can improve recall. So instead of cramming for an exam all in one sitting, breaks should be scheduled in which the student focuses on something else. This will cause intrusive thoughts about the information that must be remembered that will enable the student to rehearse and consolidate it, leading to better recall when they take the exam.

Impact on Mental Health

The Zeigarnik effect also points to reasons people may experience mental health problems. For example, if an individual leaves important tasks incomplete, the intrusive thoughts that result can lead to stress, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, and mental and emotional depletion.

On the other hand, the Zeigarnik effect can **improve mental health** by providing the motivation needed to finish tasks. And completing a task can give an individual a sense of accomplishment and promote self-esteem and self-confidence. Completing stressful tasks can lead to a feeling of closure that can improve psychological well-being.

References

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