



# Brain Bulletin

## What was Juan Williams Thinking?

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In the news lately, journalist Juan Williams upset some folks when he said seeing people in Muslim garb board a plane made him “nervous.” The furor over these comments obscures the basic difference between conscious bias (i.e. racism) and what cognitive psychologists call a “prototype.”

Cognitive prototypes are most obvious—and most problematic—when we have been given limited information. In a classic riddle, a boy and a doctor go fishing. If the doctor is not the little boy’s father, how can the little boy be the doctor’s son? Before you go into stepfamilies, godparents, adoption, and



immaculate conception, have you considered that not all doctors are men?

In this case, the cognitive prototype is that doctors are male. Sexist? Not exactly. Sexism would be to declare that men are better doctors, or that women don’t belong in medicine. With this riddle, the brain has to fill in either a male or a female, and it makes a choice—randomly if necessary. Your brain has to start somewhere when it has limited information, and sometimes it’s wrong.

Sometimes a racial, gender, or ethnic prototype is politically incorrect. In the case of Juan Williams, his initial prototype of terrorism might include Muslims (or vice versa), but his wariness of this response prevented it from becoming racism. A person of character will monitor their prototypes, but without them, thinking simply isn’t possible.

In short, cognitive prototyping is a natural and unavoidable part of how a brain works, and treating it like a conscious bias (i.e. racism) creates an unsupportable standard.

(join the discussion on the blog at [www.brain-trainers.net](http://www.brain-trainers.net))

## Host Spotlight

A helping hand and the comforts of home – that’s what Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc, an assisted living and Alzheimer’s care community just off of Southside Blvd., is proud to offer.

The services available at Elmcroft run the gamut, from health and medical care to assistance with eating, bathing, and dressing. Residents and loved ones can rest assured that employees are available around the clock.

But more than that, the ideology behind Elmcroft’s success is their focus on bringing quality of life into the residents’ later years.

“We’re one big home in the neighborhood,” said Lebana Prah, Elmcroft’s Community Relations Director.

When walking up the beautifully manicured drive into the foyer where one resident is blissfully playing the piano, it becomes clear; Elmcroft *is* home for its residents and staff. “Because of our size, we really have a family atmosphere,” Prah said. With only 57 apartments total, Elmcroft is smaller and, in turn, more intimate of the assisted living communities in Jacksonville.

They tailor the activities to each individual resident’s interest, wants, and needs. Whether they are interested in group aqua-aerobics or art and museums, they’re able to see and do virtually any-

thing both on and off facility grounds. If was from this interest along with the interest of many of the resident’s family members, that Elmcroft began hosting Brain Training sessions twice a month. With Alzheimer’s Disease being one of the fastest growing diagnosis in America, it was apparent to the staff at Elmcroft that public education in this area was greatly needed.

Their partnership with Matthew Barrett and his Brain Trainers organization began in August of 2010 and hopes to continue growing to reach even more in 2011.

For more information on Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc, contact Lebana Prah at 904-519-9300 or visit their website: [www.elmcroftal.com](http://www.elmcroftal.com)

## Adam Sandler Lied to Us

It gnaws at me wherever I go: life doesn’t teach you how your brain works. Take names. It’s generally more socially acceptable to forget a name and ask again than to call someone by the wrong name. Yet given what we know about the brain, this social bias is counterproductive.

Consider: when you hear a name, it goes from sensory memory into working (short-term) memory, at which point it lasts for 20-30 seconds, and then only if you have nothing else to think about. That’s right, Adam Sandler lied to us: working memory never lasts longer than a minute. But hey, that could lead to 50 first dates in less than a single day! I smell a sequel...

Anyway, to get something from working to long term memory, you have to connect with something that’s already there, and this transfer is tricky. The more connections you make, the better you’ll be able to reconstruct the name when you need it. Only a few, you might easily get it wrong. Biblical name, two syllables, starts with M? Matthew? Darn, it was

Michael! How embarrassing!

So consider the two errors: **misremembering** a name is an error of long-term memory, while **forgetting** happens mostly in working memory. Social pressure, therefore, is teaching us to err on the side of forgetting—keep the name in working memory without any connections. This protects it from being misremembered...until we forget it altogether. Social pressure is setting us up to fail.

What can we do? Well, I’ve always been an idealist, so here’s my recipe for fighting back against the sweeping tide of social injustice:

- 1) **Forgive** people who get your name wrong. Better yet, thank them for trying to remember, and explain that was a “good mistake” to make. One foot in long-term is better than both feet in working memory.
- 2) **Suggest** a clue to help people remember your name. Mnemonics of any kind help jump that gap between working and long-term memory. If you think of one

for them, you’ll help them avoid embarrassment altogether.

- 3) If you aren’t sure, **try**. Phrase it as a question so it’s not so socially awkward (i.e. “I’m sorry, was it... Amy?”) instead of just asking them to repeat it. The social cost is less than getting it wrong, and it gives you an opportunity to improve your long-term connections.
- 4) **Give yourself a break** when you mess up a name. Stress is a leading killer of memory, and beating yourself up for forgetting or misremembering will only set you up for failure next time. If you got the name wrong, make a note of having made a “good mistake.” If you forgot it entirely, find an association or clue that will help the shift to long-term memory for you. If you were using one, fine-tune it to avoid the mistake next time.

# January's Brain Healthy Recipe

## Cauliflower Soup with Red Pepper Puree

- 3 TBS Blood Orange Olive Oil (or regular olive oil)
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups low-sodium organic chicken broth
- 2 tsp. orange zest
- 1 large head organic cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 ripe pear (preferably Anjou or Taylor Gold) peeled, cored, and chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Red Pepper Puree:

- ½ cup roasted red bell peppers (can use jarred peppers)
- 1 TBS olive oil
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 TBS chopped pistachio nuts

In large heavy saucepan, heat orange olive oil over medium heat. Add onions, and cook, stirring until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and cook another minute or so. Add broth and orange zest, increase heat and bring to a boil. Add cauliflower and cook until florets are no longer crisp but not soggy, about 5 minutes.

Remove from heat, and add pear. Puree in batches in blender, return to pot, and keep warm until ready to serve. (May be refrigerated for later use and gently reheated.)

For red pepper puree: In food processor, puree red peppers with olive oil and lemon juice. Transfer to a small saucepan and gently warm (add a little water if it is too thick).

Ladle soup into bowls. Dollop red pepper puree on top of soup and garnish with chopped pistachio nuts.

(contributed by Lebana Prael)

## Puzzle Corner

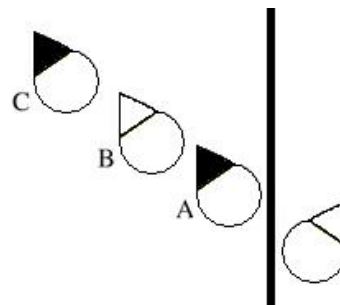
### Insight Puzzle

A cowboy rides into town on Friday, stays three days, and leaves on Friday. How is this possible?

### Logic Puzzle

A witch captured four children for her breakfast, but decided to have some sport first. She put one child behind a screen and placed the rest in a line (see picture). She put hats on their heads, and explained that there were two black hats and two white hats. Any child could see the hats in front of them, but not on their heads or behind. If any child called out the color of his or her hat, *all four would go free.*

After a minute of silence, the girl in spot B called out the color of her hat. The witch accused her of a lucky guess, but the girl had in fact been to a brain training class, and defended her logic so well, the witch was forced to let them all go. How did the girl know, seeing as she could only see one hat?



Remember that Logic and Insight are different skills, and must be exercised differently. To learn more, see our classes on Creativity and Logic

Brain Trainers  
Mental Fitness LLC



Your Brain, Only Better.

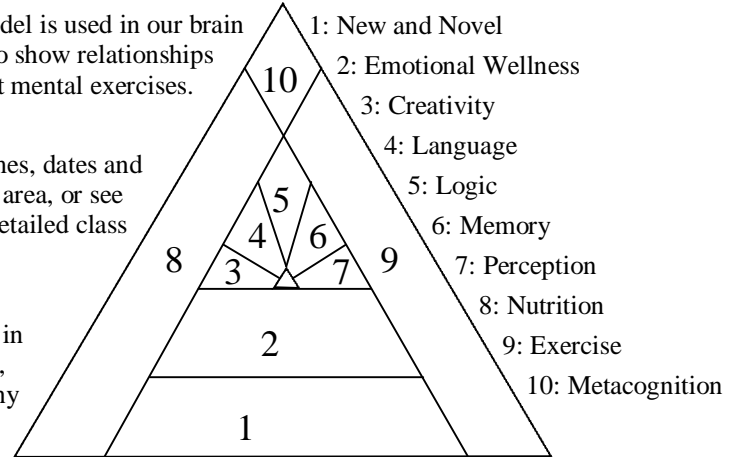
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## The Brain Fitness Pyramid

This pyramid model is used in our brain training classes to show relationships between different mental exercises.

See below for times, dates and locations in your area, or see our website for detailed class descriptions.

While classes go in order by location, you can join at any time.



# January 2011

Date	Host	Time	Topic
1/5	Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc 7620 Timberlin Park Blvd. 647-4560	11 AM	<b>Nutrition and the Brain</b> Keep your brain fueled with good nutrition! Like physical fitness, proper nutrition complements your mental exercise regimen. Find out the relationship between sugar and the brain, or coffee and Alzheimer's. The answers may surprise you!
1/6	Allegro of Fleming Island 3651 Highway 17, Orange Park 278-4442	10 AM	<b>Box Breaking</b> A return to the frontal lobes, but this time we're going against the grain! Learn about the relationship between logic and creativity in the frontal lobes, and explore the brain's amazingly intuitive creative powers.
1/19	Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc 7620 Timberlin Park Blvd. 647-4560	11 AM	<b>Thinking about Thinking</b> Do you know your preferred methods for solving problems? What does it mean when you forget something, or get frustrated or sad, or when you feel sluggish? Learn how tracking your thinking processes allows you to be your own brain trainer.
1/20	Allegro of Fleming Island 3651 Highway 17, Orange Park 278-4442	10 AM	<b>Language</b> Crosswords may be good for your brain, but they are far from the only type of language puzzle. Learn to vary the exercise you are giving your temporal lobes--the language centers of the brain.