

Brain disorder impedes navigation by preventing internal 'map'

Even though she hates lawn ornaments, Sharon Roseman, 68, has a grinning, pink lobster outside her home in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She calls him Louie, and when she comes home, the lobster's gaudy presence is the only thing that lets her know for sure that she's made it to the right house.

Locating what should be a familiar landmark isn't just hard for Roseman. Most of the time, it's impossible. Roseman has a neurological condition called Developmental Topographical Disorientation, or DTD for short. She's one in a relatively small population—there's no official tally, though some researchers estimate 1 to 2 percent of people—of people who have extremely limited navigational skills and cannot form what scientists call “cognitive maps.”

Then, in 2006, Roseman happened to see a documentary about faceblindness, or prosopagnosia. The topic piqued her interest, and she did some more investigating online at faceblind.org, a website run by a researcher who was studying the condition. Out of curiosity, she took the site's assessment on facial-recognition abilities, which included some questions about navigation. Her quiz answers alerted Brad Duchaine, a neuroscientist then at University College London (now at Dartmouth University) and one of the researchers who was running the site. He contacted Roseman directly, she said: “He sent me an email to tell me I wasn't the only person who has this.” Though her symptoms fell outside his area of expertise, he promised to keep her case in mind and, and to introduce her to someone who was studying her condition as soon as he learned of the right person.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [When the Brain Can't Make Its Own Maps](#)