

Fake memories: They can be implanted — but they can also be rooted out

[S]cientists used interviews to convince some study subjects they had undergone childhood events that didn't happen to them, such as getting lost or being in a car accident, according to [a report published \[March 29\]](#) in the scientific journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Then the researchers said they used other interview techniques that prompted the volunteers to reassess the memories and help realize they might be false or misremembered.

The work confirms previous research on the malleability of memories while pointing to potential techniques for recognizing and rooting them out.

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Some research suggests that true memories tend to be stronger for people than false ones, Nancy Dennis, a memory researcher and an associate professor of psychology at Pennsylvania State University. Yet people can also have vivid false memories or weaker true memories, making them difficult to tease apart on an individual basis.

"The hard part is when you want to take someone on that witness stand or therapists' office and want to figure out if that particular memory is true or false," said Dr. Dennis, who wasn't involved in the study.

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