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FROM THE BOOK “**USEFUL NOT TRUE**”:

YOUR EXPLANATIONS ARE NOT TRUE

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We all confabulate without realizing it.

To confabulate is to create an explanation that you believe to be true. “Con” means together, and “fabula” means story or fable, so: to put together a story. Confabulate. To fabricate. When you don’t know why you did something, your subconscious invents **an explanation that you think is a fact.**

The clearest example comes from people who have a disconnect between the left and right hemispheres of their brain.

A researcher shows a patient a message in his right eye, saying, “Please close the window.” The patient gets up and closes the window. Then the researcher shows a question to that patient’s left eye, “Why did you close the window?” The patient says he chose to do it because he was cold.

A researcher says, to only one ear, “Please walk.” The patient starts walking. Then they ask the other ear, “Why did you walk?” The patient says she was walking because she felt like getting a drink.

The patients don’t think they are inventing explanations. **They completely believe that those are the real reasons.**

That's confabulating. Similar to rationalizing: to justify and explain with a rational-sounding reason. We all do it all the time. **We think our reasons are true.**

Considering this, what should we do?

Stop asking people for explanations, and ignore the ones given. Since our reasons are unknowable, focus on actions.

Doubt your own reasons, no matter how true they seem. Get curious about what your other hidden explanations may be.

What else?

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