

## Déjà vu: are you experiencing it?

Somya Singh

Student of BALLB, Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

### ABSTRACT

Déjà vu is mostly misunderstood because of preconceived notions. There are three major diagnostic errors of the déjà vu: 1. Coincidence, 2. a glitch in brain functions and 3. Past life experience. A related phenomenon to déjà vu is premonition. It is in fact the reverse of déjà vu since we sense that something will happen which then is confirmed. Studying déjà vu provides us a window into understanding phenomenology, and how careful we must be in interpreting similar phenomena as from the same origin or cause. The detailed study of déjà vu is the study of ensuring we cluster 'like with like' and do not confound this area with "like analyzed with unlike" phenomena. Truly remarkable is that strange experience that comes over us suddenly and inexplicably: a feeling that what we are saying or doing or experiencing has been said or done or gone through before in a remote or indeterminate time. Somehow, we sense that the overall gestalt of faces, objects, and everything that surrounds us in the present has surrounded us before, in exactly the same way, as if it were not new. Or we seem to know perfectly what will be said next, or what will happen next, as if the present moment were a living memory, unfolding before our eyes. And most of us know that this is called 'Déjà vu'

**KEYWORDS:** *Déjà vu, preconceived, premonition, phenomenology, inexplicably, indeterminate*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*Déjà vu* is a French loanword expressing when you have done something and you experience the same feelings or the feeling that one has lived through the present situation before.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Although some interpret déjà vu in a paranormal context,<sup>4</sup> mainstream scientific approaches reject the explanation of déjà vu as "precognition" or "prophecy".<sup>[5][6]</sup> It is an anomaly of memory whereby, despite the strong sense of recollection, the time, place, and practical context of the "previous" experience are uncertain or believed to

<sup>2</sup> Brown, A. S. (2003). "A Review of the Déjà Vu Experience". *Psychological Bulletin*. 129 (3): 394–413. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.394. PMID 12784936.

<sup>3</sup> O'Connor, A. R.; Moulin, C. J. A. (2010). "Recognition without identification, erroneous familiarity, and déjà vu". *Current Psychiatry Reports*. 12 (3): 165–173. doi:10.1007/s11920-010-0119-5. hdl:10023/1639. PMID 20425276. S2CID 2860019.

<sup>4</sup> "Déjà vu? - Witchipedia". www.witchipedia.com. Archived from the original on 2019-11-08. Retrieved October 16, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Schnider, Armin. (2008). *The Confabulating Mind: How the Brain Creates Reality*. Oxford University Press. pp. 167–168. ISBN 978-0-19-920675-9

<sup>6</sup> Blom, Jan Dirk. (2010). *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. Springer. pp. 132-134. ISBN 978-1-4419-1222-0

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be impossible.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Two types of déjà vu are recognized: the pathological déjà vu usually associated with epilepsy or that which,<sup>9</sup> when unusually prolonged or frequent, or associated with other symptoms such as hallucinations, may be an indicator of neurological or psychiatric illness,<sup>10</sup> and the non-pathological type characteristic of healthy people, about two-thirds of whom have had déjà vu experiences.<sup>11,12</sup> People who travel often or frequently

<sup>7</sup> "The Meaning of Déjà Vu", Eli Marcovitz, M.D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. 21, pages: 481–489

<sup>8</sup> The déjà vu experience, Alan S. Brown, Psychology Press, (2008), ISBN 0-203-48544-0, Introduction, page 1

<sup>9</sup> Déjà vu and feelings of prediction: They're just feelings 01 Mar 2018, by Anne Manning

<sup>10</sup> Wild, E (Jan 2005). "Déjà vu in neurology". *Journal of Neurology*. 252 (1): 1–7. doi:10.1007/s00415-005-0677-3. PMID 15654548. S2CID 12098220.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, A. S. (2004). "The déjà vu illusion". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 13 (6): 256–259. doi:10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00320.x. S2CID 23576173.

<sup>12</sup> Warren-Gash, Charlotte; Zeman, Adam (2003). "Déjà vu". *Practical Neurology*. 3 (2): 106–109. doi:10.1046/j.1474-7766.2003.11136.x

watch films are more likely to experience déjà vu than others. Furthermore, people also tend to experience déjà vu more in fragile conditions or under high pressure, and research shows that the experience of déjà vu also decreases with age. To the general public, déjà vu is a subjective experience of the 'as if' phenomenon. It is "as if" something happened, but should not have. In its usual form, it involves the subjective impression that the present experience has happened before, even though it has not. The resulting familiarity is 'inappropriate': This often results in the perception that this should not have happened as it did-in "normal" individuals this may result in an impression of bafflement and perplexity, but in seizures, for example, the impression may be the sense of differentness; in those who claim psychic experiences, it may be more an awareness of wonderment; and in schizophrenia, it may be the 'awareness' that something has been revealed. The key is the *inappropriateness of the familiarity*.

Particularly relevant is the role of the brain and special interpretations of the environment in déjà vu.<sup>13</sup> This has led to the major current perspectives relating to the quartet of epilepsy, schizophrenia, psychosis, and subjective psi experience.<sup>14</sup> These reflect different experiences but are all encompassed within a single definition. There is a formal, universally recognized scientific definition of déjà vu, ostensibly quoted in every major article on the subject.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

## 2. Etymology

The expression "sensation de déjà-vu" (sensation of déjà vu) was coined in 1876 by the French philosopher Émile Boirac (1851-1917), who used it in his book *L'Avenir des sciences psychiques*,<sup>17</sup> it is now used internationally.

<sup>13</sup> Cleary, Anne M. (2008-10-01). "Recognition Memory, Familiarity, and Déjà vu Experiences". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 17 (5): 353–357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00605.x. ISSN 0963-7214. S2CID 55691148.

<sup>14</sup> Ross, Brian H. (2010). *The psychology of learning and motivation*. Vol. 53. London: Academic. pp. 33–62. ISBN 9780123809063. OCLC 668193814.

<sup>15</sup> Illman NA, Butler CR, Souchay C, Moulin CJ (2012). "Déjà experiences in temporal lobe epilepsy". *Epilepsy Research and Treatment*. 2012: 539567. doi:10.1155/2012/539567. ISSN 2090-1356. PMC 3420423. PMID 22957231.

<sup>16</sup> Vlasov PN, Chervyakov AV, Gnezditskii VV (2013). "Déjà vu phenomenon-related EEG pattern. Case report". *Epilepsy & Behavior Case Reports*. 1: 136–141. doi:10.1016/j.ebcr.2013.08.001. ISSN 2213-3232. PMC 4150674. PMID 25667847.

<sup>17</sup> Stanton, Dawn. "Probing Question: What causes déjà vu?". Penn State University. Retrieved 2 February 2010.

## 3. Medical disorders

Déjà vu is associated with temporal lobe epilepsy.<sup>18</sup> This experience is a neurological anomaly related to epileptic electrical discharge in the brain, creating a strong sensation that an event or experience currently being experienced has already been experienced in the past.

Migraines with aura are also associated with déjà vu.<sup>19</sup> Early researchers tried to establish a link between déjà vu and mental disorders such as anxiety, dissociative identity disorder and schizophrenia but failed to find correlations of any diagnostic value. No special association has been found between déjà vu and schizophrenia.<sup>20</sup> A 2008 study found that déjà vu experiences are unlikely to be pathological dissociative experiences.

Some research has looked into genetics when considering déjà vu. Although there is not currently a gene associated with déjà vu, the LGII gene on chromosome 10 is being studied for a possible link. Certain forms of the gene are associated with a mild form of epilepsy, and, though by no means a certainty, déjà vu, along with *jamaïs vu*, occurs often enough during seizures (such as simple partial seizures) that researchers have reason to suspect a link.<sup>21</sup>

## 4. Explanations

### Split perception explanation

Déjà vu may happen if a person experienced the current sensory experience twice successively. The first input experience is brief, degraded, occluded, or distracted. Immediately following that, the second perception might be familiar because the person naturally related it to the first input. One possibility behind this mechanism is that the first input experience involves shallow processing, which means that only some superficial physical attributes are extracted from the stimulus.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Kovacs, N.; Auer, T.; Balas, I.; Karadi, K.; Zambo, K.; Schwarcz, A.; et al. (2009). "Neuroimaging and cognitive changes during déjà vu". *Epilepsy & Behavior*. 14 (1): 190–196. doi:10.1016/j.yebeh.2008.08.017. PMID 18804184. S2CID 10881028.

<sup>19</sup> "Aura (symptom)", Wikipedia, 2020-05-25, retrieved 2020-05-26

<sup>20</sup> Brown, Alan S. (2004). *The Déjà Vu Experience*. Psychology Press. ISBN 978-1-84169-075-9.

<sup>21</sup> Brynie, Faith (2009). *Brain Sense: The Science of the Senses and How We Process the World Around Us*. Amacom. p. 195.

<sup>22</sup> Ross, Brian H. (2010). *The psychology of learning and motivation*. Vol. 53. London: Academic. ISBN 9780123809063. OCLC 668193814.

## Memory-based explanation

### Implicit memory

Research has associated déjà vu experiences with good memory functions.<sup>23</sup> Recognition memory enables people to realize the event or activity that they are experiencing has happened before. When people experience déjà vu, they may have their recognition memory triggered by certain situations which they have never encountered.

The similarity between a déjà-vu-eliciting stimulus and an existing, or non-existing but different, memory trace may lead to the sensation that an event or experience currently being experienced has already been experienced in the past.<sup>24</sup> Thus, encountering something that evokes the implicit associations of an experience or sensation that cannot be remembered may lead to déjà vu. In an effort to reproduce the sensation experimentally, Banister and Zangwill (1941)<sup>[25][26]</sup> used hypnosis to give participants posthypnotic amnesia for material they had already seen. When this was later re-encountered, the restricted activation caused thereafter by the posthypnotic amnesia resulted in three of the 10 participants reporting what the authors termed "paramnesias".

Two approaches are used by researchers to study feelings of previous experience, with the process of recollection and familiarity. Recollection-based recognition refers to an ostensible realization that the current situation has occurred before. Familiarity-based recognition refers to the feeling of familiarity with the current situation without being able to identify any specific memory or previous event that could be associated with the sensation.<sup>27</sup>

In 2010, O'Connor, Moulin, and Conway developed another laboratory analog of déjà vu based on two

contrast groups of carefully selected participants, a group under posthypnotic amnesia condition (PHA) and a group under posthypnotic familiarity condition (PHF). The idea of PHA group was based on the work done by Banister and Zangwill (1941), and the PHF group was built on the research results of O'Connor, Moulin, and Conway (2007).<sup>28</sup> They applied the same puzzle game for both groups, "Railroad Rush Hour", a game in which one aims to slide a red car through the exit by rearranging and shifting other blocking trucks and cars on the road. After completing the puzzle, each participant in the PHA group received a posthypnotic amnesia suggestion to forget the game in the hypnosis. Then, each participant in the PHF group was not given the puzzle but received a posthypnotic familiarity suggestion that they would feel familiar with this game during the hypnosis. After the hypnosis, all participants were asked to play the puzzle (the second time for PHA group) and reported the feelings of playing.

In the PHA condition, if a participant reported no memory of completing the puzzle game during hypnosis, researchers scored the participant as passing the suggestion. In the PHF condition, if participants reported that the puzzle game felt familiar, researchers scored the participant as passing the suggestion. It turned out that, both in the PHA and PHF conditions, five participants passed the suggestion and one did not, which is 83.33% of the total sample.<sup>29</sup> More participants in PHF group felt a strong sense of familiarity, for instance, comments like "I think I have done this several years ago." Furthermore, more participants in PHF group experienced a strong *déjà vu*, for example, "I think I have done the exact puzzle before." Three out of six participants in the PHA group felt a sense of déjà vu, and none of them experienced a strong sense of it. These figures are consistent with Banister and Zangwill's findings. Some participants in PHA group related the familiarity when completing the puzzle with an exact event that happened before, which is more likely to be a phenomenon of source amnesia. Other participants started to realize that they may

<sup>23</sup> Adachi, N.; Adachi, T.; Kimura, M.; Akanuma, N.; Takekawa, Y.; Kato, M. (2003). "Demographic and psychological features of déjà vu experiences in a nonclinical Japanese population". *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*. 191 (4): 242–247. doi:10.1097/01.nmd.0000061149.26296.dc. PMID 12695735. S2CID 23249270.

<sup>24</sup> Cleary AM (2008). "Recognition memory, familiarity and déjà vu experiences". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 17 (5): 353–357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00605.x. S2CID 55691148.

<sup>25</sup> Banister H, Zangwill, O (1941). "Experimentally induced olfactory paramnesia". *British Journal of Psychology*. 32 (2): 155–175. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8295.1941.tb01018.x.

<sup>26</sup> Banister H, Zangwill, O (1941). "Experimentally induced visual paramnesias". *British Journal of Psychology*. 32: 30–51. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8295.1941.tb01008.x.

<sup>27</sup> Cleary, Anne M. (2008). "Recognition Memory, Familiarity, and Déjà vu Experiences". *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 17 (5): 353–357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00605.x. ISSN 0963-7214. S2CID 55691148.

<sup>28</sup> O'Connor, Akira R.; Moulin, Chris J. A. (2013). "Déjà vu experiences in healthy subjects are unrelated to laboratory tests of recollection and familiarity for word stimuli". *Frontiers in Psychology*. 4: 881. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00881. ISSN 1664-1078. PMC 3842028. PMID 24409159.

<sup>29</sup> O'Connor, Akira R.; Barnier, Amanda J.; Cox, Rochelle E. (2008-09-02). "Déjà Vu in the Laboratory: A Behavioral and Experiential Comparison of Posthypnotic Amnesia and Posthypnotic Familiarity". *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*. 56 (4): 425–450. doi:10.1080/00207140802255450. hdl:10023/1647. ISSN 0020-7144. PMID 18726806. S2CID 1177171.



have completed the puzzle game during hypnosis, which is more akin to the phenomenon of breaching. In contrast, participants in the PHF group reported that they felt confused about the strong familiarity of this puzzle, with the feeling of playing it just sliding across their minds. Overall, the experiences of participants in the PHF group is more likely to be the *déjà vu* in life, while the experiences of participants in the PHA group is unlikely to be real *déjà vu*.

A 2012 study in the journal *Consciousness and Cognition*, that used virtual reality technology to study reported *déjà vu* experiences, supported this idea. This virtual reality investigation suggested that similarity between a new scene's spatial layout and the layout of a previously experienced scene in memory (but which fails to be recalled) may contribute to the *déjà vu* experience.<sup>[38]</sup> When the previously experienced scene fails to come to mind in response to viewing the new scene, that previously experienced scene in memory can still exert an effect—that effect may be a feeling of familiarity with the new scene that is subjectively experienced as a feeling that an event or experience currently being experienced has already been experienced in the past, or of having been there before despite knowing otherwise.

### Cryptomnesia

Another possible explanation for the phenomenon of *déjà vu* is the occurrence of "cryptomnesia", which is where information learned is forgotten but nevertheless stored in the brain, and similar occurrences invoke the contained knowledge, leading to a feeling of familiarity because the event or experience being experienced has already been experienced in the past, known as "*déjà vu*".<sup>30</sup> Some experts suggest that memory is a process of reconstruction, rather than a recollection of fixed, established events. This reconstruction comes from stored components, involving elaborations, distortions, and omissions. Each successive recall of an event is merely a recall of the last reconstruction. The proposed sense of recognition (*déjà vu*) involves achieving a good match between the present experience and the stored data. This reconstruction, however, may now differ so much from the original event it is as though it had never been experienced before, even though it seems similar.<sup>[39]</sup>

### Dual neurological processing

In 1964, Robert Efron of Boston's Veterans Hospital proposed that *déjà vu* is caused by dual neurological

<sup>30</sup> Youngson, R. "Deja Vu". The Royal Society of Medicine Health Encyclopedia. Dr R.M. Youngson. Retrieved 1 October 2012.

processing caused by delayed signals. Efron found that the brain's sorting of incoming signals is done in the temporal lobe of the brain's left hemisphere. However, signals enter the temporal lobe twice before processing, once from each hemisphere of the brain, normally with a slight delay of milliseconds between them. Efron proposed that if the two signals were occasionally not synchronized properly, then they would be processed as two separate experiences, with the second seeming to be a re-living of the first.<sup>[31][32]</sup>

### Dream-based explanation

Dreams can also be used to explain the experience of *déjà vu*, and they are related in three different aspects. Firstly, some *déjà vu* experiences duplicate the situation in dreams instead of waking conditions, according to the survey done by Brown (2004). Twenty percent of the respondents reported their *déjà vu* experiences were from dreams and 40% of the respondents reported from both reality and dreams. Secondly, people may experience *déjà vu* because some elements in their remembered dreams were shown. Research done by Zuger (1966) supported this idea by investigating the relationship between remembered dreams and *déjà vu* experiences, and suggested that there is a strong correlation. Thirdly, people may experience *déjà vu* during a dream state, which links *déjà vu* with dream frequency.

### Related terms

#### Jamais vu

*Jamais vu* (from French, meaning "never seen") is any familiar situation which is not recognized by the observer.<sup>33</sup>

Often described as the opposite of *déjà vu*, *jamais vu* involves a sense of eeriness and the observer's impression of seeing the situation for the first time despite rationally knowing that they have been in the situation before. *Jamais vu* is more commonly explained as when a person momentarily does not recognize a word, person or place that they already know. *Jamais vu* is sometimes associated with certain types of aphasia, amnesia, and epilepsy.

Theoretically, a *jamais vu* feeling in a sufferer of a delirious disorder or intoxication could result in a delirious explanation of it, such as in the Capgras delusion, in which the patient takes a known person for a false double or impostor.<sup>[42]</sup> If the impostor is himself, the clinical setting would be the same as the

<sup>31</sup> Efron R (September 1963). "Temporal perception, aphasia and *déjà vu*". *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*. 86 (3): 403–424. doi:10.1093/brain/86.3.403. ISSN 0006-8950. PMID 14063892.

<sup>32</sup> "How *Déjà Vu* Works". 11 April 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Ahuja, Anjana (2006-07-24). "*Doctor, I've got this little lump on my arm . . . Relax, that tells me everything*". Times Online. London. Retrieved 2010-05-01.

one described as depersonalization, hence *jamais vu* of oneself or of the "reality of reality", are termed depersonalization (or surreality) feelings.

The feeling has been evoked through semantic satiation. Chris Moulin of the University of Leeds asked 95 volunteers to write the word "door" 30 times in 60 seconds. Sixty-eight percent of the subjects reported symptoms of *jamais vu*, with some beginning to doubt that "door" was a real word.

The experience has also been named "*vuja de*" and "*vèjà du*".<sup>34</sup>

### Déjà vécu

Déjà vécu (from French, meaning "already lived") is an intense, but false, feeling of having already lived through the present situation. Recently, it has been considered a pathological form of déjà vu. However, unlike déjà vu, déjà vécu has behavioral consequences. Because of the intense feeling of familiarity, patients experiencing déjà vécu may withdraw from their current events or activities. Patients may justify their feelings of familiarity with beliefs bordering on delusion.<sup>35</sup>

### Presque vu

Presque vu (French pronunciation: [pʁɛsk vy], from French, meaning "almost seen") is the intense feeling of being on the very brink of a powerful epiphany, insight, or revelation, without actually achieving the revelation. The feeling is often therefore associated with a frustrating, tantalizing sense of incompleteness or near-completeness.<sup>36</sup>

### Déjà rêvé

Déjà rêvé (from French, meaning "already dreamed") is the feeling of having already dreamed something that is currently being experienced.<sup>37</sup>

### Déjà entendu

Déjà entendu (literally "already heard") is the experience of feeling sure about having already heard

something, even though the exact details are uncertain or were perhaps imagined.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

### 5. Is Déjà Vu Good or Bad?

People experience déjà vu differently. Some are terrified of the experience while others feel a mild euphoria. Since it only occurs for about 30 seconds, it doesn't really have a tremendous effect on anyone's consciousness. Unless it cause anxiety.<sup>40</sup>

Some people associate the phenomenon with clairvoyance or a premonition. This often causes problems, because they will tend to use the phenomenon as a factor in their decision making. However, there has been no proof whatsoever that déjà vu is a precursor of things to come. It really does depend on how you interpret the experience.

Many Eastern religions believe that déjà vu is simply a case of memories of your past lives that surface.

### 6. When déjà vu signals a problem

Déjà vu may suggest a neurological problem when it:

1. occurs frequently (a few times a month or more often versus a few times a year)
2. Is accompanied by abnormal dream-like memories or visual scenes
3. Is followed by loss of consciousness and/or symptoms such as unconscious chewing, fumbling, racing of the heart, or a feeling of fear

If there is any doubt about the cause of déjà vu, it is important to consult a neurologist.

Apart from epilepsy, déjà vu has been observed in vascular dementia and more rarely in other dementias. Patients with front temporal dementia experience<sup>41</sup> persistent déjà vu and fabricate stories about their current life to rationalize the illusion.

### 7. Déjà Vu Meaning: Spiritual Interpretations A Reminder from Your Past Self

Regardless, many speculate that déjà vu is actually proof that previous existences do exist. When something happens to you in a very uncanny yet familiar way, it could mean that you are witnessing an event that also took place in your former life.

It is just a memory of your previous reincarnations that was able to pierce through this dimension. Until now, there's no telling why events like this take place. Perhaps there are specific seams that leak the memories of your past life to the one that we have

<sup>34</sup> "The power of "Vuja De"". 2013-07-03. Retrieved 2016-04-11. something else that you've done a hundred times before—and you suddenly feel as if you're experiencing something completely new. This is vuja de,

<sup>35</sup> O'Connor, Akira R.; Barnier, Amanda J.; Cox, Rochelle E. (2008-09-02). "Déjà Vu in the Laboratory: A Behavioral and Experiential Comparison of Posthypnotic Amnesia and Posthypnotic Familiarity". *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*. 56 (4): 427. doi:10.1080/00207140802255450. hdl:10023/1647. ISSN 0020-7144. PMID 18726806. S2CID 1177171.

<sup>36</sup> Blom, Jan Dirk (2009). *A Dictionary of Hallucinations*. Springer Science & Business Media. p. 422.

<sup>37</sup> M., Schredl; A., Goritz; A., Funkhouser (2017). "Frequency of Déjà Reve: Effects of Age, Gender, Dream Recall, and Personality". *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. 24 (7–8): 155–162.

<sup>38</sup> Grinnel, Renée (2008). "Déjà Entendu". PsychCentral. Retrieved 2011-04-10.

<sup>39</sup> "nevdp.org.au" (PDF). [www.nevdp.org.au](http://www.nevdp.org.au).

<sup>40</sup> Déjà Vu: What It Is, When It May Be Cause for Concern – Cleveland Clinic

<sup>41</sup> If You Have Ever Had Déjà Vu, This Is What It Means (powerofpositivity.com)

now. You can say that it is a glitch. But certainly, there's nothing wrong if you are going to pay attention to it.<sup>42</sup>

There's a possibility that déjà vu is a spiritual experience. In your past life, your former self might have mistakes or regrets that it doesn't want you to experience. It is a way of reminding you that there's a need for you to take action. After all, you have to realize that some small decisions out there could affect your life significantly.

Sure, you can say that the déjà vu was seemingly trivial. However, you should never downplay its importance, especially if the "weight" of the event is shaking your core. Once you experience déjà vu, it is essential that you contemplate and meditate. You have to see if there are some hints and reminders that you need to unravel.<sup>43</sup>

### A Message from Your Higher Self

One of the most suitable meanings of déjà vu still actually involves yourself. However, this time, it is your high subconscious counterpart. I am pretty sure that this is quite mind-boggling. Let me explain at least the surface of this.

All of us humans have a higher form of our self. This existence is the one that has the closest placement of spirituality and enlightenment. It is within us, but it is not that easy to tap or unlock it. Those who have spent time meditating are the ones that can actually communicate with their higher subconscious.

Now, our higher self and déjà vu can be related things. When a sense of familiarity strikes to you, there's a chance that your higher self is telling you that you are in the right moment. You can't experience something twice if it does not form any semblance with appropriateness. When déjà vu happens, it is a sign that you exist in a plane where everything falls right into their places.

The best thing that you can do here is to take advantage of the situation. If there are opportunities that present themselves to you, grab them. This is the exact moment that might change your life for the better!<sup>44</sup>

### Tuning Fork Phenomenon

The tuning fork phenomenon is usually connected to the occurrences of **déjà vu**. Specifically, this event happens when the spiritual frequencies of a person

suddenly match the spiritual frequencies of others. When this happens, an immediate connection can be made, and a level of profound understanding can be established quickly.

However, such a phenomenon doesn't last long. It is for this reason why tuning fork does not cause two individuals to become soul mates. But if these individuals will work things out, they might be to reconnect their strings again.<sup>45</sup>

### 8. WHO EXPERIENCES DÉJÀ VU THE MOST AND WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

Young people experience déjà vu the most. A very small number of people say they had their first déjà vu experience by the age of 6. More people report their first déjà vu experiences as having happened sometime before they were 10 years old.

By the time you reach an age between 15 and 25, you will probably be having déjà vu experiences more often than you will ever have them after that. The number of déjà vu experiences people report steadily decreases after 25 years old. This is puzzling for researchers because we are used to thinking of memory problems *increasing* with age, not *decreasing* with age! This may actually tell us something really important about déjà vu – that déjà vu is not a memory problem at all. If you think about the stage of déjà vu where you realize that you're feeling of recognition should not be as strong as it is, you will probably recognize this is actually a really helpful response. It lets you know that while you may feel really strongly that something is familiar, this feeling is wrong and you should try to ignore it.<sup>46</sup>

Déjà vu may actually be one sign of a healthy mind that is able to spot familiarity signals that are incorrect. Perhaps what is happening in people over the age of 25 is that they get worse at spotting incorrect familiarity signals and they actually start believing them. This is not the only explanation for the change in the number of déjà vu experiences we report as we get older than 25 years though. Can you think of any others?

### 9. HOW DO SCIENTISTS INVESTIGATE DÉJÀ VU?

Research on déjà vu falls into two main categories: observational studies and experimental studies. In observational studies, researchers measure features of the déjà vu experience (who has it, how often it happens, when it happens, etc.) and look for patterns and links in the results. Observational studies told us that young people have more déjà vu experiences than

<sup>42</sup> If You Have Ever Had Déjà Vu, This Is What It Means ([powerofpositivity.com](http://powerofpositivity.com))

<sup>43</sup> What Does Déjà Vu mean Spiritually & Why Do You Experience Déjà Vu. ([onlinepsychic.eu](http://onlinepsychic.eu))

<sup>44</sup> What Does Déjà Vu mean Spiritually & Why Do You Experience Déjà Vu. ([onlinepsychic.eu](http://onlinepsychic.eu))

<sup>45</sup> <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2015.00001>

<sup>46</sup> Brown, A. S. 2004. *The Déjà Vu Experience*. New York: Psychology Press.



older people. In experimental studies, researchers try to trigger déjà vu experiences in people (one of the weirdest ways that this has been done is by squirting warm water into peoples' ears!). The idea behind many experimental studies is that if we can find out what causes déjà vu, we might be able to understand more about the thought processes that give rise to it. Experimental studies of déjà vu sound cool, but they are actually really hard to do. We know from lots of experiments that have been done in the past 10 years that it is actually quite easy to get people to say they have had déjà vu in an experiment.<sup>47</sup> We often cannot be sure though, whether people really did have déjà vu or whether they are just saying so. The problem is that people who are doing experiments usually want to give the experimenter the "right" answer.

As an example, if your teacher asked the whole class whether they had ever had déjà vu, and you thought that everyone would put their hands up to say they had, you might do this too, even if you were not sure. There is not anything wrong with this – it is a very normal way to answer questions. The issue is that it does make it hard for researchers to know whether people who say they have had déjà vu have actually had déjà vu, or whether they are just trying to make the researcher happy.<sup>48</sup>

## 10. CASE STUDY

- A. A 23-year-old White British man presented with a form of persistent déjà vu in 2010, approximately 3 years since symptom onset. He reported a history of anxiety and experiencing feelings of depersonalization. Neurological assessment (electroencephalogram and magnetic resonance imaging) did not indicate any abnormalities. We assessed his recognition memory with a task used in patients with dementia who report similar experiences but lack awareness of their falseness.<sup>49</sup>
- B. The group of scientists from the UK, France and Canada who studied the strange case of the man with "chronic déjà vu" thinks one possible cause of the phenomenon could be anxiety.

The man's condition was so persistent he avoided watching television, listening to the radio and reading newspapers because he felt he had "encountered it all

before". For minutes, and sometimes even longer, the patient would feel that he was reliving experiences. There was one instance where he went to get a haircut. As he walked in, he got a feeling of déjà vu. Then he had déjà vu of the déjà vu. He couldn't think of anything else. For eight years, the man felt "trapped in a time loop". The more distressed he became by the experience, the worse it seemed to get.<sup>50</sup>

## 11. The Subjective Perception

People, who experience the "sensation" or more correctly the "inappropriate familiarity impression", for instance, while traveling to an unfamiliar country during a vacation, usually react to the sensation by saying, "It was 'as if' I had been there before." Consequently, déjà vu is not something in which you believe or disbelieve, in the sense of how you believe in a supreme being, or in good and evil. It is primarily a personal experience, and just as non-objectifiable as subjectively perceiving a voice inside one's head, or of having spontaneous but improvable intuitive impressions during everyday life. It can be poetically described as the "present turning into the past." But no matter how we conceive of the experience, we cannot really prove it is occurring, since only the person experiencing the sensation knows it is happening. Déjà vu exists solely within the perceiver's inner reality.<sup>51</sup>

Neppe's term 'déjà experience' is more correct as it pertains to any of the déjà circumstances, not just the seen-the 'vu'.<sup>52</sup> Hearing something for the first time-*déjà entendu*, or the rationalizing of the inappropriate familiarity, for example, by "I must have dreamt this before"- *déjà rêvé*, makes 'déjà experience' more correct than 'déjà vu' when the déjà experience may not be 'seen' at all. Importantly,<sup>53</sup> any of these terms may be applied to any subtype of *déjà experience*, for example, theoretically any of these kinds of experiences can occur in 'normal's' or 'temporal lobe epileptics' or 'psychotics' or 'subjective paranormal experiments', though some of these terms may be more common in certain subtypes-for example, 'already lived through something' implies it could be more intense than a vague just 'already heard' it

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30927102>

<sup>51</sup> Neppe VM (2006) When is déjà vu déjà vu?, in *Déjà Vu: A Second Look*. In: Neppe VM & Funkhouser AT (Eds.), *Brainvoyage.com*, Seattle, Washington, USA, 1: 2-20.

<sup>52</sup> Neppe VM (1983) *The Psychology of Déjà Vu: Have I been Here Before?*. Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>53</sup> Jackson JH (1888) A particular variety of epilepsy "intellectual aura", one case with symptoms of organic brain disease. *Brain* 11: 179-207.

<sup>47</sup> O'Connor, A. R., Barnier, A. J., and Cox, R. E. 2008. Déjà vu in the laboratory: a behavioral and experiential comparison of posthypnotic amnesia and posthypnotic familiarity. *Int. J. Clin. Exp. Hypn.* 56:425–50. doi: 10.1080/00207140802255450

<sup>48</sup> Bancaud, J., Brunet-Bourgin, F., Chauvel, P., and Halgren, E. 1994. Anatomical origin of déjà vu and vivid 'memories' in human temporal lobe epilepsy. *Brain* 117:71–90. doi: 10.1093/brain/117.1.71

<sup>49</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25482434/>

before, and this may affect its distribution in different subtypes.<sup>54</sup>

## 12. CONCLUSION

Déjà vu is typically a transient mental state in which a novel experience feels highly familiar. Although extensively studied in relation to temporal lobe epilepsy as part of simple partial seizures, déjà vu has been less studied in other clinical populations. A recent review of temporal lobe epilepsy suggested a possible link between clinical levels of anxiety and debilitating déjà vu, indicating further research is required.<sup>55</sup>

Here, for the first time in the literature, we present a case study of a young man with anxiety and depersonalisation who reported experiencing persistent and debilitating déjà vu. This report therefore adds to the limited literature on the relationship between anxiety and déjà vu. Déjà vu is an interesting and unusual experience where something feels very familiar, but we know it should not feel as familiar as it does. The experience is important because it shows us that remembering happens with a series of steps, some of which can go wrong. Young people have déjà vu the most, and this may actually be a sign that young people are very good at spotting when their brains start telling them that things are more familiar than they ought to feel. It is very hard to do experiments to make people have déjà vu and we still do not know what actually causes it, but this makes it a very interesting topic for scientists to investigate. Perhaps in the future, you will become a scientist who uncovers the secrets of déjà vu.<sup>56</sup>

As intriguing as these theories are, none have been proven, and, in reality, all could have some or no truth to them. We assume that déjà vu is a single type of experience, but it could be generated in subtly different ways either between individuals or within the same individual at different times. Déjà vu doesn't help us predict the future. But it can manifest as a feeling that we can.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com>

<sup>56</sup> <https://jmedicalcasereports.biomedcentral.com/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com>