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**FORGETTING AS A FRIEND OF LEARNING:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING**

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**ABSTRACT:**

It is natural to think that learning is a matter of building up skills or knowledge in one's memory and that forgetting is a matter of losing some of what was built up. From that perspective, learning is a good thing and forgetting is a bad thing. The relationship between learning and forgetting is not, however, so simple, and in certain important respects is quite the opposite: Conditions that produce forgetting often enable additional learning, for example, and learning or recalling some things can contribute to forgetting other things. In this talk I attempt to characterize the interdependencies of learning, remembering, and forgetting that define the unique functional architecture of how humans learn and remember, or fail to learn and remember. I focus in particular on why forgetting enables, rather than undoes, learning; and why the interplay of forgetting, remembering, and learning is adaptive and yet poorly understood by the user.

**Robert A. Bjork** (PhD, Psychology, Stanford; BA, Mathematics, Minnesota) is Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles. His research focuses on human learning and memory and on the implications of the science of learning for instruction and training. He has served as Editor of *Memory & Cognition* (1981-85) and *Psychological Review* (1995-2000), Co-editor of *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* (1998-2004), and Chair of a National Research Council Committee on Techniques for the Enhancement of Human Performance (1988-1994). He is a past president or chair of the American Psychological Society (APS); the Western Psychological Association; the Psychonomic Society; the Society of Experimental Psychologists; the Council of Editors of the American Psychological Association (APA); and the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology. He is a recipient of UCLA's Distinguished Teaching Award; the American Psychological Association's Distinguished Scientist Lecturer and Distinguished Service to Psychological Science Awards; the American Physiological Society's Claude Bernard Distinguished Lectureship Award, and the Society of Experimental Psychologists' Norman Anderson Lifetime Achievement Award. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.