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# Surviving the Fog



Daniel Ellingburg Apr 14, 2018 · 3 min read

“The Fog” is a term I was introduced to while studying first century Greek. Of course, I already knew what fog was, and I definitely knew about “The Fog of War” (from Blizzard’s popular series of RTS games), but I had never heard the term applied to learning a language.

According to William Mounce, the author of Basics of Biblical Greek, “the fog” is something that all language learners must travel through in order to accomplish their goals. It is caused by a mixture of being overwhelmed by an unending flow of new information, an awareness that what you are learning is only partially being grasped, and understanding that the goal of fluently and accurately utilizing your new language of choice is years away (at best). The fog gathers early, remains persistent, and disappears so gradually that you do not notice it dispersing until it is already almost gone.

The fog is deadly because it makes you lose all perception of your progress...Think about that idea, losing perception of your progress.

Have you even been working at something for a day, a week, a month, or a year and felt like you had made no progress? Are you in that spot right now, struggling for motivation and flailing (even if just a bit) for direction? That feeling is the work of the fog. It silently settles in; it saps your synopsis of their spunk, and it simply sits until something disperses it.

So, how do you disperse this intangible motivation thief?

The answer suggested by Mounce is simple: look back to your previous victories to assure you of your progress. Look back to your previous victories to encourage you towards future successes. Of course, maintain awareness of your desires and goals, but take the time sometimes to remember what you have accomplished!

I started the Bloc.io online Web Developer Track a month ago. Recently, I was working on grabbing some data with a `.fetch` request and placing it onto a webpage with DOM manipulation. I knew I had the data because I could log it to my console and see what I had, but for some reason I couldn't loop through it to put it on my page. I had been stuck at that EXACT point for hours when I finally stepped away in frustration with nagging voices of doubt sounding off in the back of my head. "Am I too dumb to do this?" "Am I too old to do this?" "Am I simply an idiot?" I was frustrated and this brought out uncertainty and fear. Following the advice of the pros, I stepped away from my computer for a moment to catch my breath.

Maybe it looks a bit different, but I bet that some of you have been in that point of frustration too. What do your voices say? What raw unfiltered emotions are screaming in the back of your head?

While away, I followed Mounce's advice. I thought about how it had taken me hours to figure out how to set up my first git repository, tie it to a remote repository on github, and push my first commit to the remote. (And at the beginning of that very day, the sentence I just wrote would have appeared to be nothing but gibberish to me.) Then I remembered how it had taken me DAYS (weeks?) to *begin* to become comfortable with passing functions with arguments into functions with arguments. (Wait! Passing functions? Is that a bit like passing ..., hmm. Probably depends on how well the function is written.) But now, I am good with those two things. I'm not an expert yet, but I understand them, am significantly more proficient with them than I was, and am picking up the terminology.

By looking back I was able to see that I had been making progress! The sun shone through, the fog was dispersed, I was encouraged and able to get back to work.

If you find yourself in that spot of frustration and despair, look back. Give yourself a moment to bask in your past victories, and let those tangible and real victories be the forecaster of your future success.

Motivation

Frustration

Struggle

Keep Calm

Learning To Code

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