



## Did I Forget Something?

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### The older we get...

the greater the likelihood of experiencing **some** cognitive changes. But the good news is serious cognitive changes are not an expected element of normal aging. There are no hard and fast rules about aging and significant loss of cognitive abilities. Everyone is different. Not all older people will lose significant cognitive skills.

The real burning question, in my mind, is *not* how many cognitive skills we will lose due to aging, but actually, **how will the loss of cognitive abilities affect function and independence?** If cognitive skills decline, the real worry becomes how does the loss of cognitive abilities affect the ability "to do things", and then how does that affect "safety and health?"

### What Happens When Cognition Declines?

So many people think aging equals cognitive loss. This is a myth. But here are some types of things related to cognitive changes that frequently do happen to aging adults.

#### Memory Changes

- ✓ Compared to younger people, more time and effort is needed to learn something new.
- ✓ Retrieval of information includes recalling or recognizing information. This may slow down.
- ✓ Problems remembering newly learned facts may start to happen.
- ✓ Problems remembering names of new acquaintances may develop.
- ✓ Difficulty remembering tasks on lists may begin to occur.
- ✓ Misplacing objects such as the car keys, a pen, sunglasses, etc may happen.
- ✓ Forgetting telephone numbers right after hearing them may happen.
- ✓ Forgetting what was going to be done minutes after just deciding to do it.

#### Speed of Processing and Reaction Time

There is evidence that indicate older adult's speed of processing and reaction time slows with age. An example of this is the time it takes to think about what is going to be done, then actually doing it. An example of this is the time it takes to recognize a need to use the car brake, then actually applying the brake.

But don't let this get you down. You can take personal control of your situation, and choose new ways to cope with changes.

## How to Maximize and Maintain Cognitive Abilities

Besides maintaining health by eating nutritious foods, being fit, not smoking or drinking excessive alcohol, here are some other tips you can choose to maintain or maximize cognitive abilities:

- ✓ Attend cultural or educational events regularly
- ✓ Collaborate with your spouse or friend to learn something new together
- ✓ Develop a new hobby
- ✓ Do crossword or jigsaw puzzles
- ✓ Get involved in a regular discussion group
- ✓ Learn a new language
- ✓ Learn a new vocabulary word everyday
- ✓ Play table games
- ✓ Marry someone smarter than you (yep, it's true!)
- ✓ Play scrabble
- ✓ Read a lot
- ✓ Teach yourself a new skill
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Volunteer
- ✓ Work
- ✓ Write your memoirs, a family history or a personal journal