



HEALTH AWARENESS

Adjusting To An Aging Mind

(NAPSA)—As our brains age, we're less likely to think as quickly or remember things as well as we used to. Research is now showing how the brain changes and adapts with age. You can use what we've learned and follow a few simple tips to help remember things and avoid scams.

Dr. Denise C. Park, director of the Roybal Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Illinois, explains that the knowledge we gain from life experience can sometimes compensate for other changes in our brains as we age. Older professionals can often be better at their jobs than younger ones. "Your memory may be less efficient," Park says, "but your knowledge about how to do it may be better."

Researchers can design tests that expose problems in the aging mind by creating tasks in which older adults can't use their experience. These tests reflect real-life situations like getting upsetting medical news or having a crafty scam artist pressure you for an answer.

One key to dealing with situations like these, Park says, is not to make rash decisions. Ask for further information and more time to consider. Discuss it with friends or relatives.

Perhaps the most common trouble people face as they age is remembering things. Park says it's important to acknowledge that your memory is fallible. "For medicines, driving directions or other things with specific details, don't rely on your memory," she says. "That's good advice for everybody, but especially for older adults." If you need to remember something important, write it down on a pad or use an electronic device like a personal digital assistant (PDA) that lets you store notes and reminders.



Researchers supported by the National Institutes of Health continue to explore new ways to keep the aging brain healthy.

Another way to remember things is through routines. Take your medicine with a snack or a particular meal, for example. Always keep your keys and wallet in the same place.

You can also use your imagination. If you imagine doing something beforehand, Park says, you're much more likely to do it. So, for example, imagine taking your medicine in as much detail as you can, paying attention to where, when and how.

Practice can help, too. Rehearse talking to a salesperson. Visit somewhere new in advance.

Keeping your brain active with activities that require mental effort, such as reading, may help keep your mind sharp. Staying physically active may help, too.

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