

Lesson 4: Memory Tricks

Myths about Memory and Aging

Myth #1: All memory and thinking processes decline when we age.

This is not the case. Crystallized intelligence (like vocabulary), world knowledge and wisdom appear to increase and remain stable as we age. Although memory decline is common, not all memory declines the same way: working memory may get a little slower, but long-term recall (like memories from your childhood) are often intact.

Myth#2: If I feel that my memory is getting worse, I must be in the early stages of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Some decline is normal and common, even in the most healthy people. Age is the #1 risk factor for these diseases, but most people will not decline into dementia or Alzheimer's disease. If you are concerned that you or a loved one may be developing a disease, you should talk to your primary care physician.

Myth#3: Losing your memory in old age is going to happen to everyone and there's nothing I can do about it.

This is the biggest myth of all. The best thing you can do to help your memory is to keep your heart healthy. This means remaining physically active, eating fruits and vegetables, and adhering to prescriptions. You can also practice memory "tricks" to optimize how your memory works and you may find that it is easier to remember new information.



Memory "Tricks" to Help You Remember

When trying to remember new information, like phone numbers, names, or lists, try some of these "tricks" to help your memory:

1. Organize lists of information into meaningful groups: like fruits and vegetables together.
2. Visualize doing a task or items on a list while first learning the new information: like imagining picking up groceries in the order that I would walk through the store.
3. Make up a story or meaningful association: like when learning a new name, try to associate the name with a physical feature.
4. When possible try to both write information down and say it loud. Then repeat it to yourself a few times.