

MENTAL NOTES

A mind expanding e-newsletter from Mark Zust, *The Perceptionist*



Thanks For The Memories

May, 2009

“The best memory is that which forgets nothing but injuries. Write kindness in marble and write injuries in the dust.” – Persian Proverb

At nearly 90, my Mom’s memory isn’t what it used to be. Then again, neither is mine. I’m proud to report that “Grandma Loretta” is going strong. She enjoys dancing, drives in the metroparks and rooting on her beloved Cleveland Indians. She can vividly recall watching Babe Ruth battle the Indians at League Park in 1942, but gets fuzzy when she attempts to remember how the Tribe fared in last night’s game. I can recall student names and their design



projects I graded 25 years ago, but retrieving a computer shortcut I learned last week can sometimes be a bit dicey. Yes, our short-term memory can cloud a bit as we age, but not nearly as much as we fear. We can help keep our precious memories intact by exercising more regularly, taking a class, reading a challenging book and opening ourselves up to meeting new people and having brain-enhancing experiences like going to a play, music recital or poetry slam. The MacArthur Foundation Network on Successful

Aging is a research collaboration that first came together in 1984 to study more than 4,000 people throughout the US and determine what defines successful aging in “high functioning” individuals. One of the most fascinating insights is the role of a person’s emotional state in maintaining intellectual abilities in later life. Researchers cited *self-efficacy*, or a belief that through your actions you can produce a desired effect, as clearly apparent among healthier, empowered individuals. These elderly were

much more likely to take responsibility for their diet, exercise regimen and mental health by staying active, reading regularly and socializing. These are good habits we can all adopt today. The MacArthur research and many other studies remind us that to battle premature intellectual decline there’s no better tonic than personal discipline. Adopt the habit of lifelong learning and know that it is never too late to grow your mind. With a little extra effort, healthy memories can be yours to treasure your entire life.

Memory Boosters:

- 1. Chill out.** Stress can rob your memory and your health, so practice “letting go” of the day’s petty disappointments. A simple meditation chant of “I release my worries and invite calm into my heart” as you prepare for bed can work wonders. Be sure to turn off the television and dim the lights at least 15 minutes before you go to bed. This stimulates the production of serotonin, a natural sleep aid. Once in bed, take ten deep breaths. With each breath, imagine wiping your mind clean, as if you were erasing an accounting of the day’s events written on a blackboard. Take five more breaths and imagine a deep blue sky turning darker and darker. You’ll be asleep before you know it and after one week of practicing these techniques you will sleep more soundly and awake refreshed.
- 2. Know your family’s history.** Those of us with first-degree relatives with Alzheimer’s disease are at an increased risk of experiencing memory problems. Ask your relatives about their parents’ behavior as they aged and look for patterns of forgetfulness, such as those outlined in the excellent book *Age-Proof Your Mind* by Dr. Zaldy S. Tan.
- 3. Ask Harry.** Harry Lorayne, that is. For nearly 50 years, Harry Lorayne has written best sellers on how to build a super-powered memory at any age. His latest book, *Ageless Memory*, takes his techniques from earlier books and offers them in manageable bites. The tips are no-nonsense, easy to use, and they work. Before you know it, you’ll reclaim your ability to remember the names of everyone you meet and memorize 30-item shopping lists in a few minutes. Now, if Harry could just teach me to remember where I put my car keys... Oh, wait, that’s in chapter three!

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