



# The Mind: Aging vs. Dementia

Jacqueline S. Gray, PhD

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## OBJECTIVES

- Discuss Myths and Facts about older adults.
- Identify the signs of cognitive decline.
- Identify the signs of a healthy aging mind.
- Describe how to maintain a healthy aging mind.



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## Reality or Myth?

- **Depression and loneliness are normal in older adults.**
- **Myth**
- As they age, people may find they feel isolated and alone. This can lead to feeling depressed, anxious, and sad. This is not a normal part of aging.
- Older adults are less likely to share their feelings

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## Reality or Myth?

- **The older I get the less sleep I need.**
- **Myth**
- Greater difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.
- Sleep needs DO NOT decline with age (7-9 hrs)
  - Adequate sleep keeps you healthy & alert
  - Improves overall well-being

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## Older Adults Can't Learn New Things

- Myth – Not True!
- Older adults can still learn new things, create new memories, improve their performance in a variety of skills.
- Trying and learning new skills may improve cognitive abilities.
- Seeking new social connections and engaging in social activities can keep the brain active.

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## It is inevitable that older people will get dementia

- Myth
- Dementia is not a normal part of aging.
- Many people live into their 90s without significant declines in thinking and behavior or dementia.
- Mild forgetfulness is normal aging process

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## 6 Types of Normal Memory Loss

- Absentmindedness -- Losing things, forgetting
- Blocking – “Tip of the Tongue” moment
- Scrambling– remember-but confuse the details.
- Fading away – “Use it or lose it”
- Struggling for retrieval
  - ❖ can't remember name of someone just met
  - ❖ Saw great movie, but can't remember the title
- Muddled multitasking -- As age harder to focus

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## Older adults should take it easy and avoid exercise, so they don't get injured.

- Myth
  - Studies show there is more to be gained by staying active and more to lose by sitting too much.
  - Physical activity may help manage chronic conditions and are a benefit to mental and physical health.

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## If a family member has Alzheimer's disease, I will have it too!

- **Myth – Risk may be higher, but it is not an absolute**
- Environmental factors such as exercise, diet, exposure to pollutants, and smoking can also affect risk of Alzheimer's

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- **There is nothing that can be done to reduce one's risk of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias.**
- **Myth**
- Physical & mental inactivity, smoking, obesity, diabetes, hypertension & depression are associated with increased incidence of Alzheimer's Disease.

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## Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementias

- ~100 types of dementia
  - ❖ After a “night on the town” discover a note in your pocket that you remember nothing about
  - ❖ Irreversible fatal Alzheimer's Disease
- 2 Categories of dementias
  - ❖ Curable
  - ❖ Non-curable

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## 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

- Memory loss
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks
- Problems with language
- Disorientation to time and place
- Poor or decreased judgement
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Problems with abstract thinking
- Misplacing things
- Changes in personality
- Loss of initiative

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## 5 Ways to Lower Odds of Alzheimer's

- Brisk walk (150 min/wk)
- Don't smoke
- Mediterranean diet
- Light to moderate alcohol consumption
- Do something challenging for the brain
  - Reading, writing, playing games, crosswords
- **Decrease by 60% practice 4; 38% decrease if practice 3**

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## Now that I am older, I will have to give up driving.

- **Myth**
- The number of older adults licensed to drive will continue to increase.
- 20% of licensed drivers are over 65.
- Changes occur like slower reaction times, diminished hearing and vision, reduced strength and mobility.
- Decision should be made on ability to drive safely.

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## Individual can learn new skills in late life.

### ➤ Reality

- Older adults can learn skills in late life, but it may take longer than older adults.

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## ➤ Older adults stay engaged and productive.

### ➤ Reality

- Many older adults continue to work, volunteer & act as caregivers.

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## Tips to Make Aging Well a Reality

- Good Health
- Exercise
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Preventative Health Practices
- Advocate for your health
- Recognize and Treat Mental Health the same as Healthcare
- Stay involved and interested in art, sciences, culture, politics, social activities
- Engage in what matters to you

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## Improving Brain Health & Cognitive Problems

- Practice memory training techniques
  - ❖ Focus – paying attention
  - ❖ Frame – Creating visual images & mental associations
  - ❖ Jack
  - ❖ Examples
    - ✓ Crossword puzzles
    - ✓ Sudoku (math puzzles)
    - ✓ Trivial Pursuit
    - ✓ Remembering the grocery list
    - ✓ Learn new things
    - ✓ Search the internet
    - ✓ Take a class

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## Improving Brain Health & Cognitive Problems

### ➤ Reducing stress

#### ❖ Relaxation breaks throughout the day

- ✓ Stretching
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Conversations with friends

#### ❖ Examples

- ✓ Yoga, exercise, tai chi,
- ✓ Restful sleep
- ✓ Cut back on multi-tasking
- ✓ Lighten your load
- ✓ Laugh
- ✓ Getting organized
- ✓ Asking for help

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## Improving Brain Health & Cognitive Problems

### ➤ Get enough sleep

#### ❖ Sleep – brain healing

- ✓ Less amyloid plaque
- ✓ Less Inflammation in the brain

#### ❖ Treasure your sleep, it's your friend

### ➤ Exercise regularly

- ❖ Your hippocampus – a memory center of the brain – will grow!
- ❖ Bigger brain is better!!

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## Contact us for more information!

Dr. Jacque Gray, LPC

E-Mail: [Jacqueline.gray@und.edu](mailto:Jacqueline.gray@und.edu)

Phone: 701.777.6084

1301 North Columbia Road, Stop 9037

Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202-9037

701.777.3848 • [ruralhealth.und.edu](http://ruralhealth.und.edu)

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