The Aging Brain: Why getting Older Just Might Be Awesome!

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Today we’re going to talk about:
What’s Lost, What’s Left, What’s Possible

1. The Aging Brain
2. Diseases that Impairment to the brain
3. Healthy Habits For Your Brain and Body
Memory and Learning

• As you grow older, you may notice differences in the way your mind works.

• You may have difficulty finding the correct words, multitasking or paying attention.

• The good news is that even if you have already noticed some of these changes, you are still able to learn new things, create new memories and improve vocabulary and language skills.
• The brain is the most sophisticated organ in the human body.
• The most complex structure known in the universe.
• The brain ages, on its own schedule and in its own unique fashion.
• The human brain weighs on average about three pounds
• Consists of 200 billion cells.
How the Brain Works

• There are 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons, creating a branching network.

• Signals traveling through the neuron forest form memories, thoughts and feelings.

• Alzheimer’s destroys neurons.
Neurons Affected by Alzheimer's

dead cells full of tangles

Sparse, damaged cells

amyloid plaques

withered branches
• The brain operates on a “self-organizing principle” (aka, synaptic plasticity), arranging and rearranging neurons to complete specific tasks, and changing patterns of neural connections in response to the learning and experience of each individual (Whalley, 2001).
Common Conditions that Affect Brain Health

- Heart disease, high blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury
- Depression
- Sleep problems
Alcohol’s Effect on Brain Health

- Slow or impaired communication among brain cells, even with moderate use
- Poor driving, slurred speech, fuzzy memory, drowsiness, dizziness
- Long-term changes to balance, memory and emotions, coordination, and body temperature

Staying away from alcohol can reverse some changes.

Some medicines can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol.
Diabetes

- Damages blood vessels throughout your body, including your brain
- Increases risk for stroke and heart attack
- May increase risk for memory problems and Alzheimer’s disease
- Maintaining a healthy weight through physical activity and healthy eating can prevent or control diabetes

Talk with your health care provider about the combination of lifestyle and medicine that works for you.
What is Dementia?

A chronic and persistent disorder caused by a brain disease or injury that produces a decline in memory and intellect from some previously higher level of functioning severe enough to interfere with everyday life.
Types of Dementia

• Dementia is the loss of memory due to changes in the brain
• Alzheimer’s is the most common form
• Many mixed cases
• Many memory disorders are reversible and not truly dementia