

Is it a "Senior Moment?"

By Dr. Zorica M. Ljaljevic

Mere forgetfulness or something more than that?

Memory loss is one of the first sign of aging. With the increasing numbers of the baby boomers generation this is a hot topic today. It's being talked about on the radio, TV, internet, newspapers and medical journals on a daily basis. Often times we see it titled "Is Your Memory Fading" and "What's Normal and What's Not."

We are living longer and healthier but is it worth it if our memory is faltering?

Most of us sometime in our life have experienced a frustrating situation of walking into a room and not knowing why we are there. Also most of us have misplaced or forgot where we put our keys or forgot people's names.

It happens across the life span--kids, teenagers, adults and older adults have experienced this and causes could be many varying from anxiety, poor attention span, etc. So what is the concern in the elderly?

Most people are able to move on without being too concerned about the periodic lapses of memory but older adults sometimes notice that they are not as sharp as they once were and begin to worry that it could be the onset of something more serious like dementia.

There are so many questions leading from here on.

How do we distinguish what is normal aging and what is not? How does aging change the brain? What are other causes of memory problems? When do we seek help? What can be done if we have memory problems?

With the advances in neuroscience, we are learning that we are losing brain cells every day starting in our 20s but also that the brain has the capacity to regenerate itself throughout adult life--the concept known as Neurogenesis.

This is an astounding discovery as it implies that the brain can create new neurons/brain cells into and throughout adult life; the concept we thought was



possible only early on in life until recently! So there is hope!

If you are concerned about memory loss in yourself or a loved one, please discuss it with your doctor. Memory problems could be secondary to depression or certain side effects of medications that are easily corrected. For some memory problems a more extensive evaluation is needed, again something that can be further discussed with your doctor.

Dr. Zorica is a Board Certified Psychiatrist and an Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Stanford University with expertise in mood disorders and geriatric psychiatry. For more information, go to www.drzorica.com. Or call 650. 917.9009.



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