



The Masterpiece Living Mosaic

12600 W. Colfax Ave., Suite B-110 • Lakewood, CO 80215

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Maximizing Memory Ability in Older Adulthood

By Dr. Rob Winningham

Maximizing one's memory ability in middle and older adulthood requires a multifaceted approach. In this short article, I will summarize recent research showing how we can maximize our memory ability. Any one suggestion won't have a huge impact, but all together they could have a very significant effect on not only your memory ability but also your quality of life.

It turns out that about 50% of our memory ability and our chance of developing dementia is determined by genetics. So, I hope you chose your parents well, as there isn't much we can do about our genetic make-up. But the good news is that we can largely control the other 50% that is non-genetic.

If you want to maximize your memory ability in adulthood, research shows we need to engage in the following behaviors:

1. **Get adequate physical exercise.**

This includes aerobic activity such as walking and other activities that increase heart rate. This also includes strength or resistance training, such as lifting weights. The effects of resistance training are just now being understood, with a 2012 study showing it could lead to significant improvement in attention and concentration for people who were experiencing mild cognitive and memory problems.

2. **Get adequate cognitive exercise.** We have all heard of the concept *Use It Or Lose It*, and there is a lot of research that supports that idea. We should never stop learning and challenging



ourselves. Cognitive stimulation comes in many forms. We can volunteer, fully engage our hobbies, travel, learn new skills, and engage in targeted cognitive activities. There are even some excellent website and iPad apps that can help people get targeted brain exercise.

3. **Watch weight, diet, and glucose levels.**

Controlling weight, avoiding diabetes, and eating right could dramatically reduce the chance of having cognitive problems. There is some evidence that eating fish or a fish oil supplement can reduce one's chance of developing dementia.

4. **Stay socially engaged.** Social engagement is cognitively stimulating and is associated with a reduced likelihood of developing dementia.

5. **Sleep well.** Poor sleep quality and quantity can impair brain function and result in a number of physical and mental problems.

In subsequent articles, I will explore the above five factors in more detail. Ok, now it is your turn to put these suggestions into practice and take control of your brain health.

Dr. Rob Winningham is a Professor of Psychology and Gerontology at Western Oregon University. For the past 20 years he has researched human memory and ways to enhance cognitive abilities. His brain stimulation activities are used by thousands of retirement communities and have been shown to improve memory ability.

For more information go to: www.robwinningham.com.



The Neurobics+ program provides memory-enhancement activities to keep your brain in shape. Located on the MPL website under *Resources > Campaigns and Programs by MPL > Neurobics+*.



The 8-Unit BHU virtual course and two Q&A sessions led by Dr. Rob will remain on our website for viewing. All unit videos are available with closed captioning on the MPL website under *Resources > Campaigns and Programs by MPL > Brain Health University*.

Rosewood Resident Champions Brain Fitness for the Masses

By: Danielle Palli

“Pass a kind word and a smile and you bless someone’s life as much as your own.”

We could follow Helen Henton all day collecting shareable nuggets of wisdom, such as the quote above. Helen, a long-time resident at Rosewood (a Human Good community), can be best described as an optimist, a cheerleader, and a part-time comedian. Sharp-witted and determined, Helen is an advocate of lifelong learning and keeping your brain sharp, regardless of age or personal challenges. Helen understands that 50% of our memory ability is determined by lifestyle choices.

“Never stop learning as long as you live,” she told the Mosaic. “If you don’t challenge yourself ... if you don’t step over boundaries and get out of your comfort zone, you can’t continue to grow. You need to keep learning and growing forever and ever.”

Helen – along with approximately 50 other participants – is a student of Brain Fit, a six-week brain training class that Rosewood offers four times throughout the year to every resident in every level of living. It is also open to the greater community. Students begin by taking a short cognitive function test to determine where they excel, and where there is room for improvement in areas such as focus, concentration and problem-solving abilities. Classes are then divided based upon scoring, with accommodations made for the visually impaired.

The class draws upon Masterpiece Living resources, to include Neurobics+, the Brain Health University Virtual Course, Dr. Rob Winningham’s Cognitive Connection tools, as well as intellectually stimulating games and discussions. This year, Helen learned how to use specialized iPad Apps as part of the course. “It took a while,” Helen said, “But I got it ... still like pen and paper the best though ... or maybe a typewriter!” She let out a boisterous laugh at how much technology has changed over the years.

Wendy Burnett, Lifestyle Enrichment Coordinator at Rosewood, told us, “Helen is our biggest cheerleader.” Because of two strokes many years ago, Helen only has use of the right side of her body. I hear her tell people



all the time, “If I can do it, so can you!” Helen, deterred neither by age nor physical challenges, replied, “If you don’t mind, it don’t matter!”

“Through Masterpiece Living, we have access to cutting-edge resources that you just can’t find anywhere else,” Wendy shared. “Residents get excited about these classes because they know that 50% of our cognitive ability is up to us.”

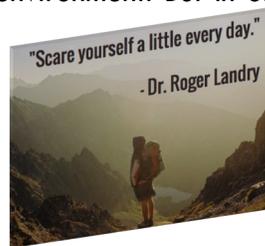
“I think the idea of Masterpiece Living is wonderful,” Helen added. “I am so excited to be a part of it.”

Think ‘Neuroplasticity!’

By: Dr. Roger Landry

Think of the brain as a collection of millions of roads - 100,000 miles of neural pathways. And every time we wish to move, learn something new, recall a fact, recognize someone, or do any of the magnificent things our brain is capable of, messages travel along these pathways at hyper-speeds of up to nearly 300 hundred miles per hour and enable us to do the task we wish.

This is neuroplasticity at its best. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain’s ability to rewire itself in response to new stimulation gained through learning and new experiences. It’s what allows our brains to compensate for injury and disease and adjust to changes in its environment. But in order to grow new brain tissue and improve and retain memory skills we need to challenge our brains with new information.



I often say, “Scare yourself a little every day,” and that means being fearless in learning new things on a regular basis.

What have you always wanted to learn or attempt? Forget about becoming an expert. Forget about how long it will take to learn. Strive to be a beginner because the beginner’s mind is where neuroplasticity is most effective.

Routine may be comforting, but if your brain is on autopilot it’s not developing new pathways and growing new brain tissue. Engage your brain with new information, skills, pastimes. It can be anything. Learn how to play an instrument, or a new song on the instrument you do play. Study a foreign language, or even how to order your meal in a different language. Take a different way home from the grocery store or try a new hobby.

The take away? Scare yourself a little every day by learning something new.