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I Don't Recall

One of the often heard complaints I get from my senior clients is, "My memory just isn't what it used to be."

Well, some memory loss is expected as we get older. It's a natural effect of aging due to decreased blood flow to the brain. Any of us over 50 have probably experienced some of this. Have you ever arrived at the grocery store and had trouble remembering what you are there to get? Do you occasionally have trouble remembering where you left your car in the parking lot? Or do you have difficulty remembering appointments such as what time you're supposed to meet your neighbor for coffee?

Besides memory, there are also other types of brain functions that decrease slightly or slow down as we age; they include:

- information processing and learning something new,
- doing more than one task at a time, and
- shifting focus between tasks.

The decrease in these functions is most obvious in our older citizens. So what can be done to slow down these kinds of memory losses?

Doctors tell us that certain activities and habits can help. Here are a few:

Stay mentally active. Activities like reading, drawing, taking classes, and exploring new hobbies stimulate new connections between nerve cells and may even help the brain generate new cells.

Learn something new. Learn to play a musical instrument. Learn a new language. Read, read, read about topics you have never explored before.

Take care of your health.

- Watch your diet by reducing calorie intake and be sure to get enough folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12.
- Exercise. Do some walking or other aerobic activity. It increases blood flow.
- Avoid tobacco. And limit drinking. Maybe some nice red wine, but no more than two drinks per day.

And finally, build your social network. The more friends you have and the more socializing you do, the greater chance you have of maintaining your mental functioning.

Whatever you do...don't allow yourself to slow down mentally...just sitting around by yourself watching TV or feeling sorry for yourself.