

Pillowcase on the Doorknob

By Suze Hargraves

WebMD reports, in its latest newsletter, that multitasking gets harder with age. I only have one thing to say to that; no... really? Raise your hand if you've gone from room to room doing various tasks around the house and found, later in the day, that the task you started first is the one you finished last. As annoying as that might be, it turns out that it's perfectly normal.

So why does multitasking become more challenging as we age? According to WebMD, "Researchers found that older people have a more difficult time multitasking not because they have to devote more attention to a secondary task, but because their brains have a harder time disengaging from the secondary task and going back to the original one." In other words, the distraction becomes the task you focus on. See, I told you it's normal.

By being aware of how our bodies and brains change as we age, we can manage these challenges with some proactive strategies:

1. Make a To-Do list daily. Include small tasks as well as bigger ones you need to tackle. Be careful to respect the reality of time. Don't put "paint the house" on your list. Realistically you're not going to paint a whole house in one day. Instead break the task down to "paint the south side of the house" or something similar. Add small tasks as well such as "pick up prescriptions". Make your list only about things you need to do today. It's not a list of goals for the future. You can use your calendar for that type of thing.
2. Speaking of calendars, keep one large enough to write on. At the top of the month you can put a larger goal for that month (here's where you can write a goal like "paint the house"). In the boxes write your appointments, meetings and times you will be away from home. By having a calendar, you can refer to it when you put together your to-do list for a day. That will help avoid setting yourself with an unrealistic task list full of distractions.
3. Use lists for shopping and errands too. There's nothing worse than getting all the way home only to realize you forgot to do or pick up something (or even someone!).

Lists and calendars aren't the only way you can bookmark your place during the day. Other simple, everyday tools can be very useful. If you're in the middle of making the bed when the phone rings, leave a light on in the room or put a pillowcase over the door knob-something that will draw your attention back to the task once you complete your call.

Aging is part of the journey of life. Stay on track by making use of simple tools and tricks to better cope with the natural changes to our brains as we age.

For more information on dealing with issues faced by seniors visit <http://senior.lifetips.com>.

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