

Confidence helps seniors remember better

Brandeis University scientists say believing you can retain a good memory as you age is the first step toward achieving that goal.

The study suggests people who believe they can control their memory are more likely to employ mnemonic strategies that help keep their memory fit despite the march of time.

Lead author Margie Lachman, a psychology professor and director of the university's Lifespan Lab, says the research demonstrates a link between actual cognitive functioning and a low sense of control, and examines whether the relationship between control beliefs and memory performance varies for young, middle-aged, and older adults.

"One's sense of control is both a precursor and a consequence of age-related losses in memory," said Lachman. "Our study shows the more you believe there are things you can do to remember information, the more likely you will be to use effort and adaptive strategies and to allocate resources effectively, and the less you will worry about forgetting."

The study, funded by the National Institute on Aging, appears in the Journals of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences.

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