

Is Memory Loss Ever Just Normal Aging?

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Forgetfulness is normal. Appointments slip our mind; names of people we should know elude us. As we age and more is stored in the brain, retrieving information is slowed.

Memory loss however is caused by conditions that starve the brain of oxygen or nourishment, or create a toxic environment for the brain. Diseases that can cause memory loss are: heart and lung disease, diabetes, depression, Parkinson's, AIDS, Multiple Sclerosis, stroke, kidney and liver disorders, chronic alcoholism and drug abuse.

Dementia is a descriptive term for a brain that is compromised in function. The most common cause for dementia is Alzheimer's disease. Almost 75% of all dementias are Alzheimer's. This is a progressive disease that affects memory, problem solving, motor skills, perception and language. Life becomes a challenge. An educated care partner can make life more enjoyable and successful.

I coach people in what is called habilitation therapy; an interpersonal approach that accommodates the person with dementia and creates successful experiences. I teach care partners about dementia, how to respond to the changes in ability and behavior in a helpful way, and then support them in the learning.