

We Have Encyclopedic Powers

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In the 1960s, a Sunday night situational comedy called “[My Favorite Martian](#),” featured Ray Walston as the Martian. Periodically, he “drained his brain” of the excess information that had accumulated. His earth host, played by Bill Bixby, found this to be most curious.

Flash-forward 50 years and researchers now believe cognitive decline as we age might be a myth.

For the longest time, behavioral scientists believed that old age and cognitive decline went hand in hand. Now, studies reveal that rather than cognitively declining, we are simply accumulating more and more information. This accumulation causes us to be a little slower when it comes to recalling specific details, but while we might be a bit slower, we’re actually smarter as we age. You might have suspected this all along—I know that I did.

Many times I have thought to myself, I know so much more than I did even five years ago, let alone 10, 15, or 20 years. My current self is immeasurably more intelligent than my college-age self, and I was no slacker in college.

Encouraging Findings

Dispelling the myth of cognitive decline is encouraging to anyone over say 40 or 45, and opens up an array of possibilities for your advancing years. Would you like to learn a foreign language? This capability is more difficult than when you were younger, but completely within your grasp.

Do you want to start reading the classics? You have what it takes to get through them and to gain the perspectives and wisdom that the author meant to impart to readers. Do you want to tackle any type of intellectual challenge which until this point in your life, has not been on the front burner? You have the capability.

Reference: The Myth of Cognitive Decline: Non-linear Dynamics of Lifelong Learning by Michael Ramscar, et al. In Topics in Cognitive Science, volume 6, issue 1, pages 5 to 42, January 2014.