

Module 3 Lesson 1

Transcript

Today, we're talking about cognitive decline. It's no secret that as we get older, our memories just aren't what they used to be. During this lesson, I'm going to discuss how your brain's ability to remember things, changes, what you do and don't have control over, and how you can apply the Nutritious Life Pillars to your client's plans to help promote brain health. All right, let's get going. I cannot tell you how impressed I am with kids sometimes. Ever notice their plump, juicy skin, that shiny hair, their little muscles that never get tired? I'm so jealous of it. Their unselfconscious wardrobes, well, at least until their teens. And, well, I could go on and on and on. It feels like a long list. But one thing that stops me in my tracks every time is when I'm trying to remember something that happened and my daughter pipes in and not only with an, "Oh, yeah. I remember that," but she can tell me crucial, exacting details.

She'll say, "We bumped into your intern at the park where people went down on that slide on cardboard. I was wearing my yellow shirt and that was the day the restaurant we wanted to go to was closed because there was a private party, and one of the people going to the party was my science teacher because we saw him walking out the door." It's truly amazing that our children are able to keep so many memories so intact in their little heads. When does that all change? When do we start remembering less and being able to conjure memories less easily? Cognitive decline, baby. I did an intake on a 53 year old woman, Joanie, several years ago. I can't even remember what her issues were. Huh? See that? Can't remember, but I do remember that we spent so much time in the beginning just going over her barriers to doing good, healthy work with me.

Some examples of her issues were that she would go to the supermarket and forget half of the items on her list because she didn't write the list down or didn't remember to bring it with her. She also struggled so much to keep a food journal because she would get to the end of the day and not remember what she'd eaten earlier or she would leave things out entirely. Joanie could not, for the life of her, remember to take the leftovers she packed for lunch when she left for work each morning. It turned out that Joanie wasn't forgetful. She was great at her job and totally on top of her game professionally. She had great memories of family and really her troubles were mostly isolated to her day-to-day. Joanie needed a lot of help to organize herself because she was dealing with early stages of memory loss. I've done my homework when it comes to brain and aging because I find it so fascinating.

Some experts are pretty clear that we don't really know when exactly cognitive decline starts kicking in. Others say absolutely twenties, and still, others say hormonal changes and menopause are

to blame. I like it that the research says that menopausal related cognitive decline is temporary and due to fluctuating hormones. That's very positive. I like knowing that. But it is confusing that our brains function better after we complete menopause than they do during menopause. Scientists say the brain fog from menopause is from estrogen fluctuations. All this is to say that it seems like good comprehensive studies find that we begin declining in our twenties or thirties, but decline definitely accelerates in our older years. Kind of like the field of nutrition where everyone eats, everyone has an opinion on what to eat. We all think and have our own experiences with our brains, not being as sharp as we'd like perhaps. So we use that to match the science to ourselves.

We all have an opinion about it. It's probably safe to say that for most of us, mental decline happens slowly and gradually. We demand a lot from our brain and it isn't like we have a mental hygiene checklist, like we do a dental hygiene checklist. The brain ages, it happens. We see it on MRI imaging all the time. The brain actually changes physically as we enter later adulthood. This is normal. This is a normal part of aging. Just like bones and joints age, so does our brain, and that's a good thing. We're aging. With that age comes some loss of acuity. It's sad and definitely frustrating. But again, getting older is a good thing. Cognitive decline can be slowed and managed though. There's a handout attached to this lesson with things that you can do to keep your noodle sharper for yourself and for your clients using the Nutritious Life Pillars.

So check that out. Okay. So let's summarize the main points from this lesson. Comprehensive studies find that cognition begins declining sometime in our twenties or thirties, but decline accelerates in our older years for sure. The brain changes physically and we lose acuity as we enter later adulthood. And this is completely normal. It happens to everyone. That said, cognitive decline can be slowed and managed. When you're working with clients, you can use the Pillars of a Nutritious Life to guide your recommendations for slowing cognitive decline. Remember, check out that handout attached here to this lesson. And I'll see you in the next lesson.