Mind Wandering, Aging, Cognitive Change and Creativity

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What is the connection between aging and mind wandering or mind drift? How is mind wandering associated with cognitive change? Does cognitive change impact the ability for creativity?

Recent research by marketing organizations has established that today’s health engaged consumers, regardless of which generation into which they were born, has losing one’s mental capacity as the top fear across all generations. The Silent Generation (born during 1925 - 1945), the Boomers Generation (born during 1946 - 1964, the Gen X generation (born during 1965 - 1980) and the Millennials generation-Gen Y (born during 1980 - 1994) all have other similar fears. Although the fears have different ranking of importance to each generation the common fears are being a burden on family or other loves ones, restricted mobility and heart attack/stroke. Perhaps unusual from this intensive market research is that the Millennials-Gen Y have dying as the second most ranked fear with being alone and death of a spouse similar to the Boomers and the Silent Generation.

The Silent Generation (expect to be seen and not heard) born during the depression and war time, and Boomers also express concern about whether intentional or un-intentional mind wandering frequency (mind drift... often thought of as day dreaming) changes with aging and impacts ability to spontaneously retrieve information or thought just learned or stored deep within the “archives of the brain memory”.

In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in the number of studies examining mind wandering and age-related reductions in the frequency of mind wandering. Research has demonstrated that age-accompanied deficits in executive functioning (a description of brain area function) and because aging is associated with increased task motivation, there has been shown a pronounced decline in intentional mind wandering by Silent Generation, Boomers and Gen X types relative to young adults.

These older adults show lower rates of intentional mind wandering compared with young adults. Older adults also demonstrate lower rates of unintentional mind wandering or mind drift. Although many forms of cognitive change occur spontaneously, which may include mind-wandering, involuntary autobiographical memories, intrusive thoughts and future expectations, spontaneous prospective memory retrieval is preserved. Thoughts and memories are remembered as from before. This is known.

For those who concern themselves with mind wandering while driving...stay focused. It is not a cognitive change issue. It is a normal aging occurrence. Older adults, as a group, do actually mind-wander less. Younger adults must work to control this regular mind wandering.

Unless...of course... the individual is involved in a demanded “creative mode or zone” because of personal desire, intention or work support opportunities. Adults have the ability to better control this abstraction known as the “flow state” because they have less mind obstructions (less distractions because of better focus when in the flow state). The adult mind (Inter-Individuality Stage), as understood

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by neuropsychologists, regularly "refreshes" or goes through mind re-set and provides a new perspective for the neuropsychology of creativity.

Often misunderstood is that the brain is in constant turmoil. There are many transactions and tracings that occur simultaneously. These activities are actually key to the balance every individual must experience.

Creativity is about many mysteries of the mind. The same brainwork associated with daydreaming is the brain network associated with theory of the mind. The creative mind creates a "psychological distance" and often begins to view current circumstance from a different perspective. What is the "flow state" for creative individuals? It is a mental state when an individual transcends conscious thought to reach a heightened state of effortless concentration and calmness. When in this state the individual is practically immune to any internal or external pressures and distraction that may hinder performance. Performance is time efficient and activity becomes effortless and endorphin pleasurable.

The flow state requires a match between the individual skill set and the task or activity in which one is engaging. These individuals often lose track of time. They daydream... regularly. They surround themselves with beauty of all forms. They are able to connect the dots and constantly shake things up. They always make time for the mindfulness thinking and use of meditation or day programming including nighttime dreams or dream work. They view all of life as an opportunity for self-expression. Individuals like this transcend current reality while in the creative zone. They observe everything and take time for solitude. They take risks. They follow their true passions and get out of their own limited perspective and explore other ways of thinking.

Creative individuals turn life's obstacles around and seek out new experiences. Openness to new experiences is constantly the strongest predictor of creating or creative achievements. It can become euphoric.

Is mind-wandering timeless?

YES, mind-wandering is with us forever. It is pure. It is with an individual to treasure. It is a joy! Be one who knows this is about life contentment.