

ANOTHER LOOK AT DEMENTIA AND AT THE PRESERVATION OF YOUTH

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Preliminary remark

The present article is based on hypothesis, deductions from observations, which are making sense and have not been written with reference to other documents, excepted in the first paragraphs. I do not express my doubts in each sentence, yet they are real. I cannot really prove everything I write here. However, all of this is based on concrete observations about myself and the people I meet or have met. And this helps me, on the one hand, to better understand, to seek more coherence and accuracy in my choices, my actions and behaviors, and on the other hand, to increase my abilities for empathy in order to have better adapted behaviors with some people I know, helping them to feel better understood. In addition, until now, those explanations have echoed with persons who read or heard them; which makes me hope to stick as much as possible to reality.

However, I ask all those who read, to trust what it will awaken or not in them. It is likely for some of them that they will understand these points of view as obvious, because they already know them implicitly and this will allow them to access a wider or more precise understanding grid.

A) Our automaton-brain

In his book "You are the placebo (HayHouse publishing UK page 71), Dr Joe Dispenza states that, from about thirty-five years old, one can consider that 95% of our thoughts have become unconscious and/or automatic. This leaves not much latitude to our will.

"95% of who you are by the time you're 35 years old is a set of memorized behaviors, skills, emotional reactions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that functions like a subconscious automatic computer program.

So 95% of who you are is a subconscious, or even an unconscious state of being. And that means your conscious mind's 5% is working against the 95% of what you've memorized subconsciously. You can think positively all you want, but that 5% of your mind that's conscious will feel as if it's swimming upstream against the current of the other 95% of your mind - your unconscious body chemistry that has been remembering and memorizing whatever negativity you've been harboring for the past 35 years; that's mind and body working in opposition. No wonder you don't get very far when you try to fight that current!"

Each person being on a personal development work in consciousness, can observe this process on their own - no matter how valid the percentage size is; it is the disproportion, and the direction of the increase of this disproportion over time which matters for the understanding of what follows.

If 95% of our thoughts have become automatic, it's at the beginning, with the tacit agreement, in some way, of our conscious thoughts. As long as we ignore the existence of this process, we cannot have a hold on it and we don't see the need of seeking to be in the present moment. We can, to some extent, choose to change the orientation of those thoughts, by changing activity, distracting ourselves, working on ourselves, and so on.

B) Aging

However, in the long run, this freedom to bring back a part of our thought according to our intentions, turns out to be an increasingly difficult task.

Because over time, no doubt that the percentage of the unconscious thoughts will continue to increase. When advancing in age, can happen a moment when we have almost no longer a hold on our thoughts. In this case, the vast majority of our actions, of our speaking, of our choices, is then only the result of the combination of our thought automatisms. Some forms of dementia would then be nothing else than the result of this process, when it went that far, that we end up losing control over our will, our presence, our intentions, except during some exceptional moments. It then becomes impossible going on in creating new neuronal connections, and the deterioration of those already existing will then accelerate

over time; and this will ultimately become visible at a medical level by an atrophy of the cerebral hemispheres.

Therefore, the atrophy of the brain would not be due to a disease of biological origin, but it would be the consequence of a natural process that appeared from childhood, and that life circumstances would have reinforced and accelerated. Once the tipping point is reached, and the will is no strong enough anymore to change the neuronal connections and to create new ones, those will freeze. And the less the brain is used, the more it will atrophy. This atrophy, if it exists long before the onset of the symptoms, would then confirm that the tipping point appears long before this becomes visible.

The mental degeneration would be established, when the mind gets into the habit of freewheeling. For, as a car on a slope, when the driver is not at the control, and there is no brake, it drives by itself, and, as in a water stream, it will follow the meanders created by the environment. And some obstacles can pull it away in a direction which, if nobody take back control, will lead it in an acceleration in that direction, which at some point, won't be manageable anymore, even when the driver will try to react. This is where one reach the stage of dementia. Single people, inactive people, are therefore much more likely to follow these kinds of paths. Yet, self-discipline - when we become aware of this phenomenon - becomes then a lever that can lead us, if we are not too far away in the slope, to take back the control as often as possible. It is then necessary to set goals, activities, priorities, clarifications, and to keep our mind busy on a positively, usefully, diversified and if possible socializing way.

In other words, whereas in childhood, the moments of presence are practically constant, they diminish bit by bit in adulthood, and it's their almost constant absence that characterizes some forms of dementia.

When our mental is working by itself, without having more control over it, it means that we are living permanently a bit like when we are stuck in emotions and when we no longer control our thoughts. If it happens to you sometimes to write down your thoughts at the moment you are stuck in a strong emotion, and you re-read them later - once freed from this emotion - you know how strong emotions can sway your opinions and thoughts.

In a way, suffering from dementia means losing the presence of mind almost continuously. It happens when our mental flees almost permanently in the habits of thoughts that it has developed for years and from which it can no longer be released. When, accumulated, they prevent him from still keeping the slightest possibility of intention, will, or control over the direction and content of his thoughts. As an adult, we sometimes have to tear ourselves away from our thoughts about preoccupation or daydreaming. Dementia is that, permanently without almost getting there. Only emotions can still help us to achieve this, otherwise, we flow back into what we know : our past.

Most adults over the age of 40 to 50 are very familiar with what I am talking about. They know then where to avoid to go.

In the same way, drugs, alcohol, psychotropics substances, are conditioning us to certain modes of brain functioning which, at a certain moment, could end up preventing the mode of brain functioning that prevails when we are sober.

And when you live in stress, you are also almost in autopilot, to the point that it is most of the time impossible to activate the "stop" lever. In order to fight stress we are advised to practice relaxation, meditation, yoga, sleep, breaks, some medications or herbal teas. Who thinks about those things when he's in a stressful time? No one. We can think about it only when we are just on a break, or when the stress finally drops, or if someone bring us there.

And in this context, the burnout would then be nothing but the stress machine that ends up working on freewheeling, and that the body and thoughts can no longer keep pace and lead us to lose control. In the same way, post-traumatic stress disorder would be the consequence of the emotion machine working on free-wheeling, dictating looping thoughts, self-generating the pursuit of both emotions, and

thoughts. Burn out, post-traumatic stress disorder, and dementia, would then relate to a dysfunction of the same nature. However, if they have in common an inability to manage thoughts correctly, they don't have the same consequences.

When our mental cannot leave the "box" anymore, we are like the hamster in his wheel, we can not stop anymore. With the difference that, in the case of dementia, we cannot leave the wheel either anymore.

C) The enemies of mental youth

The establishment of dementia takes place slowly, already in the youth, unconsciously, with acceleration moments during painful or traumatic events. However, advancing in age, some lucidity on the loss of grip on reality, still persists a very long time, and in most cases, until the end, despite appearances.

And what brings the mental to function at 95% automatically at the age of 35?

1) Automatism and absence of changes

Our conditionings, our habits, our daydreams, our ruminations, our routines, the absence of changes in our lives, the lack of innovation in our behavior, in our choices, in our activities, the absence of intellectual stimulation, the lack of curiosity, of motivation to make new learning, our lassitude, our abdication in front of the effort; are leading us to repeat the same kind of thoughts.

In this sense, our perpetual search for comfort, and our avoidance behaviors in front of unexpectedness or novelty, are signs that can draw our attention to the risk of mental shriveling up. Comfort is useful to avoid suffering and pain, but it is harmful when it comes to our laziness. In that way, a part of the novelties brought by robotization and artificial intelligence could very well accelerate our loss of intellectual abilities.

Being aware of those aspects make it possible to start the reverse learning towards improvisation, innovation and the taste for adventure.

2) An anarchic memorization

The accumulation of memorized things that are not organized, structured, arranged, sorted in our memory, will, over time, make access to those data more and more difficult. We store information, experiences, memories, opinions and reflections from childhood as if our brain memory had no limit. Imagine the hard disk of your computer, if you would save all your files, without any order, nor date, nor title, neither extension type, neither theme, and all this by tens of thousands, millions, in a single and unique library. This could lead to chaos at the time you would reach the limits of your ability to make research in all this mess, even if your memory 'space' would be unlimited.

It is well known that when aging, we keep more older memories, but we do not memorize as well in the short term. This suggests that the process of short-term memory is the one defective. This latter, generally, decreases in efficiency when we lack concentration, and this can happen in case of stress. But it may well be that it can be partly also the saturation of the long-term memory which generates the difficulty or the impossibility of memorizing in the short term. It would not then be only the recording of information that fails, just it would be prevented because of the congestion in the long-term memory.

3) Stress

Excess of stress is creating congestion of thoughts, and forces to create serial automatism without always keeping control over the proper functioning of these processes. Stress takes us away from the present moment, from consciousness, from serenity, to make the right choices. It forces us to function like a robot. Its permanence teaches us to act like automaton.

4) Negative emotions

The presence of strong negative emotions, be they fears, anger, depression; generates confusion between the memorized elements, making the dissociation between them more difficult. In particular traumatic events will reduce the mnemonic capacities in a sustainable way, even evolving, most of all when those emotions are repeated in time.

5) Submission and dependence

Submission and dependence can also play a role. When - forced or not - we delegate our actions and/or decisions to others, our mental is clearly less solicited.

6) Addictions

Addictions generate highly automated behaviors. Since there is dependence on a substance, an activity or a person, it is clearly more difficult to change those behaviors.

7) Isolation and lack of activity

Isolation and lack of activity, vectors of monotony and boredom, can also represent an important factor in the process of losing memory, for, lack of both social and intellectual stimulation, facilitates treading water in our head, by the lack of innovation, of meeting opportunities, of support, of diversification of experiences.

8) Absence of human projects

The lack on short- and medium-term goals, in terms of feeling oneself useful for others or for society, restrains the meaning of life, and the courage to live, holding back therefore the mental functioning.

9) Lack of will, of self-discipline

The lack of will, the lack of self-discipline play a role too on two levels. During youth, if they are not developed, they prevent us to realize our choices and our desires on the long term. And, when our mental abilities begin to diminish, the speed of the process will be hold back or not by the presence or not of a strong will and self-discipline. Once the disease is established, there is no real access anymore to the will.

10) The omnipresent critic

Although critical mind can be a quality in itself, when it is highly developed, it becomes disabling, and it can work like a dependence. It can lead to lots of negatives consequences that will generate situations conducive to the establishment of the dementia. Indeed, a predominant critical mind leads to failures, remoteness from the entourage, mistrust in front of novelty, of new encounter, of new activity. We trust only what we know that works well. We shrivel up, and if not we keep fighting with everything and everyone, everything being a pretext for critic.

11) Some mental illnesses or issues

Many mental illnesses also have aspects related to the process of narrowing mental activity, in the meaning that one aspect of life is spinning its wheels. This is the case with depression regarding moral or life energy, with obsessive-compulsive disorder regarding life habits, with bulimia and anorexia, regarding eating habits, with burn out, regarding stress and life energy, with chronic fatigue syndrome regarding life energy, etc.

12) The mask

During Neurological tests, it is observed that people with dementia are inventing answers. Of course. An unconscious process takes place as from the first losses occur : the person masks her lacks. As this has become automatic, as well, and unconscious, this will lead that, even during a test, the person will proceed in the same way.

The masking of all those little missteps of the brain allows to dupe the entourage for a while. However, by relying on attitudes that will mask her oversights and missteps, the affected person now prevents herself from this point forward from reacting to it constructively. Yet, this attitude will become an automatism itself, and will finally dupe the person affected herself. When the illness will really be establishing, she will get lost in the maze of of her own lies. This will unfortunately help the entourage to discredit her, whereas she doesn't necessarily have lost all her mental abilities. This is then a vicious circle that takes place between the sick person and her entourage.

The masking has also as effect that people with dementia don't complain or very few. When something goes wrong, they are used to do as if nothing had happened. And so, sometimes, even when they remember an abuse, they prefer to keep a low profile and stay quiet. And this also works in mirror : the relatives, nursing staff, caregivers, also have habits of behavior with the person affected, that, in the long term settle in the form of automatisms, because, whatever their behavior, there will be no negative reaction in order to stop them. It is not uncommon to see a spouse or a nursing staff being aggressive with a person with dementia, without even realizing it, just out of habit, as they haven't found any other way to handle certain situations and that they are not conscious that, even though the person they are dealing with has no longer the same cognitive abilities, she remains humanly complete and suffer from this aggressiveness just as much as any other person, and sometimes even much more, for, she doesn't understand the reason for this, and she is powerless in order to respond to it correctly. And those abuses, although automatic, are subtle enough to not be used in the presence of other persons. These are semi-conscious mechanisms.

Unfortunately, supervision cannot be constant in retirement homes, and especially in secure floors, and those abuses are common, everywhere. Quality continuing education would reduce this trend. Yet, work conditions being far from optimal in most retirement homes (now become most of the time real commercial enterprises) indirectly stimulate those abuses.

When doing such work by necessity and not by vocation (vocations not being usual), when the job is not well paid, when there are lack in training, when there is stress, staggered working hours, physical and psychological tiredness inherent to the tasks, and often too a deficient staff management; it becomes logical that working with motivation and humanity and showing empathy are bonuses that happen not that often. The spectacle of secure floors in retirement homes being hard to face for visitors; they are more rare than in other services, allowing misconducts and abuses less visible, which ones will never be denounced by those who endure them.

D) Acting to prevent

Acting to prevent and face the memory diseases has therefore to be done when the will and the ability to put it into action are still possible, and the sooner the better. Then it's from childhood that we have to consider the building of our mental. Once the first symptoms are well established, it becomes useless to still force a person to recover and to ask her to make painful efforts for vain gains. At a certain stage of the disease, it seems that the persons are reluctant when they are asked to train their memory. They probably have the lucidity of the scale of the task, at a loss, and for which the effort has become a real suffering. It is therefore from a very early age that learning to manage memory and thoughts must intervene.

1) Acting on thoughts

Education as it exists in Europe and probably everywhere else, doesn't offer anything in this sense. The child, from his birth never receives training in order to teach him to "think" or to manage thoughts that

cross his mental.

To reason is not to think. Mathematics, philosophy, argumentation, are teachings that deal with the way of reasoning. Reasoning is only a portion of thinking. Just as language and communication are only a partial reflection of our thoughts. However, if language courses (mother tongue or other) are taught at school, we are not even at the stage of providing simple communication courses.

Henceforth, apart during meditation or relaxation's moments, from the moment of waking up til falling asleep, all of us, think as we breathe, without being truly master of our thoughts. Every meditator knows that. And the growing success of meditation tends to show that it is likely that humanity has reached a level of evolution where every human will begin to learn to manage his thoughts. This could change the face of the World. The process will be huge, and much more important than the appearance of language or writing. But this may well happen within one or two generation(s). The emergency situation of destroying our own living environment is going to force us to do it.

And as already mentioned, digitalization, or the use of artificial intelligence, will prove very quickly problematic for those who tend too much to delegate their own abilities outside of themselves. In a certain way, some developments in those areas appear already outdated, not from a technological point of view, but from a human point of view.

In this context, we could utterly consider that dementia is a civilization disease too, as well as cancer, diabetics, obesity. If this would turn out to be true, it could potentially disappear, not thanks to medication that stopped the symptoms or progress of the process (which doesn't mean that they would be useless), but much more because the process of losing the control of the will on the thought could then be avoided.

2) Acting on memory

On the other hand, if we don't learn to manage our thoughts, we don't learn to use our memory either, except in the relatively limited context of school learning, which all too often consists in repeating information as a parrot, but without any real working method.

It looks like the "every man for himself", or even total anarchy, in this field. School gives us a partial framework, dividing lessons, creating chapters, but, once launched in active life, we will memorize on a much less organized way, rather depending on our experiences. But most people don't choose their experiences. For the most part, they are a bit forced to take what comes. A higher sociocultural level may help but not necessarily. Thus, they store learning anarchically, and memorize it without much organizing.

3) Need to act before the onset of symptoms

If it is possible to detect some forms of dementia quite early, it is because the decline process of memory starts very early. If it is estimated that at the age 35, we have only 5% of our thoughts left that we can consciously choose, it means that at this age are already largely defined the paths and the rapidity with which this percentage will still further decrease.

Still today, research for medication treatments in order to stop or restrain those illnesses remains in full swing. I think this search can take a while. Memory diseases are, for most of them, the consequences of mental processes that take place over decades. No medication will ever stop them, once the symptoms have become obvious. We can at most boost some mental abilities in order to slow down the process. It is not a question of curing dementia, nor of curing of old age. It's a question of preventing it and its development, or to slowing it down once it's fully declared.

It is by learning to manage our mental, and this, from our birth, that we are preparing to keep all our abilities much longer. This represents a considerable amount of work in order to find out how to achieve it optimally if we accept the idea that quasi-random education by parents, quasi-random experiences of life, and schooling such as we know today : are in no way the most appropriate ways to get there. And conversely, if we succeed in developing methods to learn how to manage them very early, the efficiency

of all those educational aspects will be multiplied exponentially.

E) Educate the thinking

It is possible, however, in adulthood, to do a work on oneself to evacuate everything stored on a pathological or inadequate way, in our subconscious memory, and which can disturb our conscious memory.

In that sense, we would have a much greater power than we imagine, to avoid dementia :

1) The state of physical health

First of all, the quality of our health is the first asset that stimulates the quality of our mental health. This is known : the quality of lifestyle allows to live longer : diet, sleep and physical exercise are the three pillars that should not be neglected. The absence of perpetual intense and repeated stresses could be considered a fourth.

2) Make the memory work

It is the most obvious point, but not necessarily the most essential. For the impairment of memory is the symptom, and it is mainly on the causes that has to be worked.

It's important however not to confuse stress effects or emotional shocks on the memory.

First of all, stress can interfere with attention (on a sustainable way in the burn out as we already have seen).

When we think at too many things at once (such as it happens during stress situations) and we are not really aware of it, it becomes difficult to manage the different levels of thinking so as to give the priority to one of them and to be able to calm the other flows of thoughts. It can happen easily that we are invaded by a kind of mix of thoughts that, without being managed, if they are too abundant, lead to confusion, distraction, oversights, lack of understanding of the emotions that those thoughts are generating, concentration difficulties, and eventually, to concern in front of those disabilities, etc. This situation can create quickly a snowball effect if we get aware of it because it is of course worrying. And it can harm in the long run by dint of repetition. Yet, putting the mental too much at work will, a priori, not stimulate the degeneration of the brain.

In the same way, strong emotions and emotional shocks can force the mental to work in a nagging way on the same thoughts, related to the memories of a traumatic or problematic event. This can also create the same kind of symptoms : confusion, oversights, distraction, concentration problem, and of course, the associated anxieties that will accumulate with the emotions already present. This is due to the omnipresence of the reminiscences of the traumatic event which prevents the other mental functions from working correctly, and more specifically, which will facilitate associations between the traumatic event and other events or particularities of memorized events, so that thoughts of the person affected by a trauma are almost continuously marked by aspects of the traumatic event. The repetition of the phenomenon can harm in the long term, but when it's possible to heal it, it doesn't have any impact on the degeneration of the brain. The healing occurs when one can dissociate the traumatic event from the rest of the mental functioning, and that in addition one relieves it of its emotional aspect (as for example with EMDR).

Memory can be compared to a muscle function. It needs work in order to get stronger, and it has to be maintained all life long, and even more and more with aging.

There are two main memory functions: recording and recalling. The presence of the attention is necessary for the recording of data in the memory, but beyond this recording, the recalling of the memory is only possible if we are able to make associations between different recorded elements. The

recording of one brings back the other.

Training the memory consists then of two aspects. The attention, the presence, the concentration, the awareness are the first pillar.

The association work is the second pillar. It can be trained also like a muscle. If you are searching the name of a fruit, the name of a person, the name of a profession, no matter the category; the more you get used to recall names from categories, the easier you will find back other names in those same categories, but also in any other registers.

When you realize that you tend to forget, or rather, not recall names, then strengthen your memory muscle. Search, search, more, again at every opportunity.

This work won't give many results if you are in a period of stress, of mourning, of exhaustion, strong preoccupation, important anxiety.

Manage those problems first. But in a relatively serene situation, the work of strengthening memory consists much less in recording new items than in recalling older items. The more you are able to recall all kinds of items from your memories, the easier it will be to recall those deeper buried. For, doing this, you are reactivating the neurons that create associations in the brain, and the more they are reactivated, the greater your memory will be. Being able to recall 10 names of actors, could lead you to become able to recall 100 of them.

So, whenever possible, try to find back names that are not recalled easily, without limiting yourself at noticing that you have forgotten and at giving up. Be demanding with your memory and it will answer you better and better.

3) Habits

a- limit them

In a sense, apart from our habits and obligations, and of some important choices of existence, life will lead us to live almost everything randomly or in the repetition of what we have always done. And even if most of the time it is good to follow the stream without too much resistance to what life brings to us, it is important to do it in consciousness. Our important life's choices are relatively rare : profession, couple, friendships, housing, leisure, holidays.

Inversely our daily life can be the source of continuous choices if we stop systematically relying on our habits and external influences. And it is at this level that we have the possibility to get back to the present and to educate our thoughts.

When these choices are made by conditioning, by habits or by facility, by obedience, or in order to conform to a social pressure (most of the time unconsciously), or when some of those choices are not suiting us anymore; and that we are going on rushing headlong, sometimes complaining, or blaming other for creating our problems, rather than reorienting our choices; we are setting the scene towards lowering control on events, decline in presence, reduction in memory, decrease in consciousness and a loss of mental autonomy.

And among all those choices, those who will most influence the process those are related to our time management : setting priorities, so that we never be overtaken (or as little as possible) by whatever we undertake or are forced to do. If we are not in a position to manage our time in such a way as to keep some form of serenity, we surely won't have the possibility to get back to the present moment and to be in state of making conscious choices. And inversely, being inactive consists of not having enough stimuli for our brain. A just balance is then needed to be achieved. And this is all the more important, these days, as we are more and more living connected to the external world in a virtual way, and this disconnects us from ourself.

b- changing habits - learning to leave our comfort zone

We cannot live without routine, without habits. But it is essential, in order to maintain our mental fitness,

to change them regularly. Of course, some routines cannot be really left. Once we know how to drive a car, all the driving routines stay good, even when our will decreases.

However the way we manage our daily life can be modified almost at will. Our schedules, the order of our activities, the detail of their content, the speed at which we are acting, the words that we choose to express ourself, the way we are writing, what we are eating, the clothes we are wearing, the roads we are taking to travel, our body posture, what we are watching, the programs that we are using on our tablet, our computer or smartphone, ... And that doesn't include the novelties or the changes that we can bring in the choices of our activities, of our holiday destinations, our centers of interest, our learning, our relationships and acquaintances, etc.

Everything. Everything can be questioned, everything can be changed (or almost). Faithfulness to some things and some relationships remains essential, but most of our attitudes, behaviors, and activities in our life can fluctuate over time, even our tastes and our cultural references, even our beliefs.

In a sense, the idea would be to tend to never lose our taste to get out of our comfort zone, psychological as material.

Here are some mental attitudes to privilege : self-discipline, curiosity, listening (in the sense of giving more space to the other than to ourself in the dialogue), the taste for learning.

Inversely, here are some attitudes to avoid : intellectual laziness and laziness in general (however forcing ourself too much can lead to demotivation, disgusting us with our undertaken actions), lasting inaction (when not imposed by health or external factors), submission (keeping the most mental autonomy possible, even when we are submitted to an authority, or dependent), home-loving behaviors, disinterest behaviors.

I think that people living regular and important changes in their life, are advantaged when aging, as long as these changes are not experienced on a traumatic way. For, as we already have seen, stress and traumas are the enemies of a good mental management.

Concretely it can take the following forms, for example :

moving regularly - at least move the furniture inside home - traveling, practicing different languages, reading a lot, studying, often sleeping elsewhere and in new places, changing work regularly (not necessarily changing profession), and living an intellectually stimulating life : all those factors could, by essence, be factors of avoidance of memory diseases, as long as they are experienced on a voluntary manner (whether they are our choices or whether we accept them as such if they were imposed on us), and as long as they are well managed. For, if we are overwhelmed by all those changes, they could then accelerate the aging process of our mental.

Learning or relearning to be challenged in our habits, to follow the stream of events rather than forcing to follow the program despite the unforeseen. In fact, loving the unforeseen, loving novelties, and seeking them.

For those who are reaching retirement age, take advantage of this change to do new things, while avoiding routines, but without forcing yourself. Do not go beyond your limits of insecurity, otherwise you will make the inverse movement of shriveling up by reaction in order to protect yourself from having gone too far.

I think it's better to keep the best of our habits, but I think it's more important to change habits as often as possible, and to be able to adopt new good habits that can replace other ones that were already good. The choice of innovation or change has to be done daily many times regarding all our smallest actions and decisions.

c- back to the present moment

Coming back most often to the present moment enable to reconnect to our consciousness, to our will,

to our possibility to make real choices (not automatic ones, not dictated by the program of our thoughts), and to connect ourself to everything, to something transcendent, whether we have beliefs of these kind. It may sound boring basically and yet it's the only way to honor a meeting with ourself. The more we will be able to live these present moments, the longer we will remain in control of the vessel of our life.

d- breaking free from addictions

This involves also to break free from our addictions. These are not only our habits, but they have in addition the power to force us acting against our real desires and needs. This seems obvious to understand for alcohol, and any substance altering the level of consciousness, but there are many other addictions, for some, less visible and yet harmful, such as the cigarette, food addictions (coffee, need to nibble, to eat sweet, ...) sex or even simply the need to seduce, shopping or excessive consuming, or any other little treats that we daily offer ourself and for which we don't succeed anymore in getting rid of them. And then most of all, everything that connects us virtually to others, everything that gives us a pseudo-acknowledgment, everything that is flooding us with superficiality, everything that awakes our unwholesome curiosities or our impulses, and this through all our connected devices : computer, tablet, mobile or smartphone, television, ...

All those programs, games, broadcasting, social networks, ... which plunder our time and mostly our brain and which imperceptibly take more and more space in our life, and end up preventing us from dedicating ourself to what's dear to us, and even simply preventing us from taking the time to take stock of what is the priority in our lives. Rem : video games, for instance, are mostly designed with the very purpose of creating addiction. Once this is created, we click automatically to restart once the game is over, without even having realized our desire or not to go on; this automatism being relating to addiction.

4) broadening interests

Broadening our knowledge, diversifying it, educating our curiosity, multiplying life experiences, meeting people, traveling, are all factors that can work together to maintain our mental more active in the long run. And there is a theme particularly essential in this field, it's the language skills. Since thought evolves in parallel with language and a part of our mental is merged with our language, it's fundamental to develop our language as far as possible. Diversifying our language plays the same role as the diversification of the subjects for which we feel concerned. Learning other languages being a real asset.

5) The organization of our thoughts

Aging and some forms of dementia that speed up this process lead to the shrinking of our entire field of life. We give up, step by step, all our activities, all our relationships, all our interests. It is therefore important, before this happens, to sort out all this, in order to be in state to go as far as possible in our passions and interests, and to maintain them as active as possible, but not in an anarchic base, or in excess, without ever having to force anything.

In order to make sorting possible in our thought, we can combine it with the sorting in our living environment, and therefore in our housing and at work. The decluttering helps to clean our memory, our thoughts. Cleaning up the useless, putting order in what we keep, storing things in the proper place, making lists if necessary, can help to clean the hard disk of our thoughts. And this cleaning up goes much further than that. For, we are organizing too our memories, our emotions, and so, the impact in our head is probably much more important than the impact in our space.

Making lists is another way to learn how to manage our mental. Of course, this is what people with memory disorders are advised to do to deal with this deficiency. But at a preventive level, the list is excellent. Much less for the purpose of using it later to not forget anything, than for the one of clarifying what we are writing down at the moment that we are writing it down : list of activities of the next day, to-do list at work, list of the content of our cupboards (when decluttering and cleaning up), shopping lists, list of things to take away on a trip. This allows to avoid acting by impulsion, randomly, but in a more

intentional and structured way.

Sorting out all the information that enter into our life, and without letting it dictated by TV, radio, or newspaper and magazines. Choosing what we read, watch, hear. Not allowing to be fed by what others have chosen for us, and even less by advertising. Avoiding to be a catch-all of information. Being interested in everything, but also selective, experimenting of all kind, but not whatever, and not those that were specially made up for our consuming.

6) Meditation

Learning to meditate is not easy at first. Nothing really gives us the desire to let go of our so convenient and comfortable automatisms. And the present moment seems so boring. Yet, when we manage to capture, during those moments, something to which we don't have access as long as our thought automatims have the control on our will; then, we begin to understand the nature of it and its interest. In some way, it could be considered as getting in tune with the divine source in ourself. The same as when we find love, the same as when we live intense positives emotions together with a huge crowd of people, the same as when we experience large scale natural phenomenon that subjugate us and brings us back to the same connection (as during a solar eclipse, a sunset, a rainbow, the discovering at the bend of a path of a magnificent landscape), the same as when we have an insight, intuition, inspiration, a creative momentum that makes clear for us that it comes from something much bigger than ourself. As you can see, meditation plays an essential role in life. It becomes as important as hygiene, sleep or nutrition. It can be seen as the best method for maintaining our mental. And when I talk about meditation, this includes all the methods that have a close effect and work together to manage our mental.

7) Cultivating the doubt

In parallel with the meditation, within ourself, it's worth to remain vigilant and to avoid taking our thoughts, opinions, judgments, beliefs as true, right, reliable, generalizable to all. We should then test them, verify them, deepen them, or wait for a change of mood in order to see if, in another state of mind, they still seduce us as much. We should only rely on them if, when repeated in time, they leave us serene. This implies learning how to manage our emotions, in order to no longer take for granted the automatic thoughts that occur when they are imposed on us by these emotions,

Our emotions, our naivety, our credulity, our ignorance, our errors of reasoning, or mistaken judgments, our distraction, and yet many other aspects, can lead us down the garden path. It is important to bear that in mind about everything.

Being able to cultivate the doubt while maintaining self-confidence is a hard-to reach balance, and it's only possible on the long term, by disidentifying from our thoughts.

8) Healing emotional wounds

On the other hand, it is essential to clean in our unconscious all the old emotional wounds that keep on impacting our lives at present. Generally, they have been refrained or denied. But there are still signs of them at present, means by which we can detect them but also by which we can heal from them.

Feelings of helplessness and submission are two important vectors which have prevented us to manage freely our mental in the past, and which bring then our present bugs. So, the wider is the mental autonomy from a very early age, the more the risk of mental degeneration with age decreases.

It's likely that the preferred mode of communication may also have an impact. In environments where manipulation, lying, unspoken things, innuendos, denials, insinuations, double messages are common, it's much more difficult to put thoughts in order, since lots of them, already when recorded, are extremely muddled or incoherent. It's then important to learn putting words on our feelings and emotions.

And it works the same in environments where violence is common : physic violence but mostly

psychological violence. We record very differently the events when we are in a strong emotion or not, and all the more so if it's a negative emotion, repeated over time, and combined with a feeling of helplessness and lived in solitude (in the absence of support).

9) Managing without needing to have control over everything

The brain can also develop according to the protections that we are going to develop related to our fears, our personal history, our guilt feelings, social pressure, our solitude, our pain, ... If these protections are becoming too high walls, we won't be in state to cross them anymore, and we will get locked in always the same thoughts, the same behaviors, in a vicious circle.

Having the control is not the solution. Finding meaning, seeking the key for release, opening up, opening our heart, are the best ways.

It's important to avoid freezing and control. Our ability to improvise and to face what's coming unexpectedly is therefore one of the keys to the flexibility of how our brain works.

10) Opening of the heart

And above all, in order to keep the mind alert, it is essential to mobilize it with concrete and promising projects that give meaning to our life, with thoughts pointed towards the future, that are motivated by the heart. If nothing is calling us in the future, if nothing mobilizes our heart, if we don't give a strong meaning to what we are doing today for tomorrow; we are losing the strength and energy that allow everything else. When the will to live weakens, the will itself begins to disappear.

Aging well consists in living less and less for ourself, and more and more for the others.

F) Preconclusion

There are surely many other aspects to add in order to describe what can reduce our mental abilities and to describe what can prevent or restrain this process.

Yet, it seems to me essential to understand that mental degeneration is much less a fatality than it is conceived presently, and that there won't be a miracle pill to avoid it, but inversely, we'll have to question the fundamentals of education and agree to learn how to manage our thoughts differently on a daily basis.

G) Better understanding our elders

There are so many things to improve for those already affected.

In retirement homes, it's pretty usual to see people affected with Alzheimer's disease, or other forms of dementia, treated as children, as people who don't understand anymore, as idiots, morons, crazy, or even as animals or plants.

And it's even worse, when one don't communicate with them anymore, except to infantilize them, to give them injunctions, to scold them, without being able to listen to them and to understand them. Or even, when they are left as simple furniture, and when those in charge of them don't even talk to them when they are treating them.

Most of these people lived for 70, 80 or 90 years or more. They have a life experience that we probably don't have (depending on the age difference we have with them), and may never have. They have a consciousness, they have physical needs, but also emotional needs. They are indeed often absent. But in the moments they are present, they keep for a long time a great lucidity on what's happening around them, and on their condition.

But we can never know, when they aren't communicating, whether they are present or not at what is

going on around them.

They won't be able to make big speeches in order to tell it to us, but it's about instantaneous intuitive understanding, or related to experience; and it's not about memory or logic.

In order to better understand, we can compare the human functioning to how a television works. When the message scrambles on the screen, it has nothing to do with the content of the program being broadcast. It's the same with the persons for whom brain faculties are affected. We no longer have access to their entire personality, but it's only the link which is broken. It's not the person herself who is affected, but her link to the world. This is handicapping her to lead her life in autonomy and this is requiring a lot of work of questioning for the close people, for, only they can still strive to learn to understand what their elder is living.

Only then, can they really help them. For, this help can only be based on trust. Yet, without understanding the person, she can only reject the one who wants to help her, and simply endure grudgingly all the acts that would be provided to her.

If we are able to connect with the heart to those persons, then it's not longer possible to treat them without regard. We don't really have access to what they are going through, so it's then more difficult to make our empathy work with them. But, if we are able to understand that they need, as much as any other person, presence, love, support, kindness, we will have a much greater chance of being able to help them efficiently, and they will give it back. And those needs are probably even much more important for these persons, for, what they are living, they don't really understand it completely anymore and what we put them through, is anguishing them.

And even outside pathologies, as the memory decreases inexorably with age; every person having old parents will have to deal with their aging process. Few yet understand them.

When our parents no longer understand us, no longer listen to us anymore, are more concerned about their little domestic problems or about their health, it's not out of selfishness, or because they have changed. It's because their abilities are decreasing. They are often aware of it, but they hide it most of the time (unconsciously) and try to face it head up, doing as before if they can, but not succeeding as well as before. The best way to mask that we can no longer understand, follow, listen to others; is to bring back everything to oneself and to bring the topics of conversation back to very concrete subjects, always the same, that we still master. This is not a flaw, it's just the mark of a masked inability. And this is not dementia.

Understanding this can change completely the situation. For, when a child understands that his/her parent gets to that point, he/her can then understand also that it's no longer the role of the parent to help, support, listen, but it is to him/her that this role returns from now on. The sooner this is understood, the better things will happen. It allows a new trust to develop between parents and children. It allows to slow down the mental aging process, but above all it allows to avoid loneliness that most elder person experience.

And in the same vein, when we understand that masking our own oversights and mistakes could help the disease to settle or evolve, it's then possible to learn to begin to become aware of those oversights and mistakes and to learn to acknowledge them in front of others. For, as a result of masking them, it's mostly ourself that we are fooling, preventing us for trying to remedy our loss of memory.

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from the site <http://sechangersoi.be/EN/EN-home.htm>
page : <http://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Dementiaand youth01.htm>

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