



# HEALTH NOTES



amen  
Adventist Medical  
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist health-care professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return.

To learn more about AMEN and get involved go to: [amensda.org](http://amensda.org).

Principal contributor: Elvin Adams, MD

## Learning Keeps Your Mind Young

**SUCCESSFUL AGING** requires flexibility in adapting to novel problems in order to maximize long-term functional independence. I remember a nursing home patient who had been admitted with mild dementia. She failed to answer correctly three simple questions. In exasperation she exclaimed, "Listen, I don't keep track of that kind of stuff anymore."

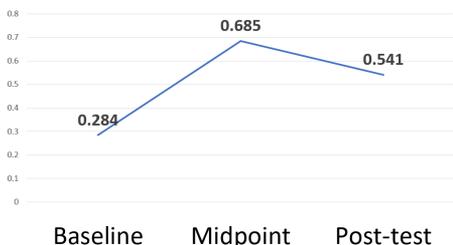
Too often as we get older, we settle into a familiar but contracted routine that is free of mental or emotional challenges. Several studies have shown that older adults who engage in new learning experiences are able to increase mental abilities and episodic memory.

These new learning experiences have included photography, quilting, learning how to use an iPad for social media, health, and finances. Other studies have shown that six months of piano lessons enhances executive functions, and improvement in digit span and trail making tests.

A new study<sup>1</sup> looked to see if there would be a mental benefit from a three-month intervention where older participants worked to develop three new but different skills all at the same time. The participants chose at least three classes from the following: (1) Spanish, (2) painting, (3) iPad use, (4) photography, or (5) music composition.

Each class was held for two hours once a week for 12 weeks. Participants were encouraged to be involved with homework or practice on the days between classes.

## Combined Scores of Mental Tests From 12 Weeks of Learning



A variety of mental function tests were administered before starting classes, at a midpoint, and at the conclusion of the 12-week learning experience.

The results were surprising. There was increased cognitive abilities across a broad range of psychological tests. Improvements were found in working memory, cognitive control, and episodic memory from baseline. The midpoint performance for the participants was similar to the performance of a separate sample of middle-aged adults **30 years younger**. Active

learning experiences can turn back the clock of your mind.



THE BIBLE indicates that it is a wise plan to continue learning.

**Proverbs 9:9(NKJV)** "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will **increase in learning.**"

**ELLEN WHITE** indicated that the true Christian will be constantly learning, "But the true disciple of Christ, he whose mind is in harmony with the mind of God, while **constantly learning**, will be teaching as well, leading the minds of others upward, away from the prevailing errors of the world." *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene 121*

Our minds can stay young if we are constantly learning of Jesus. "Keep your perceptive faculties keen and clear by **learning constantly** of Christ, the Teacher who cannot err." *Review and Herald, August 11, 1903*

So, to stay young in mind it is wise to continue learning.

---

<sup>1</sup>S. Leanos, et.al, "The Impact of Learning Multiple Real-World Skills on Cognitive Abilities and Functional Independence in Healthy Older Adults," *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* Vol XX, No. XX,1-15 June 14, 2019.

