Opinion

If the decline in cognitive performance in the treatment of novelty is unavoidable to date, it is likely that we can slow it down and even continue to learn. However, it is illusory to aim for very high-level mathematics studies if you have not reached a good level in this field before the age of 25-30 or to speak a foreign language without accent once puberty is over. On the other hand, it is quite possible, for example, to learn foreign languages or to improve in one’s native language for the rest of one’s life. This is not bad enough, and in addition, mature adults can rely on an experience they lacked, as adults. Here again, we do not all progress at the same speed or with the same means. While there are some universal recipes, most are individual [1,2]. Many factors accelerate cognitive decline: chronic stress, social isolation, poor diet (both industrial food and its additives, antibiotics and other pesticides, but also lack of variety), certain chemicals in our environment (home, work), alcohol, genetic dispositions, certain pathologies and accidents, narcotics, tobacco, certain medications, depression, lack of physical activity, lack of cognitive stimulation. I think I have identified the main factors. It should be noted that for some people, quantity, frequency (etc.) are very important. So, it’s not because we take an aperitif from time to time that we’re going to decline, nor because we’re going through a period of depression, any more than if we were to indulge in junk food from time to time. In terms of cognitive decline, genetic factors and environmental and epigenetic factors must therefore be taken into account. We are not all declining at the same speed or in the same way [3,5].

If the decline in cognitive performance in the treatment of novelty is unavoidable to date, it is likely that we can slow it down and even continue to learn. However, it is illusory to aim for very high-level mathematics studies if you have not reached a good level in this field before the age of 25-30 or to speak a foreign language without accent once puberty is over. On the other hand, it is quite possible, for example, to learn foreign languages or to improve in one’s native language for the rest of one’s life. This is not bad enough, and in addition, mature adults can rely on an experience they lacked as adults. Here again, we do not all progress at the same speed or with the same means. While there are some universal recipes, most are individual [6,9]. Conversely, without them, we simply could not have intentionally organized and controlled behaviour to achieve any goal. The basic rule is simple and old: a healthy body in a healthy mind, projects, intellectual activity, variety and novelty. All that is set out below is only an explanation of this rule [7,10-12]. Indeed, the symptoms are many and varied: difficulty concentrating, temporary forgetfulness, fear of novelty, weariness and declining motivation, difficulty calculating mentally or writing, feeling that you can no longer do certain things, etc. Mood and behaviour are also affected [5,13,14]. The fight against cognitive decline requires us to observe the various tips I have summarized here, based on scientific research. None of them are minors, they’re all related. The fight against cognitive decline must include varied, constant and constantly renewed activities, social activities, in a healthy environment and while maintaining a certain lifestyle that can give way to some excesses. But you always have to make an effort, you rarely keep the benefit of what you do forever. These activities must involve all parts of the brain (hence the notion of varied activities), and since the brain is a very complex organ that specializes itself to respond ideally to the activities to which it is subjected (hence, for example, the division into 2 hemispheres), there are many parts to stimulate. And to further complicate the matter, they communicate! Moreover, for the same activity, it is not the same parts of a novice’s or expert’s brain that are used [15,16]. Conversely, many papers showed that, people who have developed good executive memory achieve better academic performance and pass their tests better than the average [17,18]. But beyond that, and this is what really interests us, they have the means to achieve the goals they set for themselves in their lives.

References


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