

Want to stop your brain deteriorating with age? It's all in the mind

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Keeping your mind busy can halve the rate at which your brain shrinks, according to research.

Being mentally active helps stop the hippocampus, the brain's memory centre, from deteriorating with age.

The finding confirms the theory that keeping the brain stimulated helps stave off degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

An Australian study of over-60s found that those who scored lowest on a 'lifetime of experiences' questionnaire had lost more than twice the volume of their hippocampus (8.3 per cent) compared with the average volunteer, says the journal PloS One.

Author Dr Michael Valenzuela, of the School of Psychiatry at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, said, 'I think it's quite an exciting and strong finding. We've got strong evidence here that people who use their brains more have less brain shrinkage.'

'I hope people take this as a further call to arms to get out there and use their brains, get engaged in anything from tai chi to world travel, in the knowledge that it may help delay or prevent the onset of dementia.'

Learning a new language could also help, he said, but something as simple as reading or playing bingo could be just as good for an ageing brain.

Dr Valenzuela added, 'There's no one particular activity that comes up time and time again as 'magical'.'

'It seems to be more related to keeping a diverse range of activities - doing something where you're learning or you're being forced to challenge your mind.'

RESOURCE/SOURCE: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1035537/Want-stop-brain-deteriorating-age-Its-mind.html> on Wednesday, July 16, 2008.