

Do You Have Birthday Brain Syndrome?



It's a Brain Birthday

Marketers are wonderful because they have even been able to market your birthday. It's been easy to convince you that 40 is the new 30; 50 the new 40 and 60 the new 50. You can buy into that. Why not, when there is a bevy of hair color, facial products and trendy clothes to dress the exterior. Hidden arch supports, invisible hearing aids and spandex underwear is marketing's best kept secret for camouflaging the interior. Psychologically, all of this works well until the stark reminder comes from Social Security and AARP.

There is a strange phenomenon that I call the Birthday Brain Syndrome. It begins with the first symptom of increasingly hearing yourself say "I can't find ... or "Where did I put" This condition you can dismiss to the state of *Stress* – it's not your fault, the World is a busy place.

But then the second symptom silently creeps up and you find yourself asking "Why am I here?" (not the metaphysical question of the Universe, but for what reason are you standing here and what are you suppose to be doing here.)

Your brain does process the fact that you suspect you came here for a reason, but darn if you can remember what it is for. The worst part of this condition is that friends and family will attribute it to a **“Senior Moment.”** It’s bad enough that you are standing here without a clue, however it seems like of hint of truth when someone dares to direct the word “senior” at you.

The next symptom begins to raise your level of concern. It’s when you run your errands and commit any of the following:

Go to post office, get stamps but forget to mail letters

Go shopping but forget the key item on your list you need the most

Make your purchase, take cars keys out but leave wallet or handbag behind on counter.

If you recognize any of these symptoms you may have early signs of Birthday Brain Syndrome. Most of birthday brain forgetfulness is due to stress and the mindset that we adopt thinking that as we age these things should be happening to us. If, however, you do find yourself being more mentally confused or increasingly forgetful, it is always a good idea to check with your health provider.

But, the good part is to know that your brain is actually improving with each birthday through middle age. While brain processing may slow down and short term memory declines, we improve in other areas. According to Barbara Strauch, author of *The Surprising Talents of the Middle-Age Mind*, we are better at judgment, inductive reasoning, vocabulary and knowing wait to speak our mind.

On your next birthday, don’t dismay. Know that you might be forgetting some things, but your middle age brain is still capable of performing better than ever.

By Joyce Hansen