

Considering the onset of Sometimers Disease:

OK, so here's the problem, umm, challenge, I mean. The closer I get to "drool and nodding" the more comfortable I become relying on the routines that I practice every day.

With each passing day it is more and more reassuring to, in this precise order, open the drawer, remove my wallet, my keys and garage opener. Go to the closet and get my hat, coat and brief case. Turn on one light and turn off all the others. Check the locks, count the cats and leave by the front door. Go down four stairs then turn around and go back into the house to retrieve whatever it is I forgot, usually my phone.

This routine is becoming immutable. The evolved structure is Mozartian in its order. Move any part, switch any piece with another, neglect one procedure and my morning crumbles. The beautiful tidiness of my day unravels. I might as well go back to bed, wait for tomorrow and try get it going again then.

I assume that this reliance on routine is a defense against the onset of forgetfulness, the belief that once an order is perfected the arrival of senile battiness will not overcome it.

Therein lies the rub.

It is precisely this routine, the circular practice of repetitious minutia that closes the synapses, shortens the attention span, limits the memory and shrinks your thinks. As we create a smaller realm in which the mind operates, the realm of the mind becomes smaller still. The perceived cure is actually the pernicious malady. Amazing!

So here's what there is to do. Take your fear of decreasing brain function and put it way back in the freezer section of your fridge. You know, back there with the unidentifiable frosty stuff. It'll keep if you want to take it out again but in the meantime you'll stop panicking every time you can't immediately recall a common phone number. It's the fear of not remembering the number (or the name, or the date, or the title) that pushes us into siege mode. That's the mode where we close the gates, fortify the walls and settle down with our mental "stuff" to wait for the inevitable.

Put the fear away and treat each bump as just another bump.
Big deal, your socks don't match.

Now that the fear is on ice, try practicing something new. Every day, at least once a day, change something that you think is necessary to your daily routine. Set your alarm for 6:23 instead of 6:30. Shave the other side of your face first. Go for a day with no jewelry. Have dessert first. Call mom on Saturday instead of Sunday. Read your email bottom to top. Switch sides of the bed with your honey. You get the idea.

In no time you will be treading fearlessly, creatively forward and the fact that you forgot to put on your pants won't mean diddle.