

Study: Older may mean happier

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A U.S. neuropsychologist says her research indicates senior citizens are more often happier than their children and grandchildren.

Associate Professor Stacey Wood at Scripps College in Claremont, Calif., said her study suggests older adults process negative information differently than do their younger counterparts.

In a recent experiment with collaborator Michael Kisley at the University of Colorado, both older and younger adults were shown a series of negative images (such as dead animals) or positive images (such as bowls of ice cream) and the degree to which brain activity increased was recorded. The results showed older adults are more likely to be less responsive to negative or unpleasant information.

Wood says, "In general, humans have a tendency to pay more attention to 'bad' than to 'good,' a phenomenon called the negativity bias." Wood said. "This tendency decreases as we age."

The study was funded by the National Institute on Aging.

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