

# People who think positively about aging are more likely to recover memory

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A Yale School of Public Health study has found that older persons with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a common type of memory loss, were 30% more likely to regain normal cognition if they had taken in positive

beliefs about aging from their culture, compared to those who had taken in negative beliefs.

Researchers also found that these positive beliefs also enabled participants to recover their cognition up to two years earlier than those with negative age beliefs. This cognitive recovery advantage was found regardless of baseline MCI severity.

"Most people assume there is no recovery from MCI, but in fact half of those who have it do recover. Little is known about why some recover while others don't. That's why we looked at positive age beliefs, to see if they would help provide an answer," said Becca Levy, professor of public health and of psychology and lead author of the study.

Levy predicted that positive age beliefs could play an important role in cognitive recovery because her previous experimental studies with [older persons](#) found that positive age beliefs reduced the stress caused by cognitive challenges, increased [self-confidence](#) about cognition, and improved cognitive performance.

The new study is the first to find evidence that a culture-based factor—positive age beliefs—contributes to MCI recovery. The study appeared in *JAMA Network Open*. Martin Slade, a biostatistician and lecturer in [internal medicine](#) at Yale, is co-author of the study.

Older persons in the positive age-belief group who started the study with normal cognition were less likely to develop MCI over the next 12 years than those in the negative age-belief group, regardless of their baseline age and [physical health](#).

The National Institute on Aging funded this study. It had 1,716 participants aged 65 and above who were drawn from the Health and Retirement Study, a national longitudinal study.

"Our previous research has demonstrated that age beliefs can be modified; therefore, age-belief interventions at the individual and societal levels could increase the number of people who experience cognitive recovery," Levy said.

**More information:** Role of Positive Age Beliefs in Recovery From Mild Cognitive Impairment Among Older Persons, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). DOI: [10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.7707](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.7707) , [jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen.2023.7707](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen.2023.7707)

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