

OTHER VIEWS

A stretch of the imagination

Dan Quayle once said, "A mind is a terrible thing to lose." The former vice president's gaffe elicited immediate howls of laughter and derision because he had unwittingly substituted lose when he meant to say waste. In retrospect, maybe the former vice president had it right all along.

Sadly, various forms of dementia, usually considered a problem related to aging, strike some unfortunate people earlier through no fault of their own. It's those among us who invite this dreaded visitor into our minds with reluctance that I want to encourage.

In the 1990s, "use it or lose it" became a popular cliché. Although it's most often applied to another aspect of the human experience, where better to use it as an apt slogan than for our minds?

For instance, consider this paradox: Throngs of people voluntarily challenge themselves to a regular regimen of physical exercise yet willingly submit to a self-induced coma every evening with a two- to three-hour mental diet of mindless television situation comedies.

Computer programmers used to say, "junk in, junk out." They knew that results were

only as good as the data entered. It's the same way with the greatest computer of them all — the one between our ears.

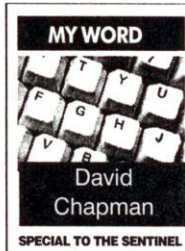
May I humbly offer a suggestion that will give your mind the workout it needs as desperately as your body?

Whatever your age, go back to school. It's the gymnasium for your brain.

You can't say you don't have the opportunity. We are blessed with the University of Central Florida, Rollins College, nearby community colleges, business and vocational schools, senior-citizen centers and adult-education programs at numerous high schools.

I've just completed a course in the Maya Studies program offered by the anthropology department at the University of Central Florida. The professors, Diane and Arlen Chase, are highly respected archeologists. This class was so challenging and stimulating, and my return to a college campus was very rewarding.

I plan to continue taking classes until I can no longer find the Expressway E-pass lane. My



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inspiration is a great lady who is 75 years young and who not only was a key contributor in our evening course, but she also took another class during the day.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "One's mind, once stretched with a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."

If you're serious about taking care of your body, consider giving your mind a good workout at least one night a week. Enroll in a class somewhere.

Think of it as a stretching exercise.

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