NORMAL COGNITIVE CHANGES WITH AGEING

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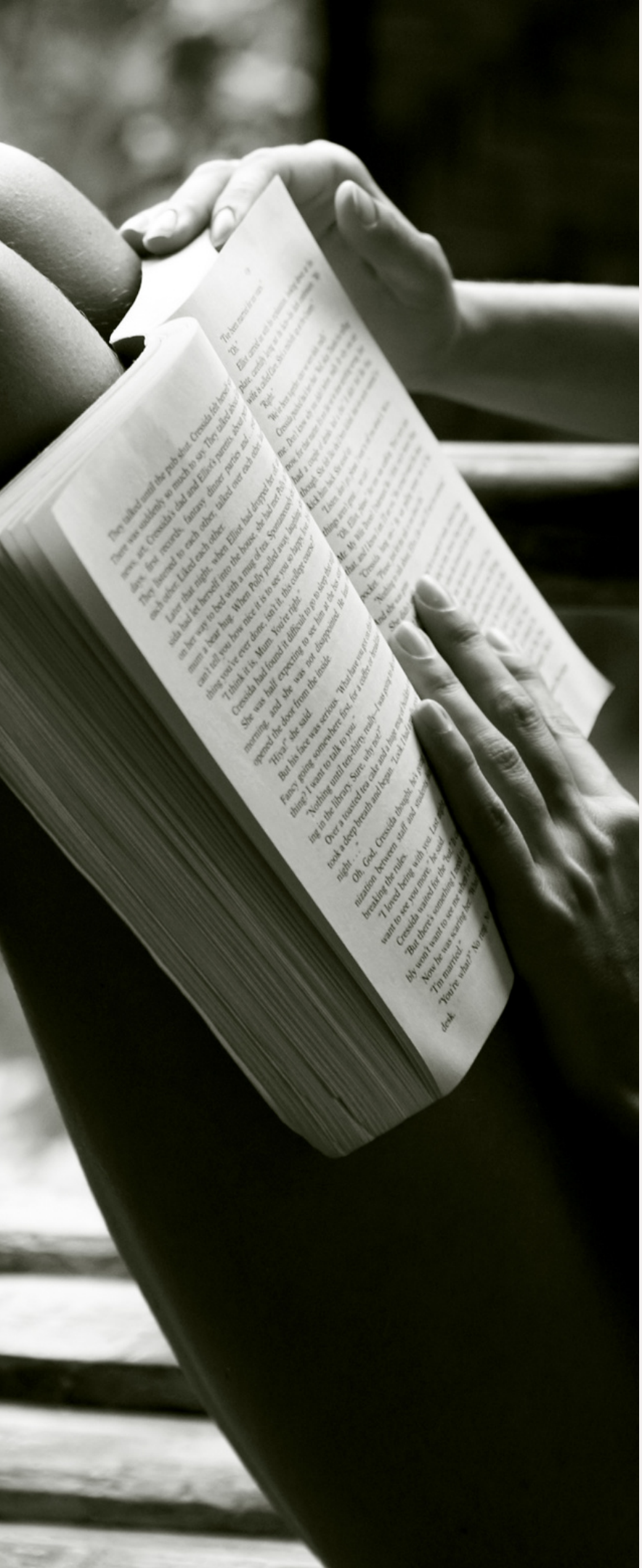
PROCESSING SPEED

This refers to how fast our brain acknowledges and responds to cognitive activities or stimuli. It may include the capability to quickly solve rudimentary math problems, rapid recognition of visual cues, and immediate reaction to dangerous situations. The decline in this cognitive domain is part of normal ageing that begins in the third decade of life to old age.

ATTENTION

Attention is the ability to focus and concentrate on relevant information or stimuli and respond to them. The three subtypes of attention: are divided, selective, and sustained attention.

With ageing, the decline is more evident in selective and divided, as these two subtypes require complex attention. Yet, this decline does not suggest a neurodegenerative condition. Sustained attention, which refers to the capability to focus over a long period, does not usually decline with ageing.



MEMORY

Older adults commonly complain about memory changes, such as the declining ability to use techniques to enhance learning and memory.

The ability to encode new information and acquire memory declines across a person's life. In cognitively healthy older adults, the ability to retain information is preserved, but a decline in the ability to access newly learned information (memory retrieval) is evident.

LANGUAGE

As we age, our overall linguistic ability (e.g., vocabulary and comprehension) stays intact, remains stable, and even improves over time. However, the ability to execute a word search and construct words for a specific category (e.g., letters, animal names) within a set time decreases as we age (Harada et al., 2014). Recalling a piece of information involves memory.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

This refers to higher-level skills such as conceptualizing a problem, the ability to make appropriate decisions, as well as the ability to plan and carry out efficient actions. The decline in executive functioning leads older adults to have slower problem conceptualization and do not perform well in events that require strategic thinking (Howieson, 2015). Research shows that older adults think more concretely than 56 younger adults. It is noticeable as people age, notably after age 70, that their concept formation, abstraction, and mental flexibility decline (Harada et al., 2013).