



WEST MARIN

SENIOR
SERVICES

June 20th

4:00 pm —5:30 pm

Point Reyes Presbyterian Church

11445 CA-1, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956



I'll Never Forget What's-Her-Name: Stability and Change in the Aging Mind DR. DEBORAH BURKE

Research has uncovered a number of myths about normal aging, e.g., “We lose a thousand neurons a day,” “It is normal to lose your memory as you grow older.” In fact, many of the cognitive abilities we value most highly improve during adulthood and do not normally decline until people are 80 years or more. There are also some frustrating cognitive problems that develop with aging, for example, difficulty in remembering an article in the morning newspaper or tip-of-the-tongue experiences where you are temporarily unable to remember a name or word that you are confident that you know. After describing cognitive abilities that are stable or improve with normal aging, I will discuss frustrating changes like the tip-of-the-tongue state, what causes them and what we can do to reduce such cognitive changes, focusing on simple everyday behaviors such as exercise.

Deborah Burke was the W.M. Keck Distinguished Service Professor in the Linguistics and Cognitive Science Department at Pomona College in Claremont, CA and is currently Professor Emerita. Her research investigates aging effects on language and memory, with 30 years of funding from the National Institute on Aging. She investigated older adults' most annoying and frequent memory failure, namely, the tip-of-the-tongue experience. She also tackled myths about aging, for example, that older adults' speech is irrelevant and off-topic more than young adults'. She found that, on the contrary, older adults' speech is rated as more interesting and informative than young adults. Her research appears in scientific journals and venues including the National Academy of Sciences, the Royal Society in London, and popular venues including NPR (*All Things Considered*), *Scientific American*, and *Psychology Today*. Her awards include Distinguished Teaching (five times), the American Psychological Association Mentor award, and a MERIT award from NIH.



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