

## WHY IT TAKES SO LONG TO DECIDE



A researcher discovers changes in our decision-making capabilities as we age.

According to Gregory Samanez-Larkin, a postdoctoral fellow at Vanderbilt University and co-director of the [Scientific Research Network on Decision Neuroscience and Aging](#), the way we make decisions changes on a fundamental, physiological level as we age. The brain begins to approach its tasks differently, and once we understand the changes, we can learn to work with them.

Processing information also gets more difficult for the elderly, said Dr. Samanez-Larkin. “We get more easily distracted and sometimes have a harder time ignoring irrelevant information. We have a harder time sourcing information — ‘Who was it that told me this was a good idea?’”

Older adults are also more focused on the present moment and maximizing well-being. That can make simply reading a menu a pleasurable experience, said Dr. Samanez-Larkin, but it may also lead a parent to resist change simply because it’s unfamiliar.

Every age brings its own peculiar shortcomings where finances are concerned, according to [a study by a group of economists](#) who looked at the financial errors people make — late credit card payments, for example — at different ages. Young people have loads of cognitive ability but little experience; elderly people have plenty of experience but diminished cognitive skills.

Middle age brings a valuable balance of ability and experience, researchers say. “Adult children are actually ideally suited to help an aging parent,” said Dr. Samanez-Larkin. We are, he said, at “a psychological prime, of sorts,” capable of being useful — so long as we remain supportive, and resist the urge to take over.

### Questions:

1. Do you have a trend in making decisions? Or a criteria?
2. Does it take so long for you to decide or make a decision?
3. Do you agree with the article above that decision making is different when you are older or you younger?