TuSalud

Bilingual Benefits

Speaking more than one language provides lifelong gains for Latino minds.

March 25, 2014 By Casey Halter

From personal experience, we all know that switching back and forth between English and Spanish in our daily lives helps keep Latinos' minds sharp, and recent studies on bilingualism's effects on our long-term mental health prove it. Turns out, speaking more than one language can delay the onset of symptoms associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia by an average of 4.5 years. Why? Scientists hypothesize that the constant need for a bilingual person to selectively activate one language—while suppressing the other—leads to better control of attention, as well as improved resolution of inhibition and conflict. This, in turn, gives the brain a better workout every day and helps protect these same functions in the long run. What's more, studies show this "mental juggling" among bilingual people can lower the risk for depression and anxiety throughout life, while also improving attention to detail and multitasking abilities.

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