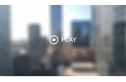

THE GRAPEVINE

Why Your Mid-20s Is the Best Age For Making Random Choices

Published Apr 14, 2017 1:55 PM EDT By Melissa Matthews

Random behavior actually takes a lot of cognitive function, says scientists. (PHOTO: PIXABAY)

Thinking of something completely random, like a sequence of coin flips, might seem instinctual, but it's actually a pretty complex process.

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Hector Zenil, Ph.D and professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, tells the *New Scientist*, "Our brains are wired to find patterns even where there are none – for example, when looking at clouds or stars in the sky."

Zenil and a team of researchers looked into how our ability to make random choices changes throughout our lives. They recruited 3,400 people between 4 and 91 years old to perform online tasks that measured their abilities to act randomly, reports *Science Daily*.

Participants were instructed to perform tasks like listing hypothetical results of coin flips to look random, guessing the card pulled from a randomly shuffled deck, and listing possible results from dice rolls.

Scientists controlled for gender, language and education, discovering that age was the one factor that impacted random behavior. The best age to act randomly is 25, according to the study, as the ability gradually declines as we get older.

As *New Scientist* reports, random behavior requires cognitive skills like memory and attention, which decline as we age. According to the article, random behavior decreases more rapidly once we hit 60.

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Even though cognitive abilities decline, there are certain things that stay intact, says Emory University. Knowledge, or intelligence, as well as memories stored over a long period of time remain fairly stable. The university also reports that our ability to focus attention on one thing holds up as we age in addition to our verbal abilities. They recommend keeping a healthy level of stress, maintaining a good diet and keeping your brain stimulated through reading or puzzles in order to preserve cognitive abilities.

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