

News Story Summary

Researchers at Penn State have determined that if people wake up feeling their day was going to be stressful, it has a negative impact on their working memory (the part of our memory that helps us learn and retain information even when we are distracted). Dr. J. Hyun, a doctoral student working with this research explains that humans are able to think about and anticipate things even before they occur, and this helps us prepare for and perhaps even prevent certain events. “But this study suggests that this ability can also be harmful to your daily memory function,” Dr. Hyun explains, “independent of whether the stressful events actually happen or not.” Dr. Martin Sliwinski, the director of Penn State’s Center for Healthy Aging, says, “A reduced working memory can make you more likely to make a mistake at work or maybe less able to focus.”

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the term “expecting a stressful day”.)

Focus Attention

To supplement the Focus Attention idea, share the news story above. Note that these researchers are suggesting that when you start your day thinking about how stressful your day could be – that negative anticipation can be harmful to your thinking and make you less productive all day long. Then direct the group to discuss the questions under Read: *What are you looking forward to the most? What are you dreading the most? What role, good and bad, can anticipation play in a person’s life?*

Challenge

To supplement the Summarize and Challenge ideas, remind the group of the Penn State researchers who have discovered that negative anticipation can have an adverse effect on your whole day. Say: *In contrast, today’s study has helped us see that our patient anticipation – looking forward to Jesus’ certain return – can be a time of courage and hope for believers.* Then continue with the instructions under Summarize.