

Understanding how your brain works

The Star Malaysia · 19 May 2022 · 4

YOU are in the middle of your college education, well on the way to becoming a working adult, yet you find yourself on a roller-coaster when it comes to planning, motivation and even managing your temper.

Guess what? It's not your fault. It's the way your brain is working. Or rather, how it's not. In the past, we used to think that people matured at the age of 18.

But, thanks to MRIs and other tools, we now know that the human brain doesn't fully develop until we're about 24 – and sometimes, even later.

If you're a student, this is important to acknowledge as the pre-frontal cortex behind your forehead is involved in impulse control, complex planning, attention and decision-making. Impulse control is important as it means young adults aren't as good at self-discipline as older adults.

In terms of decision-making, this part is where your organised thinking, risk assessment and logical thinking come into play. You might have trouble arranging facts, taking risk into consideration and making decisions based on fact rather than emotion.

In some ways, this is good: young adults can make great entrepreneurs as they take chances older adults shy away from. But you might also make some bad decisions.

Scientists suggest training your brain by staying physically healthy. This means eating and sleeping properly and staying off drugs. You can also challenge yourself in cognitive terms with a rich learning environment.

For good mental health, keep in mind that while you may be legally an adult, you can't expect to have a mature brain in a young body. So, if you make some errors of judgment that seem silly with hindsight, forgive yourself.