Everyday life is full of numerous demands for attention that can affect the ability to concentrate and function effectively. For older people, examples of these attentional demands include negotiating public transportation and issues related to driving, vision and hearing difficulties, and physical discomforts and worries that make it harder to focus the mind on completing daily tasks (Jansen & Keller, 1998). These attentional demands require extra mental effort to manage and can overwhelm and fatigue the neural mechanisms responsible for cognitive processes, particularly the ability to concentrate. When attentional demands impair these cognitive processes, people have difficulty carrying out plans and activities, making decisions, remembering, and generally taking care of the daily routines of life (Cimprich, 1992b, 1995; Kaplan, 1995). Few research studies have been done to explore the attentional demands of elders or their effects on everyday life.

Attentional Demands and Daily Functioning Among Community-Dwelling Elders
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Everyday life is full of numerous demands for attention that can affect the ability to function. For elders, examples of these attentional demands include negotiating public transportation and driving, sensory losses, and physical discomforts and worries that make it harder to concentrate and complete tasks. The purpose of this study was to examine the relation between attentional demands and the ability to manage daily activities requiring concentration for 54 community-dwelling elders (34 women, 20 men). As theorized, attentional demands correlated (r = –.58) significantly with daily functioning. Elders with more attentional demands perceived themselves as having greater difficulty managing tasks requiring concentration. Attentional demands accounted for a significant proportion of variance in functioning (12%), even after partialling out the effects of depressive symptoms and health. Findings support the theorized relation between attentional demands and daily functioning, as well as nursing interventions aimed at decreasing attentional demands to promote effective functioning for elders.