



The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain

By Gene D. Cohen

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The Mature Mind delivers good news for those in the second half of life, with an extraordinary account of cutting-edge neuroscience, groundbreaking psychology, fascinating vignettes from history and case studies, and practical advice for personal growth strategies. Gene Cohen, a renowned psychiatrist and gerontologist, draws from more than thirty years of research to show that surprising positive changes in our brains have the powerful potential to enhance, not diminish, our lives after fifty.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Old dogs can learn new tricks, says psychiatrist Cohen, drawing on the latest studies of the aging brain and mind. In fact, new scanning technologies show that in some ways the aging brain is more flexible than younger ones. How we look at the "mature mind" may change with the theories and research presented by Cohen (*The Creative Age*), founding chief of the Center on Aging at the National Institute of Mental Health. Aiming to debunk the myth of aging as an inevitable decline of body and mind, Cohen introduces the concept of developmental intelligence, a "maturing synergy of cognition, emotional intelligence, judgment, social skills, life experience, and consciousness." Expanding on Erik Erikson's developmental psychology, Cohen postulates that there are four phases of psychological development in mature life: midlife re-evaluation, "a time of exploration and transition"; liberation, a desire to experiment; the summing-up phase of "recapitulation, resolution, and review"; and "encore," the desire to go on. Drawing on the results of two groundbreaking studies, Cohen illustrates that the years after age 65 are anything but "retiring," and that creativity, intellectual growth and more satisfying relationships can blossom at any age.

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From Booklist

Starred Review Never mind those "senior moments" in which a word slips away just as it's about to leave the lips. Cohen has good news for the over-40 set: older brains can learn new things, and they are actually better than younger brains at many types of intellectual tasks. Recent studies show that the brain and mental capacity continue to grow throughout life. This development takes advantage of a lifetime of experiences as well as the emotional mellowing that occurs with advancing age and eventuates in the older brain processing information in a manner quite different from and in no way inferior to the way a young brain performs. Cohen's own research establishes that both hemispheres of the brain are used more efficiently and that the brain becomes vastly more creative as life goes on. Contrary to the previous belief that new brain cells stop forming after adolescence, the former chief of the Center on Aging at the National Institutes of Health says that growing new brain cells is a lifelong phenomenon. He identifies four developmental phases of the mature brain—midlife reevaluation, liberation, summing up, and encore; cannily supplements his data with anecdotes; and all-in-all offers a shot in the arm to the hopes of millions who wish to remain vital to the end.

Donna Chavez

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Review

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