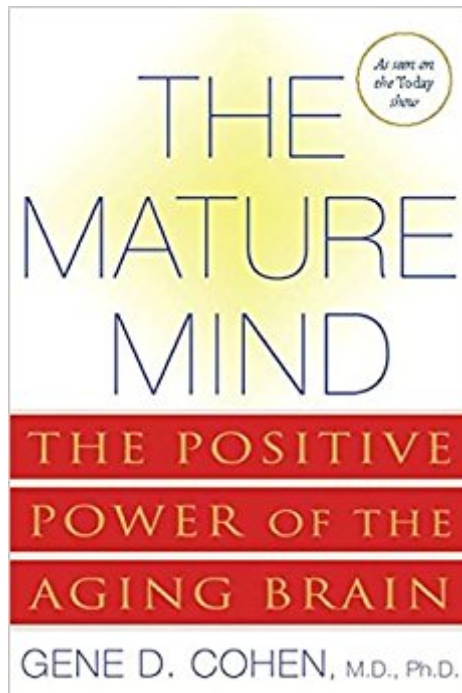




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# The Mature Mind: The Positive Power Of The Aging Brain



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

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

**\*Starred Review\*** Never mind those "senior moments" in which a word slips away just as it&#x92;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's 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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Highly recommended for anyone starting to contemplate retirement, as well as those already retired. I enjoyed the summary descriptions of four psychological stages we all traverse over the course of our lives. The book contains many interesting suggested activities and resources for staying socially engaged and connected with your true inner self as you age in retirement.

This was required reading for a graduate class I was enrolled in last semester. It surprised me that once I got into the book, I truly enjoyed it. It gave some really great, eye-opening perspectives on aging, what the elderly expect versus what they experience, & how things are changing for that age segment every day. I would definitely recommend it to anyone interested in gerontology & the study of aging.

This book is an intelligent view of how as we age we continue to develop. It is well written and easy to understand even though it describes brain development and other subjects that usually are too "Heady" (pardon the Pun) for a general audience. It gave me a great deal of comfort about approaching 70, let me off the hook for some short term memory loss, and helped me to look forward to many years of what the author calls the developmental stage of "Encore." This book came at the right time for all the baby boomers who aren't ready to sit back and "retire" but like us want to continue to grow and contribute. Thank you Gene Cohen!

New thoughts about an aging mind that are worth thinking about.

This book is EXTRAORDINARY. Every page I read gives HOPE to all of us that the last years of our lives can be beautiful years of thought, of action, of reflection. I have never had the good fortune to hear Dr. Cohen speak, but his voice comes through the pages of this book loud and clear. Just listen to a selection of sentences on just one randomly selected page:~f~ ~ A life without memory is a ghost life at best~f~ ~ Our brains have no known limits for memory storage. In other words just because you're old, that doesn't mean you've "used up" your brain's memory capacity.~f~ ~ You need to understand a bit about the brain's mind-boggling circuitry.~f~ ~ The limits on memory are logistical, not fundamental. We are limited only by the time we have in life for learning - our brains could contain many lifetimes of information. This is incredible information this man is giving up. All of the above appeared on page 106. I found the entire book to be chock full of optimistic statements and beliefs predicated on Gene Cohen's lifetime of scientific learning. I don't know about you, but when I pick up a book, the cover catches my eye, and then the feel. I want see how the pages feel as I turn them. What font does the author used, and how big is that font? Is the author long-winded in his statements? Does the book have an extra hundred, or two hundred pages of filler material, or does the author get to the point? Am I going to take one or two fabulous thoughts out of this book, or is it full of gems on every page, just waiting for me to get at them? I couldn't put this book down, that's how interesting I found it. Chapter 7 is about "Reinventing Retirement". This chapter will transform your thinking as to what retirement can be all about. It can be the best years of our lives. I use to think that when people get old, they get cranky, and nasty. It wasn't until about five years ago; I suddenly realized that hey, these people were like this when they were young. They didn't need to get old, to get nasty. The book is full of interesting anecdotes about different people at different stages of their lives. This man should write a book interviewing a hundred different fascinating people who are in their 80's or 90's. I haven't found anything out there like this, and Cohen is the perfect gentleman to write such a book. One of the gifts that old age can bring is the ability to selectively re-live different times in your life if you have remarkable recall of what took place. I talked to a man once who was in his 90's, and had been an editor of a major magazine in his earlier years. His mind was extraordinarily alive, and vibrant, with incredible recall. I asked him what was the best thing about being older. He said it was the ability to constantly entertain himself by thinking about events in the past that happened 40, 50, 60, even 70 years ago. As I get older, I am 55 now, I understand what he meant. I met a man who was among

the handful of the most powerful Cardinals in the Vatican. This individual was in his late 80's. He told me that he had participated in thousands upon thousands of situations involving the last rites of people who were about to die. I asked him if there was anything in common among the people involved? What did they think about in the last minutes to hours, of their respective lives? He said that none of them expressed guilt over things they had done. Every one of them talked about the things they had not done, but wished they had done. A man might have wanted to go salmon fishing in a river in Montana, or spent more time with his daughter in New Orleans. Not one of them ever said, "You know, I should have worked harder." This book by Gene Cohen gives new meaning to old age, and what it can become for each of us who are willing to grasp the possibilities and ACT on them. Order it today, read it from cover to cover. Give it to your parents if they are still alive, or a loved one. Get out of that rut, and take on new challenges. Every day each of us is an author, and we are busy writing our own scripts - OUR LIVES. Make it so that you can look back some day, and say - NO REGRETS AND MEAN IT. Richard Stoyeck

Even though I was raised around people who talked about the pains and ill health that accompanied aging, I never quite believed that this was what we were fated to look forward to. Still, it came as a wonderful revelation that I was not alone in my belief, and that there was strong evidence that aging as a time of decay was little more than a myth. This book not only provided compelling evidence that aging can be a rewarding period of life, but also provided a new set of expectations about what rewards will accompany the aging process. It was just the motivation I required to deal with what few health challenges I now have, so that I can enter the next phases of my life physically stronger and better able to reap its rewards!

If you're worried about what your mind is doing as you age, this book is for you.

The lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the aging brain are enormous. Cohen documents the performance of the mature mind and serves as an inspiration to all of us. Regardless of your age read this book!

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