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Successful Aging

"Every
baby boomer—
and their parents—
should read this book!"

—Daniel Goleman,
author of *Emotional
Intelligence*

The MacArthur Foundation
Study shows you how the
lifestyle choices you make
now—more than heredity—
determine your health and
vitality

John W. Rowe, M.D.

President, Mount Sinai Hospital and School of Medicine

and Robert L. Kahn, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology and Public Health, University of Michigan

This book is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information regarding the subject matters covered. It is published with the understanding that in this book the authors are not engaged in rendering medical or other professional services. If an individual is considering changes in his or her health-related practices or regimens, then medical advice or other expert assistance is required, and the services of a competent physician or other professional person should be sought.

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First Edition

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A profoundly important book that announces
a completely new way to live your life.

In this clear and authoritative work, Drs. John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn explain that successful aging is largely determined not by genetic inheritance—as common wisdom has it—but by individual lifestyle choices in diet, exercise, the pursuit of mental challenges, self-efficacy, and involvement with other people. This shift in the field of gerontology is due in great measure to the MacArthur Foundation Study of Aging in America, which was begun in 1987 and led by Drs. Rowe and Kahn. Its remarkable results are brought together for the first time in *Successful Aging*.

Inspiring and instructive, and based on more than ten years of groundbreaking research, the information and ideas presented here will transform our thinking about the quality of life that it is possible to obtain and sustain as we grow older.

Center for the Advancement of Health

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Spring 1998

Dear Friend:

The Center for the Advancement of Health is honored to work with the MacArthur Foundation in introducing this major book to those who care most about the health of our aging population.

The Center, started in 1992 by the MacArthur Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, promotes the science that investigates how emotions, thoughts and behaviors affect our health. We are concerned about the health of all segments of the population, not solely the elderly or aging, but we consider *Successful Aging* such an important addition to the store of scientific knowledge about mind-body connections that we prepared the enclosed *Facts of Life: An Issue Briefing for Health Reporters*. It summarizes some of the most significant findings explored in *Successful Aging* and provides context and background by the book's authors.

Publishing and disseminating *Facts of Life* periodically to journalists and policy-makers is one of the ways in which we promote such scientific findings and seek their application in mainstream medical care.

If you would like to learn more about the Center's work, I invite you to visit our website — <http://www.cfah.org> — where you will find descriptions of our projects, policy papers we have published, and news about the progress being made in understanding how behaviors and emotions get "under the skin" to affect our health. All of them can be viewed and printed from the website.

If you are interested in receiving hard copies of any of our publications, please contact us for a list and order form. You may reach our office by telephone at (202) 387-2829, by fax at (202) 387-2857, or by electronic mail at: cfah@cfah.org

Sincerely,



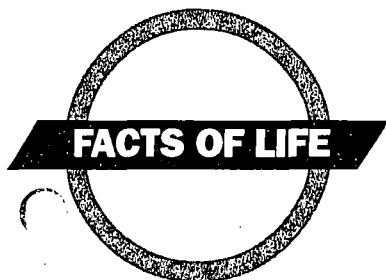
Jessie C. Gruman, PhD
Executive Director
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An Issue Briefing for Health Reporters

Vol. 3, No. 2

March-April 1998

Getting Old: A Lot of It Is in Your Head

The Issue

Inheritance only partly explains how fast our bodies and minds decline with age. Lifestyle factors play a significant role — and those factors are not programmed: they can be changed.

It is never too late to make healthy lifestyle choices, such as exercising, making friends and becoming engaged in activities, three of the most powerful determinants of health and functioning in seniors.

The Facts

- Of 1,350 people aged 70-79 who had good mental and physical functioning, almost 25 percent improved during the next eight years and more than half maintained their level of functioning. Key factors: social connectedness, exercise, engaging in productive activities.^{13, 14}
- Studies of twins who were raised apart show that only about 30 percent of physical aging and only half of age-related changes in mental functioning can be blamed on genes.⁹
- Loneliness kills: compared to those with strong social networks, those with weak or few relationships run a two to four times greater risk of death, regardless of age, physical health, smoking, alcohol use, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, race, or socioeconomic status.⁶
- You can reverse memory decline: in one study, older participants could recall only five words from a random list; younger participants did better. After five training sessions, the seniors tripled their recall rate, even surpassing the pre-training recall of the younger participants.³
- Help can teach old people to be helpless: 72 nursing home patients (mean age 78) were asked to assemble a jigsaw puzzle at four ses-

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sions. One-third was given extensive help, one-third was given no help, and the others were "encouraged" but given only minimal help. Performance of the group given the most help deteriorated even below that of the no-help group; that of the "encouraged" group improved.²

Center for the Advancement of Health

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THE JOHN D. AND CATHERINE T.
MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

March 26, 1998

Dear Colleague,

I write to bring to your attention an important book based on a major research effort on aging. Successful Aging by John Rowe and Robert Kahn (copy enclosed) provides guidance for health practitioners and educators and a solid orientation for policy-makers. For the lay person, it contains useful, science-based advice about lifestyle choices.

This work reflects more than 10 years of research by an interdisciplinary network of scientists from such fields as biology, neuroscience, sociology, genetics, psychology, and geriatric medicine. The research, funded by the MacArthur Foundation, has been one factor in the growing recognition that we can significantly influence the degree of satisfaction and health that we enjoy as we age. As the authors say:

Our main message is that we can have a dramatic impact on our own success or failure in aging. Far more than is usually assumed, successful aging is in our own hands. What we can do for ourselves, however, depends partly on the opportunities and constraints that are presented to us as we age--in short, on the attitudes and expectations of others toward older people, and on the policies of the larger society of which we are a part.

I hope you find this information useful. In the coming months the Gerontological Society of America and the Center for the Advancement of Health will be helping us ensure that it reaches those who influence policy and clinical practice regarding older Americans.

We appreciate your interest.

Sincerely,



Adele Simmons
President

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