

Preparing for Successful Aging

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It's never too early or too late to start working toward the goal of improving brain health. So perhaps the New Year is the perfect time to consider how one achieves a long and satisfying life. A book recently publishing by American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., called *Successful Cognitive and Emotional Aging* may be just the tool to help find some answers to the age-old question.

Its focus is on success in cognitive and emotional realms of aging – a compelling topic in a society where baby boomers are poised to enter their golden years.

The book is edited by a leading expert on successful cognitive aging from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine – Dilip Jeste, MD, Estelle and Edgar Levi Chair in Aging, distinguished professor of psychiatry and neurosciences, and Director of UC San Diego's Stein Institute for Research on Aging – and his colleague, Colin Depp, PhD, assistant professor of psychiatry. With topics ranging from molecules and genes to social relationships and spirituality, Jeste and Depp have compiled a collection of essays from foremost experts on behavioral and psychosocial aspect of aging, as well as prevention and intervention strategies.

As Jeste and Depp point out in the book's overview, two-thirds of all people in the entire history of the world who lived to be age 65 are alive today.

Yet, media attention regarding the "age crisis" often overshadows the real and positive strides made in extending the human life and health span over the past 100 years. Along with society's need to understand and treat pathological aging – such as identifying the onset of Alzheimer's disease – another group of doctors and researchers are working to differentiate "successful" from "normal" aging.

"Our review suggests that older adults tend to place more importance on cognitive and emotional qualities such as having a positive attitude or being socially engaged than on physical aspects of aging," said Jeste. "Therefore, opportunities to enhance the health of an aging global population through cognitive and emotional interventions are both immense and challenging." Such strategies might include physical activity, dietary recommendations and pharmacotherapy, and the

book summarizes evidence for both traditional and nontraditional approaches to cognitive stimulation and interventions.

Importantly, it stresses the importance of positive emotions, the role of spirituality and accumulated wisdom in achieving successful aging.

“It is our sincere hope that, with much left to know, this book will convince its readers that there is a rapidly developing and scientifically sound basis for optimism about growing older,” Jeste said.

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