

Levitin, D. (2020). *Successful aging: A neuroscientist explores the power and potential of our lives*. New York: Dutton, 524 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1524744182

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The book, "Successful aging: A neuroscientist explores the power and potential of our lives" written by neuroscientist, cognitive psychologist, and author Daniel Levitin, is based on a comprehensive exploration of something that is dreaded by most people: aging. In this book the author shows that for many, it is something negative, just as it is something positive. Throughout the book, the author makes particular reference to highlighting the significance of taking advantage of the aging process. Additionally, the way in which the author presents this topic is extremely clear and to a certain extent even relaxing due to the humorous tone that he places in certain parts of the book. He does so, however, without obviously losing the seriousness that a topic, such as aging, deserves. Levitin individualizes his writing through the use of case studies, personal experiences, and undertaken research.

This writing shows a totally new approach to the aging process in humans. Issues such as memory, intelligence, individual personality, and emotions are raised from a scientific point of view. The book is aimed at a general audience, but mostly caters to those interested in using the right tools to provide themselves with a realistic plan to have a happy and more enjoyable developmental stage, no matter in which part of your life they find themselves in. The book is divided into three parts. The first part of the book, which is named "Part One: The Continually Developing Brain", focused on some background science that includes brain function, human physiology, and psychology. It centers around personalities and their differences, memory of an individual, the brain, types of intelligence, how emotions lead to motivation, why things hurt us, among others. After touching on such tenants comes the middle part of the book, called "Part Two: The Choices We Make", which, just like the title suggests, speaks about why we do the things we do. It focused a lot on why certain things are beneficial for our health, such as doing exercise, getting enough sleep, and getting the right nutrition. In this part of the book, he recommends many modifications to the everyday behaviors of people. One of these modifications, or habits, that he proposes, is to practice the act of gratitude as much possible. Lastly, Levitin speaks about adopting simple practices in order to further decrease aging in "Part Three: The New Longevity". He takes his time to address the life span of humans and animals and compares them, begging the question of "why do humans die?" and why are we programmed to do so. Each and every one of these

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parts of the book are important and significant topics that allow the reader to gain knowledge, assess, and think inward to how it affects them and the people around them, which will then leave them with the thought of how, as a community, we can all live longer, smarter, and better.

Throughout the entire writing, the author makes remarks about the development and growth of the brain from birth to old age. This is evidenced by well-known case studies. His point with these case studies is that we need to “unlearn” and “relearn” in a better way about aging and aging people along with what we believe is possible after retirement. For example, the author shows the particular case of developed countries such as the United States, where there is a misinformation and wrongful thinking against older people where many individuals think that people of age are useless.

Additionally, speaking of retirement, Levitin believes that we should get rid of it in its entirety. This is due to the fact that one of the main reasons why cognitive ability decline occurs in older persons is precisely because they do not exercise their brain enough. Work, other than work the cognitive part of the brain, also gives people energy and a sense of meaning to their lives. This is the reason why there has been an increase in people who retire and then rejoin the workforce after retirement, precisely because many consider that work well managed can keep cognitive processes active and healthy. In addition, work, for many people who spend their entire lives in it without any break, means so much that it is practically their source of de-stress and for others it even serves as a hobby. Based on Levitin’s findings, loneliness and inactivity caused by retirement are two important causes of cognitive deterioration in older persons. This is why the book invites healthy ways in which you can grow old slowly and enjoy life more.

Loneliness, as stated previously, is the strongest factor on why people die an early death. According to Levitin, “in the UK, 200,000 older adults had not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month”. This is considered to be social isolation, which leads to feelings of loneliness. Social isolation is observed to be more prevalent in modern societies. Most of the book, in fact, speaks largely about developed countries, such as Canada, USA, and Europe, rather than developing countries. This is significant considering that the mental state of individuals in developing countries versus those who are in developed countries are somewhat different. Something Levitin does mention that is significant, is the fact that culture has a big influence. In fact, he mentions that depending on the place and its culture, people will have a higher or a lower life span. It all centers around the habits that, that culture has and whether it benefits the individual in the long run.

In conclusion, successful aging breathes new life and inspires, above all, offers a new and strong approach that changes the paradigm that we have about such a transcendental aspect in people's lives. It is relevant to every individual, no matter the age they are in, for it is never too late to start building healthy habits. This book will make such a shift in people's individual perspectives that will practically change the way humans plan their later life.