



Fountain of (Brain) Youth

by Catherine Findley, LCSW

Many of us take it as a given that our mental sharpness will decrease with age. This thought is understandably disconcerting, however, scientists now say that it is not inevitable and there are things you can do to strengthen your mind.

~~~~~ 1. EXERCISE YOUR BODY ~~~~~

Exercise may be as close as we will come to finding the fountain of youth. Besides lifting our spirits, staying physically active improves our ability to plan, focus and shift quickly between tasks. Working out also triggers a positive outlook that may improve memory and decision making skills. And exercise encourages the growth of new brain cells. Researchers who've studied the link between exercise and mental acuity report that maintaining an intellectually engaged and physically active lifestyle promotes successful cognitive aging. Even if we haven't exercised regularly for years, it is never too late to start. And it is never too late to enjoy the benefits of exercise.

~~~~~ 2. ENGAGE WITH OTHERS ~~~~~

However community is defined, being a respected and valued member of a community helps keep us mentally sharp. Engaging in activities with others, visiting friends and family, attending temple or church, dining out, traveling, doing volunteer work or being involved with charitable groups is an antidote for loss of mental acuity. Strong ties to others can even increase longevity.

~~~~~ 3. EXPRESS YOUR TALENTS ~~~~~

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is quoted as saying, "The world is hungry for our help and our love." In the second half of life, we have the unique opportunity to bring our authentic and wholehearted self to our chosen tasks and build our legacy. Finding something to live for is an essential requirement to a happy and fulfilling life. This sentiment is no less true for seniors than for those beginning their careers. We don't have to write a bestseller or become a Pulitzer Prize winner. We simply need to bloom where we're planted.

~~~~~ 4. EXPERIENCE THE MOMENT ~~~~~

Resolve to live in the here and now. Give attention to each passing moment. Ignore distracting thoughts and become mindful of what you are tasting, feeling, smelling, hearing, feeling and seeing. When you go for a walk, look around. Enjoy nature in all its glory. Researchers tell us that by hitting the mental pause button, by stepping into the present moment and by becoming more mindful, we slow the aging process.

The myths about inevitable mental deterioration with aging are falling by the wayside. Instead of being put out to pasture at age 65, seniors are increasingly playing diverse roles in society as workers, family members, business owners, caregivers, volunteers and consumers.



Every month CJFS counselors bring you tips for Aging Well... if you would like to speak with any of them, please call CJFS at 879-3438. Any of our counselors are happy to meet with you once or regularly to listen.