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Improve Your Mind as You Age

By Michael J. Gelb

I've been teaching people to improve their minds as they get older since the beginning of my career. I led my first seminar on the subject back in 1978 when I was just 26 years old. Well, I'm approaching 60, and now, it's SERIOUS! When I first started leading seminars I was usually the youngest person in the room, and now I'm almost always the oldest.

Although I'm blessed with abundant energy and passion for my work, I also experience the challenges of aging. For example, a few years ago my right hip began to hurt. Despite my positive attitude and holistic health practices, (and my access to many world class complementary medicine practitioners and energy healers) my hip joint continued to degrade. Thanks to the brilliance of contemporary medical technology I was able to get a new hip joint. Then, my right knee started to break down. Recently I had total knee replacement surgery. The recovery has been difficult but I'm making progress and hope to be up and running (literally!) soon.

It's clear that some of our parts, like hips and knees, do wear out with use. The good news, however, is that the brain isn't one of those parts. Indeed, the brain is designed to IMPROVE with use. So what's the best way to use it to ensure improvement?

This is the intention behind my new book, *Brain Power: Improve Your Mind as You Age* to explain, in clear and accessible terms, the research-validated, practical things that you can do, or stop doing, to improve your mind every year of your life. The book is based on the confluence of timeless wisdom, practical experience, and the latest research. Contemporary science has established that you can improve your mind as you age, and you can begin that process of improvement now.

Start by embracing a positive, optimistic, attitude toward aging. According to Becca Levy, PhD individuals with a positive attitude outlive those with a pessimistic approach by an average of more than 7 years! Find a guiding purpose for your life and cultivate gratitude, forgiveness, and humor. Continuous learning is the true fountain of youth, so learn something new every day and embrace fresh challenges. Much of what passes for senility and memory loss over the years is a function of the depletion of the supply of oxygen to the brain, so oxygenate your brain and sharpen your wits by creating an approach to exercise that you enjoy, and practice the simple principles of healthy eating. Surround yourself with beauty and a positive, multi-sensory, stimulus-rich environment.

Invest in your social wealth, and practice meditation daily. ***Brain Power*** includes a free link to the brain wave synchronization technology developed by my co-author Kelly Howell. This free audio download will help you train your brain to effortlessly create the brain waves associated with deep meditation.

Imagine the wonderful new world that would emerge if a critical mass of people applied these simple principles. And imagine the huge savings in health-care costs!

Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr penned one of the wisest statements ever made about aging, and life in general. His Serenity Prayer, adopted as a credo by AA and other groups, advises us to embrace:

The serenity to accept the things we cannot change; the courage to change the things we can; and the wisdom to know the difference.

Since most of us were raised with ideas about aging that are inaccurate, such as the faulty notions that our mental capacity is fixed at age five and that our brain cells degrade yearly after the age of 30 — we tend to underestimate what we can realistically change. The Serenity Prayer reveals the secret of aging gracefully and intelligently —serenely accept and embrace the transitory nature of life and the increasing vulnerabilities that present themselves over time —while wisely and courageously cultivating the vast possibilities of mind, body and spirit.

Bio: Author of the bestselling *How to Think Like Leonard da Vinci*, **Michael J. Gelb** is the world's leading authority on the application of genius thinking to personal and organizational development. A pioneer in the fields of creative thinking, accelerated learning, and innovative leadership, Gelb leads seminars for organizations such as DuPont, Merck, Microsoft, Nike, Raytheon and YPO. His website is www.michaelgelb.com.

The founder of Brain Sync, **Kelly Howell** is highly acclaimed for her pioneering work in healing and mind expansion. With more than two million audio programs in print and decades of experience, she is a leader in the field of self-help audio. Kelly has worked in cooperation with scientists, medical professionals, and brain researchers to develop her groundbreaking audio programs. Her website is www.brainsync.com.

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Additional Side Bar:

Here Are The Top Ten Things You Can Do (or stop doing) to Improve Your Mind as You Age:

- Understand that your brain is designed to improve with use.
- Embrace a positive, optimistic attitude toward aging (Stop commiserating, complaining and whining about getting older! Avoid negative self-programming. Eliminate phrases like “ I’m having a senior moment.” or “I’m not what I used to be.”

- Count your blessings every day. Keep a gratitude journal. Every night before you go to sleep let go of all your grudges and resentments. Laugh often.
- Clarify your life purpose and focus on it every day.
- Invest a minimum of 15 minutes each day in learning something new
- Oxygenate your brain with some form of enjoyable daily exercise
- Enjoy a healthy, wholesome diet of fresh, delicious foods. Stay hydrated, eat a healthy breakfast, take a high quality multi-vitamin/mineral supplement, minimize sugar intake and other high-glycemic foods. Never eat trans-fats. As Michael Pollan advises, “Don’t eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food.”
- Surround your self with beauty. Aim to create a stimulating, positive environment. Listen to beautiful music, enjoy inspiring art, and spend time in nature whenever possible.
- Cultivate positive relationships. Invest in your social wealth.
- Counter stress with a daily relaxation or meditation practice.