



Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives

By David Snowdon

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In 1986 epidemiologist Dr. David Snowdon embarked on a revolutionary scientific study that would forever change the way we view aging and old age. Dubbed the "Nun Study" because it involves a unique population of 678 Catholic sisters, this remarkable long-term research project remains today at the forefront of some of the world's most significant research on aging.

This remarkable book by one of the world's leading experts on Alzheimer's disease combines fascinating high-tech research on the brain with the heartfelt story of the aging nuns who are teaching scientists how we grow old — and how we can do so with grace. The Nun Study's findings are already helping scientists unlock the secrets to living a longer, healthier life.

Yet **Aging With Grace** is more than a groundbreaking health and hard-science book. It is the story of an altar boy who grew up to be a scientist studying the effects of aging on nuns. It is the poignant and inspiring stories of the nuns themselves. Ranging in age from 75 to 104, these remarkable women have allowed Dr. Snowdon access to their medical and personal records — and they have agreed to donate their brains upon death.

In **Aging With Grace**, we accompany Dr. Snowdon on his loving visits to nuns like Sister Clarissa, who at the age of 90 drives around the convent in a motorized cart she calls her "Chevy" and knows as much about baseball as any die-hard fan a third her age.

Then there is 104-year-old Sister Matthia, who until her death in 1998 knitted two pairs of mittens a day and prayed every evening for each of the four thousand students she taught over the years. These bright, articulate, and altruistic women have much to teach us about how faith, wisdom, and spirituality can influence the length and quality of our lives.

We also follow Dr. Snowdon into the lab as he and his colleagues race to decode one of the most devastating diseases known to humanity. We discover:

- * Why high linguistic ability in early life seems to protect against Alzheimer's
- * Which ordinary foods in the diet defend the brain against aging
- * Why preventing strokes and depression is key to avoiding dementia
- * Why it's never too late to start an exercise program
- * What role heredity plays, and how lifestyle can increase our chances for a mentally vital old age
- * How intangibles like community and faith help us age with grace

Both cutting-edge science and a personal prescription for hope, **Aging With Grace** shows how old age doesn't have to mean an inevitable slide into illness and disability; rather, it can be a time of promise and productivity, intellectual and spiritual vigor, and continuing freedom from disease.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Since 1986, the author, an epidemiologist, has directed a research project dubbed the Nun Study. According to Snowdon, who previously studied Seventh-Day Adventists, religious group members make ideal subjects because of their similar and somewhat insular lives. Specifically, he has been tracking the lives of 678 elderly nuns who are members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, to assess the effects of aging. Snowdon describes in detail a pilot study he conducted with the sisters in Mankato, Wis., on the link between level of education and disabilities related to aging. This initial research convinced him to expand his base to other convents and to focus primarily on Alzheimer's disease. The participants, ranging in age from 75 to 104, agreed to provide access to their medical and personal histories and, after death, to donate their brain tissue to the project. What distinguishes this study is Snowdon's decision not to maintain the usual "objective" distance from his subjects but rather to become emotionally involved with them. His commitment to treat them with "care and respect" is readily apparent in the many warm and sympathetic anecdotes and his expression of deeply felt grief when any of the sisters becomes incapacitated by Alzheimer's or dies. Among the project's findings is a clear correlation between a low rate of Alzheimer's and high linguistic ability. Snowdon has also found a positive relationship between the consumption of certain antioxidants (e.g., lycopene, found in pink grapefruit, tomatoes and watermelon), an exercise program and an optimistic outlook and aging successfully. Although the study is still under way, readers will certainly appreciate the early insights to be gleaned from Snowdon's human- (rather than statistic-) centered and compassionate story.

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From Library Journal

Since 1986, the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato, MN, have opened their lives, personal histories, and medical records in an extraordinary way, thereby offering researchers a unique view of Alzheimer's and aging. Snowdon, a professor of neurology and director of the Nun Study at the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging at the University of Kentucky Medical Center, have studied this population of 678 Catholic sisters, some of whom have remained active and lucid all their lives while others have become demented. This is an ideal population to study, for it is carefully controlled: income is not a factor, all the subjects are nonsmokers, and all have similar access to diet, healthcare, and housing. Snowdon writes with empathy and affection of these sisters, who also generously agreed to donate their brains for postmortem pathological studies. From this research, Snowdon explains, it emerged that pathological changes did not always correlate with observable changes, that linguistic ability seems to protect against Alzheimer's, that prevention of stroke and heart diseases can help avoid dementia, and that heredity, diet, and exercise also play a part. Blending personal histories with scientific fact, this inspirational and fascinating look at growing older is highly recommended. [Snowdon's research was recently profiled in a cover story in Time magazine. Ed.] Jodith Janes, Cleveland Clinic Fdn.

- Jodith Janes, *Cleveland Clinic Fdn.*

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Review

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— *Publishers Weekly*

"The Nun Study represents an absolutely unique American treasure and resource for all of us. The gems that Dr. Snowdon and his colleagues have unearthed will not only change the way you look at yourself and the aging people around you, they'll serve as catalysts for aging research for many years to come."

— Ronald Petersen, Ph.D., M.D., Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Mayo Clinic

"There are lessons for all of us in this moving account of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and their commitment to help us find the causes of Alzheimer's disease. I came away with a new respect for the power of faith as well as the beauty and complexity of the human brain."

— Virginia M. Bell, M.S.W., co-author of **The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimer's Care**

"David Snowdon leads us through the enthralling scientific, but also very personal journey that he has been taking with the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The revelations along the way show us there is so much we can all do to alter for the better how we age, and ultimately how long we live. It is a journey not to be missed!"

— Thomas Perls M.D., M.P.H., Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

"A beautiful story. Families will find hope and support through the commitment of the sisters who have dedicated their lives to helping others enjoy the gift of life as long as possible."

— Sigmund Tomkalski, Executive Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter, Alzheimer's Association

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lonnie Bowers:

Do you have something that you like such as book? The reserve lovers usually prefer to pick book like comic, limited story and the biggest one is novel. Now, why not hoping Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives that give your entertainment preference will be satisfied simply by reading this book. Reading addiction all over the world can be said as the way for people to know world better then how they react towards the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading addiction only for the geeky particular person but for all of you who wants to be success person. So , for every you who want to start examining as your good habit, you are able to pick Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives become your starter.

Maureen Jones:

Does one one of the book lovers? If yes, do you ever feeling doubt while you are in the book store? Make an effort to pick one book that you never know the inside because don't ascertain book by its deal with may doesn't work this is difficult job because you are afraid that the inside maybe not since fantastic as in the outside look likes. Maybe you answer might be Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About

Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives why because the great cover that make you consider concerning the content will not disappoint anyone. The inside or content is actually fantastic as the outside or maybe cover. Your reading sixth sense will directly direct you to pick up this book.

Debra Yarbrough:

The book untitled Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains your ex idea with easy method. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was written by famous author. The author gives you in the new period of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can start their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice examine.

Victor Loy:

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