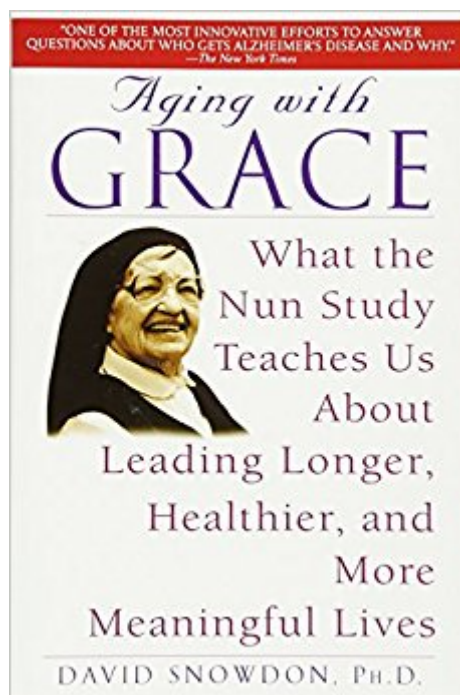




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# Aging With Grace: What The Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, And More Meaningful Lives



## Synopsis

In 1986 Dr. David Snowdon, one of the world's leading experts on Alzheimer's disease, embarked on a revolutionary scientific study that would forever change the way we view aging and ultimately living. Dubbed the "Nun Study" because it involves a unique population of 678 Catholic sisters, this remarkable long-term research project has made headlines worldwide with its provocative discoveries. Yet *Aging with Grace* is more than a groundbreaking health and science book. It is the inspiring human story of these remarkable women ranging in age from 74 to 106 whose dedication to serving others may help all of us live longer and healthier lives. Totally accessible, with fascinating portraits of the nuns and the scientists who study them, *Aging with Grace* also offers a wealth of practical findings:

- Why building linguistic ability in childhood may protect against Alzheimer's
- Which ordinary foods promote longevity and healthy brain function
- Why preventing strokes and depression is key to avoiding Alzheimer's
- What role heredity plays, and why it's never too late to start an exercise program
- How attitude, faith, and community can add years to our lives

A prescription for hope, *Aging with Grace* shows that 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—a time of true grace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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. Snowden 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 Snowden'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. Snowden 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 Snowden's human- (rather than statistic-) centered and compassionate story. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Print on Demand (Paperback) edition.

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. Snowden, 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. Snowden writes with empathy and affection of these sisters, who also generously agreed to donate their brains for postmortem pathological studies. From this research, Snowden 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. [Snowden's research was recently profiled in a cover story in Time

magazine. Ed.] Jodith Janes, Cleveland Clinic Fdn.- Jodith Janes, Cleveland Clinic Fdn. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Print on Demand (Paperback) edition.

This book is so well written and readable. He weaves the story of his research project around the lives of particular nuns who illustrate the topic of that chapter. Lots of very good information too with recommendations on what you should be doing throughout your life and into your golden years to be able to live a long, productive life with most of your mental faculties.

Purchased this book because it was required for a gerontology graduate course, but the course hasn't even started yet & I've already read this book. I really, truly enjoyed it. Not so much technical language that someone not in the fields discussed couldn't understand/keep up. The more technical parts, such as brain anatomy, are explained in a non-condescending way so the reader can comprehend the full story while also taking away new latent knowledge.

AWESOME BOOK!!! Dr. Snowdon managed to take a super scientific study and make it super exciting, understandable and gave it a personal side. I gave this book as gifts to my mother, my aunt, my friend and I forget who else. I have also recommended it to many people facing Alzheimer's or, better, with relatives who have it. This book was so helpful and yet WAY more interesting than most journal articles and understandable for anyone and everyone!

This book was talked about by my 70-something parents when they visited me in November. They live in Illinois and said this book was making the rounds (although it was published in 2001, but given their age now, perhaps it was of interest to them now in their lives). I decided to read it on my kindle, and I loved it. It's the story of a guy who utilized a group of nuns to conduct research on Alzheimer's disease. I recommend it for any age. It's not about the nuns or their faith, as it is about something they did to benefit mankind: their decision to consent to the research, including donating their brains to science for further research after their Earthly existence had ended.

As the daughter of an aging parent, I am interested in learning as much as I can about the aging process for the sake of my mother, myself and other family members/friends. This book is a gem. It is a moving and personal account by the scientist who led an amazing longitudinal study of a group of nuns. This study was unique in a way that no other Alzheimer's study has been. As I read the book, I felt as though I was walking alongside the author, David Snowdon, and getting to know each

and every nun. It was a privilege to share David's insight into this special community of women (many of whom live past the age of 100). When David finally decided to focus his research on Alzheimer's, he struggled with asking the nuns to sign a release form for their brains to be donated to Alzheimer research (after death). He was astonished when Sister Rita Schwalbe spoke up and said, "As sisters, we made the hard choice not to have children. Through brain donation, we can help unravel the mysteries of Alzheimer's disease and give the gift of life in a new way to future generations." Although Alzheimer's is still a mystery in many ways, this study helped illuminate several correlations. Depression and stroke puts a person at risk. High density ideas/complex sentences found in the nuns' handwritten autobiographies seemed to diminish risk. Faith and community, purposeful work and service, healthy eating, exercise all seemed to be positive factors in prevention. Since 50% of persons over 90 years old will get Alzheimer's, it is likely that many of our family/friends will be touched by this disease. Reading this book is not only a joy in getting insight into this wonderful community of nuns but also in highlighting the risk factors and research being done around the disease of Alzheimer's. Dale C[...] ("Transition Aging Parents")

Having a husband who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's for five years, I try to read any information I can to help me understand this disease. When a friend of mine gave me her book, I was surprised. I am not Catholic and so I wondered about how reading about a Nun Study would help me. Well, I could not put this book down! Knowing my husband for 38 years, I totally agree that having a good outlook on life is the key to not getting this disease. He has become the most negative person I have ever met and has been for many, many years. Being positive and having a hunger for knowing God is the key to having a healthy mind. The Bible speaks volumes about renewing your mind and I have actually read testimonies of people whose brains have been injured getting back their minds totally by reading the Word of God. I am grateful I have a book I can recommend to those who are afraid of getting this disease and what to do about it!

This is an amazing read. I highly recommend it for everyone! Very important research about how we age, told in a friendly, anecdotal manner.

It is an amazing story teaching us how someone's life style can influence his health and life-time span. An equilibrium between psyche and soma (mental activity, religious meditation, physical exercise, proper diet and living in supporting social environment) seems to be a solution for maintaining health as long as possible and live happy and long life.

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