



Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day

By Daniel G. Amen M.D.

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From the bestselling author and PBS star, a brain healthy program to turn back the clock, and keep your mind sharp and your body fit.

A healthy brain is the key to staying vibrant and alive for a long time, and in *Use Your Brain to Change Your Age*, bestselling author and brain expert Dr. Daniel G. Amen shares ten simple steps to boost your brain to help you live longer, look younger, and dramatically decrease your risk for Alzheimer's disease.

Over the last twenty years at Amen Clinics, Dr. Amen has performed more than 70,000 brain scans on patients from ninety different countries. His brain imaging work has taught him that our brains typically become less active with age and we become more vulnerable to memory problems and depression. Yet, one of the most exciting lessons he has learned is that with a little forethought and a brain-smart plan, you can slow, or even reverse, the aging process in the brain.

Based on the approach that has helped thousands of people at Amen Clinics along with the most cutting-edge research, Dr. Amen's breakthrough, easy-to-follow antiaging program shows you how to improve memory, focus, and energy; keep your heart and immune system strong; and reduce the outward signs of aging.

By adopting the brain healthy strategies detailed in *Use Your Brain to Change Your Age*, you can outsmart your genes, put the brakes on aging, and even reverse the aging process. If you change your brain, you can change your life—and your age.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Dr Amen magically shows us that the aging of our brain need not match the aging of our bodies. The tools he offers to avoid injury to this most precious real estate in our body are priceless and will keep us thinking sharply throughout our progressively longer lives.”

—**Mehmet Oz, M.D., Professor and Vice Chair Surgery, New York Presbyterian/Columbia and host of The Dr Oz Show**

“If you want to think smarter, you need to have a healthier brain. This is another incredibly helpful book from Dr. Daniel Amen for anyone who wants to increase their brain capacity. I want to stay sharp, and that's why I read everything Dr. Amen writes, and you should too!”

—**Dr. Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life***

“*Use Your Brain to Change Your Age* is inspiring and practical. Its case studies make this book powerfully impactful, both for adults and young adults in schools. I can't think of a single reader who won't find himself or herself represented in the stories of women and men who have used Dr. Amen's wisdom and research to live healthy lives. This is a must read for anyone interested in the human brain and the body that shelters it.”

—**Michael Gurian, author of *Leadership and the Sexes and Boys and Girls Learn Differently***

“Thorough, practical, and inspiring, this is an essential guide to reclaiming your brain—and your life! It's never too late to start... or too early. I recommend it to anyone with a brain.”

—**Hyla Cass MD, author of *8 Weeks to Vibrant Health***

“I couldn't stop reading Dr. Amen's new book until I was finished. As a holistic neurosurgeon, I found it to be the best user's guide to optimal brain function I have ever read. His incredible storytelling skill combined with practical information will change your life.”

—**Joseph C. Maroon, M.D., Professor and Vice Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Team Neurosurgeon, The Pittsburgh Steelers**

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Daniel G. Amen, MD, is a double board-certified psychiatrist, professor, and ten-time *New York Times* bestselling author. He is one of the world's foremost experts on using brain-imaging tools to help optimize and treat his patients. Amen Clinics have one of the highest published success rates for patients. His research was listed as one of the Top 100 Stories in Science for 2015 by *Discover* magazine. He has written and hosted eleven highly popular shows about the brain for public television. His work has been featured in *The New York Times Magazine*, the *Washington Post*, and *Men's Health* and on *The Dr. Oz Show* and *Dr. Phil*.

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NANA, LISA, AND RUTH

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS TO KEEP YOUR MIND HEALTHY AND PREVENT ALZHEIMER'S AND OTHER DISEASES OF AGING

I can never find my keys. Sometimes they show up by the eggs in the refrigerator.

I am fifty-two. Isn't that normal?

Think again!

When Lisa was a young girl she adored her nana, her mother's mother. Nana and Lisa baked cookies together, played cards for hours, told silly jokes, and picked plums in Nana's backyard. Nana taught Lisa how to can the fruit for plum jam, which they loved to share. Nana was very overweight, so she would hold the ladder while her granddaughter climbed the ladder for the plums. On nights Lisa slept over, Nana always read to her. Lisa remembers laughing so hard that she would sometimes snort at the silly voices. Nana used to read the stories. At night in the dark they promised each other to always be best friends. Lisa loved snuggling into Nana's body, which was never so soft. She felt unconditional love in Nana's presence, which was one of the best feelings she remembered from her childhood.

Then, when Lisa was about twelve years old, something started to change. At first, it was barely noticeable. Nana seemed less interested in their time together. There were no more jokes, fewer stories, and Nana said she was too tired to play games or pick plums. Nana was also more irritable with Lisa, even sometimes yelling at her for what seemed like no reason at all. Lisa was devastated, but Nana did not pick up on the social cues that should have told her that her granddaughter needed soothing. Lisa remembers this as one of the saddest, most confusing times in her life. She wondered if she had done something to make Nana mad. "What's wrong with Nana?" Lisa would ask her mother, but time and again her mother would say, "Don't worry. Nana is fine." This only deepened Lisa's pain and confusion. Maybe she really was the problem and Nana had just stopped loving her.

Her grandmother was sixty-five years old when Lisa noticed the changes. Around this time, Nana had been diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure. Lisa remembered watching Nana take her pills and her shots to feel better, but no one seemed overly concerned about her health.

When Lisa was fourteen, Nana took a dramatic turn for the worse. With Lisa in the car, Nana got lost on the way home from the store. Nana panicked and stopped a man who was walking across the street to ask for help, but she could not tell him where she lived. She appeared frightened and confused, like a child. Lisa asked the man to call her grandfather, who came to pick them up.

Once they got home Lisa cornered her mother. "Look, Mom, I know something is really wrong with Nana.

Her brain isn't working right. She needs help." Still, the family continued making excuses, normalizing what was obviously not normal behavior. Looking back on this time, as an adult, Lisa remembers being furious, feeling she was, even as a young teen, the lone voice of reason shouting into a bitter wind. After Nana got lost several more times, the family finally was concerned enough to take her to a doctor who diagnosed her with something called senile dementia. He recommended Nana live in a nursing home for people with memory problems.

Gone were the happy warm feelings she once enjoyed when she visited her grandmother. The nursing home where she now lived smelled "medical" and felt cold, and Lisa felt odd and afraid in it. She never knew which Nana she'd find on these visits: Sometimes Nana smiled when she saw Lisa; sometimes she did not recognize her at all. Sometimes when Lisa read to Nana she seemed engaged and happy, other times her grandmother just wanted to be left alone. After a few years, Nana died in the nursing home. However, Lisa felt that Nana had really died years earlier when her personality slowly ebbed away. At Nana's funeral, all of their special times circled through Lisa's mind. She couldn't help wondering how a person could disappear while her body continued living on, and she couldn't help feeling how sad it all was. Lisa wondered if she or her mother would have the same problem as Nana. She prayed to God they would not.

Lisa's mother, Ruth, was also a lot of fun. They too had many special times, cooking, reading, and playing together. Like Nana, Ruth was a fabulous baker who also struggled with her weight, early onset diabetes, and hypertension. Lisa's mother was also a wonderful grandmother to Lisa's three daughters, which reminded Lisa of the closeness she'd shared with her own nana. In fact, her girls called her mother Nana as well. In the back of her mind she kept watch over her own mother's brain health. She didn't want her granddaughters to lose this vibrant and wonderful relationship they'd enjoyed with her mom, as she'd lost hers with Nana. It was this concern that prompted Lisa, now in her early forties, to pick up my book, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life.*

When Ruth turned sixty-eight Lisa's worst fears started to actualize. At first, Ruth struggled with finding the right words. If she meant dog, she might unintentionally say bark; if she meant milk, she sometimes said cow. One time when she asked her granddaughter for a hug, she said, "Give Nana a slap."

Ruth's memory was also becoming a problem. Lisa watched her reach for the phone to dial her sister whom she'd just called five minutes earlier. Her sister said this sort of thing was happening more frequently. Lisa's father mentioned that there were times when he found her mother standing and staring and not knowing why she was in a room. There were also two occasions on which Ruth got lost driving in a town where she had lived for thirty years, forcing her to call her husband for directions. Her father had installed a GPS system in Ruth's car to help her. (I sometimes wonder if having GPS systems actually delays the diagnosis of early Alzheimer's disease, as people do not have to rely as heavily on their own memories to get from point A to point B, so their deficits are not seen early by those who could encourage them to get help.)

Initially, Lisa's dad just laughed off her mother's struggles. He explained it away with, "She is just getting older. She's under a lot of stress." Or "You know your mom has never had a good memory or sense of

direction. It will pass. Everything is all right."

Because early signs of dementia may alternate with periods of lucidity, families tend to deny what's happening. This is tragic, because the earlier someone seeks help, the better the prognosis. Remembering her Nana, Lisa wasn't about to ignore her concerns or let others downplay them. She anxiously and emphatically told her father, "Mom needs help and she needs it now." Together they approached her mom with their observations and concerns, urging her to go to the Amen Clinics. At first Ruth was resistant. "I'll be okay," she said, which frightened Lisa even more. Then Lisa reminded her of Nana and told her that early intervention might help her avoid Nana's fate. At this, Ruth agreed to come to the Amen Clinics for an evaluation and brain SPECT imaging.

I greeted Lisa and Ruth when they came into my office and listened to their story. From these descriptions alone, I suspected Ruth had early Alzheimer's disease. However, after being a neuropsychiatrist for thirty years, I knew I couldn't proffer a diagnosis based on my suspicions alone. I had to look, test, probe, and get as much information as possible.

Ruth's brain SPECT scan showed three findings consistent with Alzheimer's disease:

1. Decreased activity in her parietal lobes, at the back, top part of her brain. The parietal lobes help with direction sense.
2. Decreased activity in her temporal lobes, which help get memories into long-term storage. The temporal lobes are also involved in word finding.
3. Decreased activity in an area called the posterior cingulate gyrus, deep in the back part of the brain. The posterior cingulate gyrus is one of the first areas in the brain that dies in Alzheimer's disease and is involved with visual memory.

The structured memory testing that we do at the Amen Clinics also showed significant problems in both immediate and delayed recall.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS: YOU CANNOT CHANGE WHAT YOU DO NOT MEASURE

The next step in the process was to look at her important numbers. These are also vital numbers for you to know and optimize; they're a critical step in helping you live longer and look younger.

Here is a list we use at the Amen Clinics.

1. BMI
2. Waist-to-height ratio
3. Calories needed / calories spent
4. Number of fruits and vegetables eaten a day
5. Average of hours slept each night (with sleep apnea ruled out)
6. Blood pressure
7. Complete blood count
8. General metabolic panel with fasting blood sugar
9. HgA1C test for diabetes
10. Vitamin D level
11. Thyroid levels
12. C-reactive protein
13. Homocysteine
14. Ferritin
15. Testosterone
16. Lipid panel
17. Folic acid and B12 levels
18. Syphilis and HIV screenings
19. Apolipoprotein E genotype test
20. Twelve modifiable health risk factors

1. Know Your BMI Ruth's BMI, or body mass index, was 32, which was too high. A normal BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9, overweight is between 25 and 29.9, and obese is greater than 30. You can find a simple BMI calculator on our website at www.amenclinics.com. Ruth was obese, which was not helping her brain remain healthy. As already mentioned, being obese has been associated with less brain tissue and lower brain activity. Obesity doubles the risk for Alzheimer's disease. There are probably several mechanisms that

underlie this finding, including the fact that fat cells produce inflammatory chemicals and store toxic materials in the body.

One of the reasons I want my patients to know their BMI is that it stops them from lying to themselves about their weight. I was sitting at dinner recently with a friend who seemed totally indifferent about this weight, even though he was injecting himself with insulin for his diabetes at the table. As we were talking, I calculated his BMI for him. Trust me, I can be a very irritating friend if I think you are not taking care of yourself. His BMI was just over 30, in the obese range. That really got his attention. Since then he has lost 20 pounds and is more committed to getting healthy. The truth will set you free. Know your BMI.

I put Ruth on a structured weight-loss program.

2. Know Your Waist-to-Height Ratio (WHtR) Another way to measure the health of your weight is with your waist-to-height ratio. Some researchers believe this number is even more accurate than your BMI. BMI does not take into account an individual's frame, gender, or the amount of muscle mass versus fat mass. For example, two people can have the same BMI, even if one is much more muscular and carrying far less abdominal fat than the other; this is because BMI does not account for differences in fat distribution. The WHtR is calculated by dividing waist size by height. As an example, a male with a 32-inch waist who is 5'10" (70 inches) would divide 32 by 70 to get a WHtR of 45.7 percent. The WHtR is thought to give a more accurate assessment of health since the most dangerous place to carry weight is in the abdomen. Fat in the abdomen, which is associated with a larger waist, is metabolically active and produces various hormones that can cause harmful effects, such as diabetes, elevated blood pressure, and altered lipid (blood fat) levels. Many athletes, both male and female, who often have a higher percentage of muscle and a lower percentage of body fat, have relatively high BMIs, but their WHtRs are within a healthy range. This also holds true for women who have a "pear" rather than an "apple" shape.

You want your waist size in inches to be less than half your height. So if you are 66 inches tall, your waist should not be more than 33 inches. If you are 72 inches tall, your waist should not be more than 36 inches.

Note: You have to actually measure your waist size with a tape measure! Going by your pants size does not count, as many clothing manufacturers actually make their sizes larger than they state on the label so as not to offend their customers. I remember preferring to purchase pants or shorts that were labeled "relaxed fit" because I could still fit into a size 34-inch waist. There was no way I could get into a slim-fit 34 inches, which, looking back, actually was 34 inches. Since doing this work, I have seen that most people do not know their waist size and are in total denial. Most of our NFL players and patients significantly underestimate their waist size. One of the pastors we work with said his waist size was 42 inches, but when we measured (at the belly button) it was really 48 inches. Ruth was 5'4" tall. She told me her waist was 33 inches. It measured at 37 inches.

This was further confirmation that Ruth needed a structured weight-loss program.

3. Know the Number of Calories You Need and Spend in a Day I think of calories like money: If I eat more than I need, my body will become bankrupt. Wise caloric spending is a critical component to getting healthy. Don't let anyone tell you that calories don't count. They absolutely do. The people who say calories don't matter are just fooling themselves. You need to know how many calories you need to eat a day to maintain your current weight. The average fifty-year-old woman needs about 1,800 calories, and the average fifty-year-old man needs about 2,200 calories a day. This number can go up or down based on exercise level and height. You can find a free personalized "caloric need" calculator at www.amenclinics.com.

Set a realistic goal for your desired weight and match your behavior to reach it. If you wish to lose a pound a week, you typically need to eat 500 calories a day fewer than you burn. I am not a fan of rapid weight loss. It does not teach you how to live for the long term. One of my patients went on the hCG diet and lost 40 pounds in three twenty-six-day cycles, but it was at a pretty high cost. Within the next six months, she put all the weight back plus another 10 pounds. Slow and steady teaches you new habits. I like it for people to lose a pound a week, which teaches them a new way of living for the long term.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Arlene Oliver:

The experience that you get from Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day is a more deep you rooting the information that hide into the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to know but Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day giving you excitement feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having that Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day instantly.

Jennifer McMorris:

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Brian Roberts:

Reading a book for being new life style in this yr; every people loves to learn a book. When you go through a book you can get a wide range of benefit. When you read books, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information into it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you wish to get information about your review, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself read a fiction books, this kind of us novel, comics, and also soon. The Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day provide you with a new experience in studying a book.

Laura Burke:

On this era which is the greater individual or who has ability in doing something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become among it? It is just simple solution to have that. What you should do is just spending your time very little but quite enough to get a look at some books. Among the books in the top list in your reading list will be Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day. This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Mountains can get you closer in turning out to be precious person. By looking way up and review this guide you can get many advantages.

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