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BOOK REVIEW

Mental Fitness for Life: Seven Steps to Healthy Aging by Sandra Cusack & Wendy Thompson (Boulder, Colo.: Bull Publishing, 2006); paperback, 256 pages; \$16.95.

Reviewed by Nancy Ceridwyn

Demand continues to grow for dynamic tools to help older adults maintain and enhance their mental fitness. Sandra Cusack, a research fellow in educational gerontology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Wendy Thompson, an educational gerontologist, have responded to the need by bringing out a new edition of their groundbreaking 2003 book, *Mental Fitness for Life: Seven Steps to Healthy Aging*.

The publication takes an innovative approach to preparing older learners for improving mental fitness. Cusack and Thompson start by addressing the following barriers to expanded thinking:

- Stereotypes about elders' mental capacities.
- The belief that the time to maintain and even hone mental capacity has passed.
- Fears of failing to reach personal goals or of having others downplay the importance of mental growth.

The book also gives readers more empowering language to use in mental fitness and creativity training programs. By building on the authors' new perspective, older learners can experience the freedom that memory enhancement and learning can bring.

Mental Fitness for Life identifies a number of memory-enhancing exercises that highlight two key elements: attention and interest. The authors recommend that program instructors select topics that interest participants to help them maintain good attention and focus during the exercises. Clear, critical, creative expression, they write, fosters understanding and allows learners to engage with the world. The newfound confidence that these exercises will instill in elders encourages a lifelong endeavor of daily questioning, valuing and learning. ■

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