

The Aging Mind



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著者:Committee on Future Directions for Cognitive Research on Aging

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Possible new breakthroughs in understanding the aging mind that can be used to benefit older people are now emerging from research. This volume identifies the key scientific advances and the opportunities they bring. For example, science has learned that among older adults who do not suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, cognitive decline may depend less on loss of brain cells than on changes in the health of neurons and neural networks. Research on the processes that maintain neural health shows promise of revealing new ways to promote cognitive functioning in older people. Research is also showing how cognitive functioning depends on the conjunction of biology and culture. The ways older people adapt to changes in their nervous systems, and perhaps the changes themselves, are shaped by past life experiences, present living situations, changing motives, cultural expectations, and emerging technology, as well as by their physical health status and sensory-motor capabilities. Improved understanding of how physical and contextual factors interact can help explain why some cognitive functions are impaired in aging while others are spared and why cognitive capability is impaired in some older adults and spared in others. On the basis of these exciting findings, the report makes specific recommendations that the U.S. government support three major new initiatives as the next steps for research.

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