

Special Report



Supplement to MAYO CLINIC HEALTH LETTER

AUGUST 2015

Healthy reads

Books to help you expand your health horizon

By Robert Sheeler, M.D.

Medical Editor

Mayo Clinic Health Letter

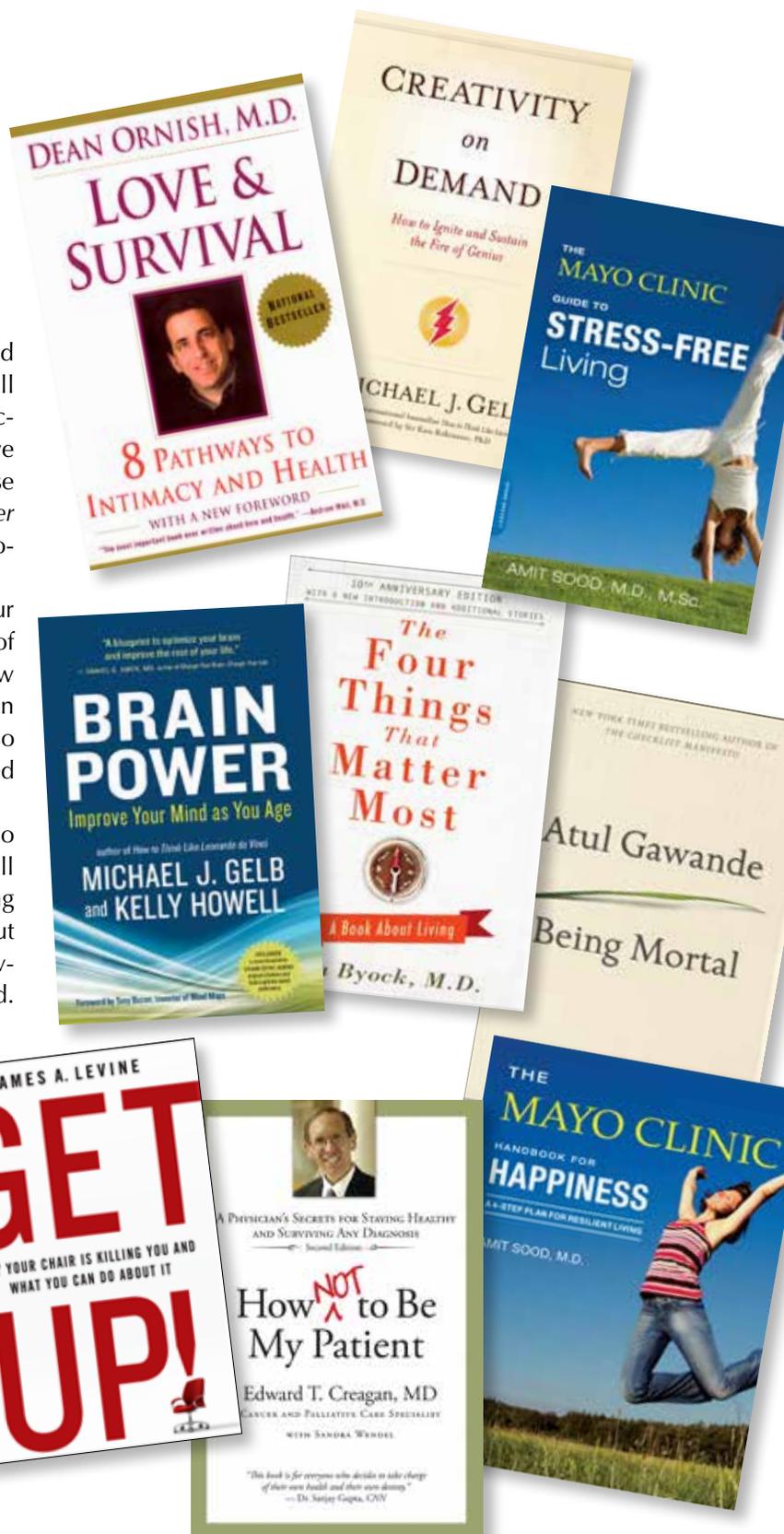


Physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of life are all related to your total health. To function at your best, you need to have depth and resilience in each of these areas. *Mayo Clinic Health Letter* strives to bring you stories that resonate in each of these areas.

Although the focus of many of our articles is on physical health, we recognize that all of these aspects are important to maintain health and grow through life transitions and challenges. The space we can allocate to a single topic in our newsletter is limited, so we decided to bring to your attention more-extended works that have the potential to transform your life.

The books are written by both Mayo and non-Mayo authors. They address a spectrum of topics from overall health and wellness to understanding and managing stress. Medical science continues to learn more about how the body responds to diet, stress, exercise and activity, and the great degree to which they're interrelated. Research is also showing that social support and connections to others are key determinants of health. While there are medicines to lower blood pressure and cholesterol, these other aspects of your life are just as critical to your well-being. They're all major determinants of the illnesses you may get and how well you adapt and survive when medical challenges come your way.

On the following pages, you'll find my reviews of books written by leading-edge medical authors that will bring you powerful tools to transform your life in a variety of areas. I hope you find something that will be of value to you and give you resources to move to a new level of health and wellness.



About the author



Michael Gelb is a leading authority on the application of genius thinking to personal and organizational development.

He's a pioneer in the fields of creative thinking, accelerated learning and innovative leadership. Gelb leads seminars for organizations such as DuPont, Merck, Microsoft, Nike and Roche. He brings more than 35 years of experience as a professional speaker, seminar leader and organizational consultant to his diverse, international clientele. Gelb is the author of 14 books on creativity and innovation.

About the co-author



Kelly Howell is the world's leading innovator in the practical application of brain wave research.

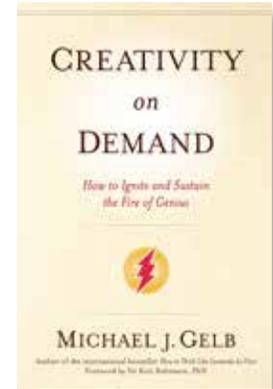
With almost 3 million audio programs in print, and decades of experience, she's renown for her pioneering work in healing and mind expansion. Howell's visionary recording techniques are based on biofeedback research and clinical studies. Over the years she has worked with eminent scientists and doctors to create meditation and brain optimization programs that are used in hospitals, in biofeedback clinics and by hundreds of thousands of individuals worldwide.

Creativity on Demand: How to Ignite and Sustain the Fire of Genius

By Michael Gelb

This book is both inspirational and eminently pragmatic. Michael Gelb uses his extensive study of martial arts to introduce simple and direct tips that will energize you and inspire you to be more creative. In addition to the more visible, physical aspects of the martial arts, many martial arts have components of inner mental discipline as well. Until recently, many of these techniques to enhance energy and increase personal prowess have been kept hidden, taught only to a few devoted students. Gelb draws upon qigong teachings to share these secrets and provide holistic skills to cultivate energy and unleash creativity.

This book is different from most in that it offers specific mind-body practices and gentle physical exercises. The exercises are easy to learn yet powerful. They can be done by almost anyone. In addition to opening your creative side, the exercises in the book can help offset the exhaustion and fatigue of modern life. *Creativity on Demand* provides additional practical exercises, such as those that involve journaling and self-reflection. Together the tools, exercises, stories and quotations are woven into a masterwork that can enliven your life and uplift your energy.



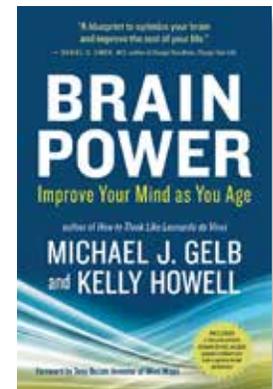
Brain Power: Improve Your Mind as You Age,

By Michael Gelb and Kelly Howell

Many things people believe about aging and learning and memory simply aren't true. You may have heard that it's difficult to learn a language after a certain age. That's not true. With the right tools, older adults may actually be able to learn with greater ease than younger people. This and many other myths and beliefs limit possibilities as people age. *Brain Power* takes these myths head-on, dispelling them and providing more-positive pathways.

Brain Power is a well-researched, well-referenced and practical guide to maintaining and improving your mind as you age. The authors discuss many different aspects of health that contribute to optimal function of your brain, including elements of memory, learning and flexibility. It's believed that exercise and quality nutrition are key elements in brain health, but this book goes further providing detailed explanations of why this is so — and proven ways to attain what's needed to function on a higher level.

Today's culture often expects decline of mental function and doesn't provide the kind of environment to preserve and enhance function over time. *Brain Power* provides a toolkit to maintain and also improve your brain over the years. It provides proof that the brain can adapt, grow and learn new skills with age. Even better, the tools provided are practical, achievable, and proven.



The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living

By Amit Sood, M.D., Mayo Clinic

Amit Sood, M.D., is one of those profoundly thoughtful people who lives from the kind of deep, compassionate place you wish you could share. The good news is that in exploring *The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress Free Living* and implementing the practical steps he outlines, you can. This well-researched and delightfully written book is designed around a set of guiding principles that blend cutting-edge neuroscience with long-standing traditions.

Dr. Sood has been studying stress and resilience for over 20 years. His stress management program has helped tens of thousands of people. *The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress Free Living* incorporates stories and teachings from his classes and lectures. It's a guidebook for structuring your daily life and attitudes in a way that will transform the stress you experience into joy and gratitude. Rather than advising long hours of meditation and detachment, Dr. Sood advocates simple and easy-to-learn techniques to help you shift your brain into a different mode by sharpening your awareness of how you live your life. This more focused mode leads to the absence of stress and the presence of contentment.

Anxiety, stress and emotional disarray are prominent in our culture. Dr. Sood provides access to simple exercises and approaches based on positive principles of gratitude, forgiveness, joy, acceptance, compassion, peace, resilience and altruism. These principles can be difficult to fully understand and even harder to live. But that's what's most unique about this book. Dr. Sood has explored and charted pathways to bring each of these elements into your life in a considered and sustainable way. If you read this book, do the exercises and implement the recommendations, it will change your life forever. Your relationships will blossom, the meaning in your life will become clearer, and you will live from a place of grace.

The Mayo Clinic Handbook for Happiness: A 4-Step Plan for Resilient Living

By Amit Sood, M.D., Mayo Clinic

Dr. Sood takes his work on stress and resilience a step further in this work on happiness. It contains a blend of wisdom from many fields of study — psychology, philosophy, neuroscience and spirituality — giving it depth and completeness.

The work focuses on four specific steps. First, it shows you how to focus your attention. Second, it discusses the elements of emotional resilience and how they fit together as a whole. Then, it explores mind-body practices that can lead you to a more connected view of yourself. Finally, it reviews ways to create and sustain healthy habits. Whether you're coping with anxiety, dealing with a chronic illness or just reaching for a new level of more integrated presence, this four-step plan can be incredibly helpful.



About the author

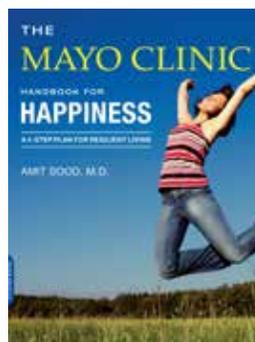


Amit Sood, M.D., is a professor of medicine at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. He's also the director of research in the Complementary and

Integrative Medicine Program, chair of the Mind-Body Medicine Initiative at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and a fellow of the American College of Physicians.

Dr. Sood has developed an innovative approach to mind-body medicine by incorporating concepts from neurosciences, psychology, philosophy and spirituality. His clinical work and research encompasses a wide range of topics from decreasing stress and anxiety to wellness solutions for corporate executives, parents and students.

Dr. Sood received the 2010 Distinguished Service Award, the 2010 Innovator of the Year Award and the 2013 Outstanding Physician Scientist Award from Mayo Clinic. *The Intelligent Optimist*, formerly *Ode* magazine, nominated Dr. Sood as one of the top 20 intelligent optimists helping the world to be a better place.



About the author

Trained in clinical nutrition as a scholar at the University of Cambridge in England, James A. Levine, M.D., Ph.D., has dedicated his scientific career to promoting health in adults and children through education and innovation.

Dr. Levine currently serves as a principal investigator for National Institutes of Health-funded studies focused on improving health for immigrant families through increased activity and better nutrition, interactions between sleep and obesity, and multilevel approaches to reduce obesity in working mothers and their children. Recent additional research includes contributions to a Mayo Clinic-Arizona State University \ pilot program looking at nutrition and activity data for homeless children, physical activity in depressed female smokers, and an investigation of integrated approaches to treating type 1 diabetes.

Dr. Levine is a world authority on obesity, serving as a named expert at the United Nations, an invitee to the President's Cancer Panel and a consultant to governments internationally. He's the Dr. Richard F. Emslander Professor of Endocrinology and Nutrition Research at Mayo Clinic. He holds five tenured professorships at Arizona State University, is the Dean's Distinguished Professor of Medicine at Case Western Reserve University, and is the Regents Professor at Umeå University, Sweden. He also serves as the co-director of Obesity Solutions, a collaboration between Mayo Clinic and ASU, and is the international director of Obesity Solutions' sister center in Sweden.

Get Up! Why Your Chair Is Killing You And What You Can Do About It

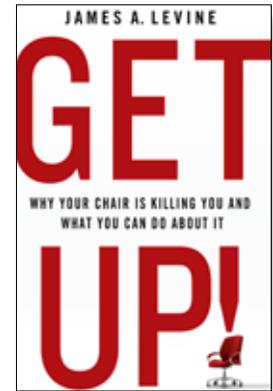
By James A. Levine, M.D., Ph.D., Mayo Clinic

Was your body designed to sit in a chair, on a couch or in a car for most of the day? Even if you exercise 60 minutes a day, is that enough to counteract the remaining 1,380 minutes a day you spend sitting? Both evolution and recent research would say no. By some estimates, every hour of sitting can shorten your life span by two hours. So if spending an hour at the gym isn't enough to offset the negative effects of hours of sitting, what can you do, especially in an increasingly sedentary culture?

In his book, James Levine, M.D., Ph.D., illustrates the harmful effects of prolonged sitting, which can impact physical and emotional health. The average adult spends 50 to 70 percent of the day in a seated position. That's not surprising news to most people who live and work in the corporate environment. Dr. Levine's research demonstrates that when you change the way you use your body, nasty things can happen to your metabolism and even your longevity. For example, the rates of heart disease, diabetes and many cancers have been increasing at a rapid pace. A key element in this health downturn has been the loss of ongoing physical activity — something that used to be woven into people's daily routines.

But Dr. Levine doesn't wallow in the bad news. Instead, he offers creative solutions. In addition to working in Mayo's endocrinology laboratory, Dr. Levine has taken his studies to corporate and school settings. One corporation that took his message to heart totally revamped its office and workday. The reward was healthier and happier workers and lowered health costs as the corporate culture and physical activity levels changed. At a school where Dr. Levine took students and faculty out of chairs and put them into motion, the learning environment improved and so did test scores.

Dr. Levine has created a number of activity-tracking devices and is also the inventor of the treadmill desk. He's taking action to move our culture back in the right direction. If you follow his lead, odds are you'll feel healthier and more vital. Your energy and stamina will increase, and illnesses or conditions you may have are likely to improve.



Dr. Levine using a treadmill desk.

Being Mortal

By Atul Gawande, M.D.

It's obvious that modern medicine and other factors of modern life have allowed longer, healthier and more productive lives than ever before. To Dr. Atul Gawande, these advances are something to be appreciated with awe and met with celebration.

However, it's easy to gloss over the thorny questions of mortality. For most people, death comes after a long decline. Bodies weaken and fall apart. Minds may deteriorate. Medical struggles accumulate. Productivity declines or disappears. Independence and autonomy are no longer an option.

What's the response to this mortal circumstance?

In Dr. Gawande's view, a tremendous amount of resources are spent on a "cure" that's often worse than the disease. To make his argument, Dr. Gawande uses extensive research and insightful stories of loved ones and people he encounters in his roles as a surgeon, family man and journalist. He finds that what the medical profession and loved ones perceive as important in old age isn't necessarily what the older adult finds important. Elder care institutions often focus on safety, schedules, participatory activities and routine. But to many older adults, this is felt as a loss of privacy and control — being told what to eat, when to wake up, how to move and when to take medications. It's an emphasis on passive entertainment versus being helpful and playing a role in society.

Dr. Gawande asks: Does debility and dependence rule out autonomy? Does it rule out the ability to keep shaping one's life story?

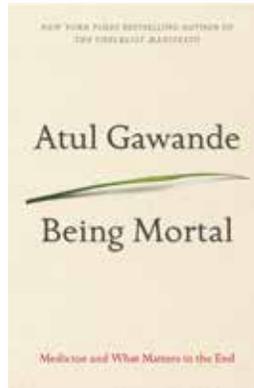
Fortunately, Dr. Gawande's storytelling includes numerous examples of how people are rebelling against the way that medicine and institutions take control of lives in old age. He provides optimism in his belief that we're in a transitional phase between institutionalized aging and something better — and provides examples of how to identify elder care situations that have made that transition.

Dr. Gawande also takes on the modern medicine's approach to disease and aging, which is to do everything medically possible to extend life. Doctors, he points out, rarely reach the point where there's "nothing more we can do." Yet, in doing so, he argues and shows with research, people often lose any sort of autonomy, choice and quality with the extended time. Moreover, Dr. Gawande explains how there's usually a point at which enormous medical resources go into making an unstoppable problem worse.

Dr. Gawande asks the fundamental question: When should doctors fix and when should they not? The answers aren't always clear. Answers often involve long and difficult discussions to sort out when to switch from fighting for time, to fighting for other things people value. A flaw in modern thinking is the idea that stopping the fight against mortality is tantamount to giving up.

Dr. Gawande doesn't provide a precise blueprint for end-of-life decision-making, but he leaves the reader with a few simple questions. Answering them, he has found, guides decision-making that's in line with the ultimate wishes of those nearing the end of life.

Although Dr. Gawande's book is about mortality, it's ultimately about life. It's about making decisions about when to sacrifice vitality now for vitality later, and when to focus on living for the best possible day today.



About the author



Atul Gawande, M.D., is a surgeon, writer and public health researcher. He practices general and endocrine surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital. He's a professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Samuel O. Thier Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School. He's also executive director of Ariadne Labs, a joint center for health systems innovation, and chairman of Lifebox, a nonprofit organization making surgery safer globally.

Dr. Gawande has been a staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine since 1998 and has written four *New York Times* best-sellers. He's the winner of two National Magazine Awards, AcademyHealth's HSR Impact Award for highest research impact on health care, a MacArthur Fellowship and the Lewis Thomas Prize for Writing about Science.

About the author



Dean Ornish, M.D., is the founder and president of the nonprofit Preventive Medicine Research Institute and is clinical professor

of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

Dr. Ornish received his medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine, was a clinical fellow in medicine at Harvard Medical School, and completed an internship and residency in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital.

For over 36 years, Dr. Ornish has directed clinical research demonstrating the health benefits of comprehensive lifestyle changes on conditions such as heart disease and prostate cancer. His current research focuses on how lifestyle changes affect gene expression, “turning on” disease-preventing genes and “turning off” genes that promote cancer and heart disease. He’s also pioneering work on how lifestyle changes may help reverse aging.

He’s the author of six books, all national best-sellers. Dr. Ornish was honored as “one of the 125 most extraordinary University of Texas alumni in the past 125 years,” chosen by *Life* magazine as “one of the 50 most influential members of his generation,” recognized as “one of the most interesting people of 1996” by *People* magazine and named as “one of the world’s seven most powerful teachers” by *Forbes* magazine.

Love & Survival: 8 Pathways to Intimacy and Health

By Dean Ornish, M.D.

Dean Ornish, M.D., is known throughout the world for his pioneering research and advice on how to reverse heart disease with changes in diet and lifestyle — and more recently for improving outcomes in cancer survivors in a similar fashion. In *Love & Survival*, Dr. Ornish explores a less tangible but likely more fundamental and profound factor in the quality of health and the quantity of years. The title of the book says it all. Love — or the connections with other people — matters as much as or more than many of the health factors that can be measured, scanned, biopsied, diagnosed and treated with drugs or surgery. Scientific studies done by Dr. Ornish and others have shown this over and over again.

To quote Dr. Ornish:

“I am not aware of any other factor in medicine that has a greater impact on survival than the healing power of love and intimacy. Not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery.”

The author goes into detail about the emotional heart of human existence and how it impacts the physical heart and many other aspects of physical function such as the immune system. The emotional and physical sides of people’s lives are so intertwined that emotional emptiness, anger or bitterness can actually contribute to mental and physical diseases.

Dr. Ornish identifies loneliness and alienation as key elements in the social isolation many face in Western societies. These factors are more important predictors of poor health outcomes and shorter life spans than anything else. Western cultures celebrate and enjoy greater degrees of freedom and autonomy than do those many other places. However, this can come with a high cost when factoring in the emotional risk that ensues from the barriers we create to fence ourselves off from others.

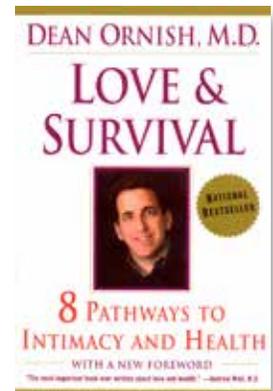
Dr. Ornish goes on to define eight emotionally intelligent pathways to intimacy and healing, which are well-founded in science. He defines specific actions you can take to improve the quality and, thus, the length of your life. Healing can take place at any age. It’s never too late. He also identifies a number of facets of our lives that can be addressed and improved. These include communication, group support, forgiveness, compassion, therapy, touch, commitment and meditation. They’re discussed in detail in a highly approachable way.

Dialogues in the book are used as powerful teaching tools. Through them, Dr. Ornish shows how ideas translate into actions, which impact the entirety of our health and our well-being. He shows that the defenses we use to protect ourselves are actually causing us to create barriers to the connection we need.

Here’s an example, paraphrased from one section of dialogue:

If you were swimming to the love of your life out in the middle of deep water and someone offered you a big bag of gold, would you take it and hold on to it? Would you let it drown you or would you let it go?

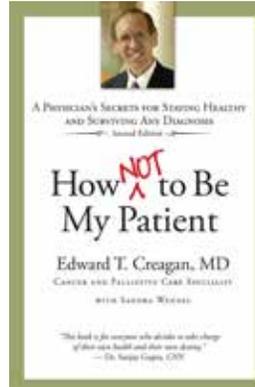
The book is filled with insights and wisdom. Dr. Ornish invites those who feel cut off from others and from themselves to reconnect and celebrate, and in so doing, to live healthier and longer lives.



How Not to Be My Patient: A Physician's Secrets for Staying Healthy and Surviving Any Diagnosis

By Edward T. Creagan, M.D., Mayo Clinic

Edward T. Creagan, M.D., a medical oncology consultant at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, is a renowned and compassionate cancer specialist (oncologist). He's a great speaker and a great teacher. In this book, he solves the health equation with equal attention to the patient perspective and the latest understanding of modern medicine. His book will empower you to use the medical system in effective ways to get maximum impact and the best outcomes. Dr. Creagan explains to the reader the best of traditional and complementary medicine from a whole-person perspective. Whether you are dealing with a health crisis and new diagnosis or simply want to develop healthy habits and a healthy respectful relationship with your doctor, Dr. Creagan covers it all in *How Not to Be My Patient*.



Dr. Creagan accurately captures the patient's perspective. His empathetic approach shows he clearly understands how people feel when they encounter serious life-changing health problems. Dr. Creagan describes in an easily readable manner how to get the support you need from your doctor and health care team. He covers everything from communicating effectively with your doctor to thoroughly understanding your diagnosis and prognosis. With this degree of knowledge, it's possible for someone outside the world of medicine to make truly informed decisions. The person that should be in charge of your health care is you. Dr. Creagan gives you the skill set to understand your situation and choose the path and therapies that are best for you.

When confronted with a serious illness, it's often hard to know what to do. Dr. Creagan outlines 10 action steps you can take to survive your diagnosis. Things you need to know, things you need to do, and the underlying attitudes that will improve your odds of survival and getting the best outcome. He discusses the details of how to cultivate a support system that will be sustaining for you. There's also an extremely well-written section on how to help a friend, neighbor or loved one with a serious illness. It's human nature to want to help when a friend or loved one has a serious health problem. But not knowing what to do or being afraid of doing the wrong thing may limit your ability to reach out. Dr. Creagan outlines in a clear and helpful way specific things you can do in this situation.

There's value in knowing how to get the best out of the medical system, but Dr. Creagan doesn't stop there. He discusses what you should know about screening tests and how to decide which ones are right for you. He discusses ways to attain health consciousness and develop self-empowering practices that will help you get healthy and stay healthy. Dr. Creagan concludes with a thoughtful section on attitude and the psychology of survival and longevity. This book can make you feel better about yourself. It can help you feel empowered to take charge of your medical care and your health.

About the author



Edward T. Creagan, M.D., is a professor of medical oncology at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. Most recently, he was awarded an Educa-

tion Diversity Award and has received the Distinguished Mayo Clinician Award — Mayo Clinic's highest honor. He completed an elected term as president of the Mayo Staff.

Dr. Creagan was the first Mayo Clinic consultant to be board certified in hospice and palliative medicine. He's a fellow of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine.

Dr. Creagan received his medical training at New York Medical College and earned graduate degrees in internal medicine and oncology at the University of Michigan and the National Cancer Institute before joining the staff at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He's also board certified in internal medicine and medical oncology.

He is a researcher and an author of over 400 scientific papers and has given presentations throughout the world. His columns on health, wellness and the mind-body connection have appeared in Midwestern newspapers. He's also the medical editor of the book *Mayo Clinic on Healthy Aging*.

About the author



Ira Byock, M.D., is a leading palliative care physician, author and public advocate for improving care through the end of life.

Dr. Byock has been involved in hospice and palliative care since 1978, during his residency at the University of California San Francisco. At that time he helped found a hospice home care program for the indigent population served by the university hospital and county clinics of Fresno, California. He's a past president of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. During the 1990s he was a co-founder and principal investigator for the Missoula Demonstration Project, a community-based organization in Montana dedicated to the research and transformation of end-of-life experience locally, as a demonstration of what is possible nationally. From 1996 through 2006, he served as director for Promoting Excellence in End-of-Life Care, a national grant program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Dr. Byock has authored numerous articles on the ethics and practice of care. His research led to frameworks for the experience of advanced illness, subjective quality of life measures, and simple, effective life-completion counseling.

The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living

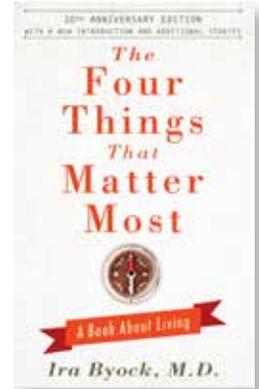
By Ira Byock, M.D.

The Four Things That Matter Most is a beautifully written book by Ira Byock, M.D., that holds a healing message for troubled relationships. Relationships can get out of balance, and sometimes even important relationships become troubled in deeply disturbing ways. Though written from an end-of-life perspective — Dr. Byock's specialty is in palliative care and hospice medicine — the book can be equally meaningful to families that need healing during the normal course of life. When I first read this book I was so moved that I gave copies to several of my friends and mentors, as well as my family.

The book is organized around four simple phrases: "Please forgive me," "I forgive you," "Thank you," and "I love you." Dr. Byock relates compelling vignettes of misunderstandings and troubles and the healing that can occur around each of these topics. The stories he includes range from sons and fathers who haven't spoken to each other in years to resolution of hurts in the last days of life. The uniting theme is that there can be meaningful resolution for all involved near the time of death or anytime along the path of life. This creates a way forward for both parties. Sometimes, it involves an ability to let go and have a peaceful death. Other times, it means moving forward into a life with newly transformed relationships.

Dr. Byock has described his work helping the dying as being "like a fireman" — he goes directly to the heart of the flames while many others are fleeing. And in the intensity of the last weeks and days of a person's life, there's great potential for healing emotional wounds. So many things that previously seemed important fall away, leaving only the essentials and a desire to make things right.

Many times people want to heal a relationship but don't know how or where to begin. The stories and wisdom contained in this book can give you courage and create an opening for this healing to occur. The book's message can help you write a new chapter in your story or even change the ending. Everyone will face the loss of a loved one at some point. Having the skill to do so gracefully and peacefully is immeasurably helpful. Full of heart with a thoughtful perspective, Dr. Byock's book is a life-affirming celebration and can be of great help at the end of life as well as along the way.



Tell us what you think

Did you find this Special Report informative? Are you planning to read any of the recommended books? We'd like to hear from you. Tell us your thoughts by writing to us at: *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*, Attn: Customer Feedback, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55905. Or send us an email at HealthLetter@Mayo.edu