



## Aging Wisely With Linda

Consultations/Consulting • Counseling/Coaching  
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# August 2023

## The Power of Positive Thought

### Can having positive thoughts about aging be a partial cure to Mild Cognitive Impairment?

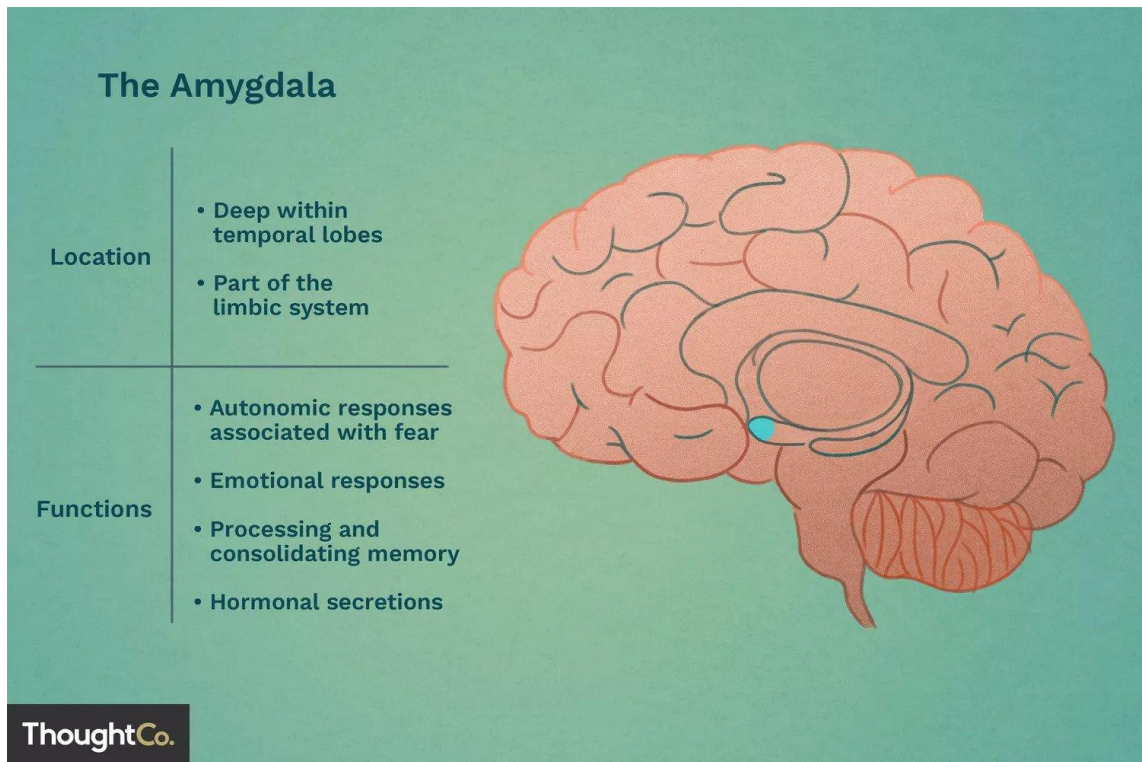
Do you think aging is an opportunity to be more involved or learn a new skill? On the other hand, do your thoughts on aging turn to being disabled, depressed, and lonely? These long-term beliefs might impact your ability to recover from MCI (mild cognitive impairment) according to a [recent study](#) published on April 12, 2023, in the American Medical Association's [JAMA Network](#). (A less scholarly article on the study is available from [Prevention Magazine](#).)

The researchers found that people who had positive thoughts about aging had a 30.2% greater chance of recovering from mild cognitive impairment than those who had negative thoughts about getting older—and that was true regardless of how severe their mild cognitive impairment was at the start of the study.

An earlier study by [Yale School of Public Health](#) found that thinking positively about aging resulted in a 44% lower risk of dementia! For those with the APOE4 gene (an indicator of a strong risk factor for dementia), the impact of positive age beliefs was even greater.

# Your Brain's Response to Positive Thought

The improvement of explicit memory through emotional arousal is mediated by the amygdala, a tiny structure inside your brain that works to both process emotions and encode memories. When aroused by emotion, the amygdala connects memories to other areas of the brain in order to store them.



Researchers have found the activity of the amygdala in older adults was decreased with negative emotions, while positive emotions were associated with activity similar to that of young research subjects! In other words, positive emotions were associated with improved memory about an experience. More can be read about this in a [National Institute of Health study on positivity and dementia](#).

## Positivity in Your World

I have always been interested in long-lived artists, scientists, philanthropists, and others. Just recently, the nightly news was featuring Mic Jagger on his birthday because he is still performing at 80. Clint Eastwood, Rita Moreno, and Dick Van Dyke are all in their 90s and still vibrant. I believe these well known individuals love their work and are forward-thinking in positive ways.

The link between people with a more positive outlook on aging and recovery from MCI now has some more scientific study behind it – it is not just observation. The research notes that those who have adopted these positive aging values are also individuals that have healthy lifestyles – so that good diet (Mediterranean diet) and exercise are also contributing to “recovery” from MCI.



Most of the individuals and families that contact me with a diagnosis of “Mild Cognitive Impairment” are certain it is the first step of a progressive illness such as Alzheimer’s disease, and they are more worried about that future, which of course adds to stress. This stress is precisely what is not needed. Yes, we should all have our affairs in order should any malady strike, but it is not the time to give in to what you think is “aging” in the negative! This early diagnosis might be a good thing now because it comes with time to change your outlook and get involved in your thinking, learning, diet, exercise, and even volunteering.

This past year I had the opportunity to teach a ten-week class on brain enhancement, and I created a three-week class for couples when one has a new diagnosis of MCI. I am excited to add this new information about positive thoughts on aging in general to my future classes. Hope is always what I like to leave my participants with at the end of classes.

We should all celebrate aging. Aging is a gift and we who can, need to be out there learning, volunteering, laughing, and living life to the fullest.

**Affirmation: “Aging is an exciting growing stage of life.”**

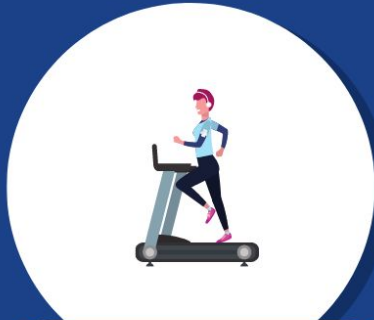


# 6 HEALTHY BRAIN HABITS



**Healthy Diet**

The Mediterranean Diet, MIND Diet, or an anti-inflammatory diet are favored for brain health.



**Regular Physical Activity**

Aim for 30 minutes of exercise every day. Some options to explore include gardening, dancing, and Tai chi.



**Brain Activity**

Take an online course. Learn a new skill. Challenge a friend to a game of Scrabble. Pick up a book of sudoku puzzles.



**Social Activity**

Choose activities that encourage social interaction. You might try volunteering at a school or joining a support group.



**Mindfulness**

This can take many forms, but it should be purposeful and become part of your routine. Set aside 5-10 minutes daily.



**Get Good Sleep**

Creating a sleep routine, including giving your body time to wind down, can help improve your circadian rhythm.