

A full-page photograph of Cameron Diaz on a beach. She is smiling, wearing a blue polo shirt and jeans, with a white cardigan draped over her shoulders. The background shows the ocean and a rocky coastline under a clear sky.

Talk *of* AGES

*Hollywood A-lister **Cameron Diaz** grows happier and more beautiful by the year. And with a new book on the science of aging, more accomplished, too*

BY LAUREN PAIGE KENNEDY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEWEY NICKS/TRUNK ARCHIVE



Cameron Diaz is one of those megawatt Hollywood stars whose name and image immediately conjure a set of glowing adjectives:

GORGEOUS
FUN
SEXY
COMEDIC
LIGHTHEARTED

Two years ago she widened this descriptive net when she published the best-selling *The Body Book: The Law of Hunger, the Science of Strength, and Other Ways to Love Your Amazing Body*, a scientifically based guide for women that tackles nutrition, fitness, and the importance of emotional self-acceptance—with zero actor-y hang-ups about dieting to stay skinny.

And now Diaz, 43, is at it again. This time, she and co-author Sandra Bark offer *The Longevity Book: The Science of Aging, the Biology of Strength, and the Privilege of Time*. It's a refreshingly positive tour of what to expect as women stride through their 40s, 50s, and beyond, including the menopausal transition.

"It's a celebration of getting older," Diaz says. In other words, you won't find a beauty-obsessed "anti-aging" tip anywhere in this fact-filled tome. She's made sure of it.

"It's the book is a celebration with information every woman should have," she explains. "In school we learn to read and write, but what do we do with this body? How does it work? For my [second] book I wanted to include everything on aging I wanted to know, and present it in a relatable way. I wanted to understand why I shouldn't be afraid. I mean, I feel great! Does that mean there's something wrong with me?"

Definitely not. Diaz, known for being super-athletic, has a fit figure women of all ages might envy. Still, she's the first to acknowledge how it's changing—and to talk about how she plans to embrace its inevitable metamorphosis.

She's had great role models in this regard, especially "my grandmother on my mom's side" who was always "strong as hell...I didn't consider her old." She also writes lovingly about her mother, whose beauty "shines from the inside out," something Diaz tries to emulate.

But does Diaz feel any creeping sense of dread as her forties unfold? Any anxiety about "the change" coming her way? Especially as an actor whose appearance is mercilessly scrutinized by Hollywood's decision-makers, gossip sites, and fans?

"When I was 25, I looked forward to being 30," she says. "In my 30s, I was like, where are my 40s? It's something I've always looked forward to, the journey we get to take while we live. Aging is a privilege," she reminds us all. "It's not a given. It's not something we should assume is going to happen to us. We *hope* we get to grow old. So how do you want to do it? How do you want that experience to be for you? How can you make that journey be of real value?"

Science Fare

Here is where the science comes in. Diaz and Bark interviewed top researchers from across the country who study the effects of aging on women. What they took away from these meetings surprised them both.

"We asked, 'What's the science? How can we be revolutionary? We want to tell women: *This is what you need to do*. We learned genes are part of [how well we

SWAN'S SONG

age], and that health occurs at the cellular level. But we can affect our genes with different choices and how we take care of ourselves.

“Every doctor we spoke to—and it didn’t matter the specialty—told us, ‘We look at nutrition, diet. We tell our patients to eat better, move more, sleep. And once they change those things, usually that’s what changes their condition the most.’”

At this, Diaz notes, “People don’t always follow through, though. They want to take a pill. They don’t want to implement simply changing their diet, getting more physical activity and sleep. It’s hard to break bad habits and develop good ones. Yet, the most important thing we can do to live longer and stronger is to build health-conscious habits now.”

These habits are even more important as women confront the challenges of menopause. Because so many women face these changes armed only with anecdotal stories from their mothers and grandmothers, many feel anxiety about what to expect. Are there differences between women of varying ethnic backgrounds, for instance? Does weight and fitness level play a role? What about attitude? And how drastic is the transformation? Does it happen overnight?

To separate fact from fiction, Diaz and her co-author met with Gail Greendale, MD, professor of medicine and obstetrics and gynecology at UCLA, Los Angeles, mid-20s and and principal investigator of the Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation (SWAN) at its UCLA outpost.

Greendale stresses that SWAN, which has studied the menopausal transition for more than 20 years at various research sites, builds from the work of earlier pioneering studies. It is, however, the first, largest, and lengthiest study of its kind, collecting data from more than 3,300 women, a consortium of white, black, Hispanic, Japanese, and Chinese participants.

What’s clear from SWAN’s findings is that “every woman is different,” Greendale stresses; that “menopause is a transition,” not a sudden shift; that it occurs gradually over many years with a range of symptoms; and that these symptoms are “common, but do not occur in all women.”

The Study of Women’s Health Across the Nation (SWAN) is “a multi-center, multi-ethnic, community-based longitudinal study conducted to characterize the biological, symptomatic, and psychosocial changes that occur during the menopausal transition,” says Gail Greendale, MD, principal investigator at SWAN’s UCLA outpost. More than 3,300 ethnically diverse women across seven research sites have participated in SWAN since 1996. Key findings include:

MENOPAUSE IS A TRANSITION. LET’S CALL IT MT. Most women undergo MT between ages 48 and 55. Early perimenopause means less predictable menstrual cycles, without menstrual gaps in the cycle. Late perimenopause means gaps of at least three months. Postmenopause means going 12 months without a period.

WOMEN GO THROUGH MENOPAUSE DIFFERENTLY. Ethnicity can affect when menopause begins, as well as the severity of certain symptoms. For instance, African American and Hispanic women reach menopause a little earlier, and Japanese and Chinese women a little later, than the average Caucasian woman, who reaches menopause at 51.5. In addition, African American women may have vasomotor symptoms (hot flashes) for a longer duration (10 years) than other women (who average seven years). Weight, too, factors in. Among pre- and perimenopausal women, heavier women on average have more hot flashes; yet for postmenopausal women, extra weight may lead to fewer hot flashes.

MOOD SWINGS ARE NOT JUST ABOUT FLUCTUATING HORMONE LEVELS. Estrogen levels do decrease during menopause, which can lead to feelings of tension or irritability. However, according to Greendale, “stress, genetics, and amount of social support can all influence mood swing symptoms and their severity.”

In other words, menopause can be as different as the women who go through it. And, interestingly, SWAN’s research shows that a woman’s attitude toward this physical change affects the frequency and severity of her menopausal symptoms.

“Learning that the more you accept it, the less stressed you are and the more prepared, and the more you allow yourself to contemplate, ‘What does this mean to me? Where do I want to end up, and who is going to take that journey with me?’ is empowering,” Diaz says. “Everyone is different, just like my period is different from my best girlfriend’s. But we’ll go through it together—and it’s going to be OK. We’re going to hold hands through it! The more you accept aging and allow it to happen, the easier it is and the fewer symptoms you’ll have.”

Inside Out

Diaz may be the rare actress who doesn’t fear growing older, but she doesn’t judge those who fight the outward advance of age with injectibles, fillers, and cosmetic surgery. Still, she hopes those who do pay attention to developing their inner glow, too.

“Doing a procedure is a normal thing now,” she says. “The levels to which we take it, and the images the entertainment industry reflects back to us, can be confusing. I’m not against it; it absolutely does its job,”

she says of cosmetic enhancement. “If it makes you feel better about yourself, great. But I don’t want people to think they’re taking care of their whole being...the superficiality of the exterior doesn’t reflect all of you. Pay attention to what’s *inside* of you, and take care of it in a real way, on the biological, cellular level.”

Diaz practices what she preaches. “I try to work out and break a sweat every day,” she says. “I’m anxious during the days when I don’t and feel less capable of holding in my emotions, being focused. Working out first thing in the morning is really important for me; I need those endorphins.”

Always active, always into surfing and hiking, Diaz knew she had another muscle to stretch when she reached her 40s: her heart. Or more specifically, its need for love. Diaz wed Good



Charlotte rocker Benji Madden in January 2015, the first marriage for both.

“Yes, I focused on my well-being, fitness, and nutrition,” she says of entering her 40s, “but I realized how I’m in a different phase now. During my first year of marriage, I’ve been rerouting *everything*. I’m expanding different parts of myself, taking care of myself in ways I never did well before. I’m focused on my husband and our life together. It thrills me, makes me feel whole in a brand-new way.”

Madden is clearly just as thrilled with matrimony. The guitarist recently tweeted gushing enthusiasm for Diaz and her latest project. “She wakes up every day on a mission to try and make the world a better place,” he posted on Twitter. “I’m always amazed by the courage, strength, and vulnerability she shows, relentlessly encouraging other women to love themselves.”

Diaz says of this loving support, “I didn’t know how powerful being vulnerable is—until now. My husband helped me figure this out. He really helped me to understand it.” Seems middle age isn’t quite so scary, after all. For Diaz, it’s looking pretty fantastic.

Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD
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DIAZ’S *Feel-Good Philosophy*

Vibrant, successful, and more fulfilled than ever, Cameron Diaz refuses to go along with society’s swan song for women entering middle age. Here’s how:

Attitude Is Everything

“Feelings of happiness and satisfaction actually increase with age,” Diaz writes. “In fact, studies around the world have consistently found that the happiest people are between 82 and 85 years old.” Factor in how your attitude toward aging can affect the physical symptoms of menopause, and this can mean only one thing:

You just might feel as good as you think, no matter how old you are.

Include Your Partner

“I’m so happy I have someone to share this journey with,” the newlywed actor says. Not only does a recent study, shared in her book, show increased sexual satisfaction among healthy women between

the ages of 40 and 80; the importance of emotional support may contribute to fewer and less frequent menopause symptoms.

Gab With Your Girlfriends

Diaz, whose world-famous girl squad includes fellow celebrities Nicole Richie, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Drew Barrymore, maintains that close friendships are key for aging well. “Talk to your friends. Ask them what they’re going through. Tell them what you’re going through.”

Meditate

“I started meditating three or four years ago. When I make time to do it at least once a day, I really feel the difference. Twenty minutes of meditation heals and changes the brain. Even in New York City in the back of a cab on the way to an appointment, when I feel frantic and all over the place, I instantly feel better. I think: *Why didn’t I do that earlier?* My whole body releases the stress it’s been under.”