

Hollywood might be obsessed with anti-ageing, but actress CAMERON DIAZ's philosophy is all about ageing well. She lets *Elaine Lipworth* in on the secret to looking – and feeling – *this* good at 43

Viva

Diaz

When I was in my 20s, I couldn't wait to be in my 30s; and in my 30s, I looked forward to my 40s. My youth has gone. I'm not young any more and I am perfectly OK with that,' says Cameron Diaz cheerfully. 'Your youth is only with you for so long and, if you're lucky, you'll be older for longer than you were ever young.'

Paradoxically, given her philosophical attitude, the Hollywood actress is at the pinnacle of a profession in which the cult of youth is ubiquitous and beauty is still one of its main currencies – at least for women. So it is interesting that, at 43, the star of blockbusters such as *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Bad Teacher* and *Shrek* is anticipating her 50s with enthusiasm. 'We see getting older as something negative, but if you're not ageing there's only one other alternative...and that one sucks,' says Cameron. 'If we understand in a positive way what is going to happen to our bodies and what we can do to stay strong and resilient, we don't need to keep wishing that we could get back what's behind us. We can actually enjoy the fulfilment and wisdom that comes with ageing.'

In Hollywood, which Cameron admits 'bears a large part of the responsibility for how we view ageing, telling us that older is ugly or less valuable', her approach is radical. But Cameron isn't making her pronouncements with the intention of changing her industry. She is simply encouraging women to take a fresh look at the whole business of ageing, and has followed the success of her 2013 bestseller *The Body Book* with *The Longevity Book: Live Stronger, Live Better, The Art of Ageing Well*. Delivering clear, factual information about all aspects of the ageing process, from grey hair and wrinkles to menopause and the midlife crisis (which she renames 'midlife celebration'), it's full of practical advice.

I suggest that it must be easier for a wealthy and beautiful film star to age gracefully than for the rest of us? She disagrees. 'It has to do with choices everyone can make every day that don't have anything to do with luxury. "Am I going to buy a frozen meal and put it in the microwave, or order in food and then be on the internet for two hours; or am I going to buy fresh ingredients and spend time cooking and decide not to turn on the TV tonight?" But sometimes you do better than other times. Sometimes I am right on point and take care of myself; other days I feel, "I could have done better getting more sleep, being kinder to myself."

'Too many people get to their 50s and their health all of a sudden slides out from underneath them and they're sick for the next 20 years. They're on medication, miserable, trying to feel good for one day.' Instead, Cameron proposes a positive way to grow older

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Left: Cameron with her husband, Good Charlotte guitarist Benji Madden. Right: with her family celebrating her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame



'with strength, grace, health and wisdom.' The actress interviewed eminent doctors and scientists at America's National Institutes of Health and prestigious universities. She found the research itself unaccountably rewarding. 'It's the most fun,' she exclaims, adding that the rigorous endeavour involved in any project that requires concentrated focus can result in health benefits. 'You are building your brain so that it gets stronger and becomes more resilient and less susceptible to dementia. It's similar to learning a new instrument or a new skill. Learning helps your brain.'

Interspersed with anatomical illustrations, scientific research and lively discussion, there's a section on 'the biology of ageing' and the emerging field of geroscience, which examines the relationship between ageing and disease – as well as information about conditions such as breast cancer, thyroid disease and hypertension. As outlined in the book, studies have shown that the world's happiest people are aged between 82 and 85 and 'along with the sags and bags, feelings of happiness and satisfaction actually increase with age'. Cameron also has sound psychological suggestions, for example, cultivating an optimistic outlook, something that clearly comes naturally to her. 'In my 50s I look forward to knowing myself on a spiritual level and being with the people I love,' she says. Cameron married Good Charlotte rocker Benji Madden, 37, in January last year (Benji's twin brother Joel is married to Nicole Richie). 'I'm so grateful because I know that I have my partner for life,' she says. 'Having meaningful, loving relationships [not necessarily a romantic partner] is one of the key components to living a longer, happier life.'

If there are visible creases around her vivid blue eyes, she's not concerned. 'Beauty appreciates, not depreciates,' she says. 'It grows, not fades.' She admits that she has tried Botox and fillers. Her current views on cosmetic surgery? 'Things ➤

◀ change; how I feel about it today is different from the way I felt two years ago. It's evolving constantly, so I'm not going to limit myself and make a remark about whether or not I'll do something [cosmetic surgery]. I'm not somebody who makes definitive statements about anything.'

Is she happy with her appearance? 'If you look at me in a film from 20 years ago and you look at me now, you are going to see a difference. But the truth for me is that those were 20 years of living and I don't focus on what I look like. I focus on the experiences I've had,' Cameron laughs, at pains to point out that *Longevity* is not an anti-ageing manual and the focus isn't on looks.

Her optimistic demeanour was fostered during a 'happy childhood' in a working-class neighbourhood of Long Beach, just south of Los Angeles, where money was in short supply but affection was plentiful. Cameron was raised with her elder sister Chimene by her late father Emilio (he died of pneumonia in 2008) and her mother Billie, evidently a great role model.

'I never once heard her make a negative comment about herself or have any body loathing; she never said, "Oh, I'm fat" or "I'm too skinny". I think that's amazing, because most women do have that [attitude] and don't realise they're passing it on to their children.' Her father was also a big influence. 'He was very gregarious, very engaging and very loyal. My parents had a loving relationship.'

Does she have a greater sense of her own mortality since embarking on her investigation into the ageing process? 'No, I am not afraid of death,' she says. 'But what I'm talking about in my book is life and living, being proactive and looking towards the future with more hope than despair.' Her biggest key to stress relief? 'Meditation: it's incredible and life-changing,' she says. Cameron practises Transcendental Meditation on a daily basis, a technique she learned from the David Lynch Foundation. 'I think everybody benefits from meditation because it helps us rest and regenerate and repair our bodies. The hardest part is to find time to do it when you're crazily busy, but that's the point. With 20 minutes' meditation a day, you will do so much more than you would ever be able to do if you weren't meditating. You'll feel great.'

Cameron also advocates spending quality time with friends. She meets her close-knit group, which includes Drew Barrymore and Gwyneth Paltrow, on a monthly basis. 'Everybody's life is different and we're all spread out, we have different responsibilities and careers, so we make an effort to stay connected. We love just being together; sharing meals; whatever we end up doing is nourishing.' They often cook for each other. 'Gwyneth is an amazing cook. I've watched her in the kitchen; she has all her bowls in front of her and



Candid Cameron

WHAT'S ON YOUR BEDSIDE TABLE? Nothing, I don't like clutter around where I sleep.

SO IF YOU'RE NOT READING...

I've been listening to a lot of Ted talks: Monica Lewinsky's 'The Price Of Shame' about the media, Elizabeth Gilbert's 'Your Elusive Genius' and 'How Our Microbes Make Us Who We Are' by biologist Rob Knight - I like science lectures.

WHAT MUSIC ARE YOU PLAYING? My husband's band Good Charlotte, which makes me happy.

FAVOURITE CLOTHES? Anything cashmere. I love the way it feels.

GO-TO RECIPE? A delicious green juice with literally anything green.

MOTTO? Do the best you can, try your hardest as often as you can.

GOALS? I'd like to write another book. I'm waiting for inspiration.



Clockwise from left: Cameron with her *Charlie's Angels* co-stars Drew Barrymore and Lucy Liu, in *What Happens in Vegas* with Ashton Kutcher, in *Bad Teacher*, promoting *Knight and Day*, with Jude Law in *The Holiday*, and at the premiere of *Sex Tape*

goes, "How about a little bit of this and a little bit of that?" Her recipes are incredible; I am more a home cook. I have certain things that I do well. I love to roast a chicken and play around with fresh herbs. I lean heavily on garlic, oil, lemon, salt and tomatoes – a sort of Italian flavour. But Gwyneth is fearless.

During our conversation, there's been no mention of Cameron's film career. Two years ago she starred in the hit comedy *The Other Woman* and a film update of *Annie*, but she tells me that while she has 'always loved acting and making movies is rewarding, I have nothing coming out and nothing looking ahead. At some point I'll go back to it, but this [her writing and research] is what I'm engaged in at the moment.'

In the meantime, she's enjoying marriage and the simple pleasures of life. Cameron says she has discovered 'a part of myself that I never knew existed. I understand that something builds deep within you. We've learnt so much about ourselves in our first year; about the commitment involved, which is the cornerstone of everything. It's not something that I thought would be different – but now I get it. Apparently I was missing something.' She sounds smitten. 'People just say you know when you know...and I did.'

Are they considering starting a family? 'The one thing I've always said is "never say never".' Cameron told me a couple of years ago she thought she would make a good mother: 'I certainly feel that way,' she says. 'I think as you get older you know more; I have more to offer a child now than I did when I was 25. I don't know what's going to happen in life and that's the beauty of it; getting married is the perfect example of that. You make choices and take a course for your future, but you don't know where it's going to end up. I am not in control. I am here for the ride.'

■ Turn the page for an exclusive extract from Cameron's new book *Longevity* ►



Live well, age well

In this exclusive extract from CAMERON DIAZ's new book, she explains how growing old healthily is the key to a truly fulfilling life



AROUND MY 40TH BIRTHDAY, I started thinking about what it means to age. None of us is immune to the passage of time. The best things we can do for ourselves as we grow older also happen to be some of our favourite things to do. Eating good food, developing our muscles, getting a good night's sleep, loving other people, laughing, relaxing, finding joy in the world. The best way to age well isn't to worry about ageing. It is to live well. All those elements that make life beautiful are good for you.

While it sometimes seems as if all the changes of ageing show up overnight, shifts begin slowly and subtly in our cells and in our organs. Here's a brief overview of how the passing years affect every system in our bodies.

Your respiratory system

As you get older, your lungs lose some elasticity, which means that you absorb slightly less oxygen into your bloodstream from the air you breathe. They also become less able to fight infections.

- Stop smoking.
- Get regular cardiovascular exercise.
- Eat foods that are high in antioxidants to protect your cells.
- Avoid lung irritants such as burning wood fires indoors or paint fumes.
- Get your flu jab.

Your eyes

As we age, our eyes take a direct hit. Dry eye affects twice as many women as men over 50. Cataracts are more likely to

occur in women than in men, too. Reading or looking at things close up may become harder.

- Spend time away from the bright light of the computer or TV screen.
- Wear sunglasses that protect against UV light when outdoors.
- Drink plenty of water to keep your eyes hydrated.
- Antioxidants such as betacarotene, vitamin C and minerals such as zinc are all important for eye health so eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.

Your skin

Decreased collagen production means that our skin becomes drier, less elastic and more prone to wrinkling as we age. In addition, as the fat layer under the skin thins, our tolerance for cold decreases (remember how your grandma always wore a sweater on days that didn't seem that cold to you?) and our risk of heatstroke increases. Our skin is more fragile and prone to cuts and bruises and it can also take up to four times longer to heal as it did in our youth.

- Use moisturising products to help hydrate the skin.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Always wear sunscreen (your skin becomes more prone to sunburn as you age).

Your heart and blood vessels

With age, a woman's risk of developing heart disease increases. So know the symptoms: neck, jaw, shoulder or abdominal discomfort; shortness of breath; arm pain; ►

Eat good food, get a good night's sleep, laugh, love, relax

Key ways to support your health

SYMPTOM OF AGE	GOAL	HOW FITNESS HELPS	HOW NUTRITION HELPS	HOW REST HELPS
MUSCLE LOSS	Build strength and muscle mass	Puts stress on muscles which helps them grow	Protein helps muscles repair	Sleep helps tissue repair and heal
MEMORY LOSS	A sharp mind	Strengthens parts of the brain that oversee memory and thinking	Fruit and veg support brain function, omega 3 fatty acids may protect against cognitive decline and complex carbs provide fuel for brain power	While you sleep your brain washes itself of sticky plaque build-up that can lead to dementia
LOSS OF ENERGY	Energy and vitality	Regular exercise builds muscle cells; more muscle cells mean more energy	Complex carbs and fats fuel your energy by giving essential micronutrients to your cells	Sleep energises and keeps your immune system robust
DEPRESSION	Better moods	Exercise lowers levels of stress hormones, increases serotonin and releases endorphins	Eating rubbish makes you feel rubbish; heavy sugar consumption increases risk of depression and inflammation	Sleep relaxes and makes us less stressed; lack of sleep leads to irritability and anxiety

◀ nausea or vomiting; sweating; light-headedness or dizziness; unusual fatigue.

- Get regular check-ups and don't ignore the warning signs.
- Eat well, get plenty of exercise and quit smoking.

Your digestive system

While ageing doesn't affect the digestive system as drastically as it does the other bodily systems, as we get older our stomach becomes less elastic and empties food more slowly. The large intestine may also slow down its job of eliminating waste. The liver loses cells with age and becomes smaller and less efficient which means the effects and side-effects of drugs and alcohol last longer in your system.

- Eat plenty of fruit and veggies and drink lots of water.
- If you don't get enough fluids or fibre you can become constipated and malnourished.

Your immune system

Your immune system uses various organs throughout the body to keep you healthy, such as your bone marrow, which makes blood cells, and your lymphatic system. With age, our immune system begins to slow down and respond to threats less quickly than it once did. This decline in immune health is linked to a rise in risk

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*Everything
and everyone
we love,
everything
we know and
recognise lives
in the brain –
protect it*
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of cancer, pneumonia and influenza as we age.

- Get enough sleep.
- Reduce the stress in your life.
- Get your flu shot every year, especially if you are over 65.

Your muscles and bones

Until the age of 35 our bodies continually build bone mass. After that we begin to lose it, as well as muscle tissue, which means less support for our weakened bones.

- Eat foods high in calcium and vitamin C to help strengthen bones.
- Weight training builds muscles even after the age of 35 if you put in the effort.

Building a stronger brain

In your 40s and 50s, the patterns you've come to rely on will shift. The way your body looks will change. The way your body responds to your nutrition and exercise habits will change. So let's get ready, because time is about to speed up and the road ahead may have some bumps you didn't anticipate when you were younger.

My job requires me to constantly reinvent myself. Each film is different and that's the best part: showing up every day and having to figure out how to do something I've never done before.

I love getting the opportunity to learn new skills. I spent months studying martial arts for my role in *Charlie's Angels* and practising singing for *Annie*. The cool thing is that every time I learn a new way of being physical, such as how to do a back flip hanging from wires, I'm not just building muscles – I'm creating connections in my brain. And the older I get the more valuable these connections become. The same goes for you, because everything and everyone we love, everything we know and recognise lives in the brain. Just as we build stronger muscles by challenging our bodies in ways that make them grow, we can build stronger brains by challenging our intellect and helping our brains grow new connections.

So protect your brain with learning, travel and new interests. Protect your brain with exercise. Studies have shown that people who exercise three times a week are less likely to experience cognitive decline or dementia later in life than people who are sedentary. Exercise also helps you think more clearly and reduces stress levels. Protect your brain with music. Studies show that when people listen to or play music their entire brain lights up with increased neural activity. Protect your brain with sleep and meditation.

There are things we can do to minimise the severity of ageing. Our brains can become stronger and more resilient by doing many of the things we already love to do: learning, moving, reading, resting. The same activities that help us stay engaged, active and sharp in the short term are also the very actions that can protect our minds over time. ■

■ *This is an edited extract from The Longevity Book: Live Stronger; Live Better; The Art of Ageing Well by Cameron Diaz and Sandra Bark, published by Harper Thorsons on 7 April, price £16.99. To pre-order a copy for £12.74 (a 25 per cent discount), visit you-bookshop.co.uk**



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