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Clockwise from top left: Josephine’s Kitchen main dining room; the Fitness Center; the Bistro on ground level and a single bedroom for the Diamond Residence at the new Belmont Village Senior Living in San Diego.

NELVIN C. CEPEDA U-T PHOTOS

NEXT-LEVEL

SENIOR LIVING

Top amenities and in-house UC San Diego-based research on healthy aging come at hefty price at new 17-story residence

BY LAUREN J. MAPP

Stepping into Belmont Village La Jolla is like walking into a luxury vacation resort with a pristinely decorated entry lounge, spacious dining room and plenty of outdoor space. ■ The apartments have large windows with picturesque views of the mountains to the north, east and south. On clear days, residents will be able to see the Pacific Ocean to the west. The 17-story residence, which opened last month, is La Jolla’s newest senior living facility. ■ Towering over many of the other structures in the area, the 180-unit building on Noble Drive is the third Belmont property in San Diego County, and the only one to boast a Living Lab from the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging. ■ In the Living Lab, gerontology researchers will work with residents to study ways to improve their quality of life. ■ One of the studies that researchers plan to conduct is a training program for seniors to build up their resilience, Danielle Glorioso said. She is the executive director of the Center for Healthy Aging, an umbrella organization for aging-related programs at UCSD, and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, which focuses on enhancing lifelong health and well-being through research, training and community outreach.

SEE LIVING • E4

DOCTOR

DIVES INTO

MEMORY

PRESERVERS

Mental exercises, diet, sleep all factor into preventing loss

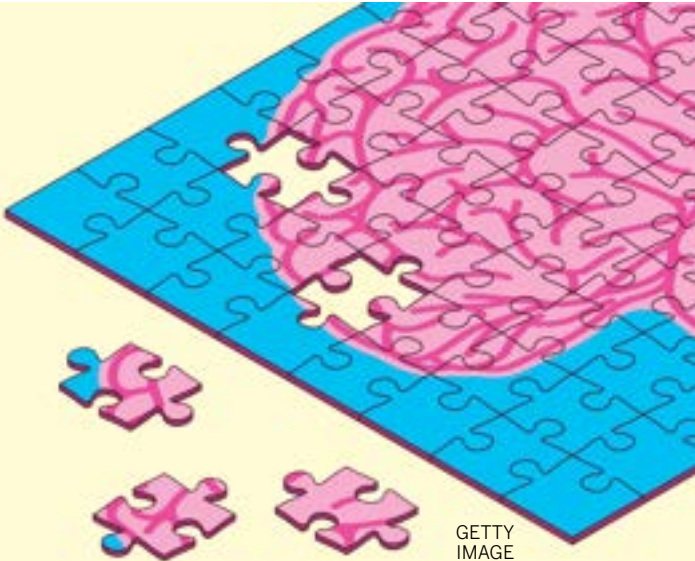
BY HOPE REESE

As we age, our memory declines. This is an ingrained assumption for many of us; however, according to neuroscientist Dr. Richard Restak, a neurologist and clinical professor at George Washington Hospital University School of Medicine and Health, decline is not inevitable. The author of more than 20 books on the mind, Restak has decades’ worth of experience in guiding patients with memory problems. “The Complete Guide to Memory: The Science of Strengthening Your Mind,” Restak’s latest book, includes tools such as mental exercises,

Working memory... is the most critical type of memory, and exercises to strengthen it should be practiced daily.

sleep habits and diet that can help boost memory. Yet, Restak ventures beyond this familiar territory, considering every facet of memory — how memory is connected to creative thinking, technology’s impact on memory, how memory shapes identity. “The point of the book is to overcome the everyday problems of memory,” Restak said. Especially working memory, which falls between immediate

SEE MEMORY • E2



GETTY IMAGE

WHAT BURNOUT REALLY IS,

AND WAYS TO PREVENT IT

BY ANGELA HAUPT

Summer Sides is a go, go, go type of person. But by late 2020, all the fitness instructor wanted to do was pass mindless hours in her home, undisturbed — venturing no farther than her backyard. She was suffering, she said, from massive burnout. Sides, 38, who lives in Greensboro, N.C., had opened a yoga studio on March 1, 2020, only to shut it down 18 days later and pivot to the Wild West of online programming. At the same time, she was taking care of her dad, who had suffered a stroke the previous year. She started getting migraines, and brain fog clouded her days. By winter, she was utterly depleted. “I didn’t mentally have the capacity to figure out another piece of spaghetti to throw at the wall,” she said. “It was like a pressure cooker: One thing after another kept getting added in, and all of a sudden there wasn’t enough space and the lid was going to blow.” As weary Americans continue to live with challenges from the pandemic — and, in many cases,

heightened personal and professional demands — experts say burnout is a common affliction. “People are overwhelmed and exhausted and still feeling like they ought to be doing more,” said Amelia Nagoski, who wrote the 2019 book “Burnout” with her sister, Emily Nagoski. “I think it’s almost everybody everywhere.” As weary Americans continue to live with challenges from the pandemic, experts say burnout is a common affliction. “Burnout” has become a popular catchall phrase in the “language of the people,” said Christina Maslach, a professor emerita of psychology and a researcher at the Center for Healthy Workplaces at the University of California Berkeley. “Some people use it to mean they’re bored — like, ‘Oh, I’m getting so burned out on Pilates.’ Or, ‘I haven’t had a creative idea

SEE BURNOUT • E2



Top: Josephine’s Kitchen dining room. Left: The master bedroom at the Mimosa Residence units. Right: Kitchen and dining space for the Diamond Residence.

LIVING

FROM E1

Past research has found that resilience — the ability to adapt to adversity — is an important component of healthy aging in seniors.

“Resilience is correlated with longevity, so people who are more resilient tend to live longer — I think, on average, like seven years longer,” Glorioso said.

“We know that decline happens over time, but how can we help older adults sort of adapt to those changes and improve their years — their quality of life — with the years that they’re here?” she added. “Our goal is not to reverse aging; it’s to help people adapt and sort of live their best quality of life.”

Being embedded on the property at Belmont Village La Jolla, she said, will mean that other research projects can be conducted as well, focusing on areas such as sleep, cognitive testing, robotics to aid seniors and microbiome testing, to name a few.

“They’re just very supportive of the work that we’re doing — so supportive that they’re willing to give up the space in their community so that we can do our research,” Glorioso said.

But the deluxe living accommodations that Belmont Village La Jolla offers come with a steep price tag that many aging seniors will be unable to afford. The monthly cost per person ranges in price from \$7,345 for independent living to \$12,060 for memory care, and if more than one person is living in the unit, there is a second occupant fee.

Caring.com reports that the average monthly costs of senior living care in California are \$3,413 for independent living to \$6,562 for memory care.

Patricia Will, Belmont Village Senior Living founder and CEO, said there are several elements that drive the cost for monthly fees, including the cost of labor for the facility’s staff and the price of real estate in Southern California.

“This is an exquisite piece of real estate, 17 stories, many of the units with apartments with big balconies and ocean views,” she said. “As anywhere here in Southern California, the value of real estate has to count for the pricing.”

The high costs can also be attributed, in part, to the design of the building’s units, a collaboration between Belmont Village and luxury real estate developer Greystar. Each of the studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments has its own private kitchen to give residents a greater sense of home, and a spacious bathroom, and many have walk-in closets, full washer-dryer units and plentiful storage.

The entire building is also licensed for assisted living. That means that if partners move in who need different levels of care, they can still live in the same apartment with one another, unlike many other senior living facilities where they would be moved into separate units.

Residents with mild cognitive impairment can also participate in the daily “Circle of Friends” program, and two floors of the building are dedicated to secure memory care for those with dementia who are at risk of wandering.

“What we find, however, is that very often, first, seniors who largely have been or are homeowners who sell homes or condos to come and live with us have a leg up because, of course, the rise in home prices has allowed for a wealth creation that enables people to afford Belmont Village,” Will said.

She added that other people are able to afford to move in because of their long-term care insurance policies, veteran benefits and help paying for the facility from their adult children.

“(Long-term care insurance) begins to smooth the affordability problem for, I’d say, probably 20 to 25 percent of our customers,” Will said. “It’s private insurance, but it pays well for assisted



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Patricia Will • Belmont Village Senior Living founder and CEO

Belmont Village La Jolla cost comparison

Across each level of care, the starting monthly costs for units at Belmont Village La Jolla are higher than the county, state and national average.

	Belmont Village La Jolla	San Diego County	California average	National average
Independent Living	\$7,345	\$3,559	\$3,413	\$2,925
Assisted Living	\$8,203	\$5,475	\$5,250	\$4,500
"Circle of Friends" MCI Care	\$10,905	-	-	-
Memory Care	\$12,060	\$6,844	\$6,562	\$5,625

The Circle of Friends level of care for patients with mild cognitive impairment is unique to Belmont Village.

Source: Caring.com

LAUREN J. MAPP & KARTHIKA NAMBOOTHIRI U-T

living and memory care.”

The new facility is the latest step in a series of collaborations between UC San Diego aging researchers and Belmont Village.

In February 2020, UC San Diego published research of residents age 60 and older in five facilities across the country, including Belmont’s properties in Cardiff and Sabre Springs. The study aimed to help the population cope with stressors related to the decline of physical and cognitive health, and included three

90-minute group sessions over the course of four months where participants discussed the impact of age discrimination.

“Seniors can improve their overall affect, their sense of well being, their happiness, their ability to thrive,” Will said. “What we are doing now is kind of putting that on steroids.”

That program was expanded into a six-session program that was administered one-on-one due to the pandemic. It is now being redeveloped into a group

program to be introduced to residents at the La Jolla property.

Aside from its work in the Living Lab, Glorioso said there are other ways the university supports the diverse community of seniors in the region.

UC San Diego aging researchers recruit seniors from community centers in South Bay, North County and other parts of the county to participate in research studies.

“What we try to do is we try to go out into communi-

ties all throughout San Diego County so that we can get full representation, and so that our work can really reflect the community that lives in San Diego County,” she said.

Low socioeconomic status has been found to impact long-term health deterioration and acceleration of aging among seniors.

A 2020 study from Princeton University looked at the aging progress of 5,018 participants ages 52 and older over the course of eight years. The researchers found that those with a lower socioeconomic status were associated with a faster rate of decline when it came to a number of health categories, including sensory function, cognitive performance, physical capability and emotional well-being.

One of the organizations UC San Diego has partnered with is Serving Seniors in downtown San Diego through a Senior Change Makers Pilot Study in 2016.

During the study, researchers provided training to older adults to help them engage in advocacy to make the community’s crosswalks and sidewalks more walkable and age-friendly. The result was that most of the seniors who received the training then completed a street audit, submitted an advocacy request or made an advocacy presentation to city staff.

Glorioso said lessons learned from research at the Living Lab in Belmont Village La Jolla can be applied to other groups of seniors in the county, and that the resilience training planned for the site has already been given to other groups throughout the region.

“Our work is not just in sort of the higher-end senior living communities,” she said. “It’s just that in this particular project, Patricia has been a true champion of helping us learn more about how to help older adults age successfully, and she has the resources to be able to let us go in-house.”

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