

Optimal Aging

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You're getting older, and ...

Looking Forward



2004, Lucille Borgen,
Age 91, WINS the 2007
Women's 10 Slalom and
Tricks SKI competition in
Babson Park, FL.

In their mid-life years, many people begin to look ahead and wonder what their older years will be like. Some envision themselves sick, lonely, and a burden to their families. These fears may be fed by common negative stereotypes—despite the fact that such stereotyping does not accurately represent old age (Fish, 2007).

If viewed in a positive, take-action perspective, looking forward can help individuals lay the groundwork for *optimal aging*.

No matter how old you are, there's always something good to look forward to.

~ Lynn Johnston (1947 -) For Better or For Worse 01-04-04

Your views on Aging Start Early – *and hurt or benefit you*



2005- Gene Glasscock, **Age 70**, finishes 20,000-mile, 3-year long horseback ride,, and raises money for children's schools.

- A striking link exists between young, healthy people's negative views of aging and later cardiovascular problems—unexplainable by risk factors such as smoking and obesity. Young people internalize their negative views. Similarly, old people who believe in the negative aging stereotypes live them out (Isanski, 2009).
- Positive views of aging increase longevity (Levy, Slade, Kunkel & Kasl, 2002).

He who is of calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, But to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden.
~ Plato (427 BC – 347 BC)

Talk Nice to Your Elders



Former U.S. President George H.W. Bush makes tandem parachute jump for his **80th birthday**. (*Mr. Bush is in the front.*)

When talking with old people, use positive adjectives to describe them, such as saying they are wise. Doing so improves their gait, balance, and walking speed.

Using negative stereotypes erodes confidence and slows memory function (*Ageing International*, 1999).

A person is always startled when he hears himself called an old man for the first time.

~ Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809 – 1894)

Lay the Groundwork



2008 – At **age 82**, actress Cloris Leachman competes in ABC's *Dancing with the Stars*.

- **Don't** believe or perpetuate negative stereotypes. **Do** find healthy, happy, active old people and make them your evidence that old age can be an enjoyable, healthy life phase.
- **Don't** blame your genes. Just because your relatives suffer physical or cognitive symptoms as they age doesn't mean you will. According to the experts, genes influence only "30 percent of how well we age and how long we live" (AARP, 2004, p. 11). **Do** lead a healthy lifestyle, which accounts for the remaining 70 percent of influence.

I never feel age. If you have creative work, you don't have age or time.

— ~ Louise Nevelson (1900 – 1988)

Tips for Optimal Aging



2009 - Jack LaLanne

At **age 94**, LaLanne still speaks out about healthy eating and exercise. He's living proof it works!

Learn to deal with stress in positive ways. Biologically, stress stimulates the “fight or flight” response in our bodies. Over time, this is detrimental to health. Learn to trigger the health-protective “relaxation response,” with focused breathing, meditation, etc. (2005, Weil, A., p. 204). In your body, the relaxation response works the opposite of the stress/fight or flight response, which benefits health.

Exercise. Researchers have found a considerable connection between physical activity and cognitive ability, as well as lessened dementia. Studies indicate that people over 65 who exercise between 15 and 30 minutes a day have diminished risk of acquiring Alzheimer’s Disease (APA, 2006).

Moderate exercise also improves respiratory and heart activity, increases muscle strength and bone density,, lowers blood pressure, improves flexibility and reaction time, and reduces depression.

I have enjoyed greatly the second blooming. . .suddenly you find – at the age of 50 say – that a whole new life has opened before you.

~ Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976)

Tips for Optimal Aging, *continued*



Louise Hay.

In her eighth decade, Hay is still at the forefront of the mind/body movement she began in the 1970s. She is active in her successful publishing company, *Hay House, Inc.*

- ***Maintain a healthy weight.***
- ***Eat at least 5 servings of fresh fruit and vegetables per day.***

Eating sensibly helps control weight and blood pressure, which lower risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease.

- ***Avoid excess alcohol.***
- ***Avoid tobacco use.***

Aging is not 'lost youth' but a new stage of opportunity and strength.

~ Betty Friedan (1921 – 2006)

Tips for Optimal Aging, *continued*



- ***Have fun! Get and stay connected.***
- ***Form fulfilling, meaningful relationships with those around you. Connect with people, pets, your community, a sports team, a job, a garden you tend, music, nature, a home and all it holds. According to Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. (1999), these connections are what satisfy us and make our lives feel happy and secure—and improve healing, overall health, and longevity.***
- ***Grab a friend, a place, an idea, a piece of art, a hobby ... and connect!***



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***You're getting older and . . .
you're getting BETTER.***



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