

# Aging Gracefully

*No one likes the idea of getting older, but how you respond mentally, physically, and spiritually to aging has a tremendous impact on your quality of life.*

## Embrace where you are right now

You will continue to age regardless of how you feel about growing older, so you may as well enjoy it. Our youth obsessed culture doesn't focus much on the advantages of aging, but there's a lot to celebrate.

Two different studies of data by the Pew Research Center and the National Opinion Research Center show that happiness actually increases with age. This shouldn't be surprising. With age comes wisdom, perspective, a lowering of expectations, and a tendency to be more easily content with what you have. Here are some things you can do to ensure that your later years are your best.

## Take Care of Yourself

**Get more sleep:** As we age, we tire more quickly and our recovery time lengthens. Getting an extra hour or two of rest will keep you energized. Take naps when possible.

**Exercise:** Maintain a schedule of regular exercise. As we age, we begin to lose muscle mass and flexibility. Our metabolic rates drop as well. You can maintain present levels of all three well into the future by incorporating cardio, strength, and flexibility training into a weekly exercise regimen.

**Eat right:** Laying off fatty, high sodium foods while eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day can help you to extend your lifespan instead of your waist.

**Get annual checkups:** An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Find a good family doctor and visit regularly to catch problems early. Don't fear the doctor and what you might learn from a checkup!

## Accept your limitations

Growing older slows us down, mentally and physically. Accepting that you can't do certain things anymore doesn't mean giving up activities you love. Try moderating instead.

## Be an Optimist

Studies show that optimists live longer, more satisfying lives. Vow to make your first thought of the day a positive one. Reading a list of inspirational quotes and affirmations over breakfast is a great way to get your day started.

## Take up new hobbies and interests

Your brain needs exercise just like your body. Trying new things will keep your mind sharp and prevent you from getting into a rut.

## Enjoy what you've earned

Aging brings all kinds of advantages. Retirement and children striking out on their own free up time and money that allow you to do things you weren't able to do when you were younger.

Enjoy life's slower pace. Forge new relationships and strengthen existing ones. Travel, contribute to charity, mentor and share your wisdom.

## Don't look back

Regret is an awful and destructive emotion. If your life isn't how you imagined it would be, relax, you've got lots of company. Forgive yourself for your mistakes and move forward with what you've learned from them.

It's never too late to pursue a dream. Dear Abby once received a letter that said, "I'm thinking of going back to college, but I'm 54 which means I'll be 58 by the time I graduate." Abby's response: "And how old will you be in four years if you don't go back to school?"

All we have is today. And today doesn't care how old you are.

