



Keys to Embracing Aging

A Positive Attitude

The connection between the mind and body is strong, so an overall positive attitude — including an upbeat outlook on life — can affect overall happiness, health, and well-being. Similar to good health practices such as eating well and getting plenty of exercise, a positive attitude should be a habit that starts early in life.

A positive attitude can impact mental health and physical functioning, including the ability to fight disease and infection. Attitude can also affect relationships, social networks, and help make success in life more likely. The bottom line: being more positive across the lifespan causes less stress and enables people to live happy and healthier lives.

Attitude affects:

- how successful you are in achieving your academic, work, and personal goals
- how you feel and look mentally and physically
- what you do and say

Do you have a positive attitude?

- Are you optimistic and/or easygoing?
- Are you willing to learn, no matter how difficult it is?
- Do you laugh a lot or have a sense of humor by not taking yourself too seriously?
- Do you express emotions rather than bottle them up?
- Do you do your best when studying or working and try to improve how you do your work?
- Do you demonstrate enthusiasm in whatever you say and do?
- Do you welcome challenges or try new ideas?

Develop a Positive Attitude:

- Be confident
- Be positive
- Be patient
- Be a goal-setter
- Be a hard worker
- Be fun (don't take yourself too seriously)
- Be accepting of change

Accepting Change

Being able to accept and adapt to change plays an important role in having a positive attitude, especially as life is filled with ups and downs. A positive attitude allows you to meet such challenges — both the good and bad — with less resistance. In this position, you are much more open to learning from mistakes, researching what you want, or seeing the possibility of new or better opportunities. When you approach change with rigid thoughts or feelings of apprehension, strain and stress are more likely to result, leaving you overwhelmed and more susceptible to a sense of failure and even depression.

Do Things that Make You Happy

According to Martin Seligman, Ph.D., the creator of positive psychology, everybody has a right to be happy. Dr. Seligman also believes that happiness helps provide a sense of purpose in life because it is something that you can create and nurture. The Pursuit of Happiness organization has identified seven habits of happy people. Happy people:

- build close relationships
- care for others
- engage in healthy, active lifestyles
- embrace spirituality
- practice positive thinking
- embrace a hobby or activity
- identify strengths

Attitude and Aging

A positive attitude about growing older throughout the lifespan can help you live longer, yet society constantly reinforces negative stereotypes of old age and aging. Such stereotypes include that aging adults are senile, frail, and cranky, and that growing old is generally something to be lamented. When primed with such negativity, you may conform to such stereotypes and live up to those low expectations, thus performing at lower functioning levels in old age. It is therefore important to recognize and value the contributions, accomplishments, and wisdom of senior adults. Such a societal change in attitude toward aging will affect both today's and tomorrow's older adults for the better. When armed with a sense of happiness and purpose, reinforced by a positive attitude, older adults are more apt to suppress negative thoughts and carry on as the competent, productive members of society that they are, regardless of age or ability.

Conclusion

Everyone has a bad day, but in general, a positive attitude and happy outlook can help pull you through life's challenges. Having an upbeat and proactive outlook on life over time can also contribute to better health and optimal aging, including longevity.

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