

# Our ideas about getting old are... getting old

July 2015 Newsletter



When is someone “old”? Renowned businessman Bernard Baruch once said, “To me, old age is always fifteen years older than I am right now.”<sup>1</sup> Recent surveys show that most Americans are on the same page.

- The Pew Research Center reports that only 21% of Americans between ages 64-75 say they feel old.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 35% over age 75 would refer to themselves as old.<sup>3</sup>
- A Harvard study found that 55 to 74-year olds feel about 12 years younger than their real age.<sup>4</sup>

## Living longer and better

Statistics show that men who’ve reached age 65 can hope to live to 84.3. Women who are 65 may live to 86.6.<sup>5</sup> And those are just averages. Many people live well into their nineties (and beyond!)

Medical advances, our focus on fitness and healthy diets are surely part of these numbers. But there’s more. Many people who are basking in their golden years have positive attitudes, connections to others and a sense of purpose.

- **Positive attitudes.** People who still think “old” equals “sick” or “frail” aren’t likely to feel good about getting older – or about the older people in their lives.

It’s important to develop positive ideas about aging. If you want to — and can — you should expect to live a full life no matter what your age. That could include working, traveling, playing games and sports, going out to restaurants and shows and being in intimate relationships.

Want to feel ageless? Do the things that make you happy. Work to overcome fears and negative stereotypes about aging and enjoy every day.

- **Connections.** As people get older, they’re more likely to experience loss. People who feel lonely may be more likely to neglect good self-care. They may become depressed. They might not stay as mentally sharp as those who are involved and active.

Older adults benefit greatly from social connections. In fact, staying engaged with others can help maintain both physical and mental health.<sup>6</sup>

Why? Social bonds build trust and caring. Having other people in your life means you watch out for them and they watch out for you. Having that support system is invaluable.

- **A sense of purpose.** We all want to matter. Having purpose gets you out of bed each morning. You have goals to achieve and reasons to be included with friends, family members and your community. Purpose helps you feel inspired and fulfilled.

## Join the new wave

If your senior years are still far in the future, think about what you can do to help older adults stay connected and important. Remember, with luck, you’ll be part of that group one day.

If you’re already an older adult, keep on keepin’ on!

<sup>1</sup>[www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)

<sup>2,3,4</sup>[www.aplaceformom.com](http://www.aplaceformom.com)

<sup>5</sup>[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

<sup>6</sup>[www.gretergood.berkeley.edu](http://www.gretergood.berkeley.edu)