

Aging Well May be all About Attitude

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Most experts agree, whatever else it may be, the notion of ageing is, first and foremost, a state of mind. The word older is relative to a person's own age and means something different to each of us.

Although the traditional image of getting older is one of gradual decline, recently it has been recognized that there is no secret formula to aging well but we may actually have far more control over the aging process and in particular our response to the challenges of aging.

By this I do not mean just the medical management of our health, as important as it is, but rather the concept of well-being at any age. In his best selling book *Successful Aging*, Mark Novak has made a similar point, "There is no secret, no magic formula. A good old age doesn't come about from some special talent or as a secret gift. It comes about when, given a basic income, reasonable health, good self-esteem and a little energy, a person sets out to discover a meaningful life for him- or herself."

In a study of centenarians, the common thread of these successful older adults was that they have a zest for life and a clear sense of meaning and purpose. They consistently say "Yes" to life and all the trials of aging.

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For most of them, their daily activities have a sense of purpose although they may be considered by some to be leisurely or unproductive. They seem to derive energy and satisfaction from serving others and pursuing a meaningful goal that transcends self-interest. Another common theme was that this group had a positive attitude towards life. Their everyday mantra was, "be cheerful and try to be as happy as you can."



And this motto may be the untold story of aging well - it is about positive attitudes towards life and death, about the spiritual quest and about personal growth in wisdom and spirituality. From this spiritual perspective, successful aging is attainable for everyone with positive meanings, regardless of his or her physical condition.

From this study of older and wiser individuals, it seems attitude matters a great deal. In fact it may be attitude more than action that ultimately determines whether a person ages well or not. Many of the participants in the study on successful aging demonstrated this important truth over and over again. They emphasized that faith, attitude and spirituality play key roles in bringing hope and comfort to the challenges of the aging process.

Fortunately, it is within almost everyone's reach to explore finding meaning and spirituality in their life. Regardless of the extent of their health concerns, losses or limitations, people can always choose a positive attitude toward life. All that is required is a grateful heart, an open mind and a smile to share.