

Ageing Well: Setting Your New Year Plan for Wellness

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Ageing well involves making lifestyle choices and adapting personal behaviors that promote healthful living and well being. It emphasizes the idea that people can maintain satisfying and healthy lives all throughout their later years. Ageing well is a dynamic, interactive and whole-person wellness process that involves staying engaged with your body, mind and spirit.

Although no single formula automatically results in ageing well, research has identified several factors that contribute to ageing well in different cultures. For example, in Hong Kong a comfortable old age is marked by family and social qualities that demonstrate respect, open-mindedness and tolerance. In the United States, engagement, vitality and physical activity are associated with ageing well. Across many cultures, determinants that are important to ageing well include physical and cognitive health, social relationships and meaningful daily involvement.

Scientists are finding that although genetics appears to influence longevity, a person's attitude about ageing is also a driving force in how you spend your later years. "The way you view the ageing process, positively or negatively, is going to affect your quality of ageing," says Luigi Ferrucci, director of the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Ageing at the National Institute on Ageing.

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Older adults who maintain a positive view tend to have fewer challenges as they age. This is true even of older adults who aren't lucky enough to have dodged life-threatening diseases. Many have suffered serious medical setbacks, says Marie Bernard, deputy director of the National Institute on Ageing. They just chose to overcome hardship. "They develop a means of coping with their illness and remain positive," says Bernard, and then move forward.

Research that has identified specific determinants of ageing well has grown out of an agenda on ageing developed by the United Nations and the International Association of Gerontology. The results outline behaviors related to healthy ageing, high quality of life and measurements of active ageing. Their results identify several key factors including:

- **Physical Health:** ongoing physical activity, good nutrition and health maintenance.
- **Cognitive Health:** participating in life long learning and an attitude of resilience.
- **Social Support:** strong network of friends and family and other social resources.
- **Finding Purpose:** engagement in formal and leisure pursuits that are meaningful.

Providing a universal understanding of ageing well helps build a strong foundation for health promotion and wellness initiatives. This is a relatively new paradigm and is part of the foundation of *LiveWell!* So as you plan your New Year, save time to enjoy the programs and events offered at your community. And remember the importance of a good attitude! It is more than just about attending. It is also about purpose, meaningful engagement and having fun.