



KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Attitude Is Everything...Be Positive

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Because the connection between the mind and body is so strong, an overall positive attitude, including an upbeat outlook on life, can affect overall happiness, health and well-being. Similar to eating well and getting plenty of exercise, good health practices should be a habit that starts early in life (Phillips and Ferguson, 2013). A positive attitude can impact mental health and physical functioning including the ability to fight disease and infection. Attitude can also affect relationships and social networks and can help make success in life more likely. The bottom line: being more positive across the lifespan causes less stress and enables people to live healthier, happy lives (Lawson, 2009; Mayo Clinic, 2011; White, 2012).

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, easygoing or extroverted?
- 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/working and try to improve how you do your work?
- Do you demonstrate enthusiasm in whatever you say and do?
- Do you welcome challenges, experiments 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 (Levy et al., 2002), 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 learn from mistakes, research what it is you may want or see the possibility of new and/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 we 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 old throughout the lifespan can help you live longer, yet we grow up in a society that constantly reinforces negative stereotypes of old age and aging. We grow up thinking that old age is terrible. We associate “old” with senility, crankiness and frailty. When primed with such negativity throughout life, we are more likely to believe such stereotypes and live up to those low expectations, thus performing at lower functioning levels in old age. It is therefore important that we recognize and value the contributions, accomplishments and wisdom of senior adults. Such a societal change in attitude towards aging will affect both today’s and tomorrow’s seniors for the better. When armed with a sense of happiness and purpose, older adults are more apt to suppress negative thoughts and carry on as competent and productive members of society, 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. Such an upbeat and proactive outlook on life, over time, can contribute to better health, optimal aging and longevity.

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