Successful Aging

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE CONFERENCE ON AGING: THE FINAL FRONTIER

EXPLORING SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND AGING

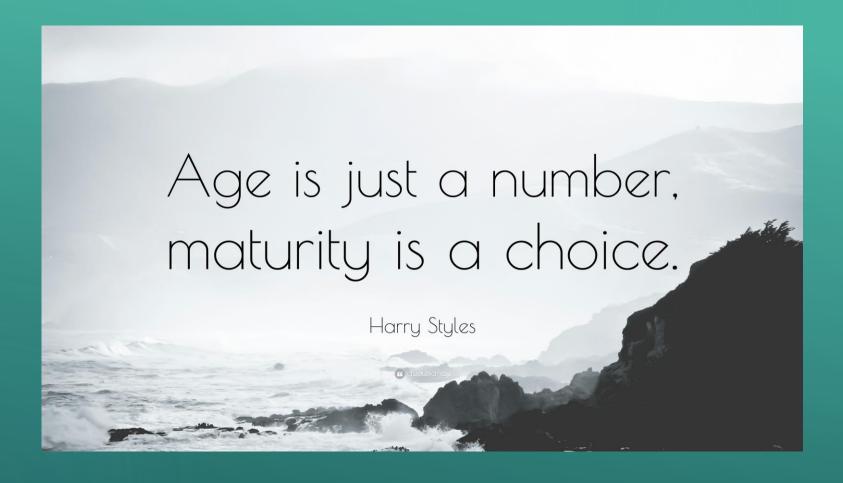
GIBSON CENTER

TORONTO, ONTARIO, MARCH 30, 2019



Overview

- How old is old? Do we have to act our age?
- What are the five popular myths of successful aging?
- What is the tough truth of successful aging?
- What can we do to fight against ageism?



How old is old? Is today's 70 last decade's 60?

How can an old man be a runway fashion model?

Deshun Wang:

"When you think it's too late, be careful you don't let that become your excuse for giving up. No one can keep you from success except yourself."



The five popular myths of successful aging:

- 1. When you have good health, you have everything.
- 2. An ideal retirement is a happy stress-free life.
- 3. Marriage gets better with age.
- 4. Wisdom comes from old age.
- 5. The ideal old age is to avoid death and prolong life.





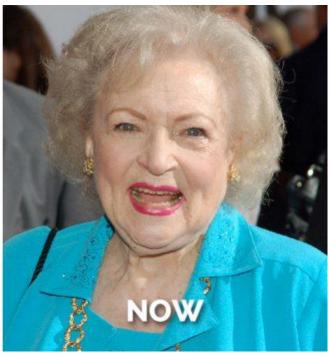
Myth 1- When you have good health, you have everything

Are these pictures depicting successful aging?

Is it all matter of having good health?

What gives them the vitality and joy?





This is Betty White at the age of 97.

She credits her long life and energy to her good genes.

Keeping physically fit and fully engaged in life remain the dominant themes of successful aging in the West.

Rowe and Kahn (1997) successful aging is associated with older people who enjoy good physical health and engage in productive activities.



Positive social attitude contributes to successful aging.

In Japan, old age is honored, "Old age is thus understood as a socially valuable part of life, even a time of "spring" or "rebirth" after a busy period of working and raising children."

– Karasawa et al. (2011).

- ▶ We become what we think: It's tragic to have a healthy body without a sound mind
- People can still live and enjoy a meaningful life, even when they suffer from some physical illness or handicap.
- That is why my Ontario successful aging project emphasizes the mental and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing.

"Attention to health is life's greatest hindrance."

- Plato -

Wong and Reker's Ontario Successful Aging Project

- 200 were from Community and 200 from Institutions
- Participants were classified as either Successful or Unsuccessful based on ratings on mental, physical health and adjustment
- Successful and Unsuccessful did not differ in terms of sex or income
- Successful agers had more resources than Unsuccessful agers

Successful Agers enjoyed more resources

- Social resources (social contacts and marital status)
- Cognitive resources (college education and intelligence)
- Spiritual resources (religious activity and personal meaning)
- Psychological resources (optimism, commitment, selfreliance)

Paul T. P. Wong

We have aged successfully, if we feel satisfied that we have become what we were meant to be, accomplished most of our life tasks, contributed to society and future generations, and kept our faith in spite of difficulties and disappointments. Therefore, successful aging is attainable by anyone, regardless of their physical conditions.

SURPRISING GUIDEPOSTS
TO A HAPPIER LIFE

FROM THE LANDMARK

HARVARD STUDY OF
ADULT DEVELOPMENT

AGING

"A SMART, IMPORTANT BOOK ABOUT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT....
EVERYTHING ABOUT IT IS PROFOUNDLY, PROVOCATIVELY NEW,"

— Sam Francisco Chronicle

- ► The Harvard Study is the world's longest continuous study of aging and health.
- The main reason why people are happy and healthy in old age is because of "the quality of relationship with the close people"

GEORGE E. VAILLANT, M.D.

George Vailliant in

Aging Well: Surprising Guideposts to a Happier Life from the Landmark Hervard Study of Adult Development*

"Successful aging means giving to others joyously whenever one is able, receiving from others gratefully whenever one needs it, and being greedy enough to develop one's own self in between."

Start dreaming about your free life Start thinking about how you will keep busy Start doing the things you never did Start being happy and carefree Start planning your vacations Start looking for new hobbies Start organizing family get-togethers Start thinking like a retiree Happy Retirement

- Myth 2 An ideal retirement is a happy stress-free life
- Is this a realistic picture of happy stress-free retirement?

WishesMessages.com

Why do so many people still feel miserable, when they have more than they have ever dreamed of?

- The main reason why so many rich people are so miserable is that all they know is how to consume and pursue happiness.
- No amount of relaxation and entertainment can free us from stress and anxiety.
- Paradoxically, they more they are obsessed with their own happiness, the more depressed they become.
- Another reason is that they have not dealt with their inner demons, such as fear of existential isolation, fear of death and painful memories, which may reside in their unconsciousness.

You need certain stress to keep you motivated and energized.

Eustress

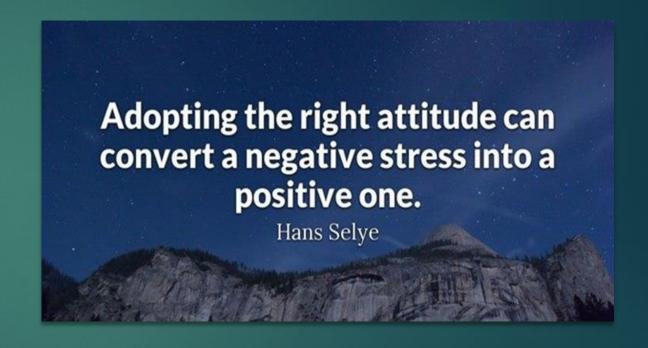
a form of stress having a beneficial effect on health, motivation, performance, and well-being

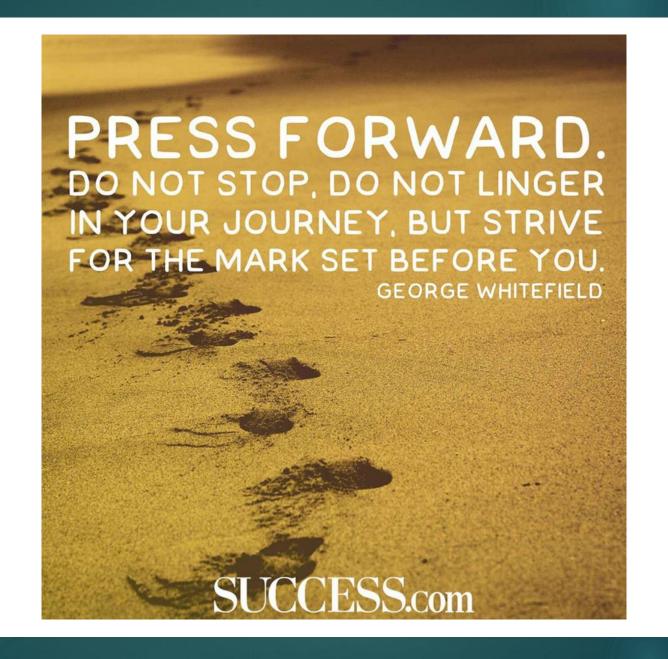


Distress

the type of stress we are referring to when we say stress. It is the form of stress with negative implications

- Even a negative stress can be transformed into a positive one.
- A truly positive person knows how to transform every negative stress into a positive one; and every No into a Yes to life.
- It takes a lot more than just a positive attitude; it demands one to know the power of meaning in every situation





One thing I do is, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those which are ahead, press toward the goal (Philippians 3:13-14) Zazzle.com/ChristianarlGifts

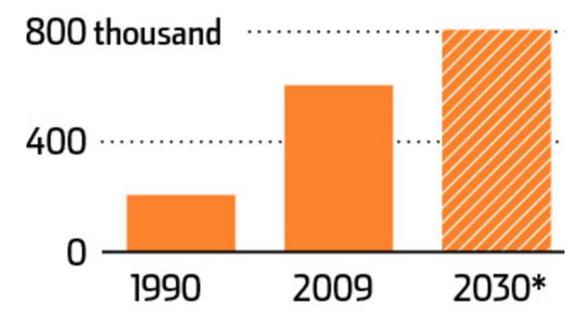
What is your dream? Are you striving towards any new goal?



Myth 3 - Marriage gets better with age

On the Rise

Number of divorces per year by those ages 50+ in the U.S.



*projected

Source: "The Gray Divorce Revolution," Susan Brown and I-Fen Lin, Bowling Green State University

- What are the top reasons for increase in gray divorce?
- 1. Growing apart over the years.
- 2. Unresolved issues becoming more serious during retirement.
- 3. Criticizing each other because of one's own unhappiness.
- 4. Not enough common interests or shared activities.
- 5. Infidelity.

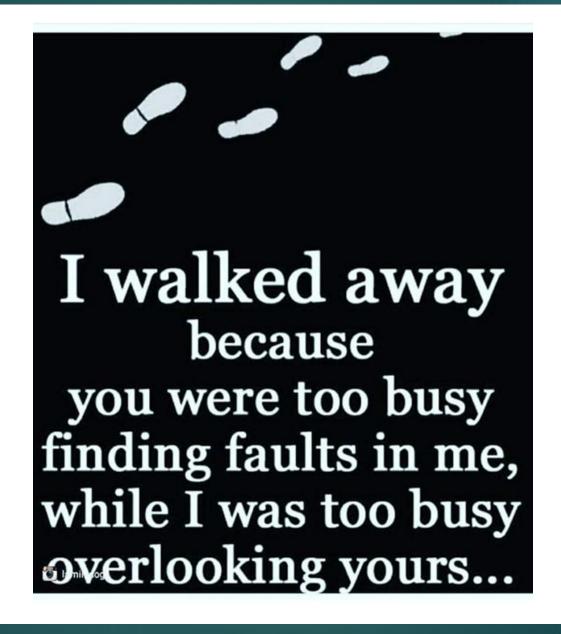


- ► Growing apart in marriage is natural, because everyone changes over the years. Blaming the other person for having changed only drives the other person further away.
- ► Growing together demands self-awareness of one's faults, and the responsibility to improve oneself daily.

the natural progression of a marriage.

Unless you put your vows to work, on a daily basis, you will regress.

~ ngina Otiende IntentionalToday.com



Myth 4 - Wisdom comes from old age



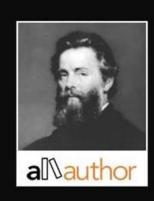
There is no fool like an old fool.

— Betty White —

AZ QUOTES

There are far more old fools than wise old men and women

It takes a life time to learn how to age well.



To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living.

-Herman Melville

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Approximate Age	Psycho Social Crisis
Infant - 18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust
18 months - 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt
3 - 5 years	Initiative vs. Guilt
5 -13 years	Industry vs. Inferiority
13 -21 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion
21- 39 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation
40 - 65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation
65 and older	Ego Integrity vs. Despair

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Pleasant memories bring moments of happiness, but not wisdom



Does life review contribute to successful aging?

Psychology and Aging 1991, Vol. 6, No. 2, 272-279 Copyright 1991 by the American Psychological Association, Inc. 0882-7974/91/53.00

What Types of Reminiscence Are Associated With Successful Aging?

Paul T. P. Wong
Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada
and Center for Studies of Aging, University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Lisa M. Watt University of Waterloo Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

To resolve the controversy regarding the adaptive benefits of reminiscence, the study was conducted to investigate what types of reminiscence are associated with successful aging. On the basis of prior research and content analysis, 6 types of reminiscence were identified: integrative, instrumental, transmissive, narrative, escapist, and obsessive. Successful aging was operationally defined as higher than average ratings in mental and physical health and adjustment as determined by an interviewer and a panel of gerontological professionals. Reminiscence data were gathered from 88 men and women judged to be aging successfully and 83 men and women judged to be aging unsuccessfully. All subjects were between 65 and 95 years of age, with approximately half living in the community and half in institutions. As predicted, successful agers showed significantly more integrative and instrumental reminiscence but less obsessive reminiscence than their unsuccessful counterparts. Community dwellers also showed more instrumental and integrative reminiscence than institutionalized seniors showed. Thus, only certain types of reminiscence are beneficial.

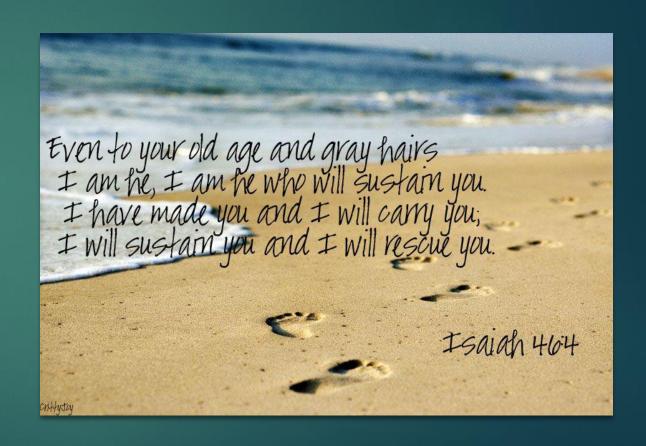
My research shows that only these three types of reminiscence contribute to successful aging:

- It integrates painful experiences.
- ▶ It recalls past successes in overcoming difficulties.
- ► It is passes past lessons onto the younger generation.



Continue to grow in wisdom and spirituality even in old age

- Learning how not to sweat the small stuff,
- Learning not to be too invested in a particular outcome
- Learning how to accept the realities of life and our own limitation.
- Learning how to become part of something larger – transcending time and space
- Learning from the Bible and old saints



INSPIRATIONS FOR DIFFICULT TIMES

PAUL T. P. WONG



EDITED BY LILIAN C. J. WONG, Ph.D

We are living longer because of progress in medical science, but prolonging life creates it own set of psychological and ethical challenges.



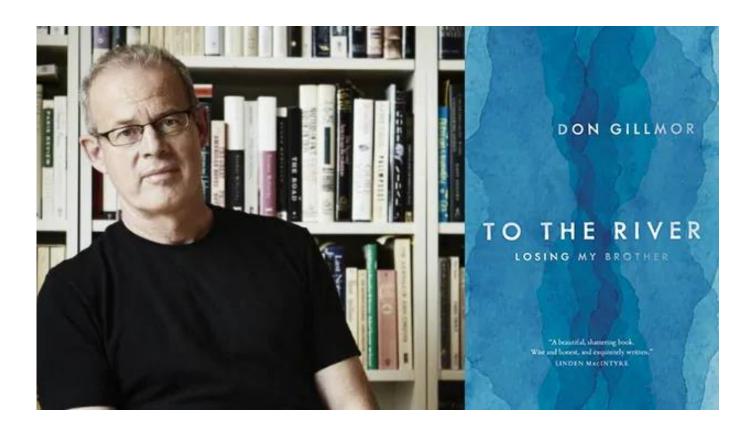
- There is a disturbing trend for the middle age people to commit suicide.
- They are afraid of facing the miseries of old age.





Hope I die before I get old

► Thirteen years ago, my brother David walked into the Yukon River, taking his own life. He was 48 years old. Since then, I have known several middle-aged men who have died by suicide. It turns out they are part of a widespread, dismaying trend: The rise in suicide rates among baby boomers.



► What is the purpose of prolonging life, when there is no medical treatment to alleviate suffering, and there is no meaning for living? The only reason for living with suffering is when one's life serves a worthy purpose.

The prime goal is to alleviate suffering, and not to prolong life. And if your treatment does not alleviate suffering, but only prolongs life, that treatment should be stopped.

Christiaan Barnard

QUOTEHD.COM

South African Scientist

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

► The tough truths of successful aging

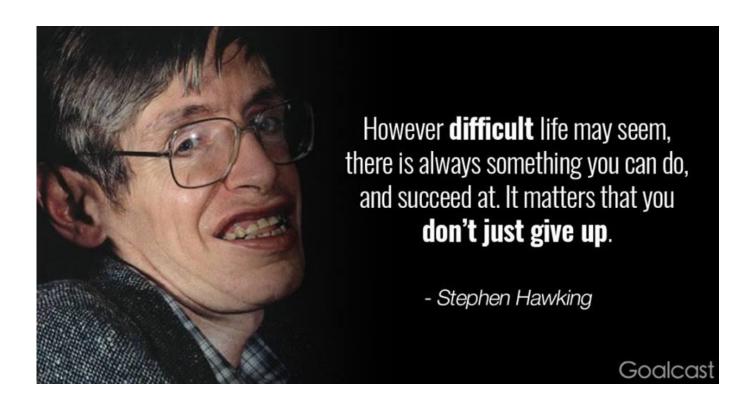
1. It takes a life time of learning and a strong faith and courage to age gracefully

IT IS A RARE AND DIFFICULT **ATTAINMENT TO GROW OLD GRACEFULLY AND** HAPPILY.

QUOTEHD/COM

American Athlete

2. One can always find something meaningful and creative to do.



3. Don't get too comfortable. It does not prepare you for the harsh reality of old age.



4. The wisdom of accepting our mortality is to accept the losses and let go.

One of the hardest lessons in life is letting go. Whether it's guilt, anger, love, loss or betrayal. Change is never easy. We fight to hold on and we fight to let go.

5. Cultivate patience as a spiritual gift and a virtue – you need it everyday in old age.

PATIENCE IS NOT SIMPLY ENDURING, IT IS ENDURING WELL!

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Other practical tips on successful aging

- Continue to grow spiritually the only area with potential for growth
- Stay engaged with life and commit to personal projects.
- Continue to learn new things and be a lifelong learner.
- Develop mental capacity and exercise your brain.
- Stay connected with family and friends.
- Pursue a healthy lifestyle.
- Be reflective and flexible in coping.
- Expand yourself in every way -inward, upward, forward and outward.

The challenge of ageism

What would be the most effective way to educate our society and church to develop a more positive attitude towards aging?



AGING IS NOT **LOST YOUTH BUT A** NEW STAGE OF **OPPORTUNITY** AND STRENGTH.

Betty Freidan

americanantiagingmag.com

IT'S NER AND YOU'RE EVER TOO OLD O BECOME

GYMQUOTES.CO

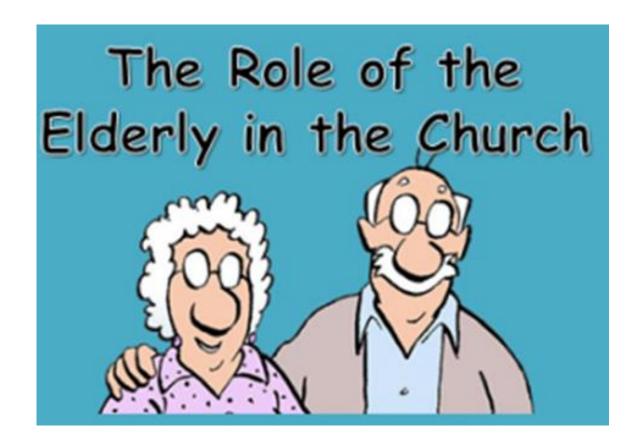
OLDER AND WISER – THE AGING WORKFORCE

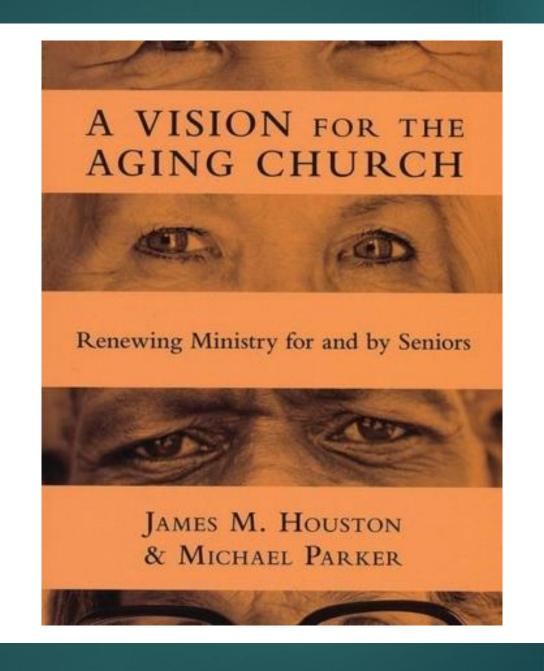
Dr C.T.C.Kenny, FAFOEM Specialist Occupational Physician Waitemata District Health Board

- Organizing neighborhood watch programs
- Tutoring and mentoring disadvantaged or disabled youth
- Renovating homes
- Teaching English to immigrants
- Assisting victims of natural disasters



- Successful aging and the Christian Church
- ► I feel that I am a stranger, an outsider in my church.
- Young people at church just don't talk to old people





- ▶ The best prepared seniors "were the most zestful, ...an abundant source of spiritual blessing to others" emotional summation that God is doing well with our soul."
- We need to repent from our culture of chasing self-fulfillment and consumerism. "We begin by sharing with our grandchildren how we had to earn and save money, never spending beyond our means. We teach them loyalty to personal commitments of job and community, as well as to spouse and family."
- Bible study groups, and inter-generational sharing in a church context, can be powerful in shifting cultures away from ageism

- "It is the spiritual responsibility of Christian seniors to settle, alone with God, the immensely important matter of their late life calling." Those seniors can leave "an eternal legacy, even if they are a 'burden' for a season."
- "In the final season of life, [seniors] are in a position to have the greatest influence, if we don't grow weary."

▶ "I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this mountain that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."

- (Joshua: 14:11-12)

