



Staying Healthy at Any Age

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As one season gives way to another, we're reminded of the many changes brought about by the passing of time. The temperature rises or drops, leaves grow or turn color, the angle of sunlight shifts little by little. Each season has its unique beauties. Similarly, time brings changes to our lives as well. Some of these are physical, while others involve adjustments to our lifestyle. If we handle these changes in a healthy way, we can enjoy life at any age.

People of every age find themselves facing the challenges of getting older. We struggle to achieve milestones, adjust to people coming and going in our lives, and accept the changes that appear when we look in the mirror. Fortunately, researchers have found ways to effectively manage many of these challenges.

Research shows that our attitude towards something can actually affect how we perceive and experience it. Adopting a healthy attitude can help us adapt to physical changes in our bodies and to cultural changes in the world around us. New trends may seem confusing and foreign at first; however, knowing that everyone experiences these changes and adopting an accepting attitude towards them can be comforting.

Having an accepting attitude towards change doesn't mean giving up or relinquishing our power to do something about the effects of time on our bodies and lives. Rather, it means approaching age-related changes with understanding and an awareness of what we CAN do to stay healthy and enjoy our lives at any age. So what are some of the steps we can take to prepare us for life's common challenges? Here are some evidence-based ideas to try:

- Stay physically active - Exercising regularly strengthens your body, improves your brain function and mobility, and reduces your risk for chronic disease.
- Connect with others - Engaging socially strengthens your network, decreases loneliness and isolation, and promotes security and community.
- Welcome challenges and experiences - Never stop learning new information and skills to keep your mind active and slow cognitive decline.
- Play at any age - People who engage in mentally challenging hobbies like puzzles and games are at a reduced risk for developing certain neurocognitive disorders.
- Develop a sense of purpose - Having defined meaning and purpose contributes to resilience and your ability to cope with stress.

- Act in line with your values - Living according to your individualized values fosters acceptance and buffers against age-related difficulties.

Change can be scary, but there's a lot we can do to manage it in healthy ways. Rather than letting negative attitudes towards getting older hold us back, we can instead realize that it is this exact change that bonds us together. We are all growing older at the same time, and this commonality connects us in meaningful ways. We can take action to stay healthy physically and psychologically, no matter what age we are. Accepting these changes helps us better understand both ourselves and others.

Talk to someone who can help! To find a licensed psychologist near you, use PPA's Psychologist Locator at <https://www.papsy.org/locator>. For information on other mental health topics, go to <https://www.papsy.org>, then "Resources" and then "Public Resources". PPA offers these articles for informational purposes only; they are not a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment.

Contact PPA: ppa@papsy.org

Mental Health FAQs: <https://www.papsy.org/page/Publicfaq>

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