Happiness and Aging:
How to Get Happier as You Get Older

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The number of extra years people who feel more positively about getting older live compared to those who feel negatively.

DOES OLDER = HAPPIER?

"GRUMPY OLD MEN" IS A MYTH

Americans age **60 and older** report better emotional health than people younger than 60.

This holds true even after controlling for such factors as income and employment.

As people age, their tendency to have a negative outlook actually **decreases.**

Happy People Live Longer

And along the way, they enjoy such health benefits as **healthy blood pressure** and **cholesterol** levels.

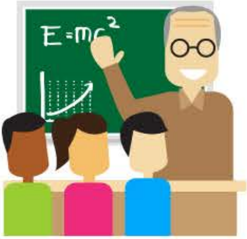
Did You Know?

Older Americans with a college education report having better emotional health than less well-educated people.

The Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary

People in all age groups derive happiness from extraordinary experiences. But as we age, we're more able to glean delight from ordinary experiences, too. Bonus!

A FEW KEYS TO BEING A HAPPY SENIOR



In his book *You Can Retire Sooner Than You Think*, author Wes Moss analyzed data finding that happy retirees have at least **3** to **5** core pursuits—fulfilling activities or interests like traveling, teaching, or volunteering.

As you get older, being content with your standard of living is key to feeling happy.

A TO-DO LIST FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Life satisfaction for people **55+** comes from satisfaction with:

- ✓ Family life
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Home

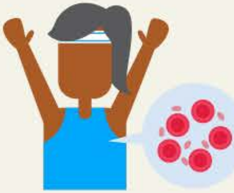
(in that order!)

EXERCISE REGULARLY

Aside from all its other benefits, exercising regularly as you age may help keep your brain functioning well.

3 Days per week you should strength train.

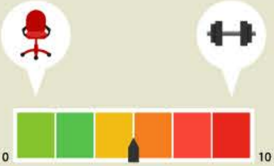
Resistance training, which you can do with weights or your own body weight (by doing pushups, leg lifts, etc.) actually reverses the aging process on a genetic level!



Save Your Cells!

150 minutes per week

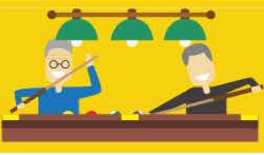
of moderate cardio that older adults need.



5 or 6

Researchers are learning that exercise may keep cells in the body from dying, which is why it's so key in keeping people young and sharp.

The level of intensity that counts for "moderate," if 0 is sitting still and 10 is working as hard as you possibly can.



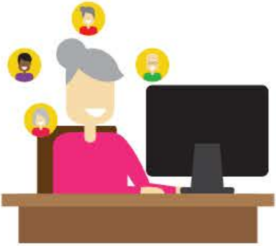
...but No Need to Train for a Marathon!

Older people can reap emotional and health benefits from less athletic activities such as playing pool with friends.

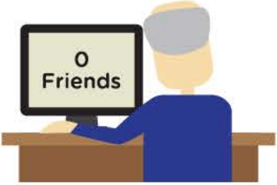
STAY IN TOUCH

Live Long, with a Little Help From Your Friends

Research shows that older people who have **active networks of friends** and **confidants** live longer than those who don't.



Interestingly, having a network of children and other relatives did not bring about the same benefit.



Conversely, older people with few relationships, or poor quality ones, are at a higher risk of death.

On a day-to-day basis, social interaction with others helps to reduce loneliness in the elderly.

Not only that, but it also reduces the chance that they will develop dementia.

And in general, the more social activities people participate in as they grow older, the happier they are.

TIP

Find a group activity you like and keep it on your calendar at least once per week so you're sure to have ongoing social interaction.

Play bridge
with friends

Play tennis

Join a
book club

Sing in a local
or church choir

AGING HELPS YOUR MARRIAGE; MARRIAGE HELPS YOU AGE

The More Anniversaries, the Better

Older adults have fewer problems in their relationships and more positive feelings about them than younger people do.

Grow Old Together

A satisfying marriage helps people maintain their happiness levels, even when health problems get them down.

Women whose marriages were assessed at ages 43, 52, and 61 were found to be the happiest at age 61

Why?

Their children had left home and the spouses had more time for each other.

A SENSE OF PURPOSE HELPS

What Are You Doing Here?

People who feel happy and satisfied with life, and who have a sense of purpose, live longer than people who don't have those feelings.

VOLUNTEER
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Older volunteers derive more benefits from the work than younger volunteers do.

Donate Your Time; Reap Good Health

Doing volunteer work helps boost the psychological well-being of older people.

Studies show that people who engaged in volunteer work frequently lived longer than their counterparts.

Those who also visited with friends and attended religious services lived even longer!

TIP:

Grab a good friend and sign up together.

Collect for a local food drive

Read to kids every week at the library

Talk to teens about careers

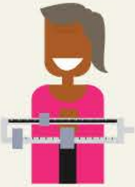
Take a shift at a soup kitchen (an ongoing commitment is best)

FOREVER YOUNG: YOUR TO-DO LIST

Researchers are still determining what causes our bodies, minds and spirits to change as we age. But they have come to some consensus about how we can slow down that process.

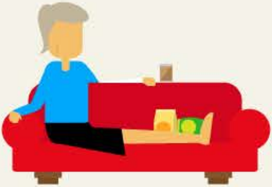
✓ **What to Do:**

Meditate. Mindfulness practices like tai chi also help.



✗ **What NOT to Do:**

Smoke. A pack a day for 40 years ages you an extra 4-7 years.



Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity causes rapid aging.

Exercise. Even if you're overweight and smoke, exercise slows aging.

Control mood disorders. Get medication and treatment if you need it.

Be sedentary. Even a short stroll helps.

Drink too much. Alcohol abuse ages the body quickly.

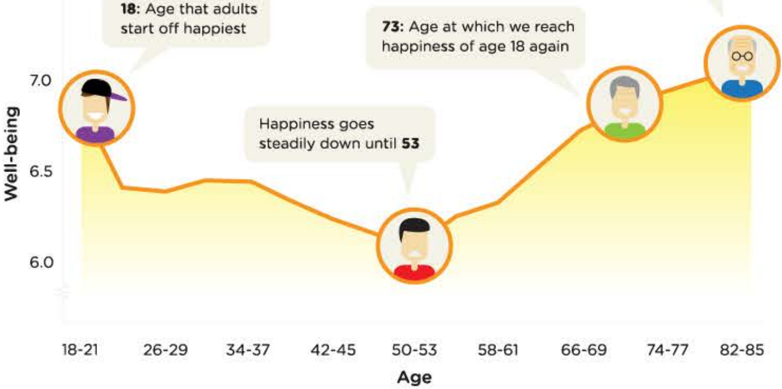
Let stress get out of control. Maintaining calm boosts health in myriad ways.

SO WHAT'S THE HAPPIEST AGE, ANYWAY?

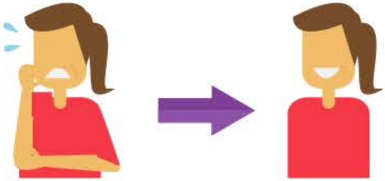
Studies have found different numbers for the "happiest age". Here's a peek at some of their findings:

A large 2010 study looked at the distribution of psychological well-being in the U.S. The middle years of life were the least happy, then well-being climbed steadily after mid-life.

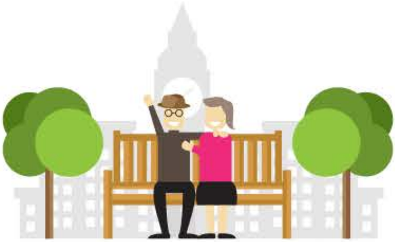
Then increases steadily until **85** (the oldest age studied)



50 The age at which worrying starts to decline.



An English study came up with similar numbers, finding that we are most satisfied at ages **23** and **69.**



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The happiest age for Brits, according to another large survey.

> "We don't stop playing because we grow old.
> We grow old because we stop playing."
>
> —**George Bernard Shaw**

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