

## YOU ARE ONLY AS OLD AS YOU THINK!

I often ask people in class how old they would be if they did not know how old they were. People are always making jokes about older people, when people forget something, you hear something about getting old and losing it. People are offended if you ask their age, unless they are under twenty. Age I am told by others older than I is a mind set. You are only as old as you think you are, I hear from people who don't seem to act their age. Almost everyone I know who is in their 70s seem to be living the same lives that they did when they were younger, perhaps just a little slower. They say I am not getting older I am getting better.

It seems that there are a few statements that I hear consistently:

1. You are as old as you think you are.
2. Stay active and hang around a few younger people
3. Don't take life so seriously.
4. Don't worry about what others think, it is your life.

I once heard a speaker talk about aging and how negative people get about it. He put it like this: You walk into your kitchen and you forget why you came there. Immediately, you think of age and losing it. Or you go to the store and come home finding the one thing that you went for, you forgot, it must be your age. Or you can't find your car keys, Wait, there they are on the table where you left them and you passed them several times not seeing them. Again we concentrate on aging and loosening it. The speaker pointed out that when you were a kid you could not find your other shoe and you did not blame it on getting older. Wow I am 4 years old and losing it. As a child you were sent to the store, , and you forgot what you were told to get, you did not say, But mom it is my age I am almost twelve. Every one of us as children walked into our bedroom looking for something and forgot why we came in the room. Lets face it, **we are not losing it, we never had it.**

Question: What kinds of things have you noticed about people who don't act their age? What is their philosophy about aging? What kinds of activities do they participate in? How much do think that affects their ability to get a job?

## Responses to Aging

I play cards with a several ladies who have retired and are between 68 - 74. When one lady was asked a question and she could not come up with the answer, she said "I have not been able to open that file". I thought that was wonderful.

The people who remain very active in the community, travel and are willing to take a course (anything from computers to cooking) seem to actually BLOOM AGAIN.

For an older person to apply for a job today is MOST difficult considering the age of the competition. We have had clients who are degreed professionals and are unable to get back into the workforce after a year or more of serious Job Search. Jan

I really need to think about this. It is a subject that is important to me as I am an older worker, many of my customers are older workers and I worked 20 years taking and developing retirement claims for Social Security in previous employment. I once took classes in Gerontology as I felt that I needed to be an advocate for them. Last point first, yes, I do think it is more difficult for an older person to obtain employment. There is discrimination out there regarding age. Often it is a practical thing on the part of the employer. If the work is fairly physical, the employer worries about Worker's Compensation claims for injuries to the older worker. There are a few business people who recognize that older workers often have a better work ethic and are often more dependable than younger workers. I always tell my older clients to prepare before a job interview the answers to the reservations that an employer might have about hiring them. For instance people sometimes think that an older person is less flexible, more likely to be ill, will retire right after they get them trained, will not learn easily, etc. I tell them to bring these issues to the table at a job interview. Tell them about your flexibility, with examples etc. Then remind them of your strong work ethic and dependability.

As far as my own philosophy of aging, is that it is a blast. After all, the best reason for having children is grandchildren; there is nothing better than a grandchild. My vision has actually improved due to my age, I was nearsighted and the natural aging has made it so for the first time in a long time, I do not need to wear glasses. I get reduced prices at restaurants, parks, etc. I still play video games with my grandchildren, my favorite is Zelda. I have my own Nintendo 64 and Game Boy Advance. One of my 11 year old grandson's looked at me the other day and said "Aren't you supposed to be knitting or something?" The Bible says that grey hair is a glory. That older women are supposed to advise the younger. Getting older is not a negative thing. Life is great at all ages.  
Sandy Lynch

Longevity or old age?

Last Friday I applied for Social Security. I will be 65 in December. Today I am involved in a meeting to set up the deployment of a major Web Database Application. I feel very fortunate that I can still be active as a programmer analyst.

First let me add that my father-in-law at about 65 crushed his back while handling solid core doors in his door factory. At 75 he became a Master Gardner and taught in the High Schools, Junior Colleges and Colleges in the local area. At 85 he got his first computer. At 90 with congestive heart problems he started his memoirs. As an American Legion member and liaison for the Boy Scouts, his Troop came in first in the state and he was appointed to be in charge of the Scouts for his district of 4 or 5 counties.

I retired from the military and watched young men (35-45) retire, sit in an overstuffed chair, drink beer and die 12-13 years later. I now see young people retire now at 55 with the same aspirations from the cooperate world.

What is the secret? I think its overcoming the hurdles. I learn slower and have to work smarter. I work as a team member and share what I have found successful for things I have not been exposed to. I have the usual aches and pains that come with age. I have found it is the common ground for striking up a conversation with another senior. Kind of a joke but its not really funny. I am no longer in competition and trying to climb the cooperate ladder. This was a hard adjustment but one that was worth while. I work almost as hard as the younger staff, maybe not as many hours. But I enjoy the successes more and am not as worried as much about the resume as before. And I think the most important part is that though I have always enjoyed my work, I now work more because I want to than because I have to. I will acknowledge few ever reach that point and that's a shame.

For older workers that are approaching retirement - look around for where you can keep mentally and physically active. It may be in part time volunteer work or right where you are.

An aside: Here at the County SDA, I did see one individual get employed. I was asked to help him with problems on his resume because of a computer problem. I probably helped more than expected but through his intense efforts to get employed I learned something. He finely wrote a resume that didn't reflect his age. When he walked into the interview and they saw him - while their mouths were still open - he said "I'm self insured". He got the job. He was 55. I enjoy you e-mails, keep up the good work. Jim

Nearly 20 years ago I met a lady who changed my attitude about "old" people. She had a grey bun on the top of her wrinkled face. She looked like she should be home knitting to my then 30-something self.

She had been laid off from Boeing, who periodically lets the gates open and "dumps" thousands of workers into the flooded labor market. She had been advised to come in and check in with the Dislocated Worker Program staff. She said, "I'm here because they told me to come see you, but I hope this doesn't take long because I need to go find a job."

She was vivacious, bubbly, enthusiastic and ready to go. I felt guilty about keeping her for even a few minutes because she had things to do and places to go and people to see. I knew that ANY employer worth a hoot would be honored to have her as an employee. That lady changed my attitude that day about age. It is in your attitude. The only thing "old" about that lady was her appearance. Once you spent even a few seconds with her, you saw how young she was, and what a great asset she would be to her next employer.

I have since seen people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s who already feel old and unemployable and you have a hard time not agreeing with them - they've convinced me by their attitude that they are too old! Attitude is everything!

I forgot to submit a note with the first reply I sent you..... I am currently dealing with a cousin that is going through depression. She isn't even in her sixties yet, and she looks and acts really aged. I talk to her, try to help her come out of it, and am actually planning to go and stay with her a couple of days. She is forever thinking that she has an illness that is going to kill her. She worries about all her friends and relatives that are sick, poor, lost, etc. She is literally wasting away. She tells me that she can't help it, that it isn't easy to sit there and not think of all the people that mean something to her. I tell her to stop watching the daily news on TV and to get out to the malls, to the zoo, park, etc. She has lost over 100 pounds in the last two years, and looks like she is under 100 pounds. She has a sister and brother left in her family that live in Texas, they both have asked her to go and stay with them for a while, but she doesn't do it. She would much rather sit in her house, watch TV all day and cry. I'm not sure what it really is the problem with her, if it is that she feels she is too old, or if she is just paranoid of what lies ahead for all of us. I strongly believe that a person must stay active, walking, talking to people, getting out, reading, reading and reading as much as laughing, laughing laughing. I love comedy shows, anything that will make me laugh :) Lydia H.

I often think of Native American values regarding age... being old meant being wise. Being wise meant you were respected, revered and looked up to by the "young". Of course, this was because you had something to impart and share and others recognized the contribution. Our age should be about experience, time on the planet and the ability to share with others what we have learned. Maybe our elders or our older peers forget keys or what they were looking for in a store, because their minds and hearts are so FULL of all they have stored up over the years. As a new parent, I am watchful of the young. I watch the egos and attitudes of those younger wreck shameful havoc on the old. It wouldn't hurt if we were all taken down a notch in order to appreciate the wisdom that comes from our elders. We should all earn the right to walk slower with the assistance of our community. Lara Stone MA

I loved the stories on aging. I hear about the same things you do and I think what keeps me young in this office is that we have 2 young secretaries here and they are so upbeat every day that they keep all of us going including the customers. It is wonderful when you walk into an office or business and people are happy and upbeat. Have a great week. June NY

I've always said the calendar can say what it wants, but it's what's in your head and your heart that matters! I suppose my best examples of how I want to be as I age are my folks. Both are in their middle 70's and they never stop moving. Oh, they may move a little slower, but they don't let that get in their way! They are active in their church, hobbies, travel and activities of their children, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren. They keep a garden every year big enough to feed half the neighborhood! They can and freeze vegetables and even make a crock of sauerkraut every year. Dad still hunts wild turkey, deer, rabbit, and pheasant every year and he fishes in the summer and winter! Mom makes homemade bread, pies, cakes, cookies. When I ask why they go to all that trouble when they financially don't need to do it, they just say they like it. Both of my folks help out people from church (mostly widows) with lawn care and the funny thing is that these widows are all younger than my folks!

You asked how older people's activities affect their ability to get a job. Well, my dad has been retired over 12 years and he has no interest in working again. But he frequents several hardware and auto supply stores in town and every one of them have been asking him to come to work for them ever since he retired. Dad says he's too busy to work. Mom says she doesn't know how she ever got everything done when she was working.

Do they ever talk about being old? Yes, but usually it's with some aggravation that they have to

do things a little slower than they used to. I've never heard them say they can't do something, they just say it takes a little longer than when they were 50! Susan--Michigan

I have to reply to this one. I'm 16, I've always been 16 and will always be. It's strange that my son is 37--don't know how that happened. Jane J. GA

The things I have noticed about older people who seem young and full of vigor seem to reside in two categories: physical fitness and mental disciplines. Staying as healthy as you can by eating right and a stiff regimen of daily exercise has proven to strengthen not only the physical realm, but contributes to mental acuity as well. There are all kinds of statistics about the benefits of exercise, but people conveniently overlook them, to justify a sedentary lifestyle.

Mental disciplines include doing what YOU want to do, not what your children, associates, and friends think you should do. Oftentimes doing what you want to do is to slow down and savor the day as it unfolds, without a multitude of social engagements, church activities, babysitting, etc. Learning to say NO without offering any excuses is a talent often developed too late in life. I am not advocating no activities, just choosing what you really enjoy, and doing just that, without any feelings of guilt or remorse. I think Americans also attribute their self worth to their jobs, and when they retire their self esteem goes through the floor, and they often feel useless. This can lead to drug and alcohol abuse to self medicate for a late life depression. It is estimated that as many as 80% of older patients admitted to the emergency room involving falls are caused by alcohol or drug abuse, or both. Older people have a vast reserve of knowledge and experience that can be utilized by younger people who have sense enough to look to them for it. They can offer guidance and help in many situations, that I think helps people stay young. Thanks, Damian IN

Here is an item 5. or at least an additional statement for you "statements about aging"

Most people get old because they stop doing things, rather than stopping doing things because they get old.

For example.... when I was 39, I was pitching for a slow pitch softball team. I had played with them for quite a few years,,, but now I was 39, and in my own mind, getting too old to play. So, the next summer I quit and they got a different pitcher. 3 years later my work area was organizing a slow pitch softball team. I missed the game, so I joined as their pitcher, and played for 3 more years with the same level of ability and success that I was enjoying in my 30's. (Incidentally, I didn't quit at the end of 3 years, the recreation league we were playing in folded, so the team stopped playing.) Gene W UT

I just had to respond to this one. I do believe you are only as old as you think. Some days I feel young and some days I feel old, but it's also very much my attitude on how I let it affect me. I will be 47 this year and people have mistakenly asked my sons (19 and 26) if I'm their girlfriend. I love it! Besides my children keeping me young, I also owe it to two other very important people in my life. One is my mother who at the age of 83 still lives and works on her 20 acre ranch and rides her bicycle ten miles everyday. Most people guess her as being in her 60's and she tells them she's no spring chicken, she's in her 80's! The other person that has inspired me is my father-in-law. He had a heart attack when he was 55 and had a five way by-pass surgery. A year later he had a four way by-pass. Over the next few years he had three cancer surgeries. In the mean time he was forced to retire. At the age of 65, after getting bored at home, he decided he needed to go back to work, his wife agreed. :) He couldn't return to his original job due to the stress factor so he went through truck driving training, passed the physical and got a job transporting milk. Anytime I start feeling like I'm getting old, I can be assured that my family will keep me in line, because after all I'll always be a spring chicken to my mother and father-in-law!

Thanks for letting me share! Rose Amaru Private Industry Council Redding, CA

As for the aging: in our island getting old is not an embarrassing thing. in fact the elderly is highly respected and they are the King of the house or the family or even the whole clan in the community. Elderly here are kept at home of their children and should not be allow to be on their own as I have seen in Western Culture. Maggie Walter HI

Just turning 61 makes me pause to think of the things on my list of "to do's" and know all will not get done. Having short term goals and long term goals is an effort to focus and get some of my dreams worked on. Love my job in One Stop Business and Employment Center as Receptionist/Greeter. On the side I am opening a shop called The Hummingbird Nest, also seamstress, jewelry designer and many other things in between. Clients depressed about the age thing are encouraged that my years have been kind to my looks. Sometimes the mirror gives me a start, but the variety of things growing from my hands and mind keep me occupied with little time to dwell on the shortness of life. MJ IL

My grandfather is 86 years old and has awesome attitude. He worked at the same company Johns Manville in the factory for over 50 years not missing a day to work. He then was retrained to work in the office to get more longevity with the company. Mind you the pay on the factory floor was better, but the potential to work more years in the office was the impetus of change. With a second grade education he learned basic computer skills and retired from JM and the Credit Union. Matter of fact the dinosaur size eye-soar known as JM has been leveled. Yet, my Pop's attitude only improves. He volunteers for voter elections every year. He is active in all kinds Credit Union meetings and activities.

Pop has never drank or smoked in his life. He still works in his yard everyday and surfs the net almost nightly. He is way hip, up on all the current events in the neighborhood and on the globe. He jokes when he gets old enough to retire, "That is when I am going to start drinking and smoking." I think positive attitudes and lifestyles are essential ingredients for a tasty career and life. Keep smilin ' Poppa. Abdullah CA

I am 53 years on this earth this time and proud of it! I earned every minute!! Anyway, we conduct a workshop here titled "Using Age to Advantage." If you have any suggestions (and I know you do as the wonderful motivator that you are!) on tips that would help mature workers that are in job search, I would love to hear them. Some of our customers are getting very discouraged and feel that age discrimination is alive and well!! Thanks for any tips. Have a great week. Joanne Susi

Thanks for this.....it really hit home. The point about youth forgetting just as older people do is so true. I'm not going to say "I'm losing it or it's my age" the next time I forget something! I hear my 13 year old daughter say "I forgot" all the time. Thanks for putting this in perspective! Deanna S AR

Strange that you would have this subject three days after my 67th birthday! That's chronological years, I might add. I often wonder how I'm supposed to act at this age -- I simply don't know. I look around at others who are my age and I neither look or act as old as they ( or so I say). Yes, I've slowed down some, but as you know, my job requires that I do a great deal of travel and some days I'm pretty tired if I've gone from one end of my region to another and back, but I recover pretty quickly.

When Eastern Airlines went out of business in 1991, I had just turned 55. Since that time I've had three jobs. I've had this job as a Regional Resource Coordinator for the Department of Family & Children Services for almost eight years and hope to stay for two more. But I do agree with the four statements that you say you constantly hear, especially, "Don't take life so seriously" This is a lesson I learned during the crisis at Eastern from Dr. Rick Suarez, a psychologist in Coral Gables who came on staff as a consultant to help us as people who had been on strike were recalled. He constantly told us, "Just don't take it so seriously." I think I've told you that I credit him with saving me from just utter despair during that time.

Well, I didn't mean to ramble on and on (something old people do, I'm told), but I think people need to just stay active, mentally and physically and ; "Just do it!" Elly

Just a little information that is on my "Stress Busters" calendar this a.m., that I thought you might find interesting:

It appears from research that cortisol, a hormone released during stress, can interfere with long-term memory functioning. This may explain why you might suddenly forget things you do really know during job interviews, exams or even when introducing your friends to one another. To counteract this tendency in specific stressful situations, work at reducing your stress level by focusing on slow, deep breathing and repeating calming phrases to yourself. Karin Till Eastern Iowa Job Training

[Your newsletter is very appropriate today because it is my 41st birthday and old is something that my 5 year thinks I am. Teresa B](#)

Question: What kinds of things have you noticed about people who don't act their age? What is their philosophy about aging? What kinds of activities do they participate in? How much do think that affects their ability to get a job?

A favorite "picture in my mind" is when my Dad was in his sixties, he took up running again. He hadn't been a runner since he participated in high school track (& football & basketball). He entered many local "Fun Runs" in his 60's & 70's, and did very well in his age group. A top competitor in his age group also became a good friend, but the competitor always wanted to, but never had beaten my Dad in a race. After much training, he had decided to run right behind my Dad in one particular race, and then try to sprint at the end and out kick my Dad to the finish line. With a quarter mile to go in the race, my Dad could sense that that was his competitor's strategy, so my Dad took off running as fast as he could before his competitor could get a jump on him. So you can just picture these two old men, in their late sixties, battling it out, sprinting side by side down a country town street, going for the finish line. My Dad won again!

He is still farming, raising cattle, alfalfa, pears, and apples, at age 83. I think his philosophy about aging is to be happy and do what you enjoy doing, even if others your age can't keep up. Bruce T

I always get a kick out of people when they find out how old you are and they almost always say, "You don't look that old." So I just ask them, "How old am I supposed to look?" I am an absolute believer that age is a state of mind. I know people who are 60 and "old", and I know people who are 75 and still "young". If you wake up every day thinking about how old you feel, how old you are, how tired you are, how burdened you are.....You are going to be "old" before your time. But "if" you wake up, and can swing your feet over the side of your bed, and put them on the floor and stand up and walk away from your bed, you should believe that the rest of your day is "gravy". I am semi-retired from my "job", but I will never be retired from "life and everything that I am privileged to still do". I am busier now than I was when I was raising my family pretty much by myself. I paint, re-decorate, garden, re-upholster, play with my grandchildren and my two "new children--my dogs, "Smooch and Cyrus". I may chronologically get older, but I will never surrender to being "old". M.A. Littrell

Amazing that you should ask about age. I am including an E-mail that I received from one of my co-workers this morning that pretty well sums up the age issue.

George Carlin's view on aging:

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids? If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions. "How old are you?" "I'm four and a half!" You're never thirty-six and a half. You're four and a half, going on five. That's the key. You get into your teens, now they can't hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead. "How old are you?" "I'm gonna be 16!" You could be 13, but hey, you're gonna be 16. And then the greatest day of your life...you become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony...YOU BECOME 21...Yesssss!!!

But then you turn 30. Oooohh, what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk. He TURNED, we had to throw him out. There's no fun now, you're just a sour-dumpling. What's wrong? What's changed?

You BECOME 21, you TURN 30, then you're PUSHING 40.

Whoa! Put on the brakes, it's all slipping away. Before you know it, you REACH 50...and your dreams are gone. But wiat!!! You MAKE it to 60. You didn't think you would! So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50 and MAKE it to 60. You've built up so much speed that you HIT 70! After that it's a day-by-day thing; you HIT Wednesday!

You get into your 80's and every day is a complete cycle; you HIT lunch; you TURN 4:30; you REACH bedtime. And it doesn't end there. Into the 90's you start going backwards; "I was JUST 92." Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again. "I'm 100 and a half!"

HOW TO STAY YOUNG

1. Throw out nonessential numbers. This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctor worry about them. That is why you pay him/her.
2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.
3. Keep learning. Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." And, the devil's name is Alzheimer's.
4. Enjoy the simple things.

5. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.
6. The tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person who is with us our entire life, is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.
7. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it's family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.
8. Cherish your health: If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.
9. Don't take guilt trips. Take a trip to the mall, to the next county, to a foreign country, but NOT to where the guilt is.
10. Tell the people you love that you love them, at every opportunity.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

Personally, I believe that you are only as old as you make yourself feel. If you do not think about your age but what you are capable of doing, you will remain young (at least at heart - sometimes the body reminds you that you are no longer a spring chicken!). Yes, it can be scary to try new things, meet new people, make new friends, but...it keeps one young and fun and involved and current and up to date. Try it! Instead of looking at yourself as being "Over the Hill" think of yourself having a lot of good experiences that put joy, and sometimes sorrow, in your life. Turning 30, 40, 50, or 60 never bothered me. I was/am glad to be where I am today, doing the things that I like doing, wishing that the things that I don't like would go away just like everyone else. I'm glad that I do not have to relive some of the experiences of the 20's, 30's, 40's, etc. - once was enough! I look forward to each new tomorrow and all of the things it will bring - some people are old at 20, while others are very young at 80. Your attitude and your mind all play a big part in how you view life. Carole Z

Age is just a number, and you are only as old as you feel. I have several relatives in their 80's and a few in their 90's and many neighbors and friends in their 60's that say this and also say their grandkids keep them young. My aunt worked until she was 86 and said that kept her going. Never stop. Do the same things you always did as long as your health permits it. And of course, think young. Exercise is another key player in staying young. Life should be lived to the fullest every day no matter what age you are! By the way, I enjoy reading your articles each week. Thanks. Tammy