

Old age used to be synonymous with being washed out, frail, and helpless. Not anymore. Now people in their 70's, 80's, and even 90's are engaged, independent, and active.

What changed? The baby boomers are changing the face of old age - just as they've changed every stage of life through which they pass.

Aging has changed. As people get older, they are now more active - physically and mentally. Healthcare is better. Technology is superior. All these things make aging better than when your parents retired.

Disrupting the perception of getting older

Even though aging is changing, you might still dread growing old. That's why sentiments such as "50 is the new 30" are popular. Everyone wants to be youthful, energetic, and wrinkle-free.

Disrupting perceptions of aging, however, aren't about clinging to your youth. Being 50 is very different than being 30. For one thing, most people in their 50's are happier. Research indicates that emotional well-being improves about five percent for every decade we age – until our 70's when it levels off. That means in your 50's you're about 10% happier than you were in your 30's.

Researchers think happiness increases as you get older because you're motivated by different things. You have wisdom you've gained through the ups and downs of every-day life.

Disrupting aging is recognizing that 50 is not the new 30; 50 is the new, better 50. Here are five ways you can disrupt aging:

1. Disrupting changes in your body

You can disrupt the effects of aging by choosing to live a healthy lifestyle and prevent health problems. Working toward the goal of prevention by eating nutritious foods, exercising, strength training, getting enough sleep, and visiting your doctor on a regular basis all help maintain your body.

Disrupting your body's aging is about choices you make. You can still eat whatever you want – but in smaller portions. You can still go out on the town dancing – but not all night every night. Choosing to take care of your body doesn't limit what you can do. In fact, being physically active acts as an aging process disruptor. Disrupting the aging process makes you feel better.

Taking good care of your physical body gives you more energy, more stamina, better vision, and improves hearing. It will also lessen indigestion, depression, and the health problems that happen to those who don't take care of themselves.

2. Disrupting your emotions

As things slow down, you might become frustrated that you aren't as quick mentally as when you were younger. You might be disappointed that your physical body doesn't work as well. Emotional wellness is taking the ups and downs of life in stride. Just because you aren't as "efficient" at something, doesn't mean you can't still enjoy life. Age gives you other attributes that a younger person lacks.

As you age, your focus and interests change. You have a ton of valuable knowledge. Share your wisdom

through mentoring or volunteering in your community. Aging is not a decline, but a process of continual growth. Finding peace and harmony through community involvement, spiritual activities, and/or meditation, helps you feel a congruency between your values and your actions.

3. Disrupting social changes

People need other people. We're social animals – whether you're an introvert or an extrovert – interaction with others boosts happiness. It's difficult to participate in social events, however, when you see yourself as "old" and worn out. Disrupting the aging of your physical, mental, and emotional self will help you be more social. Loneliness is directly related to dementia. Data suggests that people who have strong social bonds and are socially active, are less likely to develop symptoms of dementia.⁵

Another facet of being social, is being able to hear well. If you can't participate with others because you're not hearing them, get your hearing checked. A study by Johns Hopkins and National Institute on Aging suggests that "the strain of decoding sounds over the years may overwhelm the brains of people with hearing loss, leaving them more vulnerable to dementia".⁶ As Helen Keller said, "Blindness separates us from things but deafness separates us from people." Don't let hearing difficulties separate you from being social.

4. Disrupting career changes

One of the biggest concerns during aging is dealing with the loss of career, implementing retirement, and financial worries. Wondering if you'll have enough money to last throughout our your life can be a significant stressor – or it can be a motivating challenge. It depends on how you look at the situation.

Many people see being over 50 as a time to reinvent themselves, including their careers. The unemployment rate for those over age 55 is just 4.1% (Unemployment for teens is 18.8% and 5.7% for the total overall population). Quite a few companies value older employees. In fact, several companies are now actively recruiting those with wisdom.

Instead of staying at your current job, or transferring your skills to a new company, you could start a business. Baby boomers often start an "encore" career. Encore businesses are small, help you pursue your passion, and increase your income. The Small Business Administration notes that twice as many boomers plan to start a business as millennials.

5. Disrupting mental aging

Your body slows down as you age. So does your mind. In fact, the brain science company Posit Science has data that suggests brain speed slows down 1.5% per year after age 50. Normal aging does not result in significant memory loss, it just slows down your brain's processing time. Not hearing or seeing well can also affect your brain. (Good sight and hearing are critical sensory stimuli; "Use it or lose it" Not seeing or hearing well cause parts of the brain to atrophy). Be sure to have your eyes and ears checked by an optometrist and an audiologist (specialists in those areas).

Keep your memory sharp by 'exercising' your mind. Reading, developing new interests, and having lively discussions with friends stimulate your brain. Also solving problems – crossword puzzles, figuring out a cross-stitch pattern, or working on improving your golf swing – also keep your mind in good shape. Finding brain stimulation games specifically geared to sharpen auditory processing, visual acuity and

short-term memory (locally available for a free 8-week trial at the Center for Active Aging.)

Owning Your Age

Steve Jobs was 52 when he introduced the iPhone. Years later, Tim Cook was 51 when he replaced Jobs. Both entrepreneurs shattered the myth that the technology industry is ruled by the young.

Don't let others define you by your age. No one wants that – just like they don't want to be defined by race, gender, income, or hair color. Disrupting aging begins with you owning your age. Feel good about yourself. Take charge of your life, at any age, and live awesome.

Take control of your health by getting your hearing checked. Hearing deteriorates very slowly. Most people don't realize they have a hearing problem until it's quite severe. If you're over 50, or if you think you need a boost in your hearing, get it checked. Just pick up the phone and call us at 435.682.3192. We'll schedule your FREE Real-World Hearing Assessment (\$150 Value) at a convenient time for you. I don't love the ending. Let me reconsider our offer...

Footnote 5: Vann, Madeine. "The Loneliness-Dementia Link". Everyday Health Media LLC. 9/1/15. Web