



Have you ever heard the term “chronologically gifted” and wondered what it meant? Surprising to some, it doesn’t just mean living a long life. It goes beyond the number of years lived and represents a specific state of mind. People who are chronologically gifted face the aging process with a healthy mixture of acceptance and enthusiasm, which leads them to live happier, (and often longer) lives. They regard their age as a gift, the seal of a lifelong journey for which they are profoundly grateful. In this context, they insist on facing the aging process with gusto—putting their remaining years to good use—right here and right now.

10 Principles for Becoming Chronologically Gifted

From: Chronologically Gifted, Aging with Gusto, A Practical Guide For Healthy Living To Age 123

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The chronologically gifted are determined to live with significance, passion, and purpose in the present. Even as they seize control over their attitude about aging, they surrender the illusion of control over the reality of aging. Somewhere in the mix, they lose their concern over whether they live to see five more years, 30 more years, or 50 more years. Yet, as a group, they still tend to live longer and more rewarding lives than those who constantly preoccupy themselves with thoughts of getting older.

The list that follows represents the ten principles of the chronologically gifted. Think of these as the thought-habits that will (and do) define one’s determination to live the longest, best life possible:

Principle #1: Get rid of the phrase, “I’m too old for that.”

How many are guilty of using this phrase instead of eliminating it from one’s vocabulary and thoughts? The alternative is to confronting old age as an imposition of new limitations is to tackle it by focusing on opportunities to overcome challenges and acquire new skills. Be determined to embrace aging as part of the cycle of life, and really live each day for all it’s worth.

In general, when people think of themselves as too old for any activity, it is the phrase they use as a kneejerk reaction to almost any physically-oriented invitation. But it’s not just about the physical. It’s the mental image that one conjures up about loss from happier days. In the end, it’s destructive, so just lose it.

Principle #2: Find a reason to get up in the morning.

Everyone needs a reason to awaken—regardless of what time the day

begins. Those who begin their day with a clear sense of purpose are typically the same people who have little trouble waking up. They are positive, know what they want to do and are eager to start the day. On the other hand, those who feel stifled when asked what gets them out of bed in the morning should know they are not alone. While it might seem odd, few people think about what their life’s purpose is. Instead, most operate on automatic. Western culture doesn’t train people to think critically about what they’re hardwired to do best, which is the foundation for readiness to start each new day. With that in mind, here are four questions that can help anyone arrive at a sound reason for getting out of bed in the morning:

What are you good at doing?

What can you be paid to do?

What does the world need from you?

What do you love to do or what would you love to do?

Principle #3: Connect with something bigger than yourself.

With a little thought, most people can identify many options and ways to accomplish this goal. Volunteering time for a worthy cause is one way to connect. Other ways? Plug into a spiritual community. Meditate. Pray. Read thought-provoking books that look at the big questions in life. In the end, it’s about giving, not getting.

Principle #4: Look on the bright side.

Hardship is temporary. Victory is just around the corner. Find little reasons every day to be grateful for life—even in the face of negativity. Resolve to live mindfully with purpose and passion in order to savor the best gifts life has to offer. Focus on solutions, not problems.

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Principle #5: Get moving!

Everyone needs a physical activity to enjoy—something they're really passionate about. Engage in it regularly. Take a lot of walks. Use the stairs. Bike to the store instead of driving. Plant and tend to a garden. Find ways to incorporate low-intensity exercise of all kinds (strength, balance, and aerobic) into everyday life to ward off the potentially debilitating effects of aging.

Principle #6: Stay fueled.

Eat more fruits and vegetables and fewer simple carbohydrates. Drink a lot of water and an occasional glass of red wine. Snack on nuts and berries. Serve smaller portions, and put the rest of the food away before sitting down to eat. Pause to savor favorite flavors. Don't eat on the go. Eat smaller meals more frequently, and put the unhealthy foods out of sight and out of reach to purge temptations.

Principle #7: Create a personal blue zone.

What's a Blue Zone? This refers to Dan Buettner's groundbreaking work that identifies specific geographical areas where people tend to live longer, healthier lives. The nine healthy lifestyle habits shared by people who have lived the longest include: 1) Know your purpose; 2) Be in the right tribe; 3) Belong to something spiritually; 4) Celebrate family first; 5) Drink wine at 5:00; 6) 80% rule: stop eating when you're 80 percent full; 7) Downshift to shed stress; 8) Focus on plants (Beans are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets); 9) Move naturally. Clearly, the habits that make Blue Zones so healthful can be reproduced anywhere.

Principle #8: Don't do it alone.

Connect with like-minded, loyal, authentic people. Spend time with them weekly. Exchange complaints about current burdens. Rejoice with them in their victories, and let them respond in kind. Learn to forgive, and reach out to estranged family members before it's too late to reconcile. Life is too short for grudges.

Principle #9: Believe in yourself.

When it comes to giving oneself a pat on the back, many find that it's not such an easy task. However, by giving credit where it's due, ultimately a person can determine who it is they want to become and then resolve to make it happen. Along the way, obstacles will arise. These are only temporary setbacks—each of which can be overcome. Pats on the back should happen frequently. It builds confidence and a sense of pride, which is essential to feeling good inside.

Principle #10: Seize the day.

Above all else, live today as though it really matters—because it does. Don't do anything inopportune, but also don't let fear stand in the way of experiencing the fullness of life right here and now. Live today so that if death came early there would be no regrets.

Take it slowly

Keep in mind that everybody moves at a different pace when it comes to incorporating the 10 principles of the chronologically gifted into their life. Start gradually with the smaller steps that seem easiest to implement in the short term, while working on one bigger area at a time. Especially in the wake of a major life event, like an illness or the loss of a loved one,

it's instinctive to rush into gaining control over one's life. With seemingly superhuman strength, people attempt to tackle everything on their master to-do list at once. That's good for getting started, but sustaining such a massive effort over the long run can be overwhelming. When that happens, it's more common for a person to give up on all of it than to break it down into achievable milestones. It's always better to start small and to build on past victories because lifestyle changes that happen at a slower pace are more likely to be permanent.

Live today a little more like the tomorrow you envision. And live tomorrow a little more like you envision the next day. Setbacks need not cause derailment, especially if that person has given him or herself permission to take a breath. Then get right back up and continue moving forward.

The bottom line

By focusing on the process of continual growth and opportunity that aging brings for the chronologically gifted—viewing their futures with optimism, they're more likely to live longer and better lives with the gusto that proves the naysayers wrong. Everyone has the power to form new habits that offer a surprisingly bright and hopeful way forward for those riding the "silver tsunami." Why should one choose to age with gusto? It's simple: because doing so means living a life where every day counts, and the possibilities are limited only by one's imagination.

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About the Author:



Dr. Erica Miller holds her Ph.D. in clinical psychology and has written extensively on topics of positive psychology, longevity, overcoming challenges, and living life to its fullest. Her most recent book, "Chronologically Gifted: Aging with Gusto," made her an international bestselling author. In addition to having a private practice, Dr. Miller was the founder and executive director of Miller Psychological Centers, a chain of mental health clinics throughout Los Angeles and Orange County. Currently, in addition to public speaking, she is CEO of a family real estate business in Austin, Texas. For information, please call 805-496-8850 or visit www.dreericamiller.com