

Not Born Yesterday!

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AGING WITH GUSTO

Chronologically Gifted: Aging with Gusto! Written by Dr. Erica Miller, Motivational Speaker & International Best Selling Author

The silver tsunami is on the move! Men and women age 55+ are the fastest growing demographic, and they are living longer than ever before. In fact, today's research shows that the number of breakthroughs working to reverse human aging in this lifetime is putting a new face on the concept of "old." Additionally, attitudes are changing to adapt to this new reality. While it's obvious that aging is not an option, it is entirely possible to face the aging process with a healthy mixture of acceptance and enthusiasm.

The dichotomy between longevity and healthy aging

We live in an age of unprecedented scientific and technological advancements. Many diseases that used to ravage society are now all but eradicated in the developed West. Even chronic diseases can be surprisingly well managed with modern therapies that prolong meaningful lives for years, sometimes decades. And it's only a matter of time before discovering cures for those diseases, too.

As a result of these achievements, citizens of first-world countries are enjoying longer life spans than ever before in human history. Today's average life expectancy is 80 years for men, and slightly longer for women. Jeanne Calment of France was the oldest known human being when she died in 1997, at the record age of 122! When it comes to longevity in life, there are even places in the world—the Blue Zones—where indigenous populations have far greater concentrations of centenarians than most places in the United States. Many believe that inhabitants of Blue Zones provide wisdom about how to adjust societal structures and beliefs to produce and accommodate longevity. The numbers give reason to think this way. In 2016, there were 450,000 centenarians in the world—73,000 in America alone. Super centenarians (110+) in the world numbered 600.

Although that's good news, it's important to note the quality of healthy living has not kept pace with extended life spans. That is, while people are living longer, they're not necessarily enjoying their longer lives.

Becoming chronologically gifted

Chronologically gifted individuals don't settle for long life at the expense of their health. They're not interested in living forever if that means a prolonged state of disability and more opportunity for cognitive decline. They would rather live functionally meaningful lives until 80 and then drop dead quietly, while sleeping. So, the real question when it comes to longevity is how to extend the health span of life, not simply how to live a few more

years. Fortunately, researchers are going public with some promising discoveries on that front.

Step one in the program for becoming chronologically gifted is simple: *admit that you're getting older*. Stop fighting it. Embrace it. Own it. Love it. Those who wonder how it's possible to love the aging process understand it all begins with attitude. This isn't to imply that someone should learn to love the limitations that aging might bring. More to the point, the chronologically gifted don't have time to wait around for science to solve the "problem" of aging because they don't regard aging as a problem in the first place. They are living their best years now, whether science keeps up or not. They know the facts: genes are responsible for no more than 20 percent of one's longevity; the remaining 80 percent is up to the individual.

Yet, older readers can take heart because there's good news: being chronologically gifted doesn't mean you have to pretend to be young! Isn't that a relief? Isn't it refreshing to hear that it's *okay* to be old—to act one's age, as it were? And for younger readers, there's good news, too: being chronologically gifted means it's *okay* to age.

The chronologically gifted regard their age as a gift, the seal of a lifelong journey for which they are profoundly grateful. It's a journey that began at birth and one they hope to continue through a personal legacy that immortalizes them in the memories of others. Facing their own mortality, the chronologically gifted are determined to live with significance, passion, and purpose in the here and now. 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, thirty more years, or fifty. 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.

Undoubtedly, older citizens have far more power over how they age than society conditions them to believe. It's very simple—it begins with a decision. Those who make the decision to age in the chronologically gifted way should know: the earlier in life the decision is made, the better. But, remember, no matter how old (or how young) a person is, it's the follow-through from this point on that matter.

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. Dr. Miller has a private practice, and was the founder and executive director of Miller Psychological Centers, a chain of mental health clinics throughout Los Angeles and Orange County. More details 805 496-8850 or visit www.dreericamiller.com