

To Age with Gusto, We're Not Allowed to Say: "I'm Too Old for That."

My exclusive interview with Dr. Erica Miller, International Best-Selling Author, Inspirational Speaker, Entrepreneur, Mental Health Professional and Holocaust Survivor.

By Nathalie Virem

Dr. Erica Miller is an international best-selling author, inspirational speaker and mental health professional. She has written three books, all of which represent her trademark, "Guts, Grit and Gusto." Her latest is *Chronologically Gifted—Aging with Gusto: A Practical Guide to Healthy Living to Age 123*. Dr. Miller, whose Ph.D. is in clinical psychology, plans to live to 123, which is pretty amazing considering that this elegant five-foot-tall octogenarian spent four years of her early life in a German/Romanian concentration camp. Why 123? Dr. Miller's research shows that a French woman, Jeanne Calment, was the longest living individual. She lived 122 years and 164 days. If Ms. Calment lived to 122, then Dr. Miller wants to break that record. Today, the oldest living person, according to Dr. Miller, is Kane Tanaka from Japan, who is 116. Let's see what drives Dr. Miller and what we can learn from her.

Nathalie Virem: Congratulations on your book, *Chronologically Gifted—Aging with Gusto*, becoming an international bestseller. What does the title mean, and why did you write the book?

Dr. Erica Miller: I like to be outside the box. I want to live forever, so I began to research ways in which I could extend my life span. What would my life choices have to be? How could I realize that while life is short, we can also lengthen it? Once I started researching it, I wanted to share my findings, so I wrote the book. Really. It's not only about living long, it's about living long and well! And, my motto has always been, "Don't Tell Me I Can't Do It."



Nathalie Virem: Who is the book for?

Dr. Erica Miller: My best audiences are in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. Why? Because by the time they're in their 70s and 80s, they might say, "Why didn't I do that?" But quite honestly, it's never too late to start. Besides, my book Chronologically Gifted is not just about aging. It's about living. As an example, I do not like the word "dieting." A better way of saying it is simply eating mindfully. I want men and women to learn how to change their lifestyle when they're younger so they can live well and live long and healthily to 123.

Nathalie Virem: Why do people at any age need a reason to get up in the morning?

Dr. Erica Miller: A goal for everyone should be to find their passion and purpose. People that are resilient and positive are engaged and involved. You know, there are different chapters in life. And life is an ongoing journey. So that every person's responsibility is to find what is meaningful to them and will make them feel relevant at all stages of their lives. One of the things I tell people is that being selfish is not bad because we have to take care of ourselves before we can take care of others.

Nathalie Virem: Why is it important to be passionate about life, and what are some examples that reflect your passion?

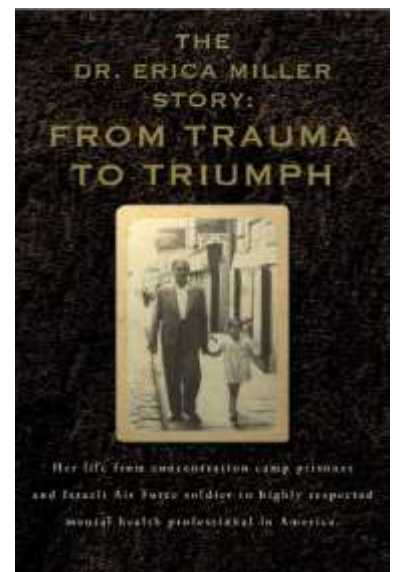
Dr. Erica Miller: For me, being passionate means celebrating life and feeling fulfilled. The way I do that is to ensure that I have a voice and that I'm relevant. So, the way I do that is to uplift and inspire other people by speaking in front of audiences and by writing books that will inspire other people to live well. My kids say my passion is to hear myself talk! But really, I have helped many women and men who want to grow old with passion and energy. They come to me for guidance, and I assist them not only to articulate a vision but also to decide how they're going to achieve it with grit and perseverance. I talk about positivism—believing that you can do whatever it is you put your mind to do.

Nathalie Virem: As a Holocaust survivor, what did you learn about resilience and overcoming trauma that contributes to your beliefs about living life with gusto?

Dr. Erica Miller: I am a testimony to not becoming a victim. Surviving my childhood gave me an ability to say, "Don't tell me I cannot do it." Having the experience as a Holocaust survivor made me strong. It gave me strength, and it made me resilient. For all of the negativity I saw, I ended up feeling grateful that I survived. I can now live with gusto because I know that I am the way I am because I lived through the horrific ordeals of my childhood. Rather than ignoring what happens to us, it's better to embrace it. That's how we can leverage all of our life's experiences in order to thrive.

Nathalie Virem: What are the traditional views about aging in our society that need to be dispelled?

Dr. Erica Miller: I am not going to lie to you. Traditions are strong, and aging for men and women is judged differently. My hairdresser says to me, "You want to go gray? Are you crazy?" If I were a man, her reaction would not have been the same. Although change is slow to come by, it is taking place. We have to dispel the views about aging that say older women are not beautiful or smart, or capable. When a woman comes to me these days and says, "My husband doesn't let me," I am not surprised because traditions are very strong, and change is slow to



come by. I believe we have to give permission to our daughters and granddaughters as well as sons and grandsons to do and be whatever they would like in the forever pursuit of gender equality.

Nathalie Virem: What are the five essentials of becoming chronologically gifted and enjoying it?

Dr. Erica Miller: There are many essentials, but I'll name the top five. Number One for becoming chronologically gifted is to get rid of the phrase "I'm too old for that." Number Two: Always look on the bright side. Number Three: Banish your fear of failure. Number Four: Give yourself permission at any age to do something different. Number Five: Cut negative people out of your life. Another way of saying it is to try to be around positive people. So about enjoying living as a chronologically gifted person, I'd say that happiness is an inside job, and that to enjoy life is to learn to be grateful for all you have.



Nathalie Virem: In what ways do we have a choice about the way we age?

Dr. Erica Miller: One way to positively affect the way we age is to make healthy choices about the food we eat. Not only do we choose healthy eating, we also learn about healthy additions to our daily food intake. For instance, turmeric is good for you. Healthy aging also requires choosing to be active, which may mean going to the gym, or taking walks, or starting an activity that gets us moving, like a sport or dancing. In my book, *Chronologically Gifted-Aging with Gusto*, I give pointers on taking care of our body and spirit. It's important to know that fate is a wonderful thing to have if possible. To the rest of us who struggle with God, spirituality is readily available to us. I view spirituality as having a sense of fulfillment and purpose, and answering the question, "Why am I here?" It could be through religion, or not.

Nathalie Virem: In your book, you say, "Aging is not optional, but growth is." Please elaborate.

Dr. Erica Miller: We are always in the process of evolving. And a way to evolve is to be open to new experiences and new ideas. The word is out. Once you stop learning, you stop living. I believe that. In *Chronologically Gifted*, I mention one way to stay young is to be curious and look for adventures to be explored. "Gifted" people in their 80s and beyond are still learning and doing things. Continuous learning and moving upward are lifestyle choices. At each stage of life, we need to enjoy who we are, but still be willing to say, "What else is out there?"

Nathalie Virem: What are the recent research results that support your beliefs about living life to the fullest and extending life span?

Dr. Erica Miller: There are so many good sources these days! I often refer to Andrew Weil, M.D., who writes and teaches about healthy aging. Dr. Avi Roy, a biomedical scientist, also cites "Lust for Life" as a contributor to longer life spans. The reference section of *Chronologically Gifted* cites research and expert opinions that support my beliefs about living with guts, grit and gusto. If I can do it, so can you.

About Erica Miller

Dr. Erica Miller holds a 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, which she ran for 40 years. Currently, in addition to public speaking, she is CEO of Miller Properties, a family-owned real estate business in Austin, Texas. For more information, please call 805 496-8850 or visit www.dreicamiller.com



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