



Association of Mature American Citizens

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COVID-19: This Too Shall Pass

By Dr. Erica Miller

When it comes to COVID-19, people of a “certain age” are at increased risk for severe illness associated with the disease. Because of conditions associated with aging, the older generations—the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers (those born between 1928 and 1945)—can be physically weaker. But in truth, these generations are psychologically tougher and more resilient than their younger counterparts. They have lived through two world wars, the Great Depression, the 2008 recession, the Korean War and 45 presidents since 1928. Adults over 65 experience less stress with the COVID-19 pandemic than younger generations, according to the [Pew Research Center](#). In fact, only 15 percent of people over 65 reported experiencing high levels of stress, versus 33 percent for ages 18-29 in the study. What does that mean?



Life challenges will always exist

As a Holocaust survivor who spent four years in a Nazi concentration camp, there comes a certain mental toughness and a recognition that humans can withstand some extremely challenging conditions that were both inescapable and indescribable. And yet, living through those challenges can help people to embrace life more fully. Likewise, living through the COVID-19 pandemic can also be accomplished at any age with guts (courage), grit (perseverance) and gusto (a positive attitude and desire to be engaged).

As people age, they will face crises, which will require them to find ways to approach predicaments with resilience. Why? Because there will always be problems. Wars. Civil unrest. Illness. Depressions. As the 1970s *Saturday Night Live* character Roseanne Rosanneadanna used to say, “It’s always something—if it’s not one thing, it’s another.” There will always be a reason to let world events on one end and family experiences on the other get us down. Yet, it’s possible to live with optimism whatever the circumstances may be. And while there’s no reason to walk around oblivious to the challenges we are facing, there’s no purpose in being totally pessimistic either.

One of the easiest optimistic mindsets to carry at all times is that of gratefulness. Whether it's being glad that the weather is good, or simply being happy to wake up—it doesn't matter. Rather than spending a lot of time listening to the news that focuses on the negative, take a walk, enjoy a hobby or do something to help someone else. There are endless ways to increase optimism.

How to change “hopelessness” to “hopefulness”

The stress, isolation and sadness surrounding COVID can lead to feelings of hopelessness, especially for older generations. But the candles on the birthday cake don't know how old we are. While additional candles each year represent a progression of age, they can also serve as a reminder to make small changes that can keep the birthdays coming. Here are some tips that can help.

1. *Live life with guts, and don't be afraid to try new things.* There is no need to be fearful. It takes practice to learn a new skill. Coach John Wooden said, “If you're not making mistakes, you're not doing anything.” So take a class in something you've always wanted to learn. Create a list of new things to try or skills to learn and tackle them one by one. It may not be wonderful in the beginning, but it's better than letting COVID win.
2. *Maintain the grit that is inherent to the Boomer generations by staying healthy and exercising brain and brawn.* Walking, dancing, puzzles, games, sewing, painting and volunteering all help keep the brain cells, psyche and body strong.
3. *Finally, embrace the concept of gusto.* Those who live with gusto embrace life with enthusiastic and vigorous enjoyment and appreciation. Gusto is an attitude of enthusiasm, delight, glee, zest and positive attitude. While doing anything with gusto during COVID seems almost offensive, this attitude takes people from a mindset of victim to one of Instead of trying to problem-solve the pandemic, embrace life with gusto so the pandemic fades into the background. Do what you love. Seize the moment. Be open to new experiences. Enjoy the here and now with appreciation for life, including all its twists and turns.

Physical and mental health are essential

The media and experts are continually reminding us that older generations are better off “laying low” and playing it safe during the pandemic. That is true to an extent, especially for those in higher risk categories. But it is still possible to live an active life while observing the recommendations for COVID prevention. Physical activity—either outdoors or indoors with some exercise equipment or imaginative use of household items as weights—will keep you flexible both physically and mentally.

Humans are a social species that do not do well in isolation. Fortunately, physical distancing doesn't have to mean isolation or loneliness. Thanks to technology, seniors can connect with family and friends virtually. They can take classes online, participate in live streaming religious services and join online hobby or interest groups. Meaningful interactions with others, especially during challenging times, will help you survive and thrive.

Life is a gift

Life is a precious journey. Those who seize it with guts, grit, and gusto savor every moment and all they have to offer. This leads to a profound state of gratitude—sincere thankfulness for the journeys that have brought them to the unique places they are now, in spite of and because of the bumps along the way. Living with guts, grit, and gusto is a choice that everyone—pandemic or not—can make each and every day. When we do this, we savor the pleasures of today while optimistically preparing for many more years to come. As we can always say, “This too shall pass.” And we will be right.

About the Author:

Dr. Erica Miller is a multifaceted, dynamic speaker and international best-selling author with a long history of “telling it like it is.” A Holocaust survivor, entrepreneur, mental health professional, and world traveler, she captivates audiences with her colorful stories and authentic conversations of guts, grit, and gusto. Her three books—[Chronologically Gifted: Aging with Gusto](#), [Don't Tell Me I Can't Do It: Living Audaciously in the Here and Now](#), and [The Dr. Erica Miller Story: From Trauma to Triumph](#)—are available on Amazon. For more information, please visit www.dreericamiller.com.

