**Aging Gracefully - Stories & Illustrations**

**It has been scientifically proven that there is nothing in the body that causes it to age. There are no time-released elements, or alarm clocks set to go off at specific times causing deterioration. The reason people age in appearance and attitude is because they believe they’re supposed to.  They’ve programmed themselves subconsciously to look and act a certain way at respective points in their lives. They believe and accept age and therefore get old. (*Jean Walters)*  
Dear Abby: “I am a 36-year-old college dropout whose lifelong ambition was to be a physician. I have a good job selling pharmaceutical supplies, but my heart is in medicine. I do volunteer work at the hospital, and people tell me I’d be a wonderful doctor. It will take me seven years to get my degree, go to medical school and do my internship.  In seven years I will be 43 years old. What do you think?” -- Unfulfilled in Philly. Dear Unfulfilled: “And how old will you be in seven years if you don’t go to medical school.” *(Rocky Mountain News)*  
The average age of people worldwide is 23. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When Charles Eliot, the former president of Harvard University, was 90 years old, he made his way down the road from his retirement cottage in Maine to the cottage of his neighbors, the Peabodys. Mrs. Peabody greeted him enthusiastically and ushered him into the living room.  After some small talk, Eliot asked if he could hold Mrs. Peabody’s new baby. She was a bit surprised, but she lifted her infant son from his crib and tenderly placed him in the arms of the old man. Eliot cradled the baby in his arms for a few moments and then returned him to his mother. With a gesture of thanks he explained, “I have been looking at the end of life for so long that I wanted to look for a few moments at its beginning.” *(Bits & Pieces)*   
  
Among people in their 30s, men tell pollsters old age begins in the late 60s, women say in the 70s. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
  
Grandpa: “Do you know the best part about getting old?” Another man: “No, I don’t believe I do. What is it?” Grandpa: “I have no idea. I was hoping you could tell me. *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)*  
Your body parts don’t age at the same rate as one another, says a doctor.  Your teeth may be 30 when your hair is 55 or your lungs 40 when your legs are 60. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
A new broom sweeps clean, but it takes an old one to get in the corners. *(Reminisce magazine)*  
What do Bedouins do with their old camels? Turn them loose, to find their own range. Their noses are pretty good at that. *(L. M. Boyd)*Eighty-one percent of all cancers are diagnosed after age 54. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
A carousel makes me feel four years old again, and I am convinced that the only way to be creative and constructive in our adult years--especially the later ones--is to get back in touch with the child we once were. It doesn’t have to be a carousel for everyone. It might be fishing or a picnic or a game of miniature golf or going to the circus or anything else that takes us back in time and grants us a special, child-like freedom in which we accept all our thoughts and memories, sad and happy--and most of all, frees us from our grownup selves. *(Eda LeShan, in It’s Better to Be Over the Hill Than Under It)*  
The wrinkles and creaky joints that come with aging may one day be optional. Scientists at the National Cancer Institute have found that aging may be halted or even reversed at the cellular level. When people grow old, the study shows, the walls of the nuclei in their cells lose their perky, round shape and become wrinkled and weak. The weak membranes allow damaging agents to get inside the nucleus to the cell’s DNA, where, studies have shown, resulting mutations lead to physical aging. Now, researchers Tom Misteli and Paola Scaffidi have shown that by blocking a specific protein called Lamin A, they can reverse nuclear wrinkling. When they blocked the protein in the cells of elderly people in the lab, the cells plumped back up to their youthful state. “You can take these old cells and make them young again,” Misteli tells Nature. The next step, researchers say, is a drug that blocks Lamin A in animals, so that the effects on an entire body of cells can be evaluated. *(The Week magazine, May 19, 2006)*  
Once you pass age 65, your chances are 1-in-2 of reaching age 75. Once you pass age 75, your chances are 1-in-4 of reaching age 85. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
Grandma: “I guess we have to accept the fact that our bodies are changing, John. We have to be more careful now.” Grandpa: “I hate the words “middle aged”. I don’t feel middle-aged. I’m exactly the same person I was when I was 30!.” Grandma: “No you’re not! You’re more mature, more confident, more experienced--you’re better. We’re both better!” Grandpa: “We are the only products that tend to improve while the packaging deteriorates.” *(Lynn Johnson, in For Better Or For Worse comic strip)*The social worker’s job was to interview new residents moving into the nursing home. When a particularly bright-eyed 16-year-old man sat down at her desk, she asked, “Did you have a happy childhood?” “So far so good,” he replied. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**Cheeta, the clever chimp who starred with Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O-Sullivan in a dozen Tarzan movies, has celebrated his 74th birthday. That puts him in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s oldest chimpanzee. Cheeta debuted in Tarzan and His Mate in 1934, he’s been retired since 1967, when he appeared alongside Rex Harrison in Doctor Doolittle. Now diabetic but still with all his teeth, Cheeta lives in Palm Springs, California, with other former showbiz simians; he spends his days painting and drinking the occasional Diet Coke. On his birthday, his caretakers gave him a sugar-free cake, and a delegation of film buffs presented him with the International Comedy Film Festival of Pensacola Prize -- his first aware. *(The Week magazine, April 21, 2006)*  
Winston Churchill, who lived long years despite alleged smoking and drinking indiscretions, exceeded life expectancy, but not life span. *(Betty Kamen, in Let’s Live magazine)*  
Good week for the sedentary lifestyle, as marine biologist, dredging the seabed off the coast of Iceland, discovered a 405-year-old clam happily living in the muck. The veteran mollusk, which has been siphoning water since the time of Shakespeare, is the oldest living animal ever found. *(The Week magazine, November 9, 2007)*  
The district attorney was cross-examining a young woman in court. “What’s your age?” he asked her. She hesitated, stared at him, looked appealingly towards the bench, began to fidget and move uneasily in the chair. “Don’t hesitate, my dear girl,” the judge said gently. “Remember, the longer you hesitate, the older you are.” *(Irish Digest)*  
   
On Thomas Jefferson’s appearance in old age: “His dress was simple. He wore what he liked best, sometimes blending fashions of different periods. He wore long waistcoats, when the mode was for short; white cambric stocks fastened behind with a buckle, when cravats were universal. He adapted the pantaloon very late in life, because he found it comfortable, and cut off his queue for the same reason. He did nothing to be in fashion, he considered such independence the privilege of his age.” *(Sarah N. Randolph, in The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson)*  
  
A six-year-old earthworm is about as old as it’s going to get. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
  
When asked if there is anything she isn’t enthusiastic about, Ruth answered decisively, “Yes, being on panels about aging.” *(Ruth Gordon, actress)***

**Currently, the fastest growing age group is 80 to 85. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
  
As I was leaving church one Sunday, an elderly couple slowly moved down the narrow walk that led to the parking area. I tried to make my way around them, but they stopped to admire some flowers. When I tried to slip past, the woman bent over to smell a red rose, blocking my passage. Then the man smelled the rose. I waited patiently, along with others. As the man straightened up, he turned to me. “It took us almost a lifetime to learn to do that,” he said, and then moved on. *(John Matus)*  
  
The latest book by Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld, Live Now, Age Later: Proven Ways To Slow Down the Clock, spells out step by step specific ways to hold back the aging process, symptom by symptom. Of course there’s nothing like good genes. But if you are not blessed like Winston Churchill--who smoked, drank, overate, and was overstressed, yet lived into his 90s--reading and heeding Dr. Rosenfeld may be the key. *(Parade)*  
Nola Ochs, a student at Fort Hays State University, took a break from her studies this week to celebrate her birthday. She turned 95. Ochs began attending the school in 1930, but set aside her studies for marriage and kids. She returned this year when she realized she was just 15 hours shy of earning her degree. If she gets if, she’ll go in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s oldest college graduate. But Ochs says she’s excited about graduating for another reason. She’ll get to walk into the graduation ceremony alongside classmate Alexandra Ochs, her granddaughter. *(The Week magazine, December 1, 2006)***

**Moira: “I haven’t seen you this happy in ages, Elly. You must be in love!” Elly: “When Michael handed me the baby, my heart just melted. There in my arms was this precious little girl. My son’s first child. If I had to find one word that would describe the way it feels to be a grandmother, I’d say it was. . .” Student: “Old?” *(Lynn Johnson, in For Better Or For Worse comic strip)*  
  
“What are you so happy about?” a woman asked the 98-year-old man. “I broke the mirror,” he replied. “But that means seven years of bad luck.” “I know,” he said, beaming. “Isn’t it wonderful?” *(Bob Monkhouse, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Interviews with the elderly and the terminally ill do not report that people have regret for the things they have done but rather people talk about the things they regret not having done: I’d dare to make more mistakes next time. I’d relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip.  I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would take more trips. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual troubles but I’d have fewer imaginary ones. You see, I’m one of those people who live sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day.  Oh, I’ve had my moments and if I had it to do over again, I’d have more of them.  In fact, I’d try to have nothing else. Just moments. One after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I’ve been one of those people who never go anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had it to do again. I would travel lighter next time. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies. *(Nadine Stair - age 85)***

**After overhearing a conversation while aboard a Chicago bus, Laura DaMata of the Windy City couldn’t resist sharing it. An elderly woman was seated next to a young woman, Laura explains, and the two chatted until the older woman reached her stop. Before getting off, she offered the young woman this advice: “Never sit around doing nothing or feeling sorry for yourself. Work! Work! Work! You’ll be healthier and happier and live a lot longer. I’m 83 and have a steady job that I like very much.” “Oh?” the younger woman replied. “What do you do?” “I take care of an old lady.” *(Reminisce Extra magazine)*  
When people are young, they forget they’re going to be old. Middle-aged people become aware of the reality of aging. Youth is gone, old age lies ahead. People forget that everyone ages by the same amount each day. Life’s like a journey. Each day brings new realities, maybe joy, maybe sorrow. Aging brings conflict, within self and with other people. Lord, help us to recognize the living process going on within us. We have to be ready to discover new things, to laugh a little each day. No matter what age we are, we have to keep on learning tolerance, love and understanding. We mustn’t close our minds. If the young, the middle-aged and the old realize and understand they are growing old together, their lives will be full. *(Father Bill Modystack, in Contemplation)*You know you are no longer a kid when: Driving a car doesn’t always sound like fun. You laugh at your parents’ jokes. You don’t buy a new sports car because of the insurance premiums. You actually buy scarves, gloves and sunscreen. You leave ballgames early to beat the crowd.  You remember when “Saturday Night Live” was funny. The only thing in your cereal box is cereal. You look into the surveillance-camera monitor at a convenience store and wonder who the overweight guy with the bald spot is, then realize that it’s a shot of you from behind. *(Lyndell Leatherman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Paul was in his mid-60s and had just retired. He was planning to landscape his yard and was trying to find some small shrubs or trees. Burleigh, a 90-year-old from across the street, offered Paul some white-ash saplings that were about two feet tall. Paul asked, “How long will it take ‘em to be full grown?” “Oh, twenty years or so,” replied Burleigh. “No good for me then,” said Paul. “I won’t be around that long.” The 90-year-old shook his head and replied, “We’ll miss ya!” *(Clydene Savage, in Reader’s Digest)*  
  
Retirement doesn’t have to be a red light. It can be a green light. Othmar Ammann would agree. After he “retired” at age 60, he designed, among other things, the Connecticut and New Jersey Turnpikes, the Pittsburgh Civic Arena, Dulles Airport, the Throgs Neck Bridge, and the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. *(United Technologies Corporation, advertising message)***

**Only one person in two billion will live to be 116 or older. *(Kids’Pages)***

**You know you’re approaching maturity: When you have left the remote in the fridge twice in one week. When someone asks your home page address and you can’t say it right without looking in your wallet. When the nicest thing you’ve heard all day was at the doctor’s office: “Why, yes, your deductible is met.” When you keep telling people that recycling in your day was biking back to the store to get what you were sent for in the first place. When your grandkids keep taking your arm at the stoplight. *(Ralph Shaffer, in The Saturday Evening Post)*A 90-year-old man was walking down the street when a friend noticed how happy he looked. “What happened to you?” the friend asked. “I just broke a mirror,” the nonagenarian quickly replied. “But that means seven years of bad luck,” the friend continued. “I know, I know!” came the joyful reply. “Isn’t it wonderful?” *(Herm Albright)***

**Ours seems to be the only nation on earth that asks its teenagers what to do about world affairs and tells its golden-agers to go out and play.  
*(Julian Gerow)*  
We had just moved to a lovely, quiet area, but my husband and I were a little concerned to discover that the neighbors all seemed to be elderly. We wondered how they would react to our baby and our large, boisterous sheepdog.  My fears were heightened one afternoon when I answered the doorbell to find a frail-looking woman leaning on her cane. Assuming she had come to complain about the infant’s crying, I began to stammer an apology. But she lifted one hand to halt my outburst and said, “I just wanted to know if your dog could come out and play.” *(Nancy Swerdlow)***

**Nuns have an average life expectancy of seventy-seven years, the longest of any group in the United States. *(Noel Botham, in The World’s Greatest Book of Useless Information, p. 122))***

**Among people over 80, women outnumber men two to one. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
Clarence Darrow, late in life, was persuaded to sit for his picture. When it was shown to him, he didn’t like it.  Never one for pretense or sham in any form, he told the photographer, “I don’t want it. You have taken out all the lines in my face that it took me fifty years to place there!” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Pedestrians over age 60 are four times more likely than young people to make illegal risky crossings, reports a British researcher. *(L. M. Boyd)*Several neighbors had gathered for dinner, and the conversation turned to pets. Our hostess commented that she had the dumbest dog ever. “Any dog that digs up the same rosebush 20 times has to be pretty dumb,” she said. Everyone seemed to agree, until the 75-year-old grandmother of the neighborhood remarked, “I’m not too surprised at the dog, but I am a little concerned about the person who planted the rosebush that many times.” *(Ruth Maddox, in Reader’s Digest)*The elderly were once a rarity on the ski slopes, but so many senior citizens are now zooming down the mountains that top ski resorts are eliminating senior discounts because they are no longer needed as an incentive. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 20, 2006)*  
When tattoos first started appearing on every American between the ages of 15 and 29, you thought tattoos were vulgar. Then you began to think they were kind of cool. Now you’re thinking, “Am I too old to get one?” You’ve also started thinking the same thing about belly-button piercings. Which proves you’re not getting old, you’re already senile.   
*(Mary Schmich, Chicago Tribune columnist)***

**A number of years ago while I was working here at the Unity Chapel an inner voice came to me and said, “Sig, your tour of duty is over. You can enjoy the rest of your life.” I spoke that word that morning and somebody at the service said, “Does that mean that you’re going to leave the Chapel?” I said, “I don’t know. I think it’s much more important than whether or not I leave the Chapel.  It is saying to enjoy life.” *(J. Sig Paulson)*  
To those who ask how I can write so many things that sound as if I were as happy as a boy, please say that there is in the neighboring town a pear tree, planted by Governor Endicott 200 years ago, and it still bears fruit not to be distinguished from that of a young tree in flavor. I suppose the tree makes new wood every year, so that some parts of it are always young. Perhaps this is the way with some men when they grow old.  I hope it is so with me. *(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)*  
George Burns punctuates this story with a flick of his cigar. “A woman said to me, ‘Is it true that you still go out with young girls?’ I said yes, it’s true. She said, ‘Is it true that you still smoke 15 to 20 cigars a day?’ I said yes, it’s true. She said, ‘Is it true that you still take a few drinks every day?’ I said yes, it’s true. She said, ‘What does your doctor say?’ I said, ‘He’s dead.’”   
  
A man was celebrating his 100th birthday, and a local television reported visited the nursing home to interview him. “Are you able to get out and walk much?” the reporter asked. “Well, I certainly walk better today than I could a hundred years ago,” he answered with a grin. *(Edna McCann, in The Heritage Book)*  
Edward Weston walked from New York to California, which is 3,895 miles, in 104 days because somebody said he couldn’t do it. Then, he turned around and walked back 3,600 miles in seventy-seven days. And he was more than seventy years old. *(Derric Johnson, in The Wonder of America, p. 137)*Seven years after he was sworn into office, George Washington announced his retirement from the presidency, September 19, 1796. “Every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is necessary to me as it will be welcome.” Washington died three years later, at 67, of a throat infection. *(Chai Woodham, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**26.6 million: Number of Americans older than 55 who will be working by the end of this decade, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That’s a 46 percent increase from 2000. The bureau says those older than 55, retires and baby boomers are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. labor force. *(Rocky Mountain News, April 8,, 2004)***

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