

Debunking the Aging Lie

Los Angeles, Calif. (February 18, 2016)—A widespread myth about aging needs a serious reality check—the one that says older people are slow, ignorant and not interested in life, says Dr. Noelle Nelson, author of the new book [*Happy Healthy...Dead: Why What You Think You Know About Aging Is Wrong and How To Get It Right*](#) (MindLab Publishing).

“The stereotype that as we age we suddenly become dim-witted, have no desire to learn new things and aren’t interest in the world is persistent in our culture, but it’s a lie,” explains Nelson. “All you have to do is pay attention to people in their 80s, 90s and beyond who are doing fabulous things to see a marvelous, ongoing yearning to live life to the fullest.”

Nelson cites examples. Phyllis Sues celebrated her 92nd birthday in 2015 by performing an amazing tango, which was uploaded to [YouTube](#) amid great acclaim. “Considering that Sues began taking tango (and trapeze) at 80, that’s quite something,” says Nelson. “She learned Italian and French in her 70s.”

In the area of love, [a couple](#), both in their 90s, met at an assisted living center and they clicked. They’ve been together for two years.

Television producer Norman Lear is still fulfilling his bucket list. Latest on the agenda? He lip-synched a song by Paul Hipp in a funny, touching [YouTube](#) salute to his 93rd birthday.

Nelson believes that in the land of happy, healthy longevity, positive emotions such as appreciation, gratitude and optimism rule. A study¹ observed the health of 255 medical students for 25 years. Those who were the most hostile had five times greater occurrence of coronary heart disease than those who were not hostile. Research published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found that older people who are happy have a 35 percent lower risk of dying over five years than unhappy people of the same age.²

“Attitude is everything,” says Nelson. “What everyone should know, regardless of age, is that if you have a negative attitude about aging, guess what? That attitude will be self-fulfilling. Recent research shows that people who thought of the elderly in negative terms were more likely to show signs of Alzheimer’s themselves (bit.ly/1TjO9sy).

“It’s certainly not inevitable that you’ll live your later years in misery. Far from it,” says Nelson. “Turn that attitude around and, as the studies show, you’ll not waste a minute of your time on Earth and have the opportunity to live a happy, healthy, fulfilling life.”

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1. C. Barefoot, W. G. Dahlstrom, and R. B. Williams, Jr., “Hostility, CHD Incidence, and Total Mortality: A 25-Year Follow-Up Study of 255 Physicians,” *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 45, 1 (1983), pp. 59– 63.

2. <http://www.pnas.org/content/108/45/18244.abstract>