

Why 80 is the new 70

Today's seniors stay young with attitude

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“There are different ways we look at someone’s age,” explains Delmanor LivingWell coach Karen Hatch. “There’s your chronological age: the number of years you’ve lived. But there’s also your functional age, referring to one’s ability and health; your psychological age, which speaks to the state of mind; and social age, referring to behaviour.”

The one we may have the most control over is our psychological age. “We see many people who are young in age but seem much older due to their mindset,” says Hatch. “But the reverse is also true. If someone feels old, it will affect their outlook on life and they will indeed be old. But if your mindset is such that you want to learn and explore, and if you choose to focus on your abilities rather than your actual age, you have greater opportunities to learn, enjoy new experiences and stay young of mind and heart. Someone much older who stays active, volunteers, sleeps well, continues to learn, stays socially engaged and stays relaxed and positive will stay young.”

Hatch believes that giving the mind an opportunity to relax without focusing on the past or worrying about the future is key, and for that she recommends breathing exercises. “Breathe in slowly for four counts and notice the expansion in your ribs. Then hold your breath for four counts and notice how full your lungs are. Then exhale slowly for four counts and notice how the shoulder and chest lowers and the muscles relax. This technique can really help you stay calm and manage stress.”

Namalee Makuloluwa, LivingWell Manager at Delmanor Glen Abbey, has some other strategies for staying young at heart as you age:

1. Do the things you love as long as you can.

“Many seniors continue to be physically active, taking part in the things that interest them, being part of their community and travelling,” says Makuloluwa.

2. Try new things.

“Use this time in your life to do the things you may have always wanted to do but never had the time or opportunity. Take a course, start a new business, teach others, write a book, learn a language. The opportunities are endless.”

3. Keep up socially.

“Continue to get out and meet new people, see friends and family, participate in things that interest you.”

4. Challenge yourself.

Just because you're a senior doesn't mean you can't take on new challenges. “Now is a good time to try something new and challenging, like rock climbing, stand-up comedy or going for a balloon or helicopter ride,” says Makuloluwa.

5. Volunteer.

“Work with kids in a reading program in a school, do something at your local community centre or with other retirees. Help out at your local hospital or library. Give back by doing something you know, something you love or something you want to try.”