

TO YOUR HEALTH

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What is Successful Aging?

by Susan Cusson

What does it mean to "Age Well"? Like the very definition of success, successful aging means many different things to different people. Gerontologists have traditionally considered a person to have aged successfully upon having reached old age with their physical health, mental well-being and spirit still intact.

In the book *Successful Aging*, authors John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn outline the findings from the MacArthur Foundation Study of Aging in America. Drs. Rowe and Kahn describe three main factors that influence successful aging:

- (1) Being free of disability or disease
- (2) Having high cognitive and physical abilities
- (3) Interacting with others in meaningful ways

Dr. Alan D. Caster also references meaningful aging in his book *Better With Age: The Psychology of Successful Aging*. He depicts "meaningful aging" as another important way to consider how to age well. Meaningful aging focuses less on longevity and encourages people to find meaning and peace in their lives. The effects that these practices can have on how we age can lead to a form of successful aging.

Western culture tends to "medicalize" aging, looking for the hidden secrets of health in a pill or a bottle. Successful aging in this paradigm is viewed as good or bad based on medical or physiological condition. We can alter this state and have more control over behaviors like how we eat, exercise, think and interact with others. These lifestyle changes can have tremendous impacts on biological health.

Drs. Rowe and Kahn acknowledge that successful aging involves both intrinsic genetic factors and extrinsic lifestyle factors. The impact of extrinsic factors such as diet, exercise, personal habits and psychosocial aspects of aging are greatly underestimated if one's view of aging is guided simply by genetics. In reality, lifestyle is more predictive of longevity than heredity.

No matter what your age, taking proactive steps now can lead to later years filled with physical vigor, intellectual accomplishment and deep emotional satisfaction. Consider these healthy aging tips:

- 1) Try to eat at least five servings a day of vegetables and fruits, both have antioxidants and anti-inflammatory benefits that promote healthy aging.
- 2) Help keep blood pressure in the healthy range with regular exercise, a healthy diet, and relaxation techniques.
- 3) Weight-bearing exercises can help build bone mass. Every step you take counts!
- 4) Wear sunscreen daily and protect your eyes from the sun with sunglasses when outdoors.
- 5) Be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day and try to stay flexible by stretching most days of the weeks.
- 6) Stay positive! Being optimistic is associated with a variety of health benefits including better immune function and a reduced risk of chronic diseases.
- 7) Try to get at least seven hours of sleep at night. Restful, restorative sleep is vital to a healthy lifestyle.
- 8) Help keep your brain healthy by doing crossword puzzles or other mentally stimulating activities daily. Maybe learn a new language!

9) Manage stress through exercise, meditation or some other practice. Simply sit in a quiet space and focus on your breath while allowing your thoughts to pass by without judgement.

10) Socialize! Reach out to an old friend and reconnect, maybe watch a funny movie together. Laughter not only feels good but also lowers your blood pressure and promotes relaxation.

Age Well Study

Last year 78 Residents from Carleton-Willard Village participated in a study called *The Age Well Study*. This is a national study designed to evaluate the impact of living in a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). Last year was the second of a five year study but the first for CWV. Results from the first year (2018) found that compared to adults in the community-at-large, CCRC participants tend to have greater emotional, social, physical, intellectual, and vocational wellness.

The Age Well Study is a longitudinal study with three years remaining. Thank you to all who took the time to participate in this study, your efforts contribute to a better understanding of Aging Well. All Residents who participated last year will receive a follow-up survey in the mail in late January. Participants will also receive a report summarizing results from the previous year.

Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging, the conductors of this study, offers daily tips on aging well. For more information, visit their website <https://www.mather.com/agewell>

New Faces in the Clinic

Elizabeth Duffy, NP has joined our nurse practitioner staff and will be working in the Clinic on Saturdays twice a month as well as filling in for some of Susan Cusson's vacation time. Beth is an adult/geriatric nurse practitioner who has extensive background working with older adults. Beth graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Lowell and has been on the faculty of Salem State University. She is currently enrolled in a Post Masters Psychiatric and Mental Health Certificate Program at the University of New Hampshire. We are pleased to welcome Beth to Carleton-Willard Village.

Kaylie Cronin recently began working in the Clinic as the Clinic Assistant two Saturdays per month. Kaylie is currently studying to be a Physician Assistant. We are happy to welcome her to CWV also.

Health Education Lecture

James Feldman from Care Dimensions Hospice will present
"Taking the Mystery Out of Hospice"

This program features a discussion of the common myths and misconceptions of hospice care along with an overview of the benefits and how to access this help. Please join us in the auditorium for this most informative presentation.

Wednesday, January 8, 2020
10:30-11:30am
Auditorium Center

HAPPY NEW YEAR!