

## [Healthy Aging](#)

### 5 Bold Changes to Revamp Your Healthy Aging Lifestyle

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By [The Silver&Fit® Blog Team](#) on January 13, 2025



**Growing older does not mean you have to buy into stereotypes about aging. You have more influence over living a vibrant, healthy life than you may think.**

You may have heard certain predictions of what's ahead as you grow older: sore joints, less mobility, a lack of energy and motivation. None of it sounds good. Still, there are ways to take aging into your own hands.

The first step? Adopting a “healthy aging mindset”—one with a bold, can-do attitude to help you stay healthy and passionately engaged with life as you age.



Take 79-year-old Rosemary Smith, a lifelong professional rally driver who competed in the early days of racing. In 2017, around the time she was settling down for a nice retirement, she was offered the opportunity of a lifetime—to drive a Formula One race car! She described the experience in a [documentary](#) produced by Renault Sport, UK:

"I said, let's go!...You've got to go out there with this fire in your belly," Smith said. "You have to have passion. At my age, I should be sitting at home doing my knitting, but feeling the adrenaline and the air whistling by—it's just such an amazing feeling."

Indeed, she got behind the wheel and drove that Formula One race car like a champ. And she was the oldest person to ever do so.

There are many examples of others who've excelled at 80 and 90 years of age, such as the 85-year-old nun who has competed in the Ironman Triathlon for the past 15 years. Then there's the 82-year-old competitive bodybuilder, [Willie Murphy, who successfully fended off a home intruder half her age](#). Highly active and athletic older people are more common than you might realize.

These inspiring role models suggest that aging doesn't mean a decline in health or loss of memory is inevitable, or that you can't try something new. You still have some choice in how well you age and how you live your life. By boldly staking a claim on that future, you can confidently draw your lines of embarkation.



### **Make a bold new plan, starting with a positive mindset**

Many people have mixed feelings about aging. But that doesn't mean your later years can't be the happiest of your life. New research suggests that people in their 80s may be among the happiest alive. That happy mindset can lead you to make lifestyle choices that support better health as you age.

Here are 5 steps to help you put that positive mindset into play as you create your bold new plan for healthy



aging:

#### **1. Face your fears and transform them into new challenges**

Research suggests that some fears increase with age, like the fear of aging itself, or the fear of death and disaster to yourself or your family. Dwelling on any of these can bring on anxiety.

But this anxiety could also be an opportunity to help you identify and confront your fears. Then, no matter how big or small your fears are, you can turn them into new challenges to overcome.

Kateryna Mareha, originally from east-central Ukraine, overcame her fear of computers at the age of 67. Because of the war, her relatives fled Ukraine, and she had no way of communicating with them. When she learned she could study digital skills at the local library, she reached out for help. After several weeks, she could communicate with her family and now advises others on how to use technology.

Kateryna used her problem-solving skills and a can-do mindset to overcome her fear. You can, too. No matter what your fears are—fear of death or fear of the computer—here are some steps you can take to address them:

- **Expose yourself to your fears slowly.** Gradually begin exposing yourself to the things you fear. Identify their source and talk about them with trusted friends and family.
- **Give yourself time.** Be patient with yourself as you work to overcome your fears.
- **Challenge negative thoughts.** If you're trying to solve a problem, reach a health goal, or overcome a barrier (including a fear), tell yourself you have what it takes. Talking to yourself in a positive inner voice can build confidence.
- **Focus on growth.** Celebrate small achievements and focus on the little gains you make towards overcoming a fear or challenge. Allow yourself a sense of happiness and joy for each little step you take.



- **Practice mindfulness.** Learn about [mindfulness exercises and meditation](#) . This practice can help you accept your thoughts and feelings—including any fears you are trying to overcome.
- **Take breaks.** If you're feeling anxious, remember that a bit of anxiety is normal and doesn't have to control your life. But if you find that too much worry is affecting your joy and growth, speak with your doctor.



## 2. Let the tough times help you learn and grow

Adversity is part of life. Each time you go through a difficult experience, you build resilience. [Resilience is the inner strength](#) that helps you manage stress and recover from setbacks or hardships. Building resilience helps you to face future challenges.

One participant in a [research study](#) described how they navigate adversity:

“I have two choices. I can deal with what life has thrown at me or I can bury my head in the sand. I choose the first option. When crisis strikes, I get real quiet and I think. I think hard about what the situation is and how exactly I’m going to tackle it. I try hard to leave emotion out of it at first and take a good long look at what exactly is going on.”

How can *you* transform difficult times into opportunities for growth? Here are some strategies you might want to try:

- **Cultivate resilience.** Resilience can help you maintain a positive outlook, gain greater confidence in uncertain times, and plot a course even in the toughest of times. The more resilient you are, the better you can handle the stress, anxiety, and sadness that come with adversity and find ways to recover from setbacks.
- **Grow and evolve.** Getting through tough times can make you more determined, help you stay focused and flexible, boost your confidence, and bolster your belief that you can solve your problems. Tough times can also reveal insights about yourself and the world. And it can deepen your empathy. These are just a few of the ways hardship can help you grow.
- **Focus on what you *can* change.** Focus on what you can control versus what you can't. If you're diagnosed with high blood pressure, you can't completely predict whether that will lead to heart disease. But you can lower the risk for it by choosing the diet, exercise, and other lifestyle habits to get your blood pressure under better control.
- **Reach out to others.** Talking to friends and family when you're having a hard time can help you reduce stress, improve your mood, and make sense of all the changes. Instead of facing your problems alone, you can find support and build inner strength by leaning on others.



### 3. Be yourself!

Authenticity is about being true to yourself in every situation and acting in ways that truly reflect who you are.

Psychiatrist and humanitarian Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote, “We think sometimes we’re only drawn to the good, but we’re actually drawn to the authentic. We like people who are real more than those who hide their true selves under layers of artificial niceties.”

Here are 4 ways to be your [authentic self](#) :

- **Practice mindfulness.** Carve out 5 minutes of your day and sit somewhere quiet. Set a timer and put away your phone. Close your eyes and notice how you feel physically and emotionally. Focus on your breathing. Name your feelings and sensations without judging, indulging, or engaging with them. If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Mindfulness practices like this can help you tune into your deepest desires and values, steering you towards activities and pursuits that truly align with your authentic self.

- **Identify the inauthentic.** If you're feeling a bit inauthentic, take some time to think about the specific actions or behaviors that are making you feel this way. Perhaps you tried to please someone because you thought it was the right thing to do, rather than what you wanted to do. Think about which actions or behaviors would help you feel more genuine and truer to yourself. Once you pinpoint these, you can take steps toward being your more authentic self.
- **Act on your core beliefs and values.** Use self-awareness and self-reflection to identify your core values and beliefs. How can you act on these? Find something you're passionate about and step into a volunteer role. Or follow a passion you've left behind. Take up music or painting or something else that truly inspires you. Choosing what's important to you helps you identify your core values and beliefs.
- **Stop and think before making decisions.** It's easy sometimes to jump in with both feet before thinking. To live more authentically, get in the habit of thinking before

making important decisions. Make a pro/con list. You'll want to stay in sync with your core values and keep your well-being intact. So, take the time to reflect to make sure everything lines up before making big life decisions.



#### 4. Reject ageist stereotypes

Ageism is the act of stereotyping or discriminating against people based on their age. It can happen both at work and in your private life, affecting older adults and younger adults, alike.

Self-directed ageism happens when you internalize negative attitudes about aging or your own age group. This can lead to self-doubt and a negative self-view, making you feel like your best years are behind you or that you're becoming a burden on your family.

By [neutralizing self-directed ageism](#), you can reframe negative beliefs about growing older. This shift can boost your self-esteem and confidence in your ability to age well and achieve your health-related goals.

To handle ageism and stay true to yourself, here are some tips:

- **Strengthen intergenerational bonds.** Building bonds with people in every age group can help reduce ageism by letting people see beyond labels in face-to-face interactions. Try spending more time with your [children](#) and grandchildren, younger coworkers, or younger people in your community.



- **Challenge ageist messaging.** If you hear someone make a comment based on ageist stereotypes, don't let it go unchallenged. Remind friends and family that older adults lead active, fulfilling lives.
- **Defy stereotypes.** Resisting age-related stereotypes can positively impact mental health, reducing the risk of issues like anxiety. To support this, try to maintain independence in as many areas of your life as possible. You can also better resist age-related stereotypes by building your self-esteem and practicing self-compassion. Both of these can help you build a positive self-image and help you be kinder to yourself.
- **Shift your focus to the positive.** It's challenging to let go of negative self-images about aging when you're thinking about losses rather than opportunities. Aim to battle negative internal messages by focusing on the benefits of aging. Think about the positive aspects of getting older, such as gaining wisdom, having more life experiences, and enjoying a different pace of life. This will help you counteract negative self-images and shift your mindset from loss to opportunity.



## 5. Embrace a healthy aging lifestyle

Growing older is a natural part of life. Aiming for the right mindset is key to aging well. But how you experience aging is also impacted by the lifestyle choices you make.

Certain habits can help you stay vibrant and engaged as you age. Here are a few of them:

- **Stay active.** Being active can keep you strong and fit. It can help you manage your weight, maintain a healthy heart and lungs, and help keep you independent. It's also a great way to ease stress and meet new people.
- **Manage stress.** Chronic stress can negatively impact your mental and physical health. Regular exercise, deep breathing, practicing mindfulness, or engaging in a hobby are just a few stress-easing tools.
- **Cultivate a positive attitude.** You can build a more positive mindset by staying adaptable, having a sense of humor, and [remaining optimistic](#).
- **Nurture your social connections.** Having a circle of close friends and family you can count on is key to your health, happiness, and longevity.
- **Eat healthy foods.** Healthy eating can help you lower the risk of chronic illnesses or better manage them. Healthy, nutritious foods can also boost your energy and improve your mood.
- **Engage in lifelong learning.** It can keep your brain and mind engaged and active and increase your self-confidence, [joy](#), and satisfaction with life.

Taking a proactive approach to aging is key for leading a fulfilling and joyful life. By embracing the journey of aging with confidence and optimism, you can unlock new opportunities and experiences.

Remember, the later years of life hold immense potential for happiness and fulfillment. Celebrate the wisdom and growth that come with age and continue to live your life to its fullest.

**Not a Silver&Fit® member? Learn more about everything the program has to offer, including more helpful healthy living tips like this, [here on our website](#).**

*This information is not intended to take the place of regular medical care or advice. Rosemary Smith, Willie Murphy, Kateryna Mareha, and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross are not members of the Silver&Fit Program. Images used for this article do not depict Rosemary Smith, Willie Murphy, Kateryna Mareha, or Elisabeth Kübler-Ross nor any members of the Silver&Fit Program.*

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