

Determining Your Virtual Age

A primary indicator of advancing age seems to be that one becomes a regular reader of the obituaries in the daily newspaper. My grandfather used to say, “Any day you don’t read your name in the obituaries is a good one.”

Maybe so, but I was somewhat alarmed a few months ago when I noticed one day that all four people on the Press-Citizen’s Deaths page were younger than I, and all had died of natural causes (if prematurely). At age 55 I’m not at Death’s door yet, but I can see his house from here.

Now that I’m pretty sure my best years are behind me (ah,well), I’m spending more time trying to figure out ways to slow down the rate of my physical and mental decline. That’s why I was receptive when LuAnn came home one day last week and told me she had forwarded a website link to me (realage.com) that calculates one’s virtual age by using a comprehensive survey about your heredity, health, diet, habits and overall fitness.

The site is the handiwork of Dr. Roizen and Dr. Oz, who I wouldn’t be so clueless about (says LuAnn) if I watched more Oprah on TV. She said, “They even ask you things like whether or not you’re in a permanent happy relationship,” to which I replied, “How did you answer that one?” The look she gave me indicated she was seriously considering revising her response.

You don’t need a survey to know that if you are a chain-smoking, junk-food-eating, risky-driving, overweight couch potato with high stress and bad genes, you may die before you finish reading this sentence. You may want to eliminate some bad habits, or at least learn to read faster.

If you decide to take the test, you’d better set aside at least 30 minutes – it’s the most comprehensive health survey I’ve ever filled out. You’ll need to know your average blood pressure, cholesterol count, and how many milligrams of which substances are in the multi-vitamin you may or may not be taking.

For some reason, “none of your business” is not a response option to prying questions about your alcohol drinking habits, sex life or how fast you normally drive. It’s important to answer honestly even though you suspect you might be penalized for it.

The site also gives you tips on how to improve upon the responses that are counting against you, and many of those shortcomings will be easy to remedy. They tell me I need to eat more veggies and less red meat, take an Omega 3 supplement and work on my cholesterol count. Duh.

Since I have good genes, a decent diet, good habits (mostly), low stress and I exercise regularly, I expect the happy outcome – my chronological age is 55.4 and my virtual (“RealAge”) is 43.8. I’m feeling better already, although I’d like some of my hair back.

I’m sure I could score even younger if I quit riding motorcycles, but hey – nobody lives forever.