

**BJMHR**British Journal of Medical and Health Research
Journal home page: www.bjmhr.com

How to Age Gracefully Without Burdening Friends and Relations; A Personal Account.

Otto Appenzeller*MD. Sydney; PhD. London.*

INTRODUCTION

Here I recount my experiences on how to age gracefully without becoming a burden to relatives or friends.

Historically, to age without burdening relations and friends is the aim of all people who retain their sound mind. At 96, I have had some years' practice. Reaching an advanced age, however, without major disability or illness is very much a matter of luck. But the choices one makes can improve the odds. Here are lessons I have learned from my long experience and from that of friends and relatives who also had the good fortune of aging well.

Maintain aerobic capacity and muscle tone.

I was a distance runner for much of my life, and I continued to run into my late 80s. Since then, I have taken to other forms of aerobic exercise, mainly rowing on a Concept 2 machine. It takes discipline and time, but staying fit can provide a sense of purpose at a time of life when work is no longer central.

Pay attention to balance.

Balance declines with age and falls can be serious, so balance training, is important. Make sure your living environment is free of hazards that may trip you and ensure good lighting in all areas of the house. I wear comfortable shoes. Fear of falling is ever present-take precautions to avoid this. Downsizing your living space is unavoidable and should be commensurate with your age and needs.

Keep training your muscles.

You can't expect to retain the strength you had at 30 or 40. But by working your muscles regularly, with appropriate weights, you can maintain the strength needed for daily life.

Take care of your mind.

Reading, writing and learning new skills keep the mind exercised and nimble. You may find yourself developing obsessive-compulsive behaviors and engaging in repetitive behaviors such as checking and rechecking. They may be hard to resist, but it is good to be aware of

these impulses. In old age one becomes a creature of habit; any deviation from the usual time of breakfast or lunch disturbs the usual rhythms; this is to be avoided at all costs. Think about obstacles you might face and plan how to overcome them. Use a calendar to schedule tasks and appointments. Seek advice and ask questions if you're unsure about something. Importantly, stay flexible and prepared to adjust plans as needed. **Watch your diet.**

Keep your salt intake to a minimum to keep blood pressure down. Eating a balanced diet such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains also helps to retain vitality you will burn fewer calories as you get older, and it's wise to limit fats, sweets, and alcohol. Make sure that what you do consume has the nutrients you need to stay healthy.

Medical matters

You will spend plenty of time at medical checkups and treatments for your joints, heart, and kidneys. But one organ is easy to neglect: your skin. Pay regular visits to the dermatologist. After all your skin has been in use for a long time and can accumulate damage from the sun and the years that is easy to overlook. Also prioritize sleep over other activities.



Figure 1: My wife Judy



Figure 2: Cabin in the Jemez Mountains

Nurture your relationships.

Aging is a lonely affair; luckily Judy, my wife and companion of many years (see photo Figure 1), supports me, and my three boys help with advice and visits, and a strong social network improve mental and physical well-being and longevity.

For many years, my wife and I cherished our weekend retreat, a cabin in the Jemez Mountains (see Figure 2. photo). We spent many hours there in summer and winter, enjoying each other's company and the extra time we had after retiring. Over time maintaining the cabin became too taxing, and in the end, it was destroyed in a forest fire.

But aging gracefully is about maintaining your physical, mental, and emotional well-being while accepting the changes that come with growing older.

Financial independence can make everything easier.

But beware of scammers who try to take advantage of older people. They besiege you online and by phone, often posing as representatives of banks or of the government who inform you your computer or accounts have been hacked. They then tell you that they can help-providing you give them account numbers and passwords. Beware of anyone who asks for account information. No legitimate caller will ask for more than the last four digits of an account or social security number, and they will never ask for a password.

A calm and optimistic frame of mind can help you age gracefully. Build confidence in your physical capacity and take sensible precautions, and the inevitable fears can become more manageable.

Aging gracefully is about nurturing your body, mind, and spirit. Seek joy in everyday moments, stay engaged with life, and embrace the wisdom that comes with each passing year. Live with purpose, laugh often, and cherish the connections you have. Aging isn't a decline it's an opportunity for growth and understanding. Have courage to face the future it isn't as bleak as it sometimes appears.

CONCLUSION

Do what you can; do not exceed your present physical capacities and remain optimistic.

BJMHR is

- **Peer reviewed**
- **Monthly**
- **Rapid publication**
- **Submit your next manuscript at**

editor@bjmhr.com

