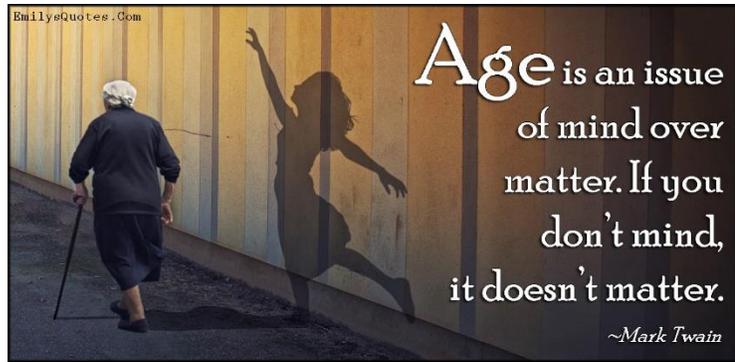


Do We Think Ourselves Old?

By Kate Kunkel

I think that most people these days would agree with the premise that “We are what we eat”. We know that eating junk food causes us to gain weight, develop type-2 diabetes, and have problems moving. We know that eating foods grown with pesticides and herbicides can create a whole host of health issues including cancer.



If you've read “Don't Let the Memories Fade”, or you follow my blog, you know that I also stress how exercise (or more precisely lack thereof), sleep issues and massive amounts of stress can contribute to cognitive decline and dementia.

But what many people are not aware of, and what is beginning to become more evident, is that our attitude toward aging has a huge impact on our health, including that of our brains. Several studies have tested this theory, both with subliminal word cues and in active situations.

In the 1990s, a researcher divided a group of 60 year-old-plus participants into two groups. One group was exposed subliminally to negative age stereotypes, the other to positive age stereotypes. Those subjected to the negative stereotypes showed a decline in performance on memory tests compared with the results taken before the exposure.

However, those exposed to positive age stereotypes showed an improvement in many cognition tests.

In an observational study, part of the Baltimore Longitudinal Study on Aging, actual physical changes in the brain were observed. People who had more negative views of aging at the outset of the study had a significantly greater buildup of the plaques and tangles that indicate Alzheimer's, compared with those who had more positive attitudes at the outset. (Measurements were made post-mortem.) Those with negative views also had more shrinkage in the memory center of the brain.

Many other studies have confirmed the connection between positive attitudes and longevity and memory, even after correcting for other health issues. Whether this has to do with the attitude itself or the fact that people with a positive attitude tend to be more proactive and look after themselves better, it doesn't really matter.

Bottom line is that a positive attitude toward aging protects body and mind.

If you think negatively about aging, you are going to have a less positive aging experience, and that includes retaining your memories and health and your ability to drive and travel and enjoy your “golden” years.

So what can you do to improve your attitude toward aging?

Start with the words you use to describe yourself. Don't call yourself “old”, and don't joke that you have “Oldtimers” disease. Instead, think “I'm seventy years young”, or “Life is just beginning” instead of “I'm over the hill.”

And don't think that just because a family member had a bad aging experience that you are doomed. I often hear people say, “Well, my mother had Alzheimer's, so I'm probably in line,” or “I have the cancer gene,” and then they wonder why they got cancer or started having cognitive issues.

Better to say, “Well, Mom had dementia, but I have more information and I attend to all the things that I know will protect me from that.”

You've Got This!



When faced with a challenge like operating a new cellphone, don't limit yourself to just figuring out how to answer the phone and use the camera. Grab a young person or go to the retailer and have them show you a new feature that you've never used before—maybe like an App that tracks your sleep. Then use it!

If you think you can learn it, you can. If you think you can't.... you won't.

I'm continually finding myself faced with new software programs and platforms to promote my blog, the book and especially the platform that houses this program *Tune Up Your Brain*. Some of them are very challenging, but I go online and watch videos or I take courses, basically do whatever I have to do – to be able to use them. I admit that I was nervous about figuring out how to get the book up on Amazon – but guess what? I did it. And I was even more nervous about using the coaching platform, but somehow, things are posted and everything seems to be working. Amazing!

I truly believe that meeting these challenges is among the reasons I feel more capable now than when I was younger. It almost feels sometimes like I'm physically stretching parts of my brain, and I joke that it's having growing pains. But I don't for one second let the thought enter my mind that I can't do something because I'm 62.

I **CAN** do it because I'm 62.

And I'm certainly not alone. There are countless stories of older men and women starting new careers or taking up new lifestyles later in life. Look at the examples of the 56 year old women who became a champion bodybuilder, or the 80 year old who graduated college!

When you combine a positive attitude toward aging with good nutrition, exercise including fun activities like dancing, and mindfulness, everything is going to be better. We do not have to lose our memories, and we do not have to get old just because we are getting older.

To Your Health!

