

Have a Healthy Senior Life with These Tips

The Sixty Year Old Personality Benjamin Franklin once said that all would live long, but none would be old. What should we actually expect of ourselves after sixty years? Must we eventually become senile and mentally old, or can we have a long life and still remain alert and bright with opinions others respect? The answer is simple. Age itself creates very few mental problems; it simply makes us more transparent and reveals the way we have actually been all of our lives. Thus, cranky and forgetful older people have usually been cranky and forgetful younger people, and bright young people usually develop into bright older people. Most of our world leaders, nearly all over sixty, are only carrying on the bright and alert way of life customary for them all of their years. Only about 10 percent of the mental difficulties in later years can be blamed on age alone, and these troubles arise usually from arteriosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. This affects a reduced amount of blood circulating in the brain, with resulting easier fatigue, and loss of fine coordination. This of course, makes much more difficult the physical activity necessary in efforts like playing a violin, maintaining heavy concentration, or making public speeches. However, we do not consider these difficulties to be diseases, but merely a decrease in the ability of our skills and talents. Actual mental diseases in later life are much the same in each person as they were in more youthful years. We are inclined to overlook the mental quirks of younger, physically able people who can work hard each day, but we are not so tolerant with older people after their physical abilities are gone and they become dependent on others. Many older people are therefore urged to seek medical help for mental diseases they have probably had since their youth. Because mental diseases are so poorly tolerated by surrounding family and friends, a startling fact has arisen, nearly half of the hospital beds in the United States are occupied by the mentally ill.

Psychosis: Unrecognized Mental Difficulties A person with a psychosis has a mental difficulty of which he is not aware. People with delusions of grandeur, who may think they are someone else, or who have hallucinations, do not realize that their difficulties are unreal. And while it may be an elderly person who thinks he has many millions of dollars, or that he is Napoleon, these ideas were probably present at a much younger age, for age alone is rarely responsible for this development. The treatment for psychoses, which can occur at any age, is long and difficult; it must be handled by a psychiatrist of great experience.

Neuroses: Recognized Mental Problems A person with a neurosis has a mental difficulty of which he is aware. He knows that his worries, extreme anxiety and other mental sufferings are not normal, and this person frequently takes it upon himself to seek proper medical care. All of us have known worriers, or people who fear innumerable things, or friends who have displayed odd behavior from childhood age on up through adulthood. One does not have to be fifty, sixty or seventy years of age to be neurotic. In fact, it would seem true that most people with neuroses are either in middle age or younger. Treatment of neurosis again demands the services of an experienced psychiatrist, who ably and skillfully points out the source of difficulty to the person, and usually helps him to obtain relief of his difficulty.

About the Author

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