

Conscious spirituality in search of truth...

WHY CREATIVE PEOPLE AGE BETTER!



Creativity is an essential component of human development regardless of age. For older people in particular creative experiences can result in not remaining isolated, meeting new friends, contributing to community, adapting to changes, and finding hidden talents never before realised. Scientists, clinical practitioners, professional health services are now recognising the significant benefits to older persons provided by 'the Arts.' Scientists have identified that creative pursuits may also contribute to the development of new neural pathways in our brains as we age.

Vast opportunities exist today for most older people to pursue. These new experiences range from volunteering, making furniture, hobby-crafts, to learning a new language, restoring an old bike or car, joining a yoga class, participating in a singing or drama group. Locally joining your environmental land care style group. Creatively all of the above provide social interconnectedness, reduces isolation or loneliness, and provide a purpose for getting up in the morning. In 2003, my wife and I joined a local singing-drama group. Later, I formed two separate senior drama-performance groups consisting of persons often without theatrical experience. To highlight creative aging an article appearing in the Huffington Post titled "Why Creative People Age Better" written by Timi Gustafson describes why creativity is important to older people, an extract follows.

—Philip Crouch, Tasmania, 2020

TIMI GUSTAFSON: HUFFINGTON POST "WHY CREATIVE PEOPLE AGE BETTER"

'Do creative and artistically inclined people have advantages over the rest of us mere mortals who can barely draw a stick figure or whistle a simple tune? There are indications that individuals who are able to use their talents also tend to fare better in other ways, including their physical and mental health, compared to others whose existence mainly consists of repetitiveness and routine. Still, scientists have never been able to prove that creativity is indeed a contributing factor to humans' well-being.

Picasso was undoubtedly one of the most creative persons one can think of, and he maintained a zest for life and work well into his 90's. But so was Mozart, who tragically died at 35 years of age.



Hemingway, perhaps the greatest writer of his generation, couldn't pen a single word for long periods of time -- mostly because of drunkenness. Some famous artists have looked upon their gift as a curse rather than a blessing. So, should we assume any connection between creativity and well-being at all?

One study ¹ [ABSTRACT Openness to Experience and Mortality in Men: Analysis of Trait and Facets Nicholas A. Turiano, MS, Avron Spiro, III, PhD, Daniel K. Mroczek, PhD] that looked into the health status and life expectancy of creative people found that creativity may indeed be associated with delayed decline in cognitive and physical health at an advanced age.

While it remains unclear whether engaging in creative activities or the use of creative energies actually contribute to the slowing of the natural aging process, **it is conceivable, according to the researchers, that creative people find better ways of coping with their diminishing capabilities than their less resourceful counterparts.**

On the other hand, there are highly creative persons who only function superbly in a specific area of interest and are not better-equipped for problem-solving beyond their expertise, for example when it comes to their health needs. Prior research, including a landmark study from Seattle on the [ABSTRACT]² "Relationship Between Personality and Cognition," K. Warner Schaie, Sherry L. Willis, and Grace I.L. Caskie] has shown that attitude and outlook on life were important components for maintaining the mental health of seniors in their '70's and '80's.

Experimentation, openness to new ideas and flexibility in dealing with changes are the essence of creativity, and they are also crucial ingredients for healthy cognitive aging, the researchers say.

Thankfully, you don't have to be a genius or maestro yourself to stay healthy and vital. Even just loving to read, attending art performances, and keeping stimulating social ties can yield enormous benefits throughout life, according to a study on creativity and aging, which was sponsored by the *National Endowment for the Arts*.

Seniors between the ages of 63 and 103 who participated in a variety of weekly art programs were found to be in better health, had fewer doctor visits, and **used less medication** in comparison to a control group that attended no such activities. They also showed better results in mental health tests, and were overall more involved in their communities.



Creativity can find fertile ground anywhere. But it takes a personal decision and commitment to openness to change as well as acceptance of risk, including risk of failure. Conservatism, hunkering down in the hope that things will remain the same, is not helpful and hampers any creative process.

That doesn't mean everything from the past has to be overthrown and redone from scratch. But it can require rethinking some old traits that may no longer serve us well. Or, what has been overlooked for some time may regain relevance when seen in a different light. **The beauty of aging is that there is room for new perspectives based on hindsight and greater appreciation for the preciousness of time.** ‘

-
- 1 [ABSTRACT Openness to Experience and Mortality in Men: Analysis of Trait and Facets Nicholas A. Turiano, MS, Avron Spiro, III, PhD, Daniel K. Mroczek, PhD]
 - 2 ABSTRACT "The Seattle Longitudinal Study: Relationship Between Personality and Cognition, K. Warner Schaie, Sherry L. Willis, and Grace I.L. Caskie



Suggested resources:

Why creative people age better, Huffington Post article, Timi Gustafson, R.D. Registered Dietician, Health Counsellor.

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/timi-gustafson/creative-people-aging_b_5622062.html

Abstract 1:

Openness to Experience and Mortality in Men: Analysis of Trait and Facets Nicholas A. Turiano, MS, Avron Spiro, III, PhD, Daniel K. Mroczek, PhD]

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0898264311431303>

Abstract 2:

"The Seattle Longitudinal Study: Relationship Between Personality and Cognition, K. Warner Schaie, Sherry L. Willis, and Grace I.L. Caskie

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1474018/>

Five big benefits of creative expression for seniors

<https://www.agedcareonline.com.au/2019/05/5-Big-Benefits-of-Creative-Expression-for-Seniors>

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/new-theories-and-research-findings-on-the-positive-influence-of-music-and-art-on-health-with-aging>

<https://www.agedcareguide.com.au/talking-aged-care/creative-ideas-to-fight-social-isolation-among-older-people>

<https://www.woodlakebooks.com/art/inventory/All-Products/Spirituality-in-the-Arts/Creative-Aging>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/open-mind-longer-life/#>

www.philipcrouch.org

