

Feeling empowered in later life could make you feel younger

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(PhysOrg.com) -- People may feel younger if they feel empowered to make changes that will impact their lives, according to a new study conducted at Penn State. The study looked at "subjective age" -- how old a person feels in comparison to their chronological age, which plays an important role in health and well-being.

“Recent research has shown that subjective age is related to mortality and [longevity](#) -- individuals who feel younger than their chronological age are more likely to live longer and die later than those who feel as old or older than their chronological age,” said Frank Infurna, doctoral candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.

In conducting the study, Infurna and his colleagues sought to better understand what factors can lead to people feeling older than their chronological age. Other research has examined this phenomenon in middle age and older adults, but Infurna’s research is one of the first to look at adults age 80 and older.

The researchers looked at data from the OCTO study, a sample of people age 84 and older living in Jonkoping, Sweden. After statistical analysis of 267 participants, Infurna found that mastery beliefs -- “beliefs that your actions can influence outcomes in your life,” he explained -- were strongly associated with feeling a younger subjective age.

Infurna's research also showed that, despite their chronological age, most participants (64 percent) reported not feeling old. This has been shown in other studies, too, in countries such as Finland, Germany and the United States. Infurna believes this is an indication that, throughout their lives, people have the capacity to feel younger, and old age is no exception.

Mastery beliefs may allow individuals to adjust to and downgrade the impact of possible age-related losses in cognitive, physical, or social domains -- wrote the authors in their findings -- which appear in [Psychology](#) and Aging.

By researching different factors that can lead to undesirable outcomes such as early death, researchers are improving the chances that people can continue to develop healthily in old age.

Infurna noted that the effect of feeling younger may differ across nations, and future work in different geographic regions is needed.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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