

# What is Successful Aging at Westminster Woods?

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For residents and staff at WW, Masterpiece Living provides a pathway, a way of thinking that questions aging stereotypes of decline – and offers instead, opportunities to live well, improve life satisfaction, and to age successfully – body, mind and spirit.

It starts with our thinking, our beliefs, our life experiences that are examined in a MPL culture as we ask ourselves as staff and as residents - what does successful aging mean to me now, 10 years from now, or even near the end of my life? What contributes to my life satisfaction as I age?

Read on as residents and staff share their thoughts....

Aging is not an option. We've been doing it since the day we arrived. We opened our baby blues, our soul looked around and the countdown began. How successfully we complete our journey is mainly up to us. There is genetics, of course, and nurturing parenting; but for the most part we age successfully or not depending upon the decisions we make along the way. It's called "consequences." So, if I were advising that soul that was me when I awoke for the first time, I would say:

Start early; don't waste a day. Open your heart and your mind to the world around you and marvel at its magnificence. Listen for that still small voice that whispers advice and when it does, take it. Take care of your body. It's the only one you will ever get. Feed it well. Exercise it every day. Take it outside and give it fresh air to breathe. Wear a hat. Be curious. Ask why. Have adventures. Find joy. Laugh. Don't be satisfied with what you see on the surface, look deeper. Wonder. Embrace those around you. Know that you have the privilege of encountering other souls. Believe in their goodness. Listen for the wisdom they have to offer. Recognize their flaws, as you recognize your own, as the price of being human. Be kind. So, get started kid. Go out there and wow them with the best you can be. It will be enough. Barbara, 73

*"Old age is always 15 years older than I am."*

To me, successful aging is being happy, having people around you to enjoy your life with and doing things you want to do in life. Crystal, 30

Spending time together, living in the moment, enjoying family (especially grandchildren) and friends, and having the freedom to go where the day takes us is our definition of successful aging. Regular exercise to tone body and mind as well as time to relax and reflect are essential in maintaining a healthy balance and allowing us to do those things we enjoy as we age. Mike, 61 Darla, 59

## *What is Successful Aging?*

**M**aintaining habits in your life that allow you to grow old and keep your physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being.  
Bonnie, 69

**S**uccessful aging to us means living independently and maintaining good physical health while living in a community that has good health care available. Also, it means we continue to be intellectually challenged so that our mental abilities are retained or enhanced, and we are socially engaged with family, friends and neighbors. It means we are able to pursue our life interests such as reading, sports, hobbies, travel, or activities outdoors.  
Ron, 79    Nancy, 81

**I** recently heard someone say “your thoughts become your life” and it gave me something to ponder. Applying this to the topic of successful aging brings to mind several attitudes which can benefit us at any age or stage of life.

The first attitude I think of is an acceptance or openness to change which is ongoing throughout life. Many people think of change negatively and although it can be challenging at times, life would be pretty boring without it.

Second, maintain a desire to keep learning. Trying a new activity, developing a new skill, or interest impacts the quality of life. So, for example, if we can embrace the suggestion to make exercise an intentional part of our lives if it hasn't been, the results can definitely impact our life positively. The same applies to meeting new people, taking a class, playing a new game, or traveling to a new place.

The third attitude that is important to me is one of giving. Stay involved as best you are able in helping others. This can involve a regular time of volunteer activity, providing a listening ear to someone in need, or just extending a compliment to brighten someone's day. Continue to use the knowledge you have gained in life and the talents you have developed.

The last thing I think of is having an attitude of gratitude. It may be great or small, but there is always something to be thankful for in any situation. Try to focus on that.  
Sharon, 68

**I** don't like getting old. You need patience no matter what; there will be changes and you need to be accepting. It took me awhile on many things but I accepted change physically and mentally. Marion, 88

**S**uccessful aging to me is living life the way I want to, having services available when I need them – someone to take care of things. It also means spending time with grandkids, enjoying time being myself and living life the way I want on my terms.  
Brian, 56

*“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do, than by the ones you did.”*

## *What is Successful Aging?*

Successful aging means knowing the sun will come up each morning and being thankful it does. It means understanding the wisdom you possess came from the mistakes you made, understanding the joy you feel in life evolved from the disappointments experienced in the past and knowing the strength you have was built on the trials you overcame. Successful aging means knowing the body may be weak, but the spirit is strong. As the seasons change, you can still smell a flower in spring, feel the warmth of a summer day, hear the crunch of an autumn leaf beneath your feet and taste the wet snowflake on your tongue. You have earned the right to be respected not just for what you did, but who you are. Others can still see the sparkle in your eye and the joy in your heart. Successful aging means being treated with dignity not simply because you are old, but because you have aged with grace. You do not live in the past, but let the past be joined to you like a faithful friend; you live in the present, but, know your life could end at anytime, unafraid and ready to go to your eternal home.

Margaret, 62

In the past 2/3 years, I have had to adapt myself and my life to make significant changes and realized some things have more priority over others, now, more than before. I am different from my younger years and I am sure there will be even more differences to come that I will have to adjust to - based on my 22 years of nursing observation, of other peoples positive and negative decisions with their lives.

Everyone is always seeking life satisfaction and happiness, everyone has seen advertisements that offer age defying products and remedies and is probably even guilty of trying some of these products - myself included. But the most important thing I've learned over my life is - don't ignore your health, value your health and social activity, be flexible and select your investments wisely. It's good to have good plans in place for later on in life.

Rose, 39

### *“It is better to wear out than rust out.”*

Successful aging can be defined as having a positive attitude and an understanding of our God given destiny of change in all phases of our lives. Each stage of life has its opportunities and privileges - we are all learning to be 70 - 80 - 90. It is all part of a plan that invites us to accept change, adapt and grow spiritually, socially, intellectually and physically. As we cultivate our inner life, we grow spiritually and recognize that we are more than just flesh and blood. This growing sense of our inner spirit emerges as we make our journey, dealing with the unexpected, facing life-changing choices and discovering the necessity of accepting responsibility. So it is that we come to recognize that each stage of life is right and meant to be. Our part is to try to understand, accept, adapt and grow!

Successful aging is also about doing something meaningful for others, about loving caring service and friendship that contributes to another's well-being.

The word “retire” should not mean to sit and become inactive. On the contrary, successful aging means developing and maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle in each of the areas identified by the four pillars of Masterpiece Living: keeping physically active, walking and exercising, socially active, working and playing with others, intellectually active, reading writing, and discussing, being spiritually active, sharing, caring and praying for others. The four Pillars help us focus and direct our attention to what is important. In summary, a well-lived life will result in our saying: “..... surely goodness and mercy will follow me all

## What is Successful Aging?

Successful aging to me means understanding that life can change in an instant and having the support services when you need them to navigate the challenges and roadblocks you meet as we age. Before moving to WW, I owned a farm with 10 horses, a dog and a cat. The decision to leave my farm and be a part of a retirement community was very complex. On top of that, as part of my decision to move, I scheduled hip replacement surgery prior to my move and arrived at WW on a stretcher to receive rehabilitation services at The Oaks. I was able to move into my villa following the rehab, to begin the settlement process and redefine WW as my home. To make a long story short, subsequent to my first surgery, I had three major medical incidents, some with surgeries, all requiring support systems to help me recover. In fact, at one point I was in a wheel chair for five months. As I reflect on what my life has been in the last two years, I would say that the success part is due to my choice on where to live; it took the whole WW team to get me through the last year nursing, transportation, physical therapy, maintenance, food services, and some very kind resident neighbors. They all worked together to get me healthy again and enjoy living again.

My take home message is – plan ahead. Make sure your resources are adequate to provide you a place that can provide the services you may need, even though you may not need them now. John, 70

I have *thought* more about aging with my role in Masterpiece Living. Before that, I just felt the effects of getting older. I thought it was inevitable that I would turn into my grandmother. Then came MPL. Balancing the four components of Social, Intellectual, Physical, and Spiritual seems like a no-brainer, but you have to live it, too. And I was not doing that. I looked at those 4 component areas very closely and decided I needed to work on my spirituality. – yes, my faith in a higher power, but also what feeds my soul – music, reading, riding my motorcycle; just making more time for myself. I am more at peace. Then I decided that I physically wanted to be better. So I am working out and hating every minute of it – but loving the effects both physically and mentally. I move better, I think better, and I do more because I have more energy. I am not going to be my grandmother; I am going to just live. I don't know what is next, but I took the aging out of Successful Aging – I prefer to think of it as Successful Living!! Linda, 58

Successful aging to me means staying healthy by having a healthy diet and exercising; staying positive and having a good attitude, participating in productive activities like volunteering and helping others, doing things for myself instead of others doing them for me and nurturing personal relationships which give me emotional and physical support. I am happy and satisfied with my life at this age, and I refuse to feel OLD! Diana, 83

Successful aging for me is to reach this age – disease free with nothing wrong! I also feel successful aging come from when you don't worry and fuss about things. I'm not a worrier; I take life as it comes. Pat, 91

So, what are YOUR thoughts about successful aging? Inevitable decline or opportunities to try new things, set goals, and have fun and satisfaction in the process *despite* your chronological age? Be a part of our Masterpiece Living culture at Westminster Woods and remain engaged in life. After all, it is YOUR life....