

TO YOUR HEALTH

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Rethinking Aging: From Decline to Dynamism

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Historically, aging has been defined by a decline in physical and cognitive well-being, accompanied by societal stereotypes of frailty and vulnerability. However, advances in medicine, healthcare, and living standards have shifted this perspective. Most significantly, demographic changes are altering our view of aging. The surge of baby boomers entering retirement is set to transform how we perceive this stage of life. According to the 2020 census data, there will be more older adults than young children in the U.S. by 2034. The National Institute of Health (NIH) define an older adult as anyone over the age of 65. Currently, older Americans make up 16.8% of the population, and this figure is projected to rise. The traditional notion of aging as a period of disease and disability is being replaced by a view of it as a time marked by vitality and potential. While certain aspects of aging are inevitable, with appropriate social and economic support, retirement can be a time of vibrancy and growth.



The experience of aging is diverse and varies greatly among individuals. Japan, with its' population growing older, offers valuable lessons. In some rural areas, such as Nagaro on Shikoku Island, villages are predominantly inhabited by elderly residents. The villagers have creatively

populated their community with scarecrow dolls who are engaged in various activities, inadvertently attracting local tourism. Okinawa, known for having the world's oldest population, attributes its longevity to strong social connections, a healthy diet, and the occasional drink. The tradition of Moai, which involves forming lifelong friendships, is believed to contribute to their longevity.

In the U.S., landmark decisions have reshaped the concept of aging. The Social Security Act of 1935 provided an income safety net for older Americans. Despite its initial exclusion of domestic and agricultural workers, who were predominantly Black, it laid the groundwork for future reforms. In President Roosevelt's words, it was "*a cornerstone in a structure which is being built but is by no means complete.*" The exemptions were amended in the 1950s. The introduction of Medicare in 1965, initially providing health care for those over 65, has evolved over time due to cost and demographic changes. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 aimed to combat age discrimination, and the 1986 amendment abolished mandatory retirement ages. However, a recent vote in North Dakota has introduced a new restriction, barring anyone over 81 from running for the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. This measure passed with 61% support and may be challenged in the Supreme Court.



Addressing ageism—a pervasive form of discrimination that devalues older individuals—is also crucial in this redefinition. Combating ageism requires a



cultural shift to recognize the wisdom, experience, and contributions of older adults. Federal organizations such as the National Institute on Aging, established in 1974, and AARP, incorporated in 1958, have revolutionized our

continued

approach to aging. The National Council on Aging has mobilized older adults through advocacy programs like *Boost Your Budget Week* and the *Fall Prevention Toolkit*, encouraging them to lead fuller lives. Third Act, founded in 2021, which has a home at CWV, is a group of older adults working for climate change, racial equity and democracy. These programs focus on capabilities rather than barriers to successful aging.



Redefining old age involves re-evaluating our expectations and support systems. This includes creating age-friendly environments that promote accessibility and inclusion, as well as providing opportunities for continued education and engagement.

<https://www.kxnet.com>
<https://naacp.org>
<https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu>
<https://www.reuters.com>
<https://www.census.gov>

National Falls Week takes place between September 23- 27

- 1 in 4 Americans over the age of 65 fall each year.
- According to the National Council of Aging (NCOA), falls are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury and account for over 95% of hip injuries.
- \$50 billion each year is spent on falls and Medicare and Medicaid pay about 78% of the bills.
- To better serve the CWV, the Clinic will be conducting a falls survey in September. This will be a brief, anonymous survey which will appear in your mailboxes later in the month. Please look out for the yellow flyer with the questionnaire and complete the survey.

Groups

Groupwork is a powerful tool to help resolve problems together. They are frequently supportive in nature and help establish connections with other individuals. The Clinic offers several groups every month.

- The ***Mighty Nineties*** is the best attended group that the Clinic oversees. We now run three groups to accommodate the needs of the community. It has gained a great deal of momentum over the last two years.
- Look out for our ***Open Enrolment Workshops*** in October and November. This group will help you navigate Medicare and Supplemental Insurances.
- This fall, in collaboration with Llewysac Activities, the Clinic will be offering a new group. ***Fiction & Films*** will bring together books that have been adapted for the movies. We will read extracts from books and watch excerpts of the film. The group will highlight elements of world cinema. Join us for a discussion of both art forms and how they influence narrative and technique. The first meeting will be on Thursday, September 26th @ 3:00pm in the Lower Llewysac Lounge.

Looking forward to seeing you at a CWV Group.

