

New Year's Resolutions for the Rest of Your Life

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By Eileen Beal

New Year's Day will be upon us soon. For many of us, that's the day we craft our New Year's resolutions.

This year--whether you are 40, 60, or 80--make resolutions that will lay out a roadmap for successful aging.

Don't know what kind of resolutions that takes?

Not to worry. To get you started I've asked a gaggle of MythBusters--people in their 70s, 80s, and 90s who've been disputing, defying, and debunking the myths of aging since well before they became "seniors"--to share things they'd put on a New Year's resolution list aimed at aging successfully.

Keep working say 87-year-old Fred Embrescia, WRMR goodwill ambassador and 78-year-old former Congressman Louis Stokes "Working gets you out of the house. It keeps you meeting people. It keeps your brain active. And you learn new things," said Embrescia. "Utilizing your talents demonstrates your appreciation for having them," says Stokes. "And the more you do, the more energized you become."

Be good to your body says 89-year-old blues guitar great Robert Lockwood, Jr. and 84-year-old Joe Pyles, an adjunct instructor at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences "That [being good to your body] doesn't just mean eating right and getting proper rest and not overdoing things or worrying 'bout nothin,'" said Lockwood, "it also means listening to those who know what they are talking about."

"Maintaining good health," said Pyles, "is important for happiness."

"Without that [happiness]," he added, "you won't feel good about yourself. You won't be able to accept things and you won't age as successfully as you could."

Stay active says eighty-something "First Lady of Fitness" and Ohio Women's Hall of Famer Paige Palmer.

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"No matter what your condition, you must keep active. Going places--to museums, to the opera--and doing things--getting into a fitness class at your local church or school, walking at the local mall, helping an organization that needs volunteers--will keep you mentally and physically sharp," said Palmer.

Keep an open mind, says 80-year-old TV3 personality Del Donahoo "Keep yourself open to changes," said Donahoo, "yet hold on to the conviction you were taught as a child and that you've lived by all these years." Find a cause that's important to you says 79-year-old Eleanor Warner, former director of the Cuyahoga County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program "You have to have something that takes you out of yourself to age successfully," said Warner.

"But," she stressed, "you're not just looking for something that keeps you busy. You want something that's important to you personally (that help others) and that keeps you involved in the world, too."

To thine own self be true say 78-year-old Ed Hrubey, former president of the Huff-n-Puffers, a seniors-only sports league, and 83-year-old senior activist and Ohio Senior Hall of Famer Belle Likover

"Learn from what you have experienced, always tell the truth, and go from day to day doing the best you can at whatever it is you are doing," said Hrubey. "Accept who you are and be comfortable with who you are. And always be open to new ideas and new challenges. The worse thing you can do when you get older is to get stuck in a rut," said Likover.

Know your limits says 77-year-old former postman and Huff-n-Puffer umpire Gene Gizzi "Don't over-commit," said Gizzi, "and know your physical, emotional, financial, and mental limits, or you will try to do too much, which is a recipe for needless failure and disappointment."

Have a positive attitude says 91-year-old former Chester Gray, former president of the Cleveland City Club.

"Attitude is a personal thing because every step out of the womb you are aging and certain patterns of behavior and experiences from way back have an impact on how you age and how you experience aging," explained Gray.

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"But," he added, "if you have a positive attitude and positive feelings about yourself, that leads to positive feelings about things that are outside of self." Live each day as if it were your last, says 73-year-old radio talk show host, Bill "Smoochie" Gordon "Don't make long term plans, [and] come up with new ways of thinking--think smarter, think more pragmatically, set goals that are realistic about how you can make your life better," said Gordon.

"If you live each moment successfully," he added, "by the time you 'age,' you have aged successfully."

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