- Attitude (Psychology)

SMILES BETTER

IS A POSITIVE MINDSET THE SECRET TO HAVING BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES LATER ON IN LIFE

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A RECENT study revealed individuals who have a positive attitude towards ageing tend to recover better after experiencing a fall. Researchers from Imperial College London and Coventry University analysed data from 694 adults aged between 60 and 90 and reviewed information related to falls, as well as survey responses that reflected participants' attitudes and beliefs about ageing. The findings showed that those with the most optimistic views on ageing were 162% less likely to exhibit slow walking speeds, 200% less likely to rely on others for everyday activities, and 123% less likely to become inactive after a fall compared to those with more negative perceptions of ageing.



So could a positive mindset around ageing influence other health outcomes?

PHYSICAL FUNCTION

...Reduced stress supports healthier ageing across all the major systems in the body Dr Enayat "People with a positive outlook are more likely to stay active, which is one of the most impactful steps individuals can take to ensure a healthier future and a chance to maintain independence," says Dr Lis Boulton, health and care policy manager at Age UK. "Exercise improves strength, mobility, and mental health, and it reduces the risk of conditions like heart disease, frailty and some cancers."

BOOSTED IMMUNITY

"For some, a positive mindset can help to build a stronger immune system," notes Dr Boulton. "Positive thinking has been linked to greater resistance to illness, including the common cold." Dr Mohammed Enayat, GP and founder of London-based longevity clinic HUM2N, agrees and explains: "Psychological outlook influences hormonal and immune function, partly through reduced chronic stress. This can result in faster wound healing and improved recovery from illness or surgery."

REDUCES STRESS

“People who accept and embrace the ageing process are less likely to feel internalised pressure from ageist messages and are better equipped to adapt to change,” explains Dr Enayat.

“Lower stress levels are associated with decreased cortisol, improved heart rate variability, better sleep, and reduced risk of chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. “Over time, reduced stress supports healthier ageing across all the major systems in the body.”

COGNITIVE FUNCTION

A positive mindset may also aid better cognitive function. “Research shows that those with a positive outlook on ageing showed slower cognitive decline and better memory performance,” says Dr Boulton.

MENTAL HEALTH

“A positive attitude towards ageing is linked with greater social engagement, stronger community involvement, and better selfesteem,” notes Dr Enayat. “These factors help reduce the risk of loneliness and depression. People who embrace ageing are more likely to seek and maintain meaningful relationships, which are critical to mental health and longevity.”

GREATER LIFE EXPECTANCY

“Research has found that positive thinking can help with longer lifespan,” says Dr Boulton. “A large study of around 14,000 adults aged 50+ found that those with the most positive attitudes toward ageing had a 43% lower risk of dying from any cause over four years.”

CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES

“Having a positive mindset begins with awareness,” highlights Dr Enayat. “Challenge stereotypes about ageing and replace them with examples of active, engaged older adults. “Surround yourself with age-diverse communities and positive role models.”

FIND HOBBIES YOU ENJOY

“Engaging in meaningful work or hobbies, volunteering, and lifelong learning can also reinforce a sense of purpose that supports healthy ageing,” says Dr Enayat.