

Research finds aging is satisfying

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University of Queensland research is turning conventional wisdom on its head when it comes to grumpy old men and women.

Professor Bill von Hippel, from UQ's School of Psychology, has been examining the links between people's age and their social satisfaction and he has turned up some surprising results.

In collaboration with Julie Henry and Diana Matovic from the University of New South Wales, Professor von Hippel measured social activities and social satisfaction in older adults between the ages of 66 and 91, and younger adults between the ages of 18 and 30.

He said they found younger adults engaged in a lot more social activities, but were no happier with their social lives than older adults.

"Despite older people engaging in fewer social activities with others and spending more time alone each day, they are just as socially satisfied as their younger counterparts," Professor von Hippel said.

The reason for this social resilience seems to lie in how older and younger adults perceive their social activities.

"Our research suggests that if a young person and an old person have the same experience, the older adult is likely to find it more uplifting," he said.

"Older adults appear to see the good things in life more easily and are

less likely to be upset by the little things that go wrong.

"As a consequence, their daily experiences bring them just as much satisfaction as younger adults, even if they have lost friends or a spouse, or if they can no longer get out as much as they would like.

"This may be the wisdom of ageing, the ability to experience everyday life as uplifting."

The research was published in the June issue of the American Psychological Association journal *Psychology and Aging*.

Source: Research Australia

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