

Tenacious and flexible goal pursuit gets older people on the move

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Tenacious goal pursuit and flexible goal adjustment have been shown to help maintain psychological well-being despite age related challenges and losses. A recent study demonstrates that tenacity and flexibility are

beneficial for out-of-home mobility as well.

Older people who persistently strive for their goals, but at the same time are able to adjust their goals to better correspond to current circumstances, move across a larger life-space than do their less tenacious and flexible peers. Furthermore, tenacious and flexible older persons better perceive their possibilities to participate in [outdoor activities](#). This was observed in a study conducted at the University of Jyväskylä.

"Almost all of us have some [personal goals](#), which guide our behavior and [everyday life](#)," says doctoral student Sini Siltanen. "Older people have goals as well, even though they are not discussed that often."

The study results highlighted the role of tenacity: Those who persistently strived for their own goals had larger life-space, even in spite of poor flexibility.

"Our results indicate that persistency and the ability to adjust can function as personal resources for maintaining out-of-home mobility and participation in later life," Siltanen says. "Moreover, it seems that while flexibility is especially important for maintaining autonomy, tenacity may be what gets [older people](#) out the door."

The results remained consistent even when differences in [older persons'](#) physical and cognitive abilities were taken into account. The challenges related to an individual's own living environment and housing did not affect the results either.

"Getting out of the house and going outside increases their opportunities for physical activity, independence, and participation in valued activities," Siltanen points out. "That means maintaining one's life-space and autonomy in outdoor mobility in old age is essential for retaining

quality of life."

In total, 186 persons between the ages of 79 and 93 living in the Jyväskylä area in Central Finland participated in the study.

More information: Sini Siltanen et al. Association of tenacious goal pursuit and flexible goal adjustment with out-of-home mobility among community-dwelling older people, *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s40520-018-1074-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40520-018-1074-y)

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