

For older adults, sense of control tied to feeling younger

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A recent study finds that older adults feel younger when they feel that they have more control over their daily lives, regardless of stress or health concerns. However, stress and health—not a sense of

control—play a significant role in how old younger adults feel.

"We recently found that there are things older adults can do to improve their feelings of control in their everyday lives," says Shevaun Neupert, a professor of psychology at North Carolina State University and co-author of a paper on the work. "Now this study highlights how those feelings of control influence perceptions of age. The more control older adults think they have, the younger they feel."

For this study, researchers had 116 older adults (ages 60-90) and 107 [younger adults](#) (ages 18-36) fill out a daily survey for eight consecutive days. Study participants were asked questions aimed at assessing their daily stresses, physical health, [sense of control](#) over their daily lives, and how old they felt.

"Everyone's sense of control fluctuates from day to day, or even over the course of a day—that's normal," Neupert says. "We found that when older adults felt more in control, they also felt younger. That was true even when accounting for stress and physical health."

However, an individual's sense of control had no bearing on self-perceptions of age for young adults. But stress and adverse changes in health did make young people feel older.

"This highlights the importance of having [older adults](#) retain some sense of autonomy," Neupert says. "It's not just a nice thing to do, it actually affects their well-being."

The paper, "Feeling Young and in Control: Daily Control Beliefs are associated with Younger Subjective Ages," is published in the *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*.

Provided by North Carolina State University

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