

## INSURANCE

# How to Age with Optimism

NewsUSA

(NU) - Having a “glass half full” approach to life has long been considered important for overall wellness. But evidence suggests that there may be truth in this folk wisdom.

Humana recently surveyed 2,000 people aged 60 and over, and found that 87 percent of seniors who identify themselves as “most optimistic” reported their health as good to excellent. This is compared to 44 percent for those who said they’re “least optimistic.”

Also, the most optimistic people reported nine fewer physically unhealthy and seven fewer mentally unhealthy days per month than their least optimistic counterparts.

Seniors who rated themselves as most optimistic also reported positively on other attributes linked to health, including sleep, confidence and overall happiness.

- 91 percent of the most optimistic respondents reported feeling confident in the past week, while only 52 percent of the least optimistic respondents did, a difference of 39 percentage points.

- 90 percent of the most optimistic respondents reported feeling happy in the past week, compared to 44 percent of the least optimistic respondents, a difference of 46 percentage points.

- And only 31 percent of the most optimistic respondents reported getting a restless night’s sleep in the past week, while 62 percent of the least optimistic respondents did, another difference of 31 percentage points.

Despite these impressive numbers, having an optimistic mindset is often easier said than done. The stresses of life, social stereotypes and one’s natural temperament can all impede approaching aging with optimism. Dr. Yolangel Hernandez Suarez, Humana vice president and chief medical officer for care delivery, has the following advice for anyone struggling to stay on the sunny side of life:

1. Take ownership and recognize that your health is your own. To achieve your best health, you need to set personal goals - just for you.



2. Engage with your doctor or other health care professional and build a trusting relationship.

3. Find a higher purpose that makes you excited to get up in the morning. Humana’s survey found that the majority of respondents (86 percent) who identify as optimists also rank a sense of purpose as an important attribute for aging.

4. Remain socially engaged, not isolated, and nurture close relationships. The importance of social engagement is recognized by the 71 percent of Humana survey respondents who identify as optimists and get together with friends or relatives either monthly or weekly. Further, 80 percent of optimists say maintaining an active social life is an important motivator to stay healthy.

5. Stay active and remember that physical activity is important. Find something that’s right for you and that you like to do. Almost all of the most optimistic survey respondents (97 percent) say remaining physically active is a major motivator for retaining good health.

6. Practice gratitude and make it a habit to look for and appreciate everything you’re thankful for in life.

“As a boomer myself, I know that the majority of the decisions about my own health take place outside of a doctor’s office,” said Dr. Hernandez Suarez. “With the knowledge that optimism may be linked to health and well-being, I’m focused on making positive health decisions through all aspects of my life. Our goal at Humana is to empower everyone to approach health in the same way.”