

## New Connections Among And Between Brain Cells

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### EDITORIAL NOTE

Growing older is a limiting of possibilities. At age 20, that's a depressing prospect. By age 60 or so, it's a relief. By 70 and beyond, it may be one of the reasons older people are happier. Yes that's right emotional wellbeing actually improves with age, according to studies from many different countries and cultures. Starting sometime after 60, people tend to be happier, worry less, and have less stress. Wide scale studies confirm it. Furthermore research on creative accomplishments indicates that in some disciplines, such as the arts, history and fiction writing many people produce their best work in their 50s or even decades later. Philosophy leadership and politics are other areas in which the older person flourishes. Depending on the age, the people who are less happy will grow older. In one survey found that most older people are lonely and isolated and in another survey major depression is more prevalent among the elderly than among younger persons.

Depending on very real and weighty concerns associated with aging such as planning for retirement, health issues and the death of companions and loved ones it seems that many people in the united states actually get happier with age and this is regardless or whether they are employed or retired have young children at home or live alone or with a partner. The fact is that growing older is for many of us, growing happier. Several studies show that happiness increases through the late 60s and into the 70s and perhaps beyond. The observation of preserved wellbeing about aging that it is often met with disbelief in both the general population and

the research community. And some older people themselves share pessimistic views about the typical older person. Another wide ranging study found that in older years, the emotional flames that threatened us with self destruction have become comforting in most cases. Passions run deep but not as hot and certainly not as out of control. As people age, they are less troubled by stress and anger, researchers noted in the study.

Many feel less happy with aging, including some people facing challenges with health or mobility issues, financial problems or feelings of loneliness or loss. But quite a few of us are not just getting older, in terms of well being we are getting better.

Our brain is a work in process. From conception to death, it keeps on growing, changing and adapting as it creates and dissolves networks and memories. We used to think we were born with all the brain cells we would ever have and when they were gone, that was it. That's because your brain cells unlike other cells in our body cannot reproduce themselves. But scientists now know that new neurons continue to arise in some parts of the brain, right up to the time of death. This is neurogenesis.

But research making new connections among and between brain cells all the time. Functions thought to be hardwired are turning out to be adaptable. Brain is changing response to the very act of reading the words you read, and the ideas the words provoke.

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