



Opinion

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Aging Gracefully

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To Cite This Article: Dongfeng Wu* and Feng Shi, Aging Gracefully. Am J Biomed Sci & Res. 2024 22(2) AJBSR.MS.ID.002948, DOI: [10.34297/AJBSR.2024.21.002948](https://doi.org/10.34297/AJBSR.2024.21.002948)

Received: 📅: April 27, 2024; Published: 📅 April 29, 2024

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If you pay attention to recent biotech developments, aging is always a popular topic. There are many research and articles in this area. Some people may choose to freeze their dead bodies at extremely low temperatures (usually -196°C or -320.8°F), and wait for future technology to treat their diseases and revive them, this is called Cryonics [1]. There are many arguments on whether this is practical and possible [1]. Other research on aging focuses on gene editing or gene therapy [2]. Although it is an exciting experiment, no technology can guarantee that we will live longer or happier so far. We will approach this problem from a different perspective, and maybe this will help us age gracefully.

The actuarial life table is published online by the United States Social Security Administration (SSA) [3]. The table was built based on the mortality experience of the U.S. population including all 50 states, the DC area, and islands surrounding the US, etc. and it is updated every six months. It provides the probability of dying within one year given one's age, from age 0 (birth) to age 119, with the life expectancy at any given age in this age interval. For those who could make it to 119 years old, the expected life is 0.53 years, which means age 120 is the limit. This statistic corresponds to the age limit that God set for humans in the book of Genesis [4]. "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'" (Genesis 6:3). So, God has set the limit for our lives after the Noah's Flood, which was about five thousand years ago. However, we barely see anyone who reaches this limit nowadays, although we eagerly seek all kinds of medicine and biotechnology to prolong our lives. What is the problem? Why can't we even live up to our age limit of 120?

In the book of Genesis, people can live up to 900 years easily [4]. For example, Adam, the first man God created and our ancestor,

lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5). But after Noah's Flood, God set the limit to 120 years. From the environmental point of view, we are living in a similar environment after the Flood: similar weather, similar UV from the sun, etc. So, we will focus on people in the Old Testament who lived longer than 120 years after the Flood. Think about that for a moment: In those times the Israelites didn't have modern medicine, they didn't have regular health check-ups, and since they were nomads, they didn't even have a decent house, but lived in tents and traveling here and there. Yet, they lived much longer than most of us. One figure that amazed us most was Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who would give birth at 90 years old (Genesis 21:2). It was a miracle from God of course. Right before that, when Sarah was 89 years old, she was so beautiful that a pagan king, Abimelech, wanted her to be his wife! He probably didn't realize that Sarah was his mother's or maybe his grandma's age. In today's world, it is hard for us to imagine an 80-year-old woman is as attractive as Sarah, though there is plastic surgery and many other treatments for looking younger. All movie stars looked pale compared to Sarah in their old age. According to the Bible, Sarah lived 127 years (Genesis 23:1). Abraham, Sarah's husband, lived 175 years and died at a good old age (Genesis 25:7-8). So, let's examine their family's lifestyle, and hopefully, we can learn something to live longer and age gracefully.

First of all, let's look at what they eat. People in the Old Testament eat bread, wine, olive oil, legumes, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, fish, and meat. They eat 100% organic food, no pesticides, and no gene modification food. They were nomads and made a living as shepherds. So, they probably eat lots of beef, and lamb meat, and drink 100% organic milk. They also eat honey, as God says milk and honey are good [4]. On the other hand, they don't have any modern medicine or drugs. We should know that all medicine



has side effects and an old Chinese saying is that all medicine contains one-third poison. Luckily for the Old Testament people, there were few drugs. One of the recorded medicines is a poultice of figs to treat boil on King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7), which is a traditional herb medicine. There is one prominent difference environmentally, and that is plastics. There were no plastics in those days, but plastics are everywhere today, nano plastic particles are found in our bottled water and food [5]. And it is an important factor to shorten our lives.

Now let's check their daily schedule or work-life balance. Since there was no electricity and no light after darkness, they could not do many things or continue working after dark. And the only choice was to sleep. So, most likely, they slept at the sunset and rose at the dawn. That is about nine to ten hours of sleep in winter and seven to eight hours in summer. And they don't have to commute to work like us. Sarah probably suffers less from insomnia, although there were some family tensions once in a while. Sarah cooked meals (Genesis 18:6), but since Abraham was a rich man, and she had a maidservant, so she might enjoy cooking, but not in a stressful way. They faced other dangers such as robbery, but Abraham had 318 soldiers in the household (Genesis 14:14), so they were safe most of the time. In general, they didn't have so much pressure from work and didn't suffer from hypertension constantly.

Finally, they work outdoors most of the time and enjoy lots of sunshine. Since their family business was to raise sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, etc. (Genesis 12:16), they spent lots of time working outside in the wilderness. So, they have enough sunshine daily. Although they never go to the gym, they have strong bones and muscles and never lack calcium or suffer from low bone density. Enough sunshine also helps people fight against depression and negative feelings.

So, what we can learn from their lifestyle on aging? We should eat organic food as much as we can afford, and use less or no medicines. We need to reduce pollution from plastics and avoid drinking from bottled water. And most important, we suffer from a lack of sleep most of the time. We all have a biological clock inside which is called circadian rhythms [6], and we need more sleep than we have today. It is hard to sleep early with today's busy schedule and distractions such as video games and social media. And we need to spend more time outdoors to enjoy the sunshine, so we won't have depression. This can be achieved by doing some yard work, such as mowing the grass, and taking care of a small vegetable/flower garden. In summary, we can change our lifestyle one step at a time and age gracefully, and hopefully, we can live up to the age limit of 120.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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