

# The Power of Happier Ageing

PROVEN WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR WELLBEING AS YOU AGE

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## PREFACE

**"Ageing is not a problem to be fixed or a disease to be cured. It is a natural, powerful, life long process that unites us all"**

Ashton Applewhite

Try as we may to avoid it, from the moment we are born we are ageing, and this is something we cannot control. Inevitably, over the course of one's life there will be illness and loss, but if we actively seek to cultivate and nurture positivity, this can be its antidote and one of the keys to living a happier later life to the fullest.

The power to choose the way we frame ageing is within everyone's grasp and should empower us to work on our mindset because of the potential it holds to improve and enhance the quality of our lives. Looking on the bright side of life means we can prevail, despite poor health and the other setbacks that getting older hands us.

The great news is that developing a positive mindset does not require any previous experience, is free and you can start straight away! It's never too late to change our attitude and train one's mind to develop those traits that lead to greater happiness - the power is in your hands.

As the population ages there will be more people living with chronic illness so there has never been a more important time to shine the light on the benefits of a postive mindset in the quest for **Happier Ageing**.

**Happier Ageing** is about positivity. It is about how we think about our lives and how we live our lives. It is not about being in a constant state of unbridled joy, it is more to do with day in, day out well being. Positivity is a state of mind and empowers us to engage in the world around us, pursue our passions, strengths and abilities, so we can realise our potential and prosper.

Our **Happier Ageing** philosophy of care enables wellbeing and flourishing in our clients and our caregivers. We are passionate about making lives better and in this report, we share the principles that guide and underpin every decision we make in our organisation.



**“INSIDE, WE ARE  
AGELESS AND  
WHEN WE TALK TO  
OURSELVES, IT’S  
THE SAME AGE OF THE  
PERSON WE WERE  
TALKING TO WHEN  
WE WERE LITTLE.  
IT’S THE BODY  
THAT IS CHANGING  
AROUND THAT  
AGELESS CENTRE.”**

David Lynch



# AS THE WORLD TURNS, IT AGES

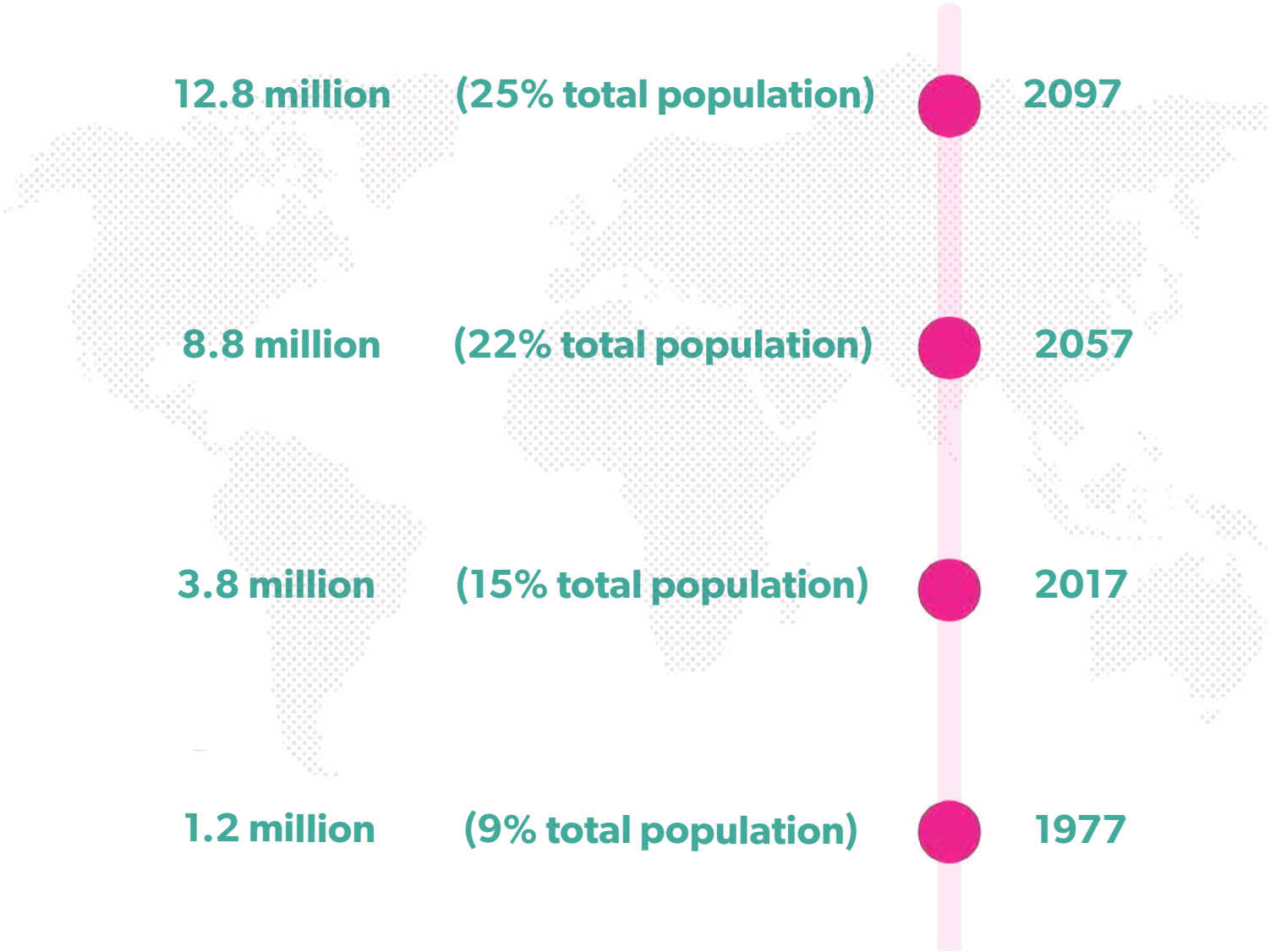
World population aged 60 and over is projected to increase from 900 million in 2020 to 2 billion by 2050.

Across the world the fastest growing age group will be people aged over 85



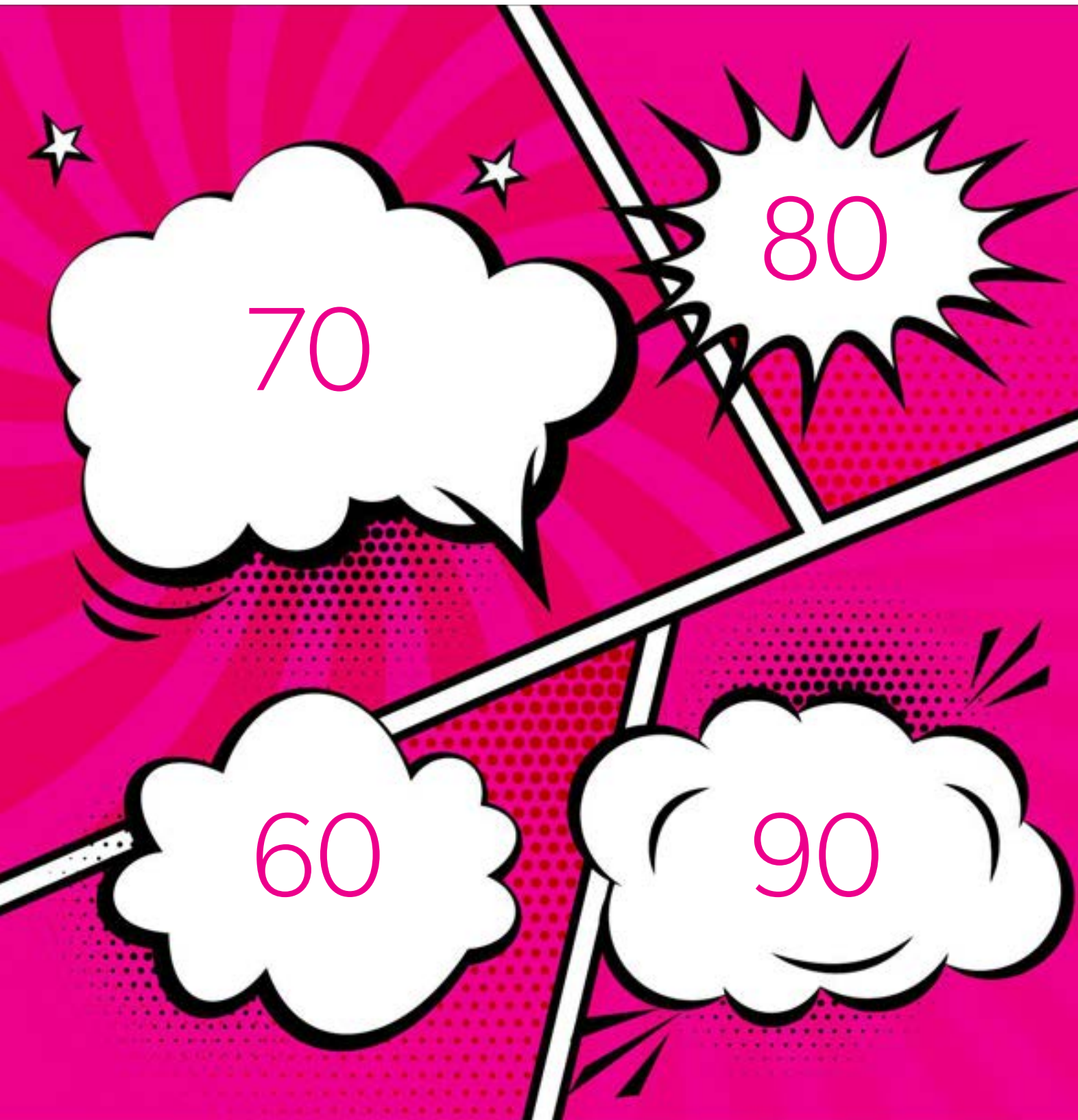
In Australia 1000 plus people turn 85 every week.

## AUSTRALIANS AGED 65 AND OVER



# HOW OLD WOULD YOU BE

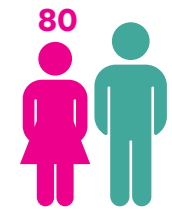
IF YOU DID NOT KNOW HOW OLD YOU WERE ?



## AGE CAN BE DESCRIBED IN THREE DIFFERENT WAYS

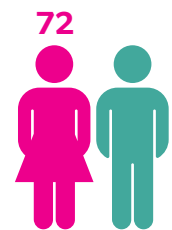
### 1. CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

is based solely on the passage of time.  
It is a person's age in years.



### 2. BIOLOGICAL AGE

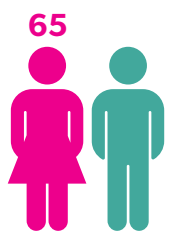
is the cumulative result of everything that has impacted on the health and function of your cells over your life. Most noticeable differences are caused by our lifestyle and habits. Good lifestyle choices usually mean a lower biological age than chronological.



### 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AGE

is based on how people act and feel.

For example an 80 year old who participates in lots of activities and is optimistic about their future would be considered psychologically young.



**"Older people holding positive self-perceptions of ageing live, on average, 7.5 years longer than those with less positive views.**

**Remarkably, this impact on survival was found to be greater than the advantage of low systolic blood pressure, low cholesterol, & lifestyle factors like smoking and exercise. "**

**"Self-perceptions had a greater impact on survival than gender, socioeconomic status, loneliness and functional health."**

"Longevity Increased by Positive Self Perceptions of Aging"  
Becca Levy, et al., Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 83 (2002)



# THE POWER OF THE MIND

Hope brings up the possibility that things can change

## The Placebo effect -

Proof that the way we think can affect biology

**“Wherever you put the mind, you’re necessarily putting the body”**

Dr Ellen Langer Levy and Harvard psychologist

**“The placebo effect is the positive effect on a person’s health experienced after taking a placebo. It is triggered by the person’s **belief** in the benefit of the treatment and their expectation of feeling better, rather than the specific form the placebo takes.”** [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au)



Placebos seem to have some effect on almost every symptom known to mankind, and work in at least a third of patients and sometimes in up to 60%.

The placebo effect illustrates the power of the mind and how perception can influence an outcome. The placebo produces a positive outcome because the patient **believes** they are receiving a useful treatment.

## Neuroplasticity -

Proof that the brain can change

**“Neuroplasticity is the property of the brain that enables it to change its own structure and functioning in response to activity and mental experience.”**

Norman Doidge, The Brain’s Way of Healing: Remarkable Discoveries from the Frontiers of Neuroplasticity

The old paradigm of a brain being fixed and unchanging has been replaced with what scientists now know is the brain’s ability to change.

While it is true that our brain is much more plastic during our early years, neuroplasticity takes place throughout our lives, proving that we are perfectly capable of changing and learning new approaches. This allows our thinking and emotions to positively adapt to new situations, developing better outlooks on ageing at any point in our lives.

**Use it or lose it.**

New habits can replace previously negative ones. Weaker can become stronger. And we can reverse a lot more things than most people realise. We can reboot, rewire and re-invent. Whatever stage of life you’re at it’s never too late for positive change, all we have to do is free ourselves from our self-imposed limitations and shift our perspective to that of possibilities.

**Neurons that fire together wire together.**

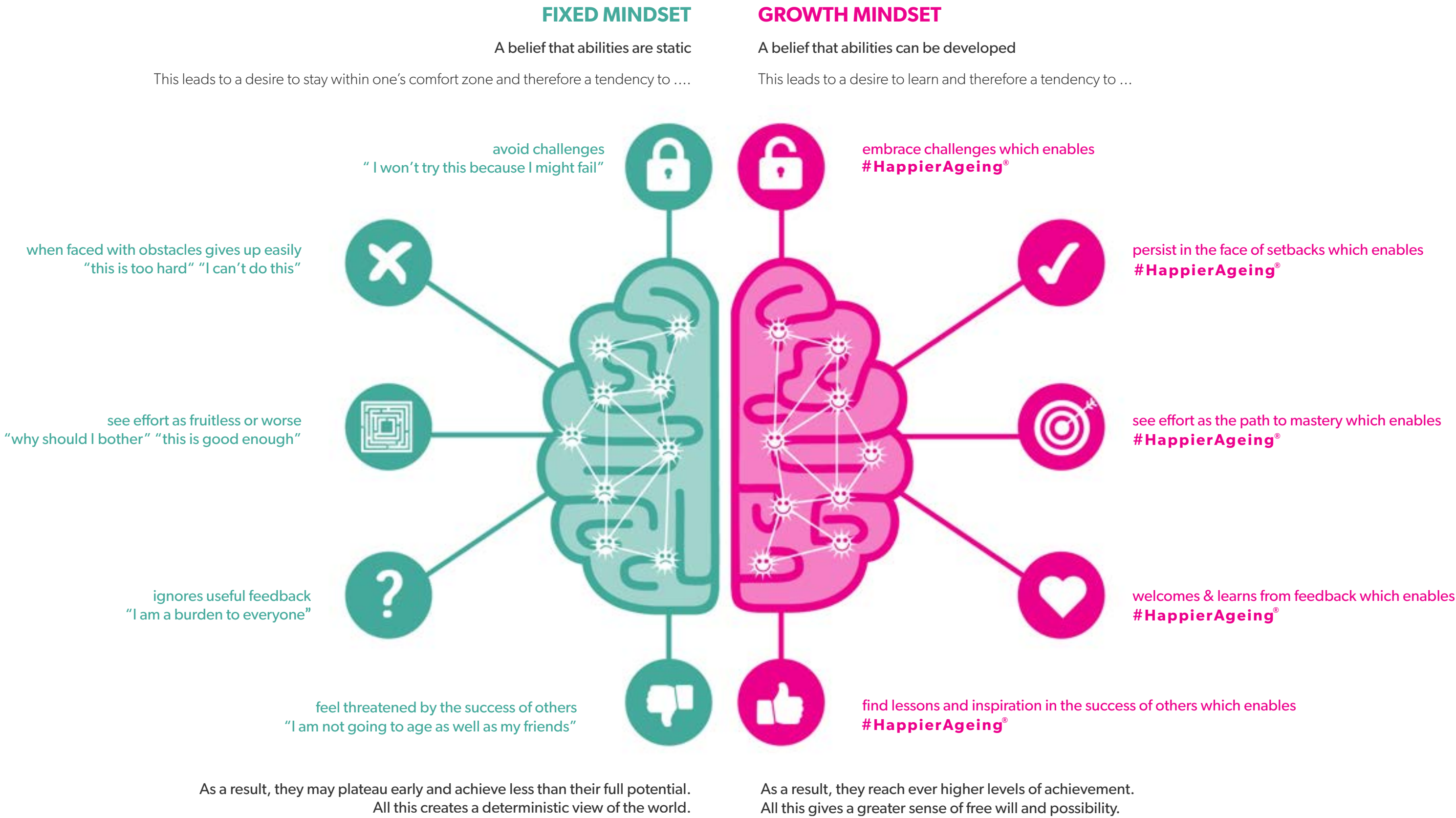
We are a mind-body system meaning if we think and therefore feel negative and self-limiting patterns about ourselves, then our bodies live that too. On the flip side, optimism has been shown to add years to our life.

**“THE QUALITY OF OUR LIFE IN THE FUTURE WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE QUALITY OF OUR THINKING”**

“Future Positive” Edward De Bono 1979

# MINDSET

Our mindset is a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines our behaviour, outlook and mental attitude. Mindset is a spectrum - you are not just one or the other.





## WHAT IS A POSITIVE MINDSET ?

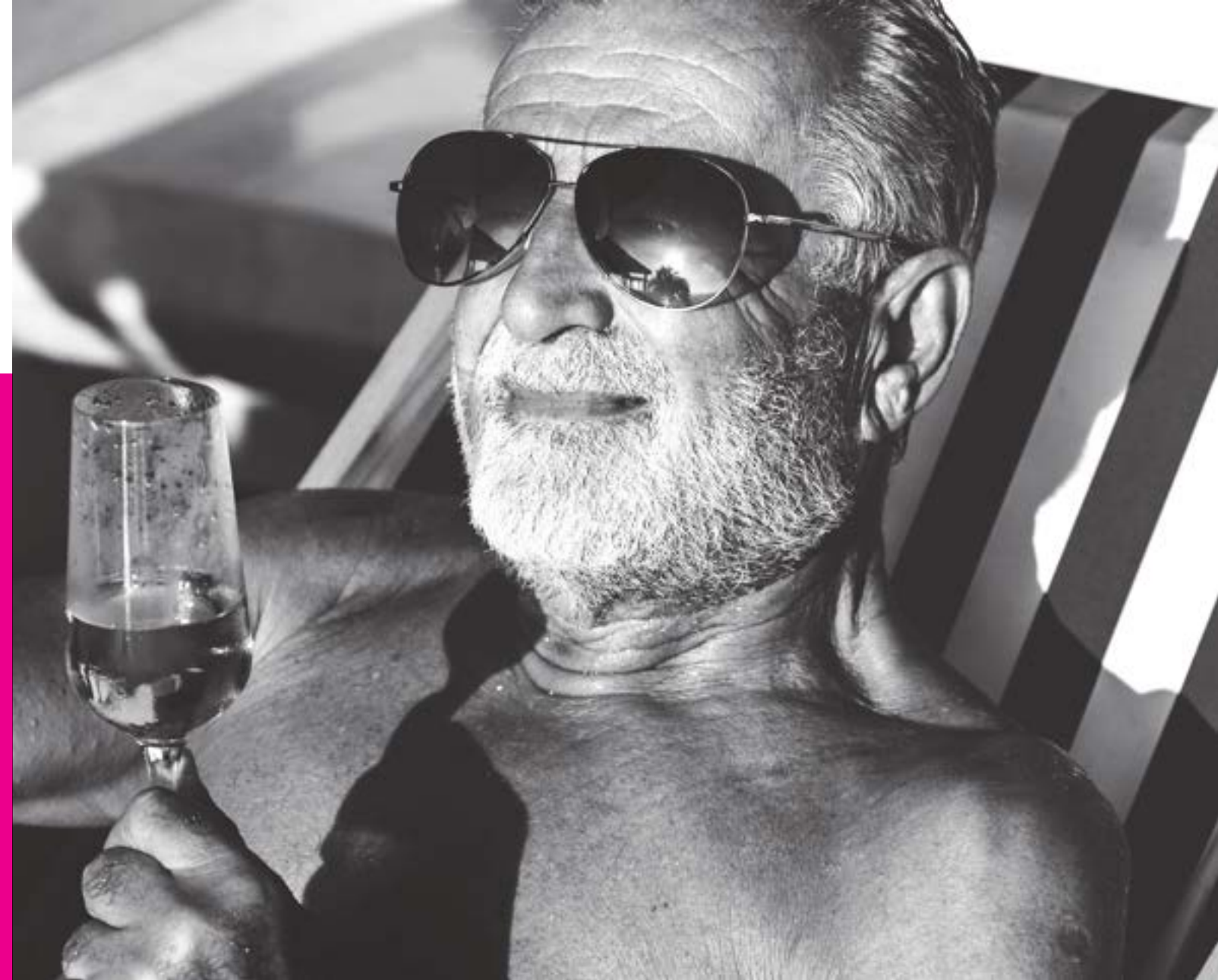
AND HOW DOES THIS CULTIVATE HAPPIER AGEING ?



Psychologists originally relied on the belief that happiness is genetic and that we are born to be happy, or not. Research now tells us that even if you have 'happy genes' this is no guarantee of happiness.

Happiness is more complex but, put simply, it is a combination of genetics and your environment with a large percentage being completely in your hands.

A positive mindset is also considered a growth mindset. Choosing to adopt the right mindset will, barring an unforeseen accident or disease, be the most critical determinant of whether you age successfully, that is, you have a long and happy life.



**"THE REMEDY IS  
NOT TO SUPPRESS  
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES.  
WHEN THEY HAPPEN,  
THEY HAPPEN.  
RATHER IT IS TO FOSTER  
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES"**

"Buddha's Brain - the practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom" Richard Hansen 2009



# #HappierAgeing

is about making the most of that 40%

50% OF OUR HAPPINESS IS DUE TO GENETICS, 10% TO OUR LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT 40% IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL.

50%

GENETICS

10%

LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

40%

WE CONTROL

WHAT WE DO WITH THAT 40% CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON OUR OVERALL HAPPINESS

"The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want." Lyubomirsky S 2008





# STEPS TOWARDS A POSTIVE MINDSET

Never underestimate the benefit of small steps

## STEP 1 : AWARENESS

Hear your “fixed mindset” voice or your inner critic.

For example, look for times when you find that you’re doubting yourself, saying something like “Can I really do this? Be aware of when you’re focusing on failure rather than success. It might be there when you are trying something new or challenging

## STEP 2 : REFRAME

Once you are aware of that voice you can learn to control it. The way that you interpret challenges and obstacles you face is up to you.

This is the most challenging step. It is difficult to reframe the voice when you have well grooved patterns. The way to think about reframing is to imagine giving advice to a friend. Naturally you would never use a harsh, critical voice when trying to help a friend. If you would never do this with a friend, then why are you doing it with yourself?

We are generally harsher on ourselves than we are with others. Now, imagine that you’re giving someone else advice and reframe the negative statement that was made.

Fixed - I’m not sure I can do that?

Growth - I’m not sure I can do that yet, but with support and effort I can try.

## STEP 3 : ACTION

After reframing comes action.

What challenges can you take on in order to foster and nurture a growth mindset? What challenges have you been avoiding? Choose a challenge and try it again, but this time, turn your fixed mindset around.

For example, there might be an exercise class you want to attend but you have been shying away from joining, thinking what is the point I haven’t exercised in years.

So go to the first class.

Take the challenge.

Once you have success with the first challenge, you can learn how to reframe your mindset to take on the next challenge!



**“EVEN WHEN PHYSICAL DECLINE  
AND LOSSES RESTRICT ONE’S OPTIONS,  
THERE REMAINS THE CAPACITY TO  
APPRECIATE AND APPROACH EACH DAY  
WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE.**

**IT’S ALL ABOUT HOW YOU  
FRAME WHAT YOU HAVE”**

*“The end of old age - Living a Longer, More Purposeful Life” Marc E Argonin MD 2018*



# WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

AND HOW DOES THIS CULTIVATE HAPPIER AGEING ?

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY  
IS DEFINED AS THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY  
OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCES  
AND POSITIVE INDIVIDUAL TRAITS



It is the belief of positive psychologists that human strengths and virtues may act as buffers against illness and that fostering positive emotions and happiness can have a protective effect on health, that is, health and happiness go hand-in-hand.

It has been concluded that positive psychology interventions can develop overall wellbeing & reduce depressive symptoms and negative affect. Research has also found that happiness can improve heart health, enhance the immune system, reduce disease and disability, increase longevity, and can alleviate pain in the context of disease.

Research in the field of positive psychology and happiness often defines a happy person as someone who experiences frequent positive emotions like joy, interest, and pride, and infrequent (though not absent) negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and anger.

Changing how people react to situations, stressors, & their perception of things is similar to trying to impact any other aspect of their life such as diet or exercise. Habits do not change easily and without daily practice people tend to gravitate back to the way they have always been, but with intentional work the effort will be worth it.

Positive psychologist, Martin Seligman's theory is that wellbeing has five measurable elements (PERMA) that count towards it and, if we focus our attention on these five areas, positive outcomes can be achieved. PERMA stands for positive emotion (P), engagement (E), relationships (R), meaning (M) and achievement (A). Positive psychology moves away from a deficit approach to mental health (what's wrong with the individual) to a proactive wellbeing approach.

The "Ageing and the Art of Happiness Study" measured the success of implementing the principles of PERMA into daily life and illustrated how neuroplasticity in older adults is still possible and that we can continue to learn throughout our lives, and can enhance happiness levels and overall well being with the right interventions.

**"Without a positive approach it is virtually impossible to age successfully because we won't be motivated to do the things that create wellbeing."**

**If we lack the positivity that it takes to live a good life it's so hard to rise from bed or leave the house each day; so hard to smile, so hard to make contact with others, and so hard to get out of your own way and embark on a project"**

"Booming - A life changing philosophy for ageing well" Marcus Riley 2018

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY & THE PRINCIPLES OF PERMA

small positive actions every day will add up to large changes over time

## Positive Emotion

Feeling good, optimism, pleasure, enjoyment.

Positive emotions are an individual's subjective views on his or her life, and are often measured by life satisfaction.

This element of the model is one of the most obvious connections to happiness. Being able to focus on positive emotions is more than just smiling, it is the ability to be optimistic and view the past, present, and future from a positive perspective.

This positive view of life can help you in relationships, work, and inspire you to be more creative and take more chances. In everyone's life, there are highs and lows, focusing on the lows increase your chances of developing depression, therefore, you should focus on the high and positive aspects of life. There are also many health benefits to optimism and positivity.

## Engagement

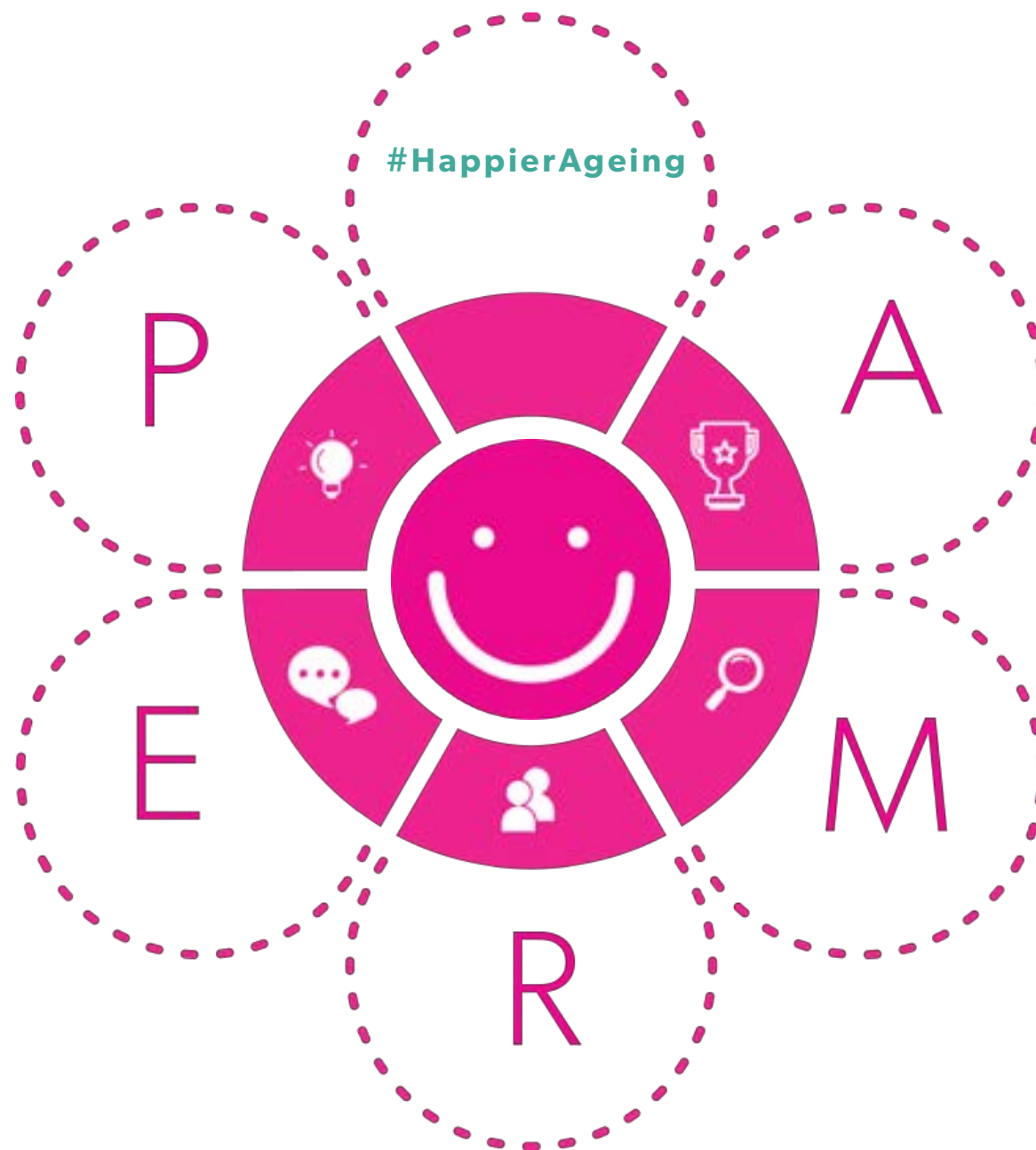
What are your interests? What engages you?

Everyone is different and we all find enjoyment in different things whether it's playing an instrument, watching sport, dancing, working on a crossword or spending time with the grandkids. We all need something in our lives that entirely absorbs us in the present moment, creating a 'flow' of blissful immersion into the task or activity.

It is important in our lives to be able to find activities that need our full engagement for us to nurture our personal happiness. Being engaged means staying stimulated and being alert to the opportunities to participate in life.

Interest is an awakened state that calls your attention to something new and arouses your curiosity & fascination. Regardless of whether you are 8 or 80, having an interest invigorates you and stimulates your desire to engage.

#HappierAgeing



## Relationships

The pursuit of meaningful, healthy relationships in one's life.

Relationships and social connections are one of the most important aspects of life. Humans are social animals that thrive on connection, love, intimacy, and a strong emotional and physical interaction with other humans. Building positive relationships with your family, friends and peers is important to spread love and joy. Having strong relationships gives you support in difficult times.

## Accomplishment

Find things that are within our capabilities and then work on them. The less you do the less you are able to do.

Few things are as satisfying as a job well done. Not just major tasks, but simple ones as well. Research has shown how incredibly beneficial the confidence boost is to our sense of wellbeing by completing an everyday task such as making our bed in the morning. Multiply that positive feeling by completing numerous tasks during the day.

Regardless of age, setting goals to achieve something, big or small, making the bed or walking the Great Wall of China, putting in the effort to achieve these goals can give you a great sense of satisfaction. Feeling the sense of pride and fulfillment when you stretch yourself and attain something you thought might be impossible, is a wonderful feeling at any age.

Having accomplishments in life is important to push ourselves to thrive and flourish. It gives us confidence to set new goals and try new activities and experiences.

## Meaning

Having a purpose, finding a meaning in life.

It doesn't matter how old we are, we all need a reason to get out of bed each day.

Having meaning in our lives, or a sense of purpose, is the X factor that gives us our "get up and go." It is self defined by what is important to you and what your interests are.

What motivates each of us will be different, but the important thing is that you find something, as the value of pursuing activities and passions that lead us to engage with life everyday, are critical to successful ageing.

When we become unable to pursue the roles and passions of our younger years, we can tap into our past for strength and inspiration. We can try something new that is either an extension of what we did before or that takes us in a new direction.



# PERMA

## ideas for #Happier Ageing

P

### Positive Emotion

Smile  
breath deeply  
hug someone for 6 seconds  
spoil a friend or family member  
reminisce  
be present  
get some sun  
practice mindfulness  
go for a walk  
listen to music  
watch your favorite movie  
smell a flower  
catch up with friends  
spend time in a park  
practice yoga or meditate  
help someone  
eat your favorite food  
bake some cookies  
get a your hair done  
Ask yourself what went well today and write down 5 things you are grateful for

E

### Engagement

Read with children  
Community volunteer programs (primary schools, libraries)  
Community gardens  
Set up a group of your own to play a sport, watch a movie – bring friends together  
Set up a 'whatsapp' group to stay in touch  
Join groups that have similar interests to you  
Make an effort to comment on your friends facebook or instagram posts  
Join online communities with similar interests  
Volunteer in a hospital  
Carpool  
Catch public transport  
Look at old photos

**UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE**  
[www.u3avictoria.com.au](http://www.u3avictoria.com.au)

R

### Relationships

Join a walking group  
Host an afternoon tea for old friends  
Babysit the grandchildren  
Join a club to make new friends  
Make time to chat with good friends  
Buy a pet  
Host a dinner party for a new group of friends  
Use social media to stay in touch  
Take a holiday for over 50's  
Travel overseas to visit relatives  
Write a card or letter to a long lost friend

**ROTARY CLUBS**  
[www.rotaryaustralia.org.au](http://www.rotaryaustralia.org.au)  
**PROBUS GROUPS**  
[www.probusvic.com.au](http://www.probusvic.com.au)

M

### Meaning

Sponsor or take in the arts  
Learn to cook your favourite meal  
Make presents for friends and family  
Visit the house you grew up in  
Visit the church you were married in  
Volunteer in your old primary school  
Donate to a cause close to your heart  
Take up photography  
Frame & hang your favourite photos  
Share stories of your childhood  
Act as a mentor to younger people to share your experiences and wisdom  
Rescue a pet from the pet shelter

**MEANINGFUL AGEING AUSTRALIA**  
[www.meaningfulageing.org.au](http://www.meaningfulageing.org.au)

A

### Accomplishment

Learn a new language or skill  
Catch up with old friends  
Google 'how to' and repair something you've been meaning to mend  
Reward yourself for doing the things you'd rather not do (but have to)  
Set small goals that you can accomplish in a day  
Grow your own vegetables  
Sew your own clothes  
Join a group to make and donate goods to charity  
Volunteer your time  
Clean that room that's been bothering you  
Finish a jigsaw puzzle  
Join a masters sporting organisation

**MASTERS SWIMMING**  
[www.mastersswimmingvic.org.au](http://www.mastersswimmingvic.org.au)



### Useful Links

**HEALTHY AGEING LITERATURE**  
[www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/healthy-ageing-literature-review](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/healthy-ageing-literature-review)

**BETTER HEALTH CHANNEL**  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/healthy-and-active-ageing](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/healthy-and-active-ageing)

**HEALTHY AGEING ONLINE NETWORK**  
[www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care)

**VICTORIAN ACTIVE AGEING PARTNERSHIP**  
[www.move.org.au/VAAP](http://www.move.org.au/VAAP)

**MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA**  
(voice for local government - Positive Ageing)

[www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/positive-ageing](http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/positive-ageing)





“

**Your beliefs** become your thoughts,

**Your thoughts** become your words,

**Your words** become your actions,

**Your actions** become your habits,

**Your habits** become your values,

**Your values** **become your destiny.**

”

MAHATMA GANDHI

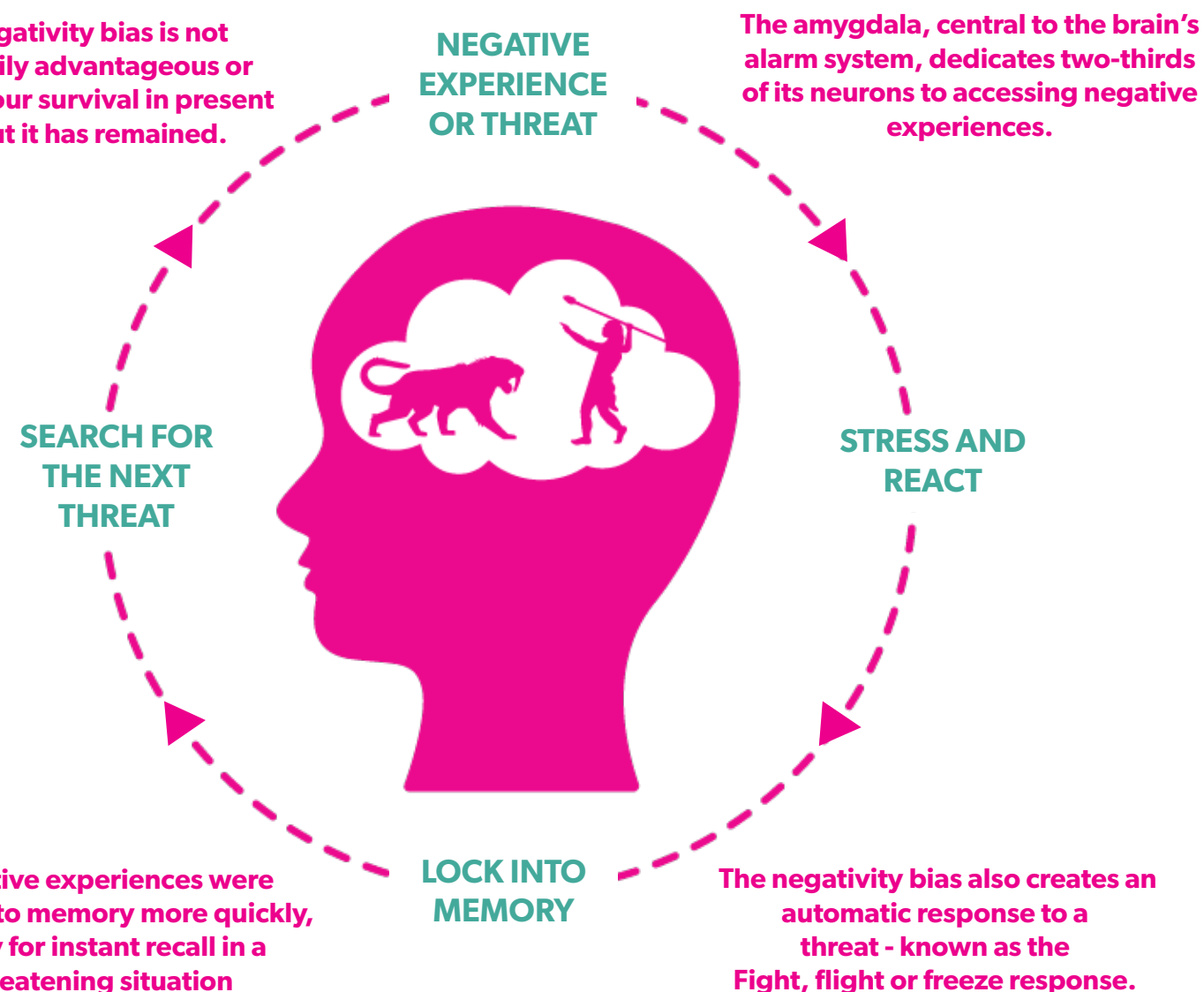


# WHAT IS THE BRAIN'S NEGATIVITY BIAS?

The brain's negativity bias is simply that negative experiences have a greater effect on one's psychological state than positive experiences. Through evolution the negativity bias has been wired into our brain because, throughout history, it has been far more important that we survive than be happy.

Our brains have evolved to be fearful and pay far more attention to negative experiences in order to survive.

The negativity bias is not necessarily advantageous or critical to our survival in present day, but it has remained.



**“OUR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES STICK TO US LIKE VELCRO, WHILE OUR POSITIVE EXPERIENCES SLIDE RIGHT OFF US LIKE TEFLON”**

“Hardwiring Happiness” Rick Hanson

## HOW WE CAN OVERCOME THE NEGATIVITY BIAS

It may have served our ancestors to focus on the negative, however in this modern age we are not necessarily helped by finding every fault or threat in our daily environment, so how can we rid ourselves of the negativity bias?

We can restore balance in our lives by consciously looking for and taking in positive experiences. This 3 step process is called “taking in the good” which, when used habitually, can alleviate the stress and pain that come with focusing on the bad.

### 3 Simple Steps to Overcome Your Negativity Bias

#### 1. “LOOK FOR GOOD FACTS, AND TURN THEM INTO GOOD EXPERIENCES.”

Make a conscious effort to look for positive aspects of every experience. Take active measures to notice the good in both the world and in yourself. As you do this, pay attention to any resistance you encounter within yourself and acknowledge any instinctual attempts to dismiss or deny these positive feelings, but choose not focus on them. Practicing this at least a half dozen times a day, can quickly turn it into a habit.

#### 2. “SAVOR THE EXPERIENCE.”

Attend to positive experiences. Give yourself ample time (at least twenty to thirty seconds) to fully enjoy that moment. By elongating our positive sensations, we allow more neurons to fire and wire together in response to the stimulus. This solidifies the experience in our memory.

We are predisposed to collecting and clinging to negative memories, but we can counteract this by intentionally developing a more diverse and deeply rooted base of positive memories. As we fill our memory with more positive experiences, through savouring, we become less reliant on external positive stimuli.

#### 3. “INTENTIONALLY SENSE THAT THE GOOD EXPERIENCE IS SINKING INTO YOU.”

This is where your mindfulness practice can come in handy, by becoming aware of the different ways in which a positive experience affects you. Identify the emotions involved. Visualize the positivity spreading throughout your body. Consider the brain's plasticity as neurons fire and wire together. When we consciously interact with our positive experiences, we can strengthen their neurological presence in our brains.

“Buddah's Brain - The practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom” Rick Hansen 2011

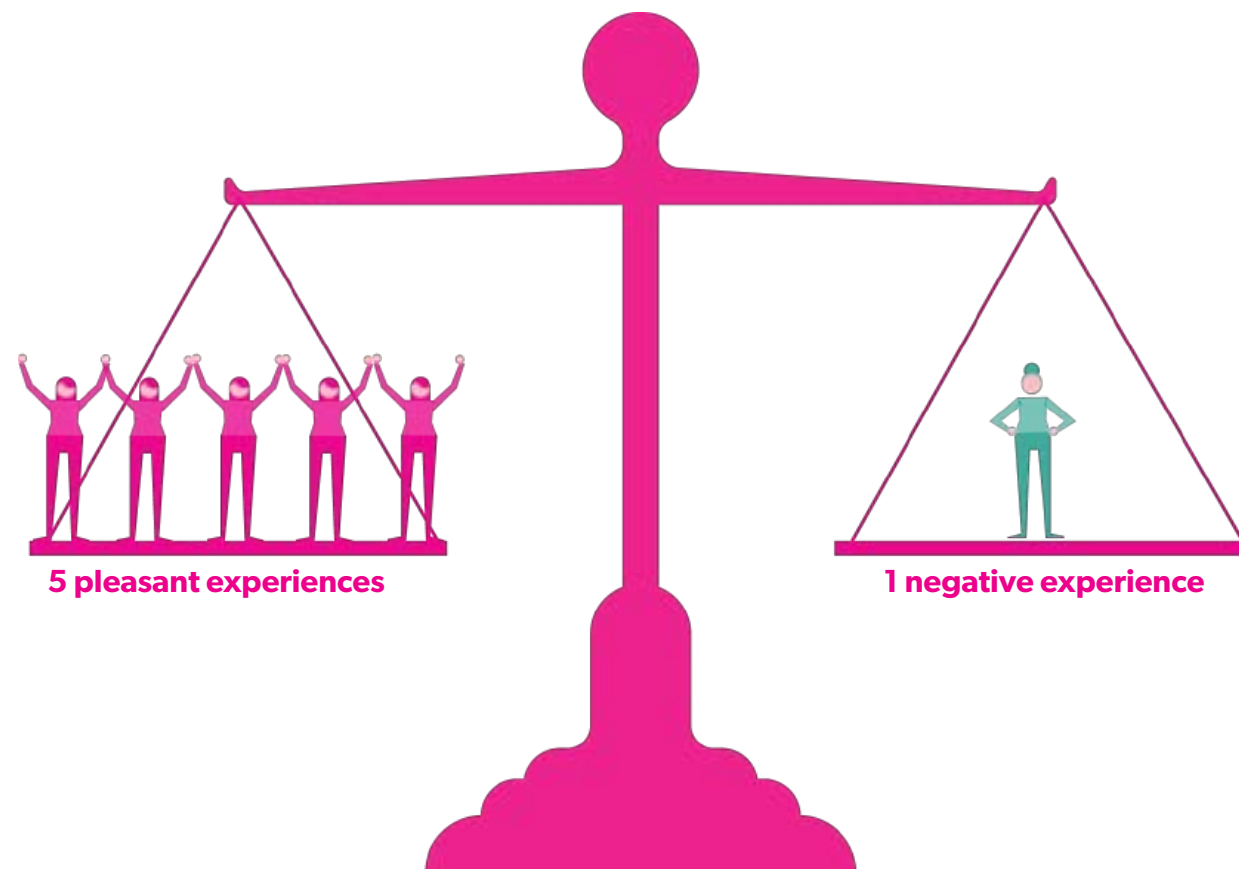


# WHAT IS INTENTIONAL HAPPINESS ?

AND HOW DOES THIS CULTIVATE HAPPIER AGEING ?

Happiness is not something that happens to you.

It is created by you.



It is estimated that it can take five pleasant experiences to balance a single negative one of equal magnitude. So we must take steps to actively pursue happiness and work to maintain it.

**“IDENTIFY AND CULTIVATE  
POSITIVE MENTAL STATES,  
IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE  
NEGATIVE MENTAL STATES”**

“The Art of Happiness - A handbook for living” Dalai Lama 1999

**This is intentional happiness and this cultivates Happier Ageing.**





# INTENTIONAL HAPPINESS

seek out more of this in your life

**MINDFULNESS**

**SMILE**

**BREATH  
DEEPLY**

**POSSIBILITY**

**LOVE**

**LOOK FOR  
INSPIRATION**

**MUSIC**

**HOPE**

**BE PRESENT**

**JOY**

**SERENITY**

**PRIDE**

**PRACTICE  
GRATITUDE**

**SMELL THE  
FLOWERS**

**LAUGH**



# WHAT IS HAPPIER AGEING?

There is no question that ageing comes with its share of challenges and, while we can not stop the ailments associated with age, we can, through **#HappierAgeing®** shift perspectives that will give us a different kind of energy and momentum, allowing us to realise the true potential of longevity.

As one ages and becomes more frail, we encourage you to be brave and fight the temptation to fade from life. We encourage you to keep pursuing the things you love. The effort will be worth it because as Atul Gawande says in his book Being Mortal “Our ultimate goal is a good life all the way to the very end”

The real key to **#HappierAgeing®** at every age and stage - particularly old age - is not material things but gratitude for life's simple things, like laughter among friends or watching a sunset with a loved one. It's the little things in life that end up mattering most of all. If we focus and are grateful for small things that occur everyday we will often be much happier

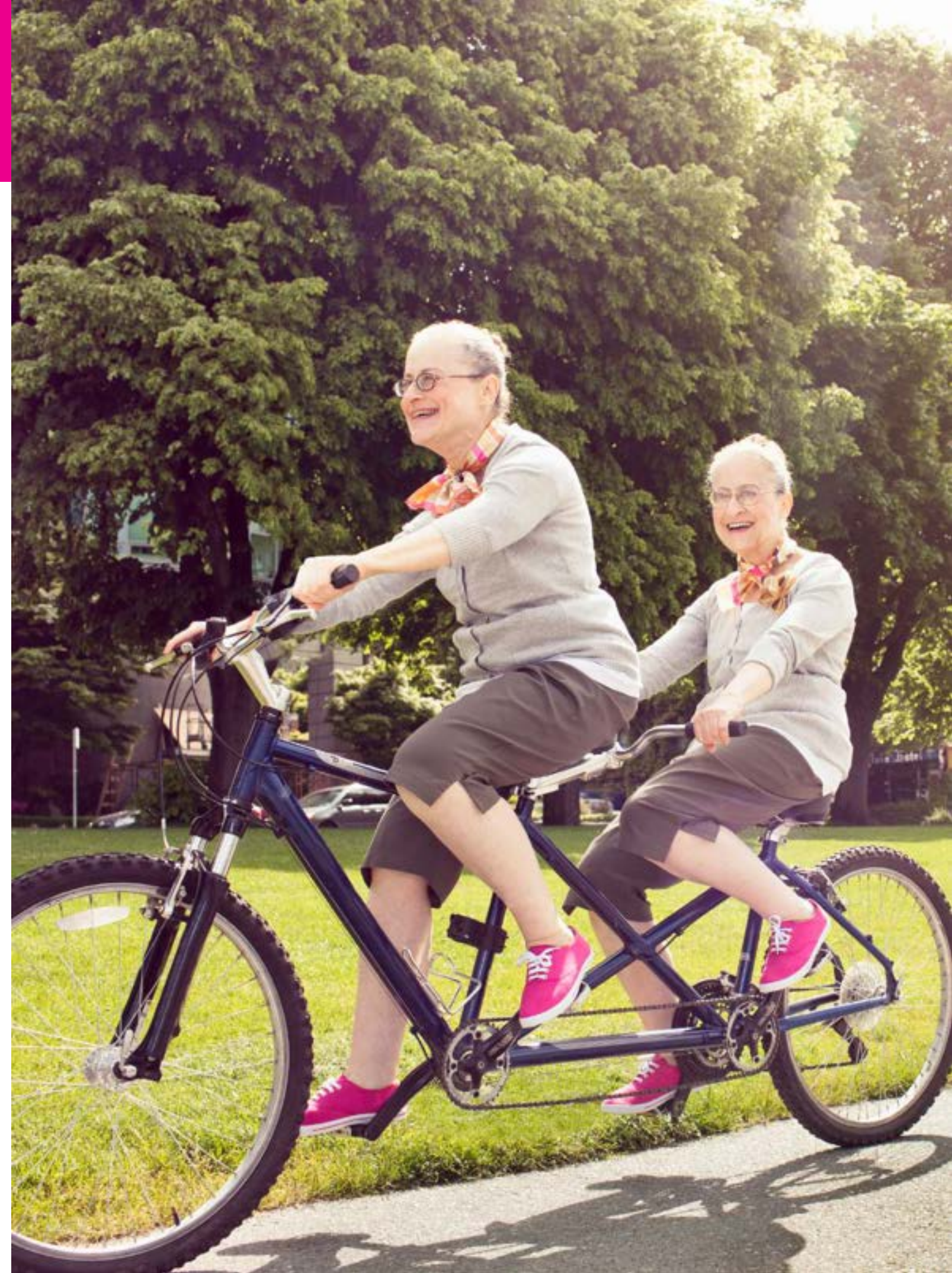
**#HappierAgeing®** is about focusing on what you CAN DO, not what you can't. It requires a willingness to accept your new reality - and move forward, with the aim of having the best life you can, where you are at right now

At Nurse Next Door we believe so strongly in the power of **#HappierAgeing®** we trademarked it. We believe that ageing well is more than just the absence of disability and disease, and all of our team members are trained to provide appropriate positive psychology interventions through our **#HappierAgeing®** model of care.

Our philosophy of **#HappierAgeing®** is all about cultivating a growth or positive mindset, to enable the principles of positive psychology to enhance well-being and allow us to live a good life at every age.

**#HappierAgeing®** starts with one question ...

**What did you used to love doing that you no longer do anymore?**





## #HappierAgeing



"The Power of Happier Ageing"  
is also available as a FREE one hour presentation -  
**The Happier Ageing "Happy Hour"**  
that comes to you!

If you are over 65 and have a group of ten or more  
people, the Nurse Next Door Team will bring  
Happier Ageing to you.

The one hour presentation explores Happier Ageing in more  
detail, discussing proven ways to enhance well  
being as we age and providing hands on activities to practise  
Happier Ageing every day, as well as a  
FREE Happier Ageing tool kit for every participant.

If you would like to book a  
**Happier Ageing "Happy Hour"**,  
please email [marketing@nursenextdoor.com.au](mailto:marketing@nursenextdoor.com.au) or  
call 1300 010 247 and one of our team will be in touch.



# Nurse Next Door®

*home care services*

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