



## Redefining the passage of time: lifestyle and longevity

The growth of life expectancy is a process that brings changes to the organization of societies. Amidst discussions about the most suitable measures for adapting institutions to the new population configurations, the projection of a longer life expectancy affects, most of all, people's perception of their own life trajectories. The perspective of longevity brings greater concern about being able to live life fully throughout its duration, and dealing with physical, psychological and social changes.

Elias<sup>1</sup> suggests that the notion of time becomes a sensitive experience for individuals through their engagement with the world, as the need arises to define common parameters that enable the constitution of collective life processes. The models of the division and standardization of durations of life situate individuals and their particular trajectories in relation to the context in which they are inserted. The division of life into phases and age categories expresses the time of human nature and organizes a cycle to be lived. However, these classifications have a history and are transformed according to the development of society. It is in this sense that the contemporary debate on the different factors that throughout life define the conditions under which we age influences the way in which individuals plan and experience aging.

With an increasing number of people reaching older ages, such as 80 and above, there is a greater interest in expanding knowledge about the different ways of growing old. Old age is too long a period to be summarized. The age reference of "over 60 years" is being replaced by a restructuring of the phases of life through a vision that is more attentive to the complexity and peculiarities of more advanced chronological stages. This seeks to identify which factors were an advantage for those who reached an advanced age, challenging the old expectations about old age. Thus, the "very old" and especially the "super elderly" are living evidence of more successful ways of aging.

What factors favor survival until such an advanced age? What makes super elderly persons reach the age of 80, 90, or 100 and have a higher than expected physical and cognitive performance for their age? This search for elements that can modify the conditions of aging is established in accordance with the conjuncture of promoting active aging with emphasis on the idea of a process of preparation for the experience of old age. In this context, where it is necessary to guarantee quality of life, one category that has redirected the biomedical approach to aging stands out: lifestyle.

The notion of lifestyle suggests the consideration of factors, attitudes and habits that contribute to a better or worse form of aging, integrating the natural biological dimension with the active positioning of individuals in shaping their own aging. The preservation of health and functionalities in old age is associated with the previous life trajectory of the individual, in order to find signs of practices that potentially favor a healthy, active, autonomous and independent aging process.

In the demographic context, studies have tried to identify an association between well-being and satisfaction with life, and death rates<sup>2</sup>. From a biomedical point of view, different aspects that influence physical and mental performance over time are investigated: habits of daily living, posture towards life, practice of physical activity, quality of sleep, stress levels and eating habits. These factors are also considered in relation to strategies for the prevention and control of chronic-degenerative diseases associated with aging, such as Alzheimer's Disease<sup>3</sup>.

The focus on lifestyle emphasizes the diversity of the aging experience as a unique trajectory, but there is a controversial bias to this emphasis: the rapid dissemination of dietary guidelines and patterns, physical exercises, and changes of habit, often contradictory, in search of an ideal performance that counteracts decline in old age.

Thinking about old age as a continuum of the life trajectory of the individual involves the challenge of ensuring that preparation for longevity is not a constant struggle against old age, but a possibility of changing the meaning of the experience of aging. It is important to consider that, instead of models for the best form of aging, the understanding of different aspects of aging can indicate the various ways to live through one's own old age as well as possible.

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