

# ANTI-AGE YOUR BEHAVIOUR

Never mind the crow's feet and wrinkles. Experts reckon your attitude and behaviour are the real age giveaways. Here's how to take 10 years off - without surgery or expensive beauty products

**S**o we spend a fortune on fancy face and hand creams, we might even contemplate an injectable or two, but our looks aren't the only thing that make us look and feel older. And nothing betrays a youthful face and fabulous body faster than a frumpy attitude - or an unconscious grunt on slumping into a comfy chair. It's not primarily our physical selves that limit us, but our mindset about our physical limits,' says psychologist Professor Ellen Langer. 'We have beliefs about ageing that aren't true. And by changing those beliefs we can alter the way our bodies age.'

In *Counterclockwise: A Proven Way To Think Yourself Younger And Healthier* (£8.99, Hodder), Professor Langer describes an experiment she conducted with a group of elderly men who were asked to live in a house as if it was 1959 - their heyday. Everything around them took them back to their prime of life. After a week, the men stood straighter, walked faster, had better hearing and a higher IQ. Acting younger had effectively turned back their body age. So how can we change our attitude and behaviour to turn back our body clock?

## 1 See the doctor when something's wrong

How many times in the last few years have you blamed a bit of back pain on an achy joint or getting on a bit, and ignored it? 'A 20 year old with backache doesn't assume it's just part of life,' says Professor Langer. 'She gets it seen to. If we buy into the idea that our bodies are supposed to

decline with age, then we don't do things that can stop problems getting worse.' Next thing you know, you're in pain all the time and hobbling about like a 60 year old before your time.

## 2 Say 'yes' more often

'We tend to say no to things that are out of our comfort zone, but that's exactly the type of activity we need to do to keep life interesting,' says Ali Campbell, author of *Just Get On With It* (£8.99, Hay House). This, according to memory experts, explains why life seems to fly by as we get older. Routine speeds up our perception of time, but the more new experiences we have, the more it slows down. That's why the first few days of a holiday feel endless and the last few whizz by - less about the experience is new. Try saying yes to something new every week. Even ordering something different for lunch helps.

## 3 Fake happiness

Not only does frowning create wrinkles, it's a sign of strain or upset. 'And we don't associate that with young people,' says Lesley Reynolds Khan from London's Harley Street Skin Clinic. One way to bust a frown is with Botox, but if that's not your thing, fake a grin. Smiling while you speak, especially on the phone, gives a youthful lift to your voice, according to Elizabeth Kuhnke, author of *Body Language For Dummies* (£15.99, John Wiley & Sons), because our voices become deeper and more monotone as we get older. While psychotherapist and





laughter teacher Akasha Lonsdale ([www.thelaughterschool.com](http://www.thelaughterschool.com)) says faking a smile is the first step to laughing more in life, which will make you feel younger. 'Small children laugh 300 to 400 times a day on average, while adults laugh less than 15,' says Akasha.

## 4 Have a baby

Okay, that would be extreme, but in trials Professor Langer found new mothers in their 40s acted younger than other women of the same age. It's thought that seeing their bodies go through the same processes as younger women stopped them accepting aging stereotypes. 'Sharing other physical experiences with younger women works, too,' Langer explains. Try exercising with someone younger than you, but of the same fitness. Or with someone much older. Seeing what an older body can do gives us faith in our own.

## 5 Put a spring in your step

When researchers at Brandeis University in Massachusetts asked people to judge women's age by their walk, those with the most flexible gait seemed the youngest. 'We tend to stiffen our movements as we age,' says Kuhnke. So if you want to look younger, try not to sink into your hips, and lift off the balls of your feet. It gives you a bit of a bounce.'

## 6 Improve your memory

According to Barbara Strauch, in her book *The Secret Life Of*

## It's not primarily our physical bodies that limit us, but our mindset about our limits

*The Grown-Up Brain* (£9.99, Penguin), forgetting people's names becomes common around 35. As does wandering into rooms and forgetting why you went there. A great memory helps you seem younger, but how do you get one? 'Remember to remember,' says Clive Lewis from brain trainers illumine Training ([www.illumine.co.uk](http://www.illumine.co.uk)). 'The main reason we forget things is we're busy, distracted, thinking of lots of things at once and so we don't remember them in the first place.' With names, make sure you listen to the introduction, then mentally repeat it to yourself. And for the room thing, Clive recommends using visualisation and rhyme association. So if you're going

upstairs to get the iron, that's one thing you need to remember. 'One rhymes with sun - so visualise the sun warming your iron.' When you get into the room, remember you had one task and that one rhymes with sun, then you'll see the image of the iron.'

## 7 Buy a new perfume

Not only will it make you seem different to people in a subtle way (change is youthful), people wearing a grapefruity scent are perceived as being up to six years younger than their actual age, say researchers at Chicago's Smell & Taste Treatment And Research Foundation. Clarins Eau des Jardins does the trick.

## 8 Reign in the complaints

Moaning endlessly about something is a trait of the old. The young are more likely to either let things go - or complain on the spot and get a resolution. 'Air your complaints a maximum of three times. If you must bring up the same complaint again, it should only be to get a new insight in the hope of fixing the problem, not just to rant,' says Karen Salmonsohn, author of *The Bounce Back Book* (£7.99, Workman).

## 9 Ask more questions

Curiosity is a youthful trait. According to Dr Todd Kashdan, author of *Curious? Discover the Missing Ingredient To A Fulfilling Life* (Harper Paperbacks, £10.28), we become less curious and questioning after 30, so

recapturing our inquisitive nature will make us seem younger. It also stops you falling into the ageing trap of rigid thinking.

## 10 Live in the now

Children do, but as adults we spend most of our time either stressing about the future or worrying about the past. Not only does living in the here and now help us feel happier, according to Professor Langer, but if you walk down the road 'in the moment' you're more likely to notice that new café or a great place to run. And this, she argues, makes it more likely we'll have new experiences, which triggers the belief that life can move on. And yes, it still can! ■