

# It's Time To Disrupt Aging: The Realities Of Aging Have Changed But Attitudes Have Not

by Jo Ann Jenkins

(NAPSA)—How old is “old”? What constitutes being middle-aged? A generation ago, someone who was in his or her early 40s was considered by most people to be middle-aged, but you won't find as many who think that now. A generation before that, middle age started at around 35. However, a composite of recent surveys conducted over the last couple of years shows a majority of people now believe middle age starts at around 55.

While the more cynical among us may ascribe the shift to a combination of boomer narcissism, faulty math and wishful thinking, there's no denying that the timeline of aging—i.e., what it means to be “old”—has changed. If you're in your 50s or 60s, think about it. How do you compare to your parents when they were your age, or your grandparents? While some similarities are a given, for lots of us, the contrasts are fairly stark.

## Ageism Is Alive and Well

With these changes in mind, it's odd that so many negative attitudes about people over a certain age, whether directed from the outside or, worse, self-inflicted, are alive and well. While expressing negative judgments of others based on race, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation is no longer socially acceptable to most people, doing the same thing regarding someone's age is often still seen as acceptable. The reality on the ground regarding aging may have changed, but attitudes haven't.

Over time, that will change, partly as a result of sheer numbers. U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that 10,000 people in the U.S. turn 65 every day and that will continue to happen—every day—for the next 14 years! But we need to dispel negative beliefs around and about aging even quicker than might normally happen—not because our world needs more political correctness, but because there's a growing body of evidence that ageism has quantifiable negative health effects on aging people, in addition to distracting them from more vital considerations. In the abstract, a long life is a fine thing, but this demographic shift brings with it new questions to ponder (and act on). If you've got another 35–40 years, how can you make them all you want them to be and what do you need to do to make it a reality?



A BOLD NEW PATH TO LIVING  
YOUR BEST LIFE AT EVERY AGE

Jo Ann Jenkins

CEO of AARP

with BOE WORKMAN



**A new book by Jo Ann Jenkins explores the realities of aging in modern times.**

Fortunately, there's a movement afoot to drive the kinds of changes around aging that will benefit everyone. I call it “Disrupt Aging,” but what matters most is its intent. Disrupt Aging is about engaging on the big questions—around health, wealth and self—and, overall, living the best future you can. As with so many things in life, either you choose a path for yourself or circumstances conspire to choose one for you.

If the Disrupt Aging movement has an initiation, or a rite of passage, it may be in “owning” one's age. We're all familiar with catchphrases along the lines of “50 is the new 30” and “60 is the new 40” and so on. Well intended though they may be, these ideas have got the wrong end of the stick. Fifty is 50, 60 is 60, 70 is 70 and they are—or can be—great. As with 20, 30 and 40, it's often what you make of it. Disrupt Aging is not about denying aging, or defying aging (good luck with that, BTW), it's about owning your age—and embracing the opportunities to live your best life at every age. That's what everyone wants, right?

Think about it this way: If you're alive, you're aging. With that in mind, it's hard to think of a change that could deliver more benefit to more people than Disrupt Aging.

• *About the author: Jo Ann Jenkins is CEO of AARP. Ms. Jenkins's debut book, “Disrupt Aging,” published by NYC-based PublicAffairs, hit bookstores on April 5. More info on the book can be found here: [www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging/info-2016/joann-jenkins-disrupt-aging-book.html](http://www.aarp.org/disrupt-aging/info-2016/joann-jenkins-disrupt-aging-book.html).*