

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Ben Sims

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

“Tips for Healthy Aging”

A smile or words of encouragement may seem like small things, but they do add up. According to K-State specialist, Erin Yelland, research shows that having a positive outlook on aging actually adds 7.5 years to your life. With that positive outlook, you’re able to embrace aging and look for the positives, and it is going to add years to your life. Yelland has come up with an acronym that supports her belief that living with positivity is the healthy path for most. That acronym is SMILE BIG.

Successful aging requires practicing positivity. If we have a positive attitude, we are more likely to make changes and implement healthy behaviors into our lives that are going to help us be successful as we age.

Manage our expectations. We are not always going to be at the pinnacle of healthy aging, and that’s okay. We need to make our expectations something that are attainable.

Interact with positivity. Research shows that when you interact with positive people and places, you’re more likely to embrace positivity as well.

Looking for positives. We know that bad things happen sometimes, but when you take the time to truly reflect, you’ll find something positive that came from the situation.

Escaping ageism. Make it a priority to escape stereotypes associated with aging. Your age does not define who you are.

Being healthy. We know that there are a lot of healthy behaviors that we should be doing, but we don’t always do them. Eating healthfully, exercising regularly, taking care of our brain...all of those things lead to successful aging.

I can’ approach. Instead of saying, “I can’t do this or that anymore,” take the ‘I Can’ approach. For example, “I can utilize a cane that will help me move around more safely...”

Give yourself grace. Sometimes we are going to mess up or have a bad day. We need to give ourselves grace so we’re not beating ourselves down when we don’t always embrace positivity. It is okay to not be okay.

The mindset doesn’t have to be that when you get old you are supposed to have gray hair, sit in a rocking chair, knit and stay at home. Many older adults are able to stay active and engaged and not fall in to the stereotypical mindset that older adults are supposed to be sedentary and stuck at home. One helpful K-State Research and Extension publication you may consider reading is *Simple Home Modification for Aging Place*. This publication outlines free or low-cost changes to make the home a safer place to live.

Information comes from K-State Research and Extension Specialist, Erin Yelland.

For more information regarding upcoming programs, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.