

What can we learn from America's fastest growing and least understood age group?

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In 1998, Hallmark unveiled a series of "One-Hundredth-Birthday" cards; by 2007 annual sales of the cards were at 85,000. America is rapidly graying: between now and 2030, the number of people in the U.S. over the age of 80 is expected to almost triple. But how long people live raises the question of how well they live.

The new book, *Aging Our Way (Lessons for Living from 85 and Beyond)* follows the everyday lives of 30 elders—ranging in age from 85 to 102—living at home (and mostly alone) to understand how they create and maintain meaningful lives. Drawing on the latest interdisciplinary scholarship on aging and three years of interviews, Professor Meika Loe explores how elders navigate the practical challenges of living as independently as possible while staying healthy, connected, and comfortable. With nearly 40 percent of Americans 85 or older living by themselves, this is important, timely research.

While most books on the subject treat old [age](#) as a social problem and elders as simply diminished versions of their former selves, *Aging Our Way* views them as they really are: lively, complicated, engaging people finding creative ways to make their lives as enjoyable and manageable as possible. In their own voices, elders describe how they manage everything from grocery shopping, doctor appointments, and disability, to creating networks of friends and maintaining their autonomy.

In many ways, these elders can serve as role models. The lessons they've learned about living in moderation, taking time for themselves, asking

for help, keeping a sense of humor, caring for others, and preparing for death provide an invaluable source of wisdom for anyone hoping to live a long and fulfilling life. Through their stories, Loe helps us to think about aging, well-being, and the value of human relationships in new ways.

Written with remarkable warmth and depth of understanding, *Aging Our Way* offers a vivid look at a group of people who too often remain invisible—those who have [lived](#) the longest—and all they have to teach us.

Provided by Sociologists for Women in Society

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