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Qualities + Attributes

Which qualities, attributes, traits are useful to you as you age?
And which are likely to result in a more challenging ride?

As we get older, we all develop a sense of the qualities that help us navigate life well — and the ones that can make things harder. Research suggests that some attributes are especially important for ageing well, while others can create unnecessary struggle. Character strengths such as curiosity, gratitude, self-regulation, zest, and kindness are associated with better wellbeing, while traits like anxiety, hostility, rigidity, and social isolation are linked with more difficult ageing outcomes.

The good news is that these qualities are not fixed. Over time, we can strengthen the attributes that serve us well and reduce our reliance on the ones that hold us back.

This resource is not meant to be exhaustive. It is simply a starting point for reflection, with a few prompts to help you think about your own strengths, challenges, and the qualities you would like to develop further.

The next pages contain information and some exercises to explore this further, for both useful attributes and the more challenging ones..

Have a look through the lists and choose a few attributes that stand out to you. You might notice qualities you take for granted, strengths you value but do not always use well, or traits you would like to change. You may also think of qualities that are missing from the list but are important to you.

So, turn the page and get started. Bring your curiosity, it's great attribute for any investigation…

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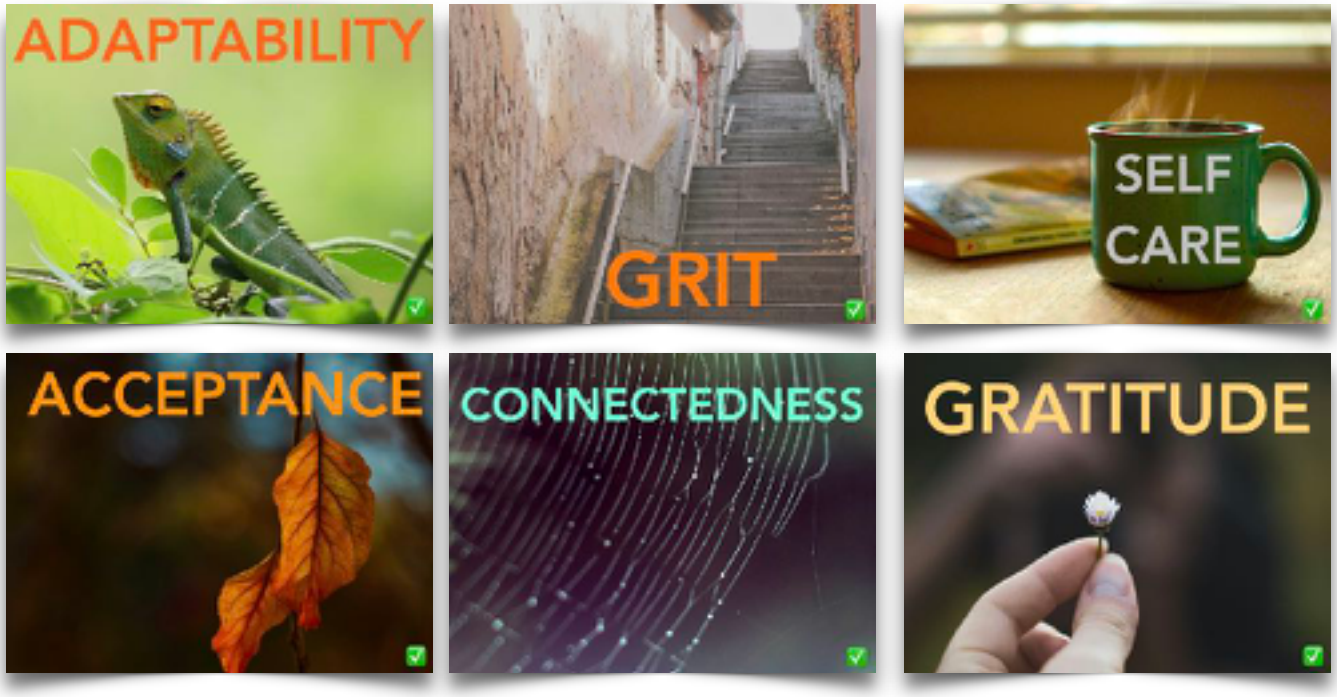
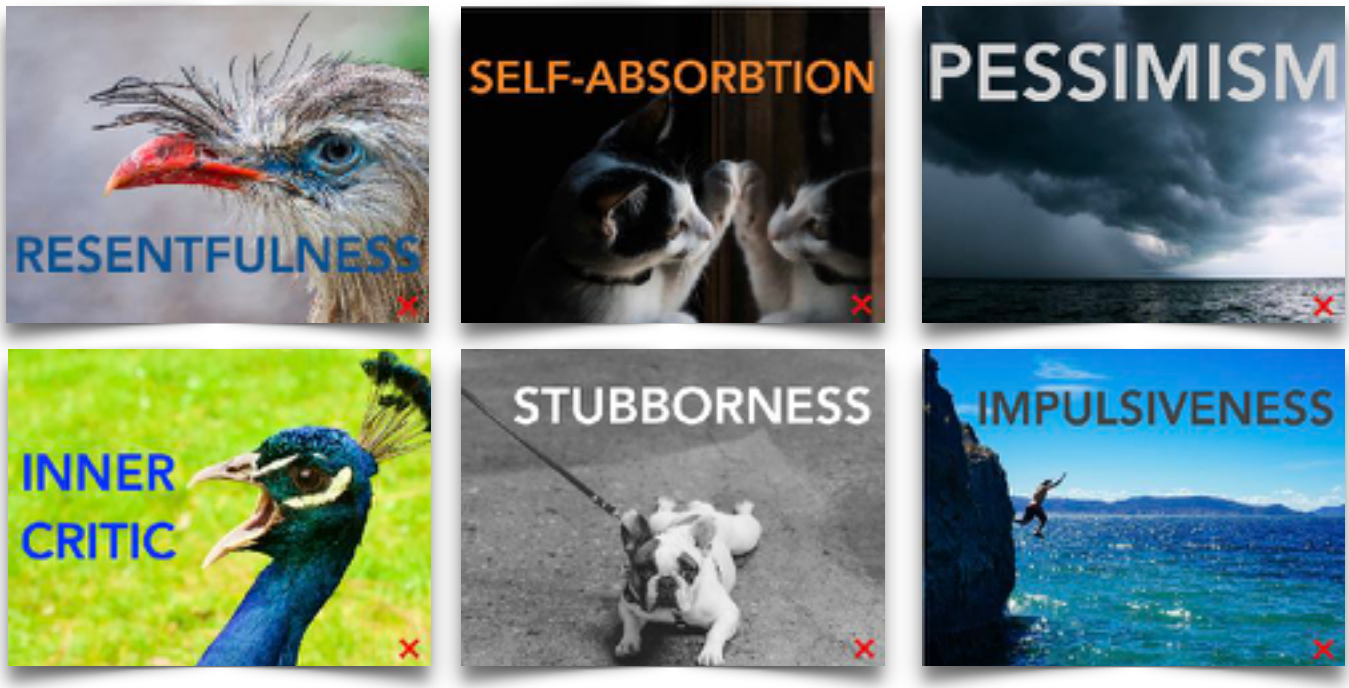
Useful Qualities



These qualities are often linked with healthier, happier ageing:

- Resilience
- Gratitude
- Curiosity
- Flexibility
- Self-regulation
- Hope
- Zest
- Problem solving
- Kindness
- Empathy
- Connectedness
- Acceptance
- Patience
- Self-care
- Resourcefulness
- Ongoing learning
- Self-awareness
- Grit
- Managing time

Challenging Qualities



These qualities can make later life harder if they become too strong or too rigid:

- Hostility
- Resentfulness
- Anxiety
- Inner critic
- Pessimism
- Impulsiveness
- Stubbornness
- Closed-mindedness
- Fearing new experiences
- Social isolation
- Self-absorption
- Unwillingness to seek help
- Over-dependence
- Rigidity
- Resisting useful technology
- Lack of meaning or purpose

Reflections

Take your time with this. You might like to:

- Circle a few qualities that feel very true for you.
- Notice strengths you already have but sometimes forget about.
- Spot patterns you recognise and be curious about whether they still serve you.
- Add your own words or phrases that fit you better than those on the list.

Here are a few questions that might help:

- Are there qualities you take for granted?
- Are there strengths you like but don't always use well?
- Are there habits you'd like to soften or change?
- Are there important qualities missing from this list that matter to you?

Understanding your strengths can help you build a more satisfying later life. Research shows that character strengths such as curiosity, gratitude, self-regulation, zest, and hope are associated with greater life satisfaction, purpose, resilience, and better wellbeing in older adults.

It is also worth noticing the less helpful traits. Patterns such as anxiety, rigidity, hostility, and social withdrawal can increase stress, reduce adaptability, and make it harder to manage the changes that come with ageing.

How to build useful strengths

You can strengthen helpful qualities by practising them in small, regular ways:

- Notice your strengths by reflecting on past achievements or asking others what they see in you.
- Choose one strength to focus on, such as gratitude or curiosity, and use it in a small daily action.
- Keep a simple gratitude or reflection practice.
- Stay socially and mentally active through groups, learning, volunteering, or conversation.
- Link your strengths to real-life challenges by asking, 'Which quality will help me here?'

A simple example

If you want to build resilience, curiosity and zest are a good place to start. Older adults who stay mentally engaged and open to learning tend to report better wellbeing and resilience, while active engagement and positive outlooks are often linked with healthier ageing.

You could do this by:

- Taking a short walk most days.
- Trying one new activity each week.
- Learning one small thing about a topic that interests you.
- Reflecting each week on what helped you cope well.

And whatever you try, find ways to make it enjoyable…

I hope you have found this free resource interesting.

If you are interested in occasional blogposts about getting older, Aussie style, please sign up for my newsletter on my website, where you'll also find more free downloads and other information.

I run workshops from time to time and am happy to come and talk to your community group about flourishing as you age.

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