

Aging is a process we all go through, but how we age varies widely. While most of us focus on **lifespan** — the total years we live — there's another concept gaining more attention among health experts: **healthspan**. Healthspan refers to the years we live in good health, free from chronic disease and disability.

What Are Lifespan and Healthspan?

Lifespan is simply the length of time a person lives. It's a number we often hear about, like "The average lifespan in the U.S. is about 78 years."

Healthspan, however, means the time during which a person remains healthy and can live actively without major illness. For example, someone might live to 90 (lifespan) but suffer chronic diseases in the last 15 years. Their healthspan would be shorter than their lifespan.

This gap between healthspan and lifespan is widening. Advances in medicine keep people alive longer, but many older adults spend increasing years coping with chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

The Growing Chronic Disease Burden

Chronic diseases are long-lasting conditions that generally progress slowly. Among older adults, [what is healthy aging](#) heart disease and diabetes are two of the most common.

- **Heart disease** affects nearly half of adults in the United States age 65 and older, causing reduced mobility and quality of life.
- **Diabetes** can cause nerve damage, vision problems, and other complications that limit daily activities.

These chronic illnesses challenge older adults' ability to stay physically active and socially engaged — key factors for maintaining healthspan.

Why Staying Engaged and Active Matters

Staying engaged means continuing to participate meaningfully in life, whether through social relationships, hobbies, volunteering, or work. **Activity adherence** refers to consistently following through with physical and social activities that promote good health. **Social participation** means connecting regularly with others, which benefits mental and emotional health.

Research shows that older adults who stay engaged and active tend to have:

- Lower risk of cognitive decline
- Better emotional well-being
- Reduced incidence of disability

The Role of Purpose in Aging Well

"Purpose" is a powerful idea that often comes up in discussions of healthy aging. But what does "purpose" actually mean here? Simply put, a sense of purpose means feeling that your life has meaning and direction—something to look forward to that motivates you.

According to Medical Daily, older adults who have a clear purpose are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors, such as regular exercise, social participation, and medication adherence. These activities help close the

gap between healthspan and lifespan.



How Purpose Supports Staying Engaged

When older adults feel they have a significant role or mission, they are more likely to stick to activity routines and remain socially involved. For example, volunteering for causes they care about or mentoring younger generations offers them meaningful interaction and goals that fuel consistent activity.

My Legacy Podcast: Sharing Stories That Inspire Purpose

Legacy+, a company dedicated to helping people find and express their life stories and values, produces the *My Legacy Podcast*. This podcast features stories of individuals who have discovered new purpose in later life, highlighting how purposeful living supports sustained engagement and activity.

Listeners can access the podcast episodes for insight and inspiration on maintaining a sense of purpose well into older age.

The Impact of Social Causes on Purpose—Marc Kielburger and Free The Children

A compelling example of purpose fueling lasting engagement is the work of Marc Kielburger. As co-founder of *Free The Children*, a global educational movement empowering youth, Kielburger has dedicated his life to social participation with meaningful impact.

His efforts demonstrate that adults, including seniors, can find renewed purpose by supporting causes that transcend themselves—building community, promoting justice, and making a tangible difference.

Marc Kielburger's Background and Credibility

Starting *Free The Children* as a teenager, Marc Kielburger grew the organization into an international movement. He is a celebrated speaker and author, highlighting how purposeful social engagement can benefit both communities and individuals' well-being—regardless of age.

His work underscores a simple but powerful truth: engaging in purpose-driven activities fosters both healthspan and emotional fulfillment.

Keeping Purpose Practical: Tools and Resources

Older adults wanting to deepen their sense of purpose, stay active, and remain socially connected have various tools available. The organizations Legacy+ and Free The Children, as well as platforms like Medical Daily, offer resources and ideas.

- **My Legacy Podcast:** Inspirational stories about purpose and engagement, providing actionable ideas to try in daily life.
- **Sharing on Twitter:** Use the Twitter share link to spread awareness and connect with others who value staying engaged.

Finding and maintaining purpose is not about grand gestures; small consistent steps — like joining a community group, mentoring, volunteering, or simply telling your story — build momentum towards a more engaged and active life.

Summary: What This Means for You

Key Concept	Explanation	Why It Matters	Lifespan	Total years lived	We want not just to live longer but better
Healthspan	Years lived in good health	Closely tied to quality of life and independence	Purpose	A sense of meaningful direction	Motivates staying active and socially engaged
Activity adherence	Consistency in health-related activities	Improves physical and mental health	Social participation	Regular interaction with community	Boosts emotional well-being and reduces isolation

Simply put: cultivating a sense of purpose can help older adults stay physically active, socially connected, and emotionally fulfilled. This not only closes the healthspan-lifespan gap but also makes the years lived more enjoyable and meaningful.



Learn More and Share the Message

Interested in hearing personal stories about purpose and aging? Check out the My Legacy Podcast by Legacy+. If you find the info helpful, please share it using the Twitter share link. Spreading awareness can inspire others to embrace purpose and improve their healthspan.

For ongoing health news and practical insights into aging well, visit [Medical Daily](#).

Remember, purpose is a tool accessible to everyone, and its power to keep older adults active and engaged is backed by both research and inspiring real-world examples.