

Over 45 and getting younger

One active senior shares his 'tools' for a youthful life, writes Emily Jade

When international speaker Gary Douglas was a young man working on a horse farm, every day a sprightly 90-year-old would arrive to ride his gelding. "He'd climb up this huge horse and then race his gelding as hard as he could and he never fell off." Witnessing this daily, Douglas vowed that he was going to be just like him when he grew up.



Gary Douglas rides spirited stallions for a hobby

Now a vibrant 70-year-old grandfather himself, Douglas is well on his way to achieving just that. He works 12-hour days, rides spirited stallions for a hobby and openly proclaims that, for him, "life is just beginning".

Douglas will be on the Sunshine Coast and in Brisbane this week to share his 'tools' on how to age better through a series of seminars called Over 45 and Getting Younger.

While most 70-year-olds are winding down, maybe going on the occasional cruise or international holiday, Gary Douglas is touring the world sharing his tips to living longer and still keeps his eyes open for new business opportunities. One of his latest projects is a luxury antiques store, The Antique Guild, which will open in Brisbane's Stamford Plaza on 24 June.

Douglas has been collecting antiques since he was 19 and hopes to create "the most beautiful store in Australia" with his collection of paintings, furniture, statues and jewellery. "I like the class and the amount of love that went into creating antiques," he explains. "Each one is an artwork that soothes the soul and pleases the eye and each antique has been caressed and loved enough to keep it in existence."

So is love a key to living younger, I ask. "Not really, I've been married twice, both disasters, I don't pick women well. When I got divorced my wife gave me some good china. I put it away and thought someday I'll have a dinner party ... then I thought, hang on a minute, what do I mean someday? I'm going to make my life a celebration and so I bought expensive crystal glasses to go with the expensive china and celebrated straight away."

Celebrating life seems to be his answer to living younger. "Don't have any fixed points of view, it only causes diminishment. A friend of mine got cancer and decided she had reached

the pinnacle, and from there I watched her falling apart because of her point of view. She stopped trying to do anything to hold onto what she had. You have got to be willing to keep creating and celebrating otherwise you will end up in an awful place. I watch people do it all the time."

Douglas says once people get over 45 they start placing limitations on themselves and

start buying into the way society tells you ageing should be experienced. Plus worldwide research has found that people in their mid-40s are the most vulnerable to unhappiness and depression and this statistic increases with age.

"The point of view that society values youth and beauty and that life is geared towards 'retirement' in our later years is dangerous. What if retirement is not the end of you (and your body) being valuable, generative and creative?" he asks.

At 70 Douglas looks incredibly fit, he claims to have had no botox or surgery and his fitness regime is simply walking, riding horses and doing "whatever I want", he says, including smoking the occasional cigar and drinking three or four times a week. But surely at 70 some parts of his body are wearing out? "I do wear glasses and it's annoying, but I have learned to be at peace with my body."

One of the 'tools' Douglas uses in his seminars challenges people to live in 10-second increments. "If you had only 10 seconds to live what would you do? If you live in 10-second increments how can you hate your husband today? When you do on occasion hate your spouse, ask yourself, can I have a different reality? We have the capacity to change anything, we just have to choose it. Choose to live younger. I am always generating and creating life; when you have decided you have lived your life, you stop."

But we are all going to die eventually, so I ask Douglas if he has thought about how he would like to die. "Yeah, I want to die having too much fun. I ride stallions and people tell me all the time I'm too old to ride such big fast horses, but if I die falling off that horse I will die happy."

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