

## The Case for Revolution

Leave it to an architect to bring clarity and simplicity to a topic as complex as aging.

That's what architect Matthias Hollwich does in his book, *New Aging: Live Smarter Now to Live Better Forever* (<http://new-aging.com/>).

Hollwich has researched aging at the University of Pennsylvania and is the co-founding principal of the New York City architecture firm Hollwich Kushner (HWKN).

Though his profession is the built environment, Hollwich focuses not just on physical space, but also addresses all the shifting parts associated with getting older and suggests ways to adapt so you can embrace aging and do it well.

### Aging is a Gift

He also calls for a revolution. Against ourselves.

Or rather against our views on aging.

Rather than seeing it as a process fraught with fear, sadness, and loss, aging should be considered a gift and

an opportunity—something empowering and something to celebrate.

The book, which can be read in a sitting or two, doesn't provide exhaustive detail concerning the how-to of aging. Instead, it suggests ways to reimagine the process and think about the actions that will lead to a more fulfilling life socially, physically, and emotionally.

Hollwich makes his case in nine brief, readable chapters that include "Love Aging," "Be Social," "Never Retire," "Access vs. Mobility," and "Our Homes are our Castles."

### Banish Last Century Thinking

Hollwich's video presentation, "8 Rules To Age Better" (<http://bit.ly/2qjY2iu>), and the book are an indictment of current senior housing options. He calls assisted living and retirement communities "outdated venues from the last century."

He describes nursing homes as storage facilities.

## Home Belongs to You, Not Your Future Buyer

So one key step to successful aging is rethinking how we house ourselves.

In that video, Hollwich points out that most people buy homes and condos with an eye toward reselling them. "It means we buy a home for the next person, not ourselves. We have to make sure the home is for us and is adequately prepared for things that might go wrong," he says.

His view is that we should turn our home into our castles.

The surrounding space – the city and neighborhood – is equally as important as the house when you're looking to support your needs and desires as you age.

Think walkability, amenities and services, recreation, restaurants and public places that you can reach easily and that will help you to stay connected with life, the community, and people.

**Good idea:** *Yes, the best plans for aging can veer off course. Have a room with a view and make certain that your bedroom is a beautiful place, just in case it becomes your primary living space temporarily or for the long term due to an illness or accident.*

## Get Social

You know that loneliness and isolation are killers during old age, so strong

human bonds are crucial to long-term happiness.

Start building that social web now, not when you're old and you desperately need it.

Three ideas for finding relationships include:

**1. Family.** Think of your three best friends and start considering them your siblings. After all, the notion of family is evolving and it's not just blood relatives who can be in our inner circle.

**2. Colleagues.** Leave a job and you often leave colleagues – those with like interests – behind. Why? Stay connected with them. They may become dear friends or they may be the people you tap when you have an idea for a new venture.

**3. Neighbors.** Robert Frost's proverb, "Good fences make good neighbors" may not be a smart move. Schmooze with your neighbors. Turn them into friends.

Volunteering, offering to help others, exercising with friends, Skyping with loved ones, and creating a weekly communal dining experience at your favorite restaurant all help to nurture those relationships.

## Innovation to the Rescue

The hope is that the human connections will help when life gets difficult. But Hollwich also is hopeful about conveniences and technologies that

increasingly allow people to age better than previous generations have.

Those include things like food delivery services, Uber, apps that help you stay active, and technology that can connect you to your doctor digitally. And as technology evolves, those innovations will only get better.

**Good idea:** *Share a person. At some point, you may need help around the house, assistance with dressing or showering, or someone to do tasks once a week. But hiring a full-time person may be too costly or unnecessary. Why not gather together some friends and hire a professional that you can share?*

“Old people are you and me in a few years,” says Hollwich.

So no one is too young to create a vision for aging. Prepare your home and

build your social network so you can craft a rich life and find an antidote to loneliness and adapt to the vagaries of old age.

And be sure that you'll be living in your castle, not in a storage facility.

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