



WHAT'S YOUR REAL AGE?

By Lisa Rapple M.Ed, RRT

After putting in a few “decades” as a human being, I have a sense of what I may be doing that helps or hurts my longevity in this world. I also know that some of the deck is stacked and some of the deck is negotiable. To quantify my longevity based on all those factors is an impossible task. So, I put on my rose colored glasses and I tell myself that I’m content to count out my age in chronological years and hope I’m helping to extend my life as I go along.

Working in the ED you can become particularly grateful with how well you are weathering life, when you see examples of extreme aging pass through the double doors. You know the conversation that goes something like this, “when you see patient XYZ, you will never guess their real age!” It can be obvious on the outside how some hard living can accelerate the aging process.

One of Oprah Winfrey’s most popular guests is Dr. Oz, one of the authors of the “YOU the Owner’s Manual” series of books. I read

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the manual, (in it’s entirety, I might add) during a particularly slow 12 hour night shift. From an educator’s perspective it is very well done. The YOU docs are very good at educating us on how the body works and how to take care of it. So, being familiar with the work, a bit, I was intrigued to take a look at the

website that Dr. Oz and his partner, Dr. Roizen created called “RealAge – Live Life to the Youngest”. The website is located at www.realage.com

The centerpiece of the RealAge website is a test to determine your physiological age versus your chronological age. Of course I started out immediately with the RealAge test when I first arrived at the site. After a very brief sign in (I gave my e-mail address and chose a password) I began the test. The test is a series of 132 questions that look at family history and lifestyle choices. The five categories of questions are: health, habits, relationships, diet, and fitness. Information from the questions is used to determine if you are physiologically younger, older, or the same as your birthday age. You can return and update the information at any time. It takes about 20 minutes to complete.

I also asked a colleague at work if he would take the test and share his results with me. I’m glad we didn’t bet money or make it a competitive thing, because I got the short end of the stick. While the test added 2.2 years to my several decades, it launched this guy

(chronologically 24 years old) back to being a teenager at 16.6 years young. So much for my rose colored glasses. His wife of the same age took it as well. She leaped forward to 27 years old. He feels like he’s married to an “older woman” now. It’s got a little mystique to it. I, on the other hand, just feel like an older woman.

But anyway, Dr. Roizen claims to have used a broad scope of research (over 33,000 articles) on which he bases the calculations used in the test of longevity. At the heart of the extensive calculation are 1200 studies extracted from that research base and placed in a “proprietary database”. There is no way to exactly calculate every variation or take into account factors that intermingle with one another, but the test attempts to recognize these combining factors. For example, aspirin reduces age by 2.2 years at 55 and 2.9 years at 70. Of course, this is not an exact science, BUT it is science-based. Even though we can never know our “RealAge” with the accuracy suggested by the test, it can give you the best guess there is available. One other important mitigating factor we mustn’t overlook. It goes back to the old saying “garbage in, garbage out”. The test is totally dependent on the user being honest....or as honest as possible in the privacy of your own cyber-world.

The purpose of the RealAge test is to engage the user in exploring healthy lifestyle adjustments. As you take the test you are given the option to check or uncheck boxes based on your health interests. These are used to customize informational e-mails from RealAge. I probably checked about 20 items in the list and would gestimate that I have received approximately one or two e-mails every one to three days, none of which have been advertisements. The entire website for *continued on next page*



“We’re not a good match, Dave. I need a man with a full tank of gas.”

RealAge is extensive. Materials presented are interactive and media-rich. There are many community-based activities. You can create a screen name and participate in chats and support groups.

As you navigate the site the information is customized based on the results of your test. Also recommendations are personalized where ever you navigate on the website, and information is pre-filled for you. So the more quizzes you take on the site, the more personalized the information becomes.

It is impossible to describe the vast amount of material at the website. To give you an idea of the diversity of material here is a sampling of items; exercise videos that you can customize and play, an interactive Sudoku game to keep you brain healthy, news feeds on medical health issues (rated by readers), recipes, recipes, a video tutorial on selecting walking shoes, a video tutorial on how to slice vegetables, and on and on.

From the home page it can be broken down into seven areas. "My RealAge" tab is your personalized screen. You pick a screen name, check your mail, and check your plan. Next is "Connecting with Others" where there are message boards for diet/health, smoking, and parenting. The "Check Your Health" tab is sub-categorized into Men's Health, Women's Health, and Kid's Health. "Eat Smart" addresses nutrition, cooking, and food safety. "Soothe Stress" features sleep, mind and mood, and financial health. "Look Young" features skin, hair and healthy aging. "Shape Up, Slim Down" contains a fitness center and diet center. The lion's share of the site is devoted to The Wellness Center where you will find quizzes and tools to assess your health. Lastly, the YOU Docs have a daily column and daily podcast.

Of course there is advertising throughout the site, and plenty of it. Just watch where you click. It isn't too annoying IMHO. I would recommend signing up for a few of the topics for e-mails. You only get what you are interested in. And take a minute to check out the You Extended Warranty Plan. It is a very simple plan to help you make a few healthy lifestyle changes that can add years to your life.

I'd like to finish by giving you the "Top 12 Ways to Make Your Real Age Younger." That way you can get a little hedge over the 24 year old in your office who is 'really' 16 years old. Or at the very least it will stimulate you to make some easy lifestyle or life habit changes. Here they are according to the YOU Docs:

1. Take Your Vitamins (6 years younger)
2. Quit Smoking and Avoid Passive Smoke (8 years younger)
3. Know Your Blood Pressure (25 years younger)
4. Reduce Stress (erase 30 years of aging caused by stress)
5. Floss Your Teeth (6.4 years younger)
6. Be Active (5 years younger)
7. Wear Your Seatbelt (3.4 years younger)
8. Fill Up on Fiber (2.5 years younger)
9. Monitor Your Health (12 years younger)
10. Take the RealAge Test
11. Laugh a Lot (8 years younger)
12. Become a Lifelong Learner (2.5 years younger)

"Over your lifetime, you can make your RealAge as much as 26 years younger. That means that you will live younger every day, and live longer with as much health and energy as possible." – RealAge.com

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