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Prime time rules

A People were not that long ago considered as entering their prime at 40. This was the age at which the of their wisdom and power was likely to be reached. Not any more. For an increasing number of people, it is now much later, between 50 and 65, which is effectively when people are thinking of . And so, far from being the major problem that has been exercising politicians and individuals in recent years, the increasing numbers of active over-fifties with a later and longer prime should be seen as to society, economically and socially. Provided, that is, that they are allowed to contribute to the community.

B Anxiety about funding 'older people' in general is based on a view of the over-fifties and sixties living a life of decrepitude with nursing home care, and being a drain on the country's wealth. Stereotypical images of senior citizens the general population. Perception tests in studies have shown that people who expect the so-called age-related illnesses like deafness and mental decline to happen in their old age conform to the stereotype and the prophecy. Thus, it is not surprising that negative images permeate society. More positive images of people in their prime or older in the media, etc. would be a good start. There are encouraging signs that the boundaries of this stereotype are already being . There are already TV programmes, for example, about people in their seventies and eighties involved in sports like sky-diving more often associated with the young. Some adverts are pushing the boundaries further by using older models to target beauty products at older sections of the population. After all, who has the wealth?

C Before looking at what, if anything, can be done to make sure that people can enjoy their prime and feel they can make a contribution to society, we should look at the causes of longevity. Technological primarily in medical science are often held up as the principal cause. However, education, wealth, and the wide range of leisure pursuits available, along with a host of other factors, have led to a marked in living standards throughout the world. People are, as a result, arriving at the threshold of retirement more active, physically and mentally, than any previous generations and in greater numbers, challenging the view that being 50 or even 60 is old.

D And the magic recipe to enhance our prime? It's all very basic stuff and not really magic at all. It does not need government committees or armies of bureaucrats to devise training packages. People are their 'prime' time without unnecessary interference. Government and planners should seek to inform themselves of what is happening rather than imposing some 'innovation'. Research has shown that physical exercise causes changes in the structure of the brain. MRI scans on a cohort of patients aged 58 to 77 have shown increases in the substance of the brain itself are brought about by exercise. There is evidence that the areas of the brain involved in memory and attention from exercise – the areas that show the greatest age-related decline in humans.

LIVEWORKSHEETS