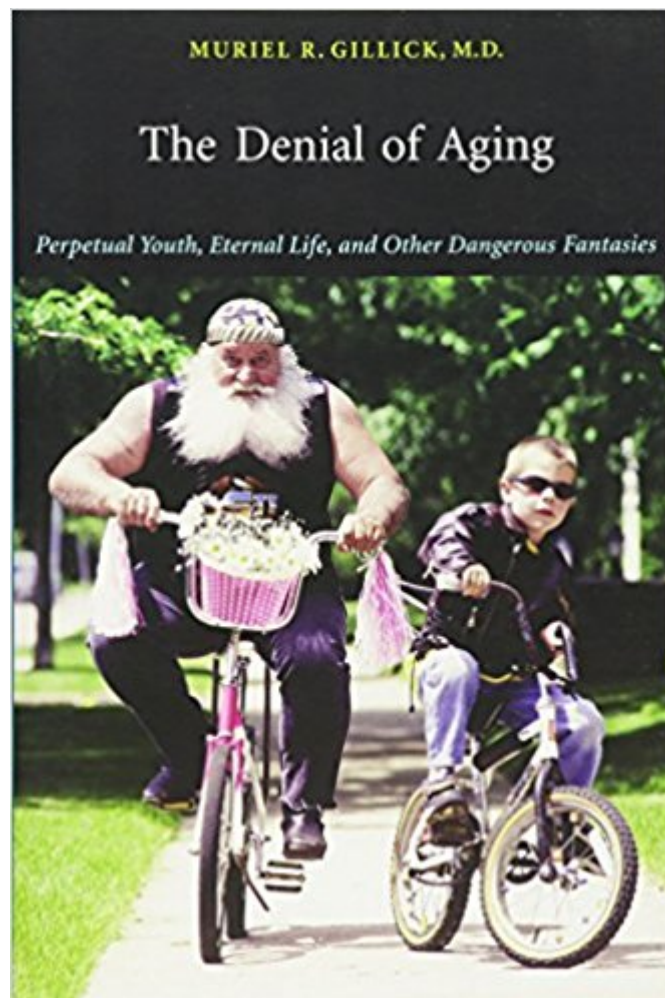




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# The Denial Of Aging: Perpetual Youth, Eternal Life, And Other Dangerous Fantasies



## Synopsis

Listen to a short interview with Dr. Muriel Gillick  
Host: Chris Gondek | Producer: Heron & Crane  
You've argued politics with your aunt since high school, but failing eyesight now prevents her from keeping current with the newspaper. Your mother fractured her hip last year and is confined to a wheelchair. Your father has Alzheimer's and only occasionally recognizes you. Someday, as Muriel Gillick points out in this important yet unsettling book, you too will be old. And no matter what vitamin regimen you're on now, you will likely one day find yourself sick or frail. How do you prepare? What will you need? With passion and compassion, Gillick chronicles the stories of elders who have struggled with housing options, with medical care decisions, and with finding meaning in life. Skillfully incorporating insights from medicine, health policy, and economics, she lays out action plans for individuals and for communities. In addition to doing all we can to maintain our health, we must vote and organize--for housing choices that consider autonomy as well as safety, for employment that utilizes the skills and wisdom of the elderly, and for better management of disability and chronic disease. Most provocatively, Gillick argues against desperate attempts to cure the incurable. Care should focus on quality of life, not whether it can be prolonged at any cost. "A good old age," writes Gillick, "is within our grasp." But we must reach in the right direction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From diets to cutting-edge diagnostic technology, Americans spend billions of dollars—  
not to mention untold hours of anxiety—staving off the aging process. In this readable examination

of growing old and learning to live with it, Gillick, a Harvard Medical School associate professor, is pitiless as she critiques the current medical mantra of "health maintenance," observing that warding off death via endless testing and dangerous invasive procedures is "a hopeless and counterproductive aim" hurting, rather than helping, the elderly. She persuasively argues for "intermediate care," "a middle ground between maximally aggressive care and exclusively comfort-oriented care" involving, among other things, less expensive screening for some ailments after a certain age and, when possible, treating patients at home. This means fewer trips to the emergency room and fewer admissions to hospitals, which, in addition to being the most expensive means of delivering health care, also have proven to be places where the elderly actually suffer unnecessarily and often die prematurely. Gillick concludes that "a good old age is within our grasp," provided we rethink our approach to urgent or acute care, provide compassionate support to the elderly, and accept the fact that no one lives forever. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Harvard physician Gillick lines up all the baby boomer antiaging fantasies--diet and exercise can conquer all, youth can be preserved, there is such a thing as an eternally healthy life, and, best of all, everyone will simply drop dead at the curb one day as he/she takes out the garbage--and systematically shoots them down. The simple truth, she says, is that no one passes through this mortal coil without illness or injury, particularly at the end, so we'd better start planning for the inevitable. With personal anecdotes and stories taken from the files of her practice, Gillick demonstrates how current medical practices don't always correspond to patient expectations. Particularly when it comes to making decisions about aggressive medical intervention with a close-to-death patient, she suggests a middle road is often preferable though too seldom taken. In language straightforward enough to draw the occasional wince, she points out inadequacies of most individual end-of-life plans and existing support agencies' woeful underpreparedness for the looming needs of aging millions. Donna Chavez Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Disregard the 1-star rating. I intended to rate it 5 (best), but I can't find a way to to edit the rating. This is a very good book with a bad title and a very bad cover illustration. The publisher must have had it in for the author. It might better have been called "Facing Old Age - Yours Or Your Parents" As Dr. Gillick uses the term, "Denial of Aging" simply means that pretending you're not

getting old doesn't work. "Eternal life," in the subtitle, is not a theological concept but a reminder that, eventually, you will die. Muriel Gillick is a geriatrician and medical professor whose concern for her patients has turned her into an advocate for the elderly in assisted living facilities and nursing homes. At times she can even be their advocate against their caregivers. It is to caregivers that she addresses her most heartfelt advice. Paraphrasing, it is that ultimately, when hope is gone, it's OK to let go. At the end, the answer to "We can't just let her die", is "Yes, you can." In the rest of the book, she offers advice to caregivers looking out for their relatives. She considers assisted living and nursing homes to be a continuum. The former, after a time, leads to the latter; meanwhile, the cost increases as the assisted living facility finds - or asserts - the need for added services. I gave copies of this book to my two sons, who may someday have to be my advocates. I told them that I hope they don't need it for a while and, when they do, they should check to see if Dr. Gillick has updated her advice to deal with our ever evolving health care system. But until that happens, this is the book I want them to have.

Informative and well written. Some of her suggestions for improving the quality of life for the elderly are unrealistic in terms of cost.

This book helped me to understand and accept my situation as daughter to an aging father who died in hospice at 92. Thank you Dr. Gillick!

I am 65 and needed to read this!

Compelling perspective on changing our philosophy towards treating disease in elderly.

The price and for a used book it was in good shape. Thanks!

Denial of Aging is both a call to arms and a personal guide. It connects two themes: 1) most of us will become infirm eventually; 2) when that happens, our medical care system will fail us, often worsening quality of life instead of improving it. Two kinds of failures are Medicare rules that favor institutional care over care at home, and a fixation on (expensive) high tech treatments that have a low chance of success in the infirm elderly, but that carry a high rate of complications. Dr. Gillick shows that we can avoid some of these problems through individual choices, but that others require concerted political action -- for instance, making Medicare more responsive to the needs of the

infirm elderly. After you read this, send it to your legislators.

I read this book thinking that it would deal with "The Denial of Aging -- Perpetual Youth, Eternal Life, and Other Dangerous Fantasies", but the book is definitely not about these things. Perhaps the title of the book could be "Old Age Sucks, But It Doesn't Have To Be That Way". The author has written an OK white paper on the state of the world for the frail and demented, and has proposed some changes to the laws, the workplace, and the culture of the US. Interesting stuff, a few disturbing facts (example: "Among people over 70 who sustain a cardiac arrest outside the hospital, fewer than 1% survive"), but nothing to do with the photograph on the front cover of the geezer on the little kid's bike. Too bad.

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