

A good old age is something to wish for, but for many it can be out of reach

[Letter to the Editor, Boston Globe, September 29, 2024](#)

The cheerful, well-meaning article [“Is how we age a choice?”](#) by Claudia Kalb may help people who have internalized ageism or who need to get out more. But the question of “how we can flourish rather than wither” in our “encore years” is more complex than she makes it out to be.

What about people with disabilities, if other members of our ableist society don't live up to the Americans with Disabilities Act?

What about Americans who have chronic illnesses that are not medically attended to because they cannot afford health care? What about doctors who ignore our ailments because we look so old they think nothing can be done?

What about indigence in old age, which is becoming more common because many don't earn enough in midlife to save for later life? What about people in bad, understaffed nursing facilities where there are few activities?

Any geriatrician or gerontologist or age critic could go on and on. We are tired of attitudes that ignore poverty, public policy, and meanness — forces that are largely out of our control and that keep us from welcoming our advanced years as they should be welcomed. Of course everyone would like to have a good old age, good long-term care if needed, and a good-enough death.

My plea: Turn your hearts and eyes to reform.

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The writer is the author of the forthcoming book “American Eldercide: How It Happened, How to Prevent It.”