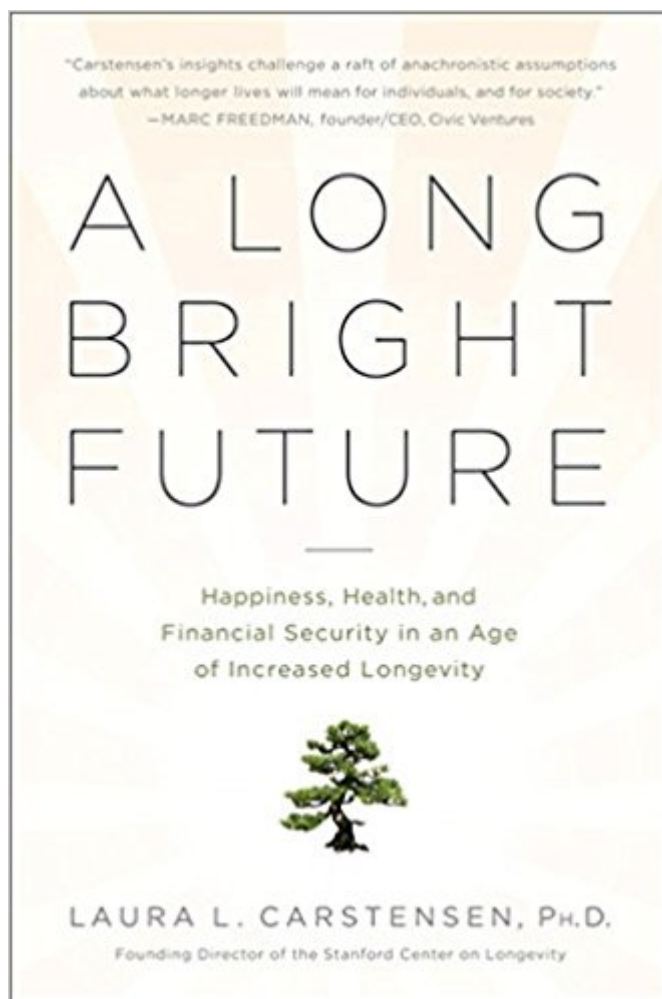


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A Long Bright Future



Synopsis

The twentieth century bequeathed us a fabulous gift: thirty more years of life on average.

Supersized life spans are going to radically alter society, and present an unprecedented opportunity to change our approach not only to old age but to all of life's stages. The ramifications are just beginning to dawn on us.... yet in the meantime, we keep thinking about, and planning for, life as it used to be lived. In *A Long Bright Future*, longevity and aging expert Laura Carstensen guides us into the new possibilities offered by a longer life. She debunks the myths and misconceptions about aging that stop us from adequately preparing for the future both as individuals and as a society: that growing older is associated with loneliness and unhappiness, and that only the genetically blessed live well and long. She then focuses on other important components of a long life, including finances, health, social relationships, Medicare and Social Security, challenging our preconceived notions of "old age" every step of the way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Huffington Post "Many great minds are committed to redefining aging and retirement models that embrace this new reality. One of them is Laura Carstensen. Carstensen has been on the forefront of research on aging for nearly 30 years."

Laura L. Carstensen, Ph.D. is a professor of psychology, and the founding director of the Stanford Center on Longevity. Her research has been supported for more than twenty years by the National Institute on Aging. A Guggenheim Fellow, an NIH Merit Award winner and a member of the

MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on an Aging Society, she lives in Los Altos Hills, California.

I read this book after seeing Laura Carstensen quoted in Time Magazine's excellent multi-faceted March 2, 2015 cover story on aging. Ironically, I was reading this while waiting as my wife was getting cataract and lens replacement surgery that will enable her to see better than she's ever seen in her entire life. Along with about 30 other "old people" who were about to experience the same miracle of modern medical technology on an assembly line to fix their eyes for life in a 10-minute operation. The previous reviews here for "A Long Bright Future"--while mostly 4- and 5-star--seemed somehow less than passionate, as was the audience to whom Carstensen presented in a 2012 TED YouTube video soon after "A Long Bright Future" was published. It's hard to be passionate about something none of us really understands nor appreciates yet ... that we are the first demographic cohort to really experience not just the government's plan for how Social Security, Medicare and 401(k)s will work together to sustain our after-work passage but also to learn how to make the most of additional years of longevity that we are all inheriting. It's kind of a "be careful what you wish for" circumstance we find ourselves in. We are constantly guilty for not saving enough for retirement, but no one ever planned for us to live this long or to have access to medical innovations that are adding quality years if not decades to our lives. As a 65-year old who still enjoys working, I read much of the daily barrage of articles and books about preparing emotionally and financially for retirement and have posted several of my reviews on for books like "Falling Short" and "Unretirement." "A Long Bright Future" adds a broader perspective to the discussion by reassuring us that we're not stupid for not preparing. We just need to appreciate what's happening in a broader, more opportunistic way. Several of the reviews here also raise the questions, "who is this book for?" and "who can best benefit from its message?" One reviewer was disappointed that Carstensen didn't describe what the future was actually going to be like. This reminded me of conversations I used to have with a colleague who also enjoyed science fiction movies that portray the future. He observed that most future visions were broken-down architectures from where we live in today, often bleak and dark, but with some cool new technology in the middle of the scenes. Think "Blade Runner." Carstensen points out that it's difficult for each of us to really envision a future that's not deeply impacted by what we know and do today. So, it seems to me that this book will benefit people of all age groups, but probably mostly 40- to 70-somethings will take the time to read it. But in doing so, we can all benefit in realizing that we can be productive and offer value to others for much longer than today's political debates and financial industry alarmists portray. Because as

difficult as it is to make good decisions, many of these debates and alarmists are correct that something must be done if we are to live into our 90's and beyond. Laura Carstensen helps to us to think and plan at a deeper level to take better advantage of the extra time we have to gain greater satisfaction in what we can do for others and for ourselves.

This is the first time I have been compelled to submit a review of a book on . I just finished reading Dr. Carstensen's book and I am so excited to share it with others. Fortunately, I will be able to do so as I will be teaching a class entitled "Growing with Intention: Having the Life you Want after Age 40" through my local college's continuing education program starting in February 2011. Dr. Carstensen's book challenges baby boomers to change the way aging is viewed in our culture. I am so encouraged by her message. And, I am so thankful that I discovered this book just in time to share it with my students!

Dr. Carstensen has a sensible outlook for the future of folks as they get older. Her book is extremely well researched and annotated. Even if one is not particularly interested in the study of aging, "A Long Bright Future" would serve one well in helping to divine a clearer vision of the aging process, how it can be managed successfully for the individual and society as a whole.

We need more of this as we find ourselves here longer. Even for the shorter journeys, this is a thought-provoking book.

A well written book on getting older, full of studies, theories, ideas to put to good use. However, as an aged person myself I found some of the suggestions impractical for those of us who have already reached our "older " years. The author suggests a complete cultural change, which in my experience is not too practical, more a wish than a hope. However, there are some good points in it for all generations to consider.

The underlying message about the aging of our population and some of the consequences was straightforward (although not necessarily "new news"), but the latter chapters I found somewhat repetitive and disappointing (perhaps I was looking for that "bright" future)

So much incredible information within the pages. A must-read for everyone! Laura writes beautifully and gives us all much food for thought.

As a member of the recently retired Boomer generation, I found Laura Carstensen's analysis and outline for redefining life stages to be most interesting. A needed economic, political, and cultural shift. It has caused me to rethink how I can positively impact others as I live my life and continue to grow older.

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