



## Bring on the *Grownups!*

By Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D.

**Where's the gravitas? Where are the leaders? I know there's talk that people want to be forever young but I'd like to make a counter-argument. If there was ever a time that the world needed some grownups (or at least some grownup behavior), it's now.**

While there's a lot that's attractive about the energy, taut skin and good intentions of youth, we could sure use some more experience, seasoned reasoning and levelheaded wisdom.

Bring back the elders; we don't want the best sitting on the bench.

Warren Buffett, the 79-year-old lion of American industry and commerce, has been in the media of late, taking strong, thoughtful positions on our economic state.

**Barbara Walters at 80 is all over** the airways and at 58, Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger miraculously landed his plane on the Hudson River with no casualties. And that's how it should be.

This is no time for our most experienced professionals to be on the bench, dismissed from the game just because they've reached an "age of retirement" that is obsolete anyhow.

**It's time to retire retirement** because 65 is definitely not old anymore and when it comes to getting out of a jam—either financial or mental, who better to help show us the way than people

who have been there before?

Late achievement, while gaining some fresh visibility of late, isn't altogether new. Groucho Marx launched a career as a television show host at 65. Mary Baker Eddy was 87 when she founded *The Christian Science Monitor*. Galileo published his masterpiece, *Dialogue Concerning the Two New Sciences* at 74. Picasso painted *The Rape of the Sabines* at 81. At 91, Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. At 100, Ichijirou Araya climbed Mount Fuji.

I also would make the case, having studied retirement now for 35 years, that most people are not all that happy with the "life of leisure" model of retirement, doing mostly nothing for 20 or 30 years.

**Having more time off to play**, to relax, take an extended break, I totally respect that. But telling people at the top of their game in a longer-lived era, "now just move to the sidelines, you're done," I think is a terrible mistake. It's not good for them and it's not good for our nation.

Here's the irony...the very generation that has tried the hardest to remain forever young may not realize that by seeking to live the Peter Pan lifestyle, we may be avoiding the critical role of growing up.

I know it's hard for this "nip and tuck" generation to imagine but for most of history, maturity was prized. Until relatively recently, the old, more than any other age group, assumed leadership, calmed the worried young and set the example for others.

**Remember that painting of the signing of the Constitution?** No Grecian Formula in that room. Leaders of the time hid their youthful hair beneath wigs that were powdered white to enhance the illusion of age and wisdom.

Those of us who came of age believing that you shouldn't trust anyone over 30 need to reevaluate our stance toward the positive dimensions of the aging process and rethink our place in society. That "won't grow up" attitude is getting old now, too.

**Now's the time to gather up** our wits and life lessons to think on our feet, lead with our hearts, envision new solutions and bring optimism and a can-do attitude to bear on the problems at hand. Be one of the grownups.

---

*Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D. is a psychologist, gerontologist, successful entrepreneur, business consultant and the author of 16 books, including his new book *A New Purpose: Redefining Money, Family, Work, Retirement and Success (Collins Life 3/10)*. He lives in the Bay Area with his wife and children. For more information about Dr. Dychtwald, visit [www.AgeWave.com](http://www.AgeWave.com).*