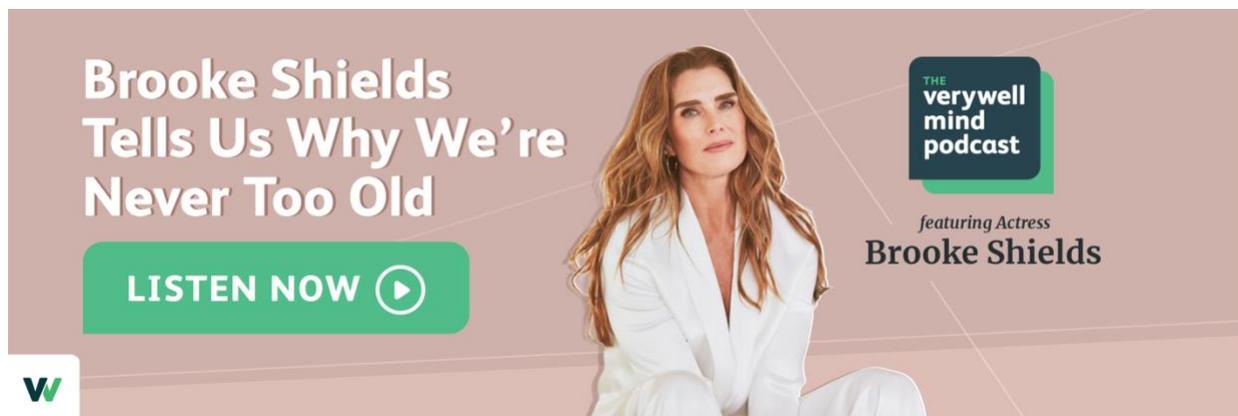




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176 — Brooke Shields Tells Us Why We're Never Too Old

Amy Morin:

Welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast*! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength. Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. And the fun part is we record this show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys!

Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so that you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week.

Now, let's dive into today's episode!

Do you ever think that you're too old to accomplish something? Do you spend a lot of time thinking about how much you dislike growing older? Are you critical of yourself and your body? If you answered yes to any of those questions, this episode is for you.

I'm talking to the legendary Brooke Shields. She's a model and an actress who's appeared in movies and TV shows and has been featured on the cover of magazines across the globe since she was a teenager. And now, at the age of 56, she's talking about ageism.

It's something she's experienced in Hollywood, but something she says is a problem outside of acting and modeling too. She's now on a mission to help people redefine what life can be like after the age of 40, 50, and beyond. Some of the things she talks

about in this episode are the stereotypes of aging that she's combating, how she's discovering new passions in her fifties, and the steps she's taking to deal with the negative thoughts she has about growing older sometimes.

Make sure to stick around until the end of the episode for The Therapist's Take. It's the part of the show where I'll break down Brooke's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life.

So, here's Brooke Shields on how getting comfortable growing older can help you grow mentally stronger!

Amy Morin:

Brooke Shields, welcome to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!*

Brooke Shields:

Thank you so much for having me.

Amy Morin:

Recently, I've heard you speaking a lot about the importance of getting more comfortable with whatever age we are, that there used to be a time where we thought 40, 50, was old, and now we're realizing that life has changed. You don't have to retire in your late fifties anymore. You don't have to take a break from life, but instead, I've heard you talk about how life can just begin as you get older.

Brooke Shields:

It is very, very true.

Not only are we living longer, but the narrative around aging is changing. My messaging, which is why I started Beginning Is Now, my company, was based on that, because I said, "I've done all of these things. I've raised my children. One's in college. Don't have the other one for too much longer before she goes to college."

I'm finding myself saying, "Oh, well, what's next?" Almost every one of my friends is sort of pivoting and starting new chapters, and I thought, "Well, we're not represented in the alcohol industry."

Ageism exists, obviously, in my industry, and you expect it from my industry. You shouldn't expect it, but that's historically what it has been. And so, to see it in life, when this is the period of my life that I finally feel much more confident, less complicated, and very clear about what I want and who I am, and that's only come with years.

Amy Morin:

One of the things I think that helped, too, was a few years ago when J.Lo performed in the Super Bowl and that meme was going around about The Golden Girls. It was a split screen that showed The Golden Girls on one side and J.Lo on another and said, "Your fifties don't have to be about sitting in a rocking chair. It's not about retiring. Instead, we can still be vibrant and happy. We can still make it a fresh start in life."

Brooke Shields:

The point is, we are. That is what we are experiencing.

We've just become used to how we're spoken about. We're told, "You hit a certain age," and they just put you out to pasture. "Your ovaries are no longer going to make the world continue, so we're just going to lump you over there and say you've had a good run."

It's so not the truth. I mean, I don't feel it, and people that I see around me... Luckily, there are companies like Clos du Bois, or Prospect Farms, that I'm really collaborating with, that are focusing on the vitality that comes from this age and from living a full life, and how to keep celebrating yourself.

Amy Morin:

Where do you think that idea came from, that once you get to be a certain age that life is kind of over?

Brooke Shields:

I think it has to do a bit with procreation, historically, and then in talking about menopause, it's looked at as you're some withered, dried up entity.

That type of messaging is something that we got used to accepting, because everything is for younger people. It's flashy and it's fabulous; that's the idea, that that's the only time you're ever really alive and vibrant. I think we've gotten used to it.

I obviously didn't think to question it when I was in my twenties. It wasn't until I got past 50 where I thought, "Wait a minute. There's nobody out there talking to me. They're overlooking me."

I've been fighting ageism in Hollywood since I was about seven. It starts then in Hollywood.

But really, sexiness doesn't have to just be a young person's reality. The commodity of being sexy and vibrant, not being burdened by so many of the things that burden you, whether it's your biological clock, or the way things are laid out for you, because that's what, traditionally, was done.

All those burdens really do shift, and take on different looks and meanings. Really, when it starts, in your forties, that's when I started to not waste time on things that didn't serve me or make me feel good about myself.

Amy Morin:

There's so much pressure, when you look at magazines that target women, or advertisements about the importance of looking younger, to try to make yourself appear like you're more youthful, that, really, "youth" is where it's at; how do we fight against that idea that it's okay to be older?

Brooke Shields:

I could argue that I am part of that problem. I'm in the advertising world, and the way I look has always been first and foremost what people pay attention to. That was my job, over the course of decades.

But I really think that it is changing. You are seeing inclusivity, gender-wise, body-wise. What we are saying is a body, a real body, not just this one thing and not just this one thing. It's about keeping the dialogue going, but sometimes it just starts at home.

I do it. How can you not pick somebody out and say, "Oh, I want to do that. What are they doing?" I think the thing that's the most important is not just necessarily yes, if someone has achieved something, or they are physically fit in a way that is attractive to you or that's what you want, learn from them, ask questions, but when it gets right down to it, you're only going to be able to find the happiness, confidence, peace, and the acceptance of your uniqueness inside you.

When you start to realize how the uniqueness and individuality of people and women, your friends, and then you listen to how they beat themselves up or the one thing they don't like, they make set the precedent for their whole... The more that I've started to support my friends and compliment them on things that I think are beautiful, like naturally, really curly hair, or whatever the thing is that you focus on.

The more you start going outside of yourself instead of comparing yourself, comparison is the kiss of death. We all do it. I remind myself daily not to do it. It's a human condition. But, I really do think the more that you celebrate other people, it starts to reflect back to you.

You start to say, "Instead of we need to homogenize what perfection is," you start realizing the beauty of it is how different we all are.

Yeah, there's something that you don't like? Then try to be healthy in the way you want to change it. Or, if there's a procedure that you know you've always hated something.

I don't say don't do anything. I say really try to be honest about what makes you happy, because it's got to be inside. It's not, "If I lose five pounds, I'll be happy." Or, "If just my nose looked different, I'd be happy."

You might want to lose five pounds, you might not. You like your nose, maybe you never did, I don't know, but whatever it is, you have to start within yourself first, and then say, "Okay, I do not want to have this be a part of my life. What are my options?"

When you come at it from a different place, instead of, "I want to look like that, so I'm going to get this done," that's when I think we start changing how we see ourselves. I

think that that's a much safer, healthier, smarter way to go about making small changes that are going to have a big impact on your life.

Amy Morin:

How do we find that balance between self-acceptance and self-improvement, when you say, "Okay, I'll be happier when..." Or, do you just accept, "This is how I look now"?

Brooke Shields:

I think it's harder. It's easier said than done, obviously, but... Okay, if you are only a certain height and you want to be taller, it might not be the easiest thing to achieve, but find a great pair of heels and enjoy that.

The balance has to come daily. I don't think you achieve it, and then you're there. It's like housework. Housework is never done. Getting in shape, you don't just do it once and then stay in shape for the rest of your life.

It's hard, because it starts with asking yourself really positive questions. What do I love about my body? What do I love about my height? What do I love about all the things? You'll find answers to these things. It's not kumbaya, but I think that when you start asking yourself more positive questions, it's saying, "Okay, instead of picking apart the things I hate every day and completely forgetting about all the things that are really unique and wonderful about me," then you start seeing yourself differently.

When you start seeing yourself differently, you start making different choices to support that amazing, beautiful, unique, different person. But, you have to practice it

Amy Morin:

Absolutely. On an ongoing basis.

When you see women who are unhappy with themselves, is it usually about their appearance? Is it more about what's going on in their lives, that they aren't where they thought they would be at a certain age? Sometimes we set up these expectations of where we think we're going to be when we hit a certain milestone and we're not there yet.

I know you started this project, Beginning Is Now, where you probably hear from lots of women about their struggles and experiences, as well as the things they're celebrating.

Brooke Shields:

What's been interesting is, a lot of the time it's about appearance. For sure.

That's why, at Beginning Is Now, we started with the five-minute workout, the "one-and-done," meaning that this is five minutes, you can do this. This is 10 minutes, you can do this. Even if you just dance like an idiot around your house, the adrenaline is a positive thing. We made it very palatable, and that was our launching pad.

What I'm noticing for women over a certain age, it still may be about weight, or whatever beauty thing that comes with the outside, but what I've noticed lately is this real confusion and fear as to what their next step is.

How do you pivot? Okay, you've done all these things; or maybe you haven't done some things and you want to do them. Or you've raised kids and they're all gone, what are you supposed to do? Run the PTA?

No. Ask yourself, really.

They're starting to say, "I've always wanted to learn this," and I always say, "Well, start. Find a class."

For instance, I've never cooked. I never lived a life that had any regularity to it. I'm starting to want to learn from people and start a little of that. You know what I mean? I don't think I'm going to become a cook, or am I going to necessarily wow my family, but that's something that I never did before.

I encourage women that come to me with that. I say, "Start to actually take steps to decide how you want to live your days." I know that also sounds easier said than done, but you'd be surprised how small, teeny changes can impact the way you see yourself, and that can look like anything. I've been getting a lot more of that once 40 happened.

Another thing that we really try to get the conversation moving is, just because you've hit a certain age doesn't mean you can't get in shape, or that it's all over. Yeah, your hormones change the way you put on weight, or change the way you can exercise, or maybe you've got old injuries, so there's an adjustment that needs to be made.

You have to really start in a small way. I say, you know what? You don't get to just hide behind being "of a certain age," and all of a sudden now you don't want to be healthy and in shape because, oh, well, I'm starting to gain it around my stomach now. So? Find a good ab workout. It's not an excuse, because if we're complaining about it, we don't get to use it as an excuse as well.

It's interesting. The narrative that I'm trying to change is the same narrative that the Clos du Boi wine is starting to try to change. They say there's ageism that's in advertising for that. Same thing goes with... It's not just workout clothes or something, it's in alcohol, too. Chardonnay is said to be the "old people's wine." Well, okay, I don't understand that. If by "old" you mean wiser, more confident, stronger, arrived, energetic?

They're trying to change the whole wording around how they're advertising towards this community. We've done a lot of research and you get all these percentages, but only 37% of people who were 55 or older felt like they were authentically represented when it came to ads for wine.

I think that's interesting. There's a whole lot of people that are left.

Amy Morin:

Right? I think that happens so much with advertising, that we just see younger people are the ones that have fun. They're the ones who are beautiful, they're attractive, they're out there doing stuff. They're changing the world! With the idea that once you hit a certain age, that chapter of your life has closed, and now you're supposed to move on.

But more and more, we're seeing that people are just launching their first business at 50, or they're writing their first book. We just had somebody on our show who wrote her first book in her late eighties.

Life doesn't have to end. You can still learn, you can still go out there and do some amazing things and it's not too late.

Brooke Shields:

We also appreciate our friends, and communing with them. Maybe it is just a glass of Chardonnay and you talk to your friends and laugh. The importance of community, and

lifting each other up, and all of that really leads into this beautiful, untapped chunk of time. It's either you're hot and sexy and fabulous, or you're in dentures or diapers or something.

There's this whole contingent in what is now more the center.

Amy Morin:

One last question for you. For somebody who's not comfortable with whatever age they are, what tip or advice would you have for them?

Brooke Shields:

Find people who are in that age bracket. Find people that inspire you that are that age. Try to learn from them, and find similarities with yourself in them. What triggers you about what they do? Do they wear red lipstick? "That one wears jewelry this way," or, "God, I always wanted to be able to do whatever," and try to find inspiration from people who do profess and talk about why they're comfortable, what their struggles are.

None of us are without struggles. Really, just sort of say, "Aren't I lucky to have gotten another year?" Or, "Isn't it amazing that I still get to wake up in the morning?" There's a lot; we forget about that. I mean, my God, if that isn't in our face right now with what's going on. How do we have anything to complain about?

I understand it. You know, just try to say, wow, you really want to be a teenager again? I don't know, remember how angst ridden that was? I look at my 16-year-old and I'm like, no way do I want to be that other person.

Courtney Cox is a really good friend of mine. I was on Friends just one time and it basically changed my life. She's someone who started playing the piano, I don't know at what age, but she directed the campaign for Clos du Bois. She keeps herself in unbelievable shape. She started really directing. She wasn't directing in her younger years, and now she's had this life. She's a mom. She's gone through many different things in her life, and she's bringing all of that to this newfound phase in her life.

In our industry, it may seem a little bit clearer because if you were an actress, maybe you could direct, but like you said, writing a book, or traveling, or learning a skill, or

picking up the piano, or what have you always wanted to do and didn't think you could do it? A friend of mine, 64 now, she had a trauma in her life and she decided, because of a friend of hers, to take a ballroom dancing class, and now she's the champion ballroom dancer of her age bracket in the States, and travel.

Amy Morin:

I love it.

Brooke Shields:

So just don't get small. Try to widen your vision a little bit.

Amy Morin:

I agree. Be inspired by people, but don't compete with them.

Brooke Shields, thank you so much for being on The Verywell Mind Podcast.

Brooke Shields:

Thank you very much. Verywell Mind. I love that. That's where it all starts. The rest falls into place, if that's real.

Amy Morin:

I agree completely. Thank you. Thank you so much. Have a wonderful day.

Brooke Shields:

Thank you.

Amy Morin:

Bye.

Amy Morin:

Welcome to The Therapist's Take! This is a part of the show where I'll break down Brooke's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life.

Here are three of Brooke's strategies that I highly recommend.

Number one: celebrate other people. It's easy to grow frustrated that other people don't seem happy for you or to be upset that no one has complimented you on something. But it's important to step back and ask yourself, "When was the last time that you said kind things to someone else?" I like that Brooke talked about the importance of celebrating other people and how when you notice good things other people are doing, it can help you see the good things about yourself too. Whether your friend buys a new car, or your sibling is taking up weightlifting, cheer them on. Celebrate their accomplishments, compliment their efforts, genuinely focus on the positive things they're doing, and watch what happens to your attitude about your own life.

Number two: acknowledge what you love about yourself. As Brooke says, most of us are quick to point out what we don't like about ourselves. We think about those physical features we wish were different or we put ourselves down for not being smart enough or not being good enough. It's important to proactively go after the good things about you. Whether you love that your legs are strong, or you appreciate that you're a good listener, remind yourself of those things often. Imagine how you'd feel if you spent more time thinking about the things you loved about yourself, rather than all the things that you don't. Of course, you're not going to change your thinking patterns overnight. Those negative thoughts about yourself won't disappear. But you can get more intentional about thinking about the things you appreciate about yourself, and reminding yourself might help you feel a little bit better.

Number three: connect with people who are doing exciting things. While one 60-year-old's going to be content watching TV all day every day, another one's going to run their first marathon, write their first book, or launch their first business. In fact, there was an ultra-marathon in the Florida Keys a couple weeks ago. That means it involved running a hundred miles in 85-degree weather. Most people who start the race never finish. But I looked at the list of people who finished, which was probably about 25% of

the people who started, and there were several people in their 60s. In fact, there were more 50 or 60-year-olds than 20 something's who finished the race. I love that these people decided they were going to run a 100-mile race at a time when most of us start slowing down. Imagine if you were surrounded by people who set out to accomplish incredible things at all stages of their life.

Don't get me wrong, not being able to run an ultra-marathon at any age doesn't mean that you lack health or that you're not mentally strong enough. The point is, look at what you might be able to accomplish if you went big. The people you spend time with greatly affect how you view yourself and how you view the world. So if the people around you think life is all about being young and youthful, you might adopt that belief too. But if you are surrounded by people who are doing exciting things at all ages (like learning a new skill, taking a new class, or venturing out to new places), you'll be more likely to see that you can do those things too. Excitement for life is contagious, but so is a defeatist attitude.

It's really easy to say, "Well, just surround yourself with amazing people," but sometimes that's tougher to do. If the people in your life aren't excited about the future, find some people who are. Just keep in mind that while it's great to be physically surrounded by those kinds of people, a next best option is to connect with them online. You might find a forum for people who are like you, but you don't necessarily have to know someone in person to be inspired by them. You might follow someone who inspires you on social media or listen to their books or their music. That could go a long way toward changing the way that you view getting older.

In fact, we recently interviewed Edith Eger on this podcast. She was in her late 80s when she wrote her first book, and she wrote her second book in her early 90s. She's proof that you're never too old to do something. She also happens to be a Holocaust survivor. To hear her story, go back and listen to episode 167, and it might inspire you to do something that you thought you were too old to do.

So those are three of Brooke Shield's tips that I highly recommend. Celebrate other people, acknowledge what you love about yourself, and connect with people who are doing exciting things at any age.

To hear more about the things Brooke is doing, check out her website beginningisnow.com.

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

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Thank you for hanging out with me today, and for listening to *The Verywell Mind Podcast!* And as always, a big thank you to my show's producer (who seems to get better with age), Nick Valentin.