

Bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel makes his case for why he wants to die at 75

By the time I reach 75, I will have lived a complete life. I will have loved and been loved. My children will be grown and in the midst of their own rich lives. I will have seen my grandchildren born and beginning their lives. I will have pursued my life's projects and made whatever contributions, important or not, I am going to make. And hopefully, I will not have too many mental and physical limitations. Dying at 75 will not be a tragedy.

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I am talking about how long I want to live and the kind and amount of health care I will consent to after 75. Americans seem to be obsessed with exercising, doing mental puzzles, consuming various juice and protein concoctions, sticking to strict diets, and popping vitamins and supplements, all in a valiant effort to cheat death and prolong life as long as possible. This has become so pervasive that it now defines a cultural type: what I call the American immortal.

I reject this aspiration. I think this manic desperation to endlessly extend life is misguided and potentially destructive. For many reasons, 75 is a pretty good age to aim to stop.

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