

My name is Claire Kamibayashi and I'm officially considered an adult. I've been waiting for this moment ever since I was in elementary school. I visualized driving, having a job, as well as living on my own in college. Then I visualized my early 20's when I'm out of college living on my own, possibly in a different city, state, or country. At some point I could see myself as a mom with a husband and kids. I imagined myself to be an adult. Taller, empowered voice, brave and confident, maybe even a few dimples. However, once I turned 18 I began to feel strange about growing up. I couldn't pinpoint why I was feeling this way until I looked inside myself. It led me to think about the aging process and why we desire to grow up as much as we do until we can't slow it down. I didn't think I would worry about how I physically looked. Everything has changed and is still inevitably changing. This terrified me for a while, but instead of feeling afraid of getting older, I decided to look at my life and the subtleties that I do get to experience.

I have all these new responsibilities, like living on my own for the first time without my parents. I have to rely on myself to get things done: get to class on time, get assignments done, make sure I'm taking care of my body by feeding it well and grooming it and budgeting my money. It can be stressful. Is aging going to continue to be stressful? Am I going to have that nice car and great clothes? I don't want to lose happiness to worrying about these new responsibilities. It's time to figure out the perfect ratio on my well being, rather than constantly stressed over aging and where my next paycheck will come from. I know it can be done because generations of people do it. Some try to run away from it and get all the testing and drugs that potentially stop aging, but in the end, we all come to our final days. This is not an easy thing to talk about, but after doing all this research on what people would do to live forever and the readiness of people who want to leave this earth, I found peace with myself. Maybe death isn't such a scary thing after all. Perhaps it only exists to fulfill us rather than to inflict pain on others. The following pages will introduce my take on death, as well as several other doctors and common people on what it means to be human if one cannot die.

Through all my years of living one of the things that struck me is how I want to die. I remember when I was in elementary school my Spanish teacher, Maria Luna, would take us to the Mission Cultural Center for Dia De Los Muertos. We'd look at all the beautiful altars that families made for their deceased loved ones. When entering, we'd pick up what I think was a penny and place it on a circle on the floor and close our eyes. Then we would wish for the way we'd eventually die. This was a strange idea. I didn't really know what to think or wish for. For a while, I thought that dying in a crazy accident would be exciting and memorable. I asked my older brother what he wished for and he said "in my sleep when I'm really old." I wished the same.

When I was ten years old my grandpa died. When I saw him at the funeral home he was lying ever so peacefully in front of me; I would no longer see him running around enjoying life with us. But he was old and old people die. But then I heard my dad say he wasn't that old, he was a stubborn and proud man who wasn't going to call 911 for help when he needed it. It was a personal choice that impacted his time of death. Since then the idea of aging has interested me, it fascinates me how our bodies evolve from babies to teens to adults and eventually dissolves into the emptiness of death. It interests me on how people focus on living longer and make choices to lengthen their lives, such as eating healthy and being active. It interests me that different cultures view the aging processes as positive or negative. Some see wrinkles as an honor of a life lived well,

while others see wrinkles as a horrible reminder of being old and do everything to hide them.

As you read through the “quality of dying and death you’ll find that it’s a subjectively determined, with numerous factors that influence its judgment, including culture, type and stage of disease, and social and professional role in the dying experience.” Having summed up the quality of death and life I’d like to step into a different viewpoint of this topic; living forever. Some strive to live forever because, just like me, they are terrified of deteriorating. I never thought that living forever would be such a bad idea, [well that might’ve been because of all those unrealistic teen movies that been released such as (Hunger Games and In Time).] People who have a higher income live longer lives than the poor. If we find out a way to keep the human body alive forever who will have access to medication and how will with they distribute it? This reality got very intimidating because if we actually somehow develop this magical life pill can we still call ourselves “human”? All of these questions will be answered to my best ability in the next pages as well as how long will it take for robots to be the main source of everything, and after life of “humans”. We will talk about the everlasting humans and who gets to decide if they want to live forever. I will also cover if living forever is the answer to all our problems or if we need to get old to feel fulfilled and what it means to die naturally. Other countries and cultures have their special qualities of life and death, but the one that’s most honored is their qualities of death. I’ll explain what might happen to three very spiritual rituals for death if life on earth takes off. Several tests on eternal life are currently being done; studies show that they have figured out how to elongate a piece of our brain that keeps the bacteria out and eventually destroy our human body. These are all things that are happening right now. Humankind is on the verge of immortality and it’s up to us to decide whom it belongs too.

The quality of life is essential to living a life that makes you happy. In some cases, it will contain nothing else but family and the community around you. In another case money is the quality of life. Dr. Robert Biswas-Diner at Portland State University is the co-author of Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological wealth. Biswas travels the world to measure many different homelands on their happiness. He took a trip to Kolkata (Calcutta) India and lived there for about three months gathering information, but his first day there he found something remarkable. While he was introducing himself to the people of Kolkata he failed to mention anything remotely close to family, love, and community and they said that they’re sorry. They’re sorry that money rules your life. After that small talk Biswas moved in and continued his studies. By the end of his studies he made a chart on a scale of 1-7, 1 being miserable and 7 extremely happy. The people of Kolkata ranked 7-7, while more popular wealthy homelands ranked 1-7. This intrigued Dr. Biswas and his studies will continue further. Not everyone has the same beliefs or methods of testing happiness.

We encounter another doctor who has a completely different view on what happiness is. Dr. Andrew Kohut has strong beliefs that the wealthy are always happier. They are able to fulfill any dreams they have. Studies also show that in the past five years, middle-income households in impoverished countries became happier. They’re able to have a stable lifestyle and not worry about where the next paycheck is coming from. Something that I found interesting was that Kohut states “The rich are always more satisfied with life.” This contradicts all that he said about the rich being happier.

Satisfaction isn't the same as happiness. Satisfaction is fulfillment. One last view on happiness comes from another doctor who experienced his own lifestyle on the subject. Dr. Arthur Brooks found out for himself that happiness has four parts; work, family, community, and faith. Obtain all of these factors in life and you can be happy. Dr. Brooks also said that money has nothing to do with happiness in the long run. Say you get a raise and suddenly started making more money than you ever imagined. That feeling of success and fulfillment only lasts for up to six months, then you start right back at where your happiness level was in the beginning.

I found that it's impossible to measure everyone's view on the quality of life and that some people find it in family or money, depending on the person. If we didn't see money as not being important then we are also wrong. It doesn't have to be a major part, but we do need it to pay for medical advancement, health insurance and shelter. Sadly, the world doesn't get to move on if you don't have money. In the city of San Francisco and many other larger cities money defines your class. You can be very happy either way but that doesn't change the fact that money chooses where you belong. In the movie *In Time* with Justin Timberlake they have different sections blocked off for different classes. All humans stop aging at around 25 and they also have a timer on their forearm counting down. It's not only their expiration date but their money source. Whenever they want to buy something it's no longer green bills they hand over, it's their time and their life. In a way, they already hit the peak of immortality because for the rich they have all time the world can offer, more time than they handle. In one scene Justin goes to a bar and sees this wealthy looking guy spending as much time as he wants on alcohol and Justin walks up to him and says something like "You shouldn't be doing that someones going to rob you." The man then smiles and tells him, "I don't care I've lived long enough." People then come into the bar looking for the billionaire potentially wanting to zero him out (kill him) The wealthy man that couldn't handle living forever is a symbol that humans shouldn't live forever. Just because we come up with a magical pill saying you don't have to die doesn't mean we should take it. If humans stopped aging and could live forever the world would overpopulate. The whole world would have to stop reproducing. Strict laws would be made and death penalties would be more common than ever. If one can't die naturally then they'll find other ways to end their life.

Many people are terrified of dying. We fear it because we don't wish for our bodies to give in and deteriorate into nothing. We're also afraid of not having enough time to do all the things we dreamed about doing but didn't set the time aside to do them. A few of us try to change that by making "bucket lists" so that by the end of our lives we feel like we fulfilled all our tasks in life. We think that if we wish to someday live forever and figure out how to avoid death then we'll never see the day when we become old. Then we can be eternally happy.

Being conflicted about how humans should die and if they shouldn't got me thinking about how I'd want to die. In the beginning of my research my thought on living forever was "it sounds like a trap, I want to get old" but getting old means closer to death, so to clear my mind on such a difficult subject I listened to this Radiolab called "The Bitter End." In this Radiolab episode they interviewed a series of doctors on their views on various end of life conditions. One of the first questions that the doctors gets asked is if they would accept CPR, 90% of them said "absolutely not", almost 100% of common people said they would. Now even I was skeptical as to why the doctors said no

and the common people said “yes.” Here is what I was missing, apparently all those doctor shows I’ve been watching were more inaccurate than I thought. CPR works about 100% of the time in shows, but more than 70% of them don’t work in real life. 3% of the patients who survive, only live for a couple months until they pass away with complications from broken bones and internal organ damage. The patients that are revived from CPR come back as vegetables. They can no longer breath or eat on their own, they rely on hospital equipment. Often times the patient will have a different breathing pattern with the breathing machine so the doctors will make them paralyzed so that they don't battle with the breathing pattern. The other 3% get to live a normal healthy life along with a few broken bones. After that question was asked the two Radiolab hosts asked the doctors “would you use CPR on your patients if you were around and they couldn't breath”? The answer was “no”, but only because he didn’t want them to suffer. His parents did something I believe everyone should do, write a living will. One doctor told a story about his father and how he had written a living will that said “If I'm incapable of making my own decisions then please pull the plug, I may still be alive but I'm not living” . “The only medicine I’ll take would be pain killers to soothe the body.” This research led me to make my own living will. In the beginning I knew that I didn’t want to be in this world if I was being hooked up to feeding tubes or paralyzed in thinking and making decisions for my self. What I didn’t know is that using CPR is possibly the worst thing to get. So my living will is now very similar to the doctor’s dying father. That is, if I can’t make my own decisions and comprehend what is going on in the room around me, then please pull the plug. I’ll refuse the right to CPR, feeding tubes, and breathing tubes. All that I will accept would be painkillers, to feel comfortable in my own skin. Being a vegetable may be considered alive, but being trapped inside your own body without being able to move or speak isn’t living life. It’s being held captive by my family’s decisions.

After humanity there will be immortality. That means all the time in the world to do the imaginable. I believe that if we live forever then we won’t live life to the fullest. We will never know when we lived the best part of life. Laura Cartensen author of [A Long Bright Future: An Action Plan for a Lifetime of Happiness, Health, and Financial Security](#). Believes that as you get older with age you become happier. In her Ted Talk she demonstrates the distribution of age as a triangle with the younger people at the bottom and older people at the top . For The first time in history people are having the opportunity to grow very old, because of cultural changes. They got rid of early death by learning more about aging. Many people believe that as you age your brain goes downhill along with mobility, but Carstensen has different views as a result of her research. She believes that with age your brain will increase in knowledge and decrease in stress levels, creating a happier lifestyle. With age comes experience and realization that life does end, making it easier for older people to solve problems and keep calm. If we decide that we don’t want to die or age then we will be losing these qualities of ourselves. Maybe we won’t need them after we stop reproducing and passing down family traditions. Aging is natural and shouldn’t be permanently messed with. There are reasons as to why we have the time we have. It’ll be selfish to live forever when there are so many humans waiting to have their turn. We should be looking forward to the days when we’re old and wrinkly. There is way too many cultures that have their own spiritual way of saying goodbye and letting go of their loved ones. That will rapidly stop if living forever is an option.

Hispanic, Buddhist and many more cultural ceremonies will be non-existent. If the human race reaches immortality then we lose many cultural traditions, the happiest moments of our lives, and the right to call ourselves humans. Living forever means that we will no longer live each and every day to the fullest and, therefore, waste our forever life.