

Understanding the experience of being aged: What we can learn from community-dwelling elders

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Purpose This hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the meaning of 'being aged' in research conversations with New Zealand Maori & non-Maori elders aged 71 to 97 years.



Methods Narrative data of going about the day were gathered and interpreted through analysing the spoken and unspoken words within each story and across the research text as a whole.

Results The meaning of being aged is in its ordinariness. In this way, being in the ordinary everyday in advanced age both conceals and reveals the phenomenon of being aged.

Being in the everyday

Being aged is ordinarily concealed within a familiar routineness, in always having things to do, and in the purposefulness which comes with making a contribution.

Being with others

The relational quality of being in the world continues through remembering places & people, even when alone, and in being an 'elder' within family or community.

Aging just is

In taken-for-granted ways, letting age happen whilst reckoning with changes that come with ageing, means being aged not 'old' for the sake of carrying on.



The announcing

Being aged announces itself when the ordinariness of doing accustomed things is suddenly interrupted by hesitating, being weaker, or by being tired in new ways.



Inviting and listening closely to elder's stories of everyday events opens up understandings of being aged and, therefore, informs new ways of preparing for the future and of being with elders in practice.