

The true shocks of aging are invisible

The physical aches of aging are expected. The true shocks are invisible: finding your 30-year-old mind trapped in an 80-year-old reflection, or going months without a single human touch.

Physical decline understood

One of the most jarring of these struggles is the "mind-body disconnect." The internal narrator rarely ages. The shock comes from the physical world: instinctively moving to lift a heavy box or sprint across a crosswalk, only for the body to remind you of the calendar year.

Isolation by digitizing world

There is also the alienation of a rapidly digitizing world. For decades, navigating daily life relied on physical interactions: handing cash to a cashier, pushing a button on a parking meter, or reading a physical menu at a restaurant. When those systems vanish into apps, touchscreens, and QR codes, older adults are not just struggling with new technology—they are experiencing the physical world actively closing its doors to them, replacing simple human interactions with mandatory digital friction.

Burden of de-accumulation

Perhaps the most emotionally complex struggle is the burden of de-accumulation. For decades, people save money to acquire heirlooms, assuming they are building a legacy to pass down to their children.



Figure 1 An antique wood hutch displays a collection of ceramic teacups, pitchers, and plates.

Eventually, they face the reality that younger generations live in smaller spaces, move frequently, and often prefer minimalism. The realization that a prized antique dining set or a 60-piece collection of fine china is not a cherished heirloom, but a logistical burden that younger relatives will ultimately haul to a thrift store, can feel like a rejection of a lifetime of work.

Normalized grief

Finally, there is the sheer volume of normalized grief. By the time someone reaches their late 80s, their primary social activity often becomes updating the mental ledger of who is gone. The loss of casual touch—often called touch starvation—sets in after a spouse passes. Without children in the house or a partner to hug, an older adult might go weeks at a time without experiencing a single instance of physical contact. [Get a dog !]