



**JANE CARO, 53,** IS A REGULAR PANEL MEMBER OF ABC TV'S *THE GRUEN TRANSFER*. SHE HAS BEEN A COPYWRITER IN THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY FOR 28 YEARS AND IS ALSO A PART-TIME ADVERTISING LECTURER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY.

→ “The more you age, the more people listen to you”

“Like Nora Ephron, I feel bad about my neck. I’m not crazy about the loss of my waist either and, at just over five feet [152cm], the idea of losing 10 centimetres in height over the next few decades horrifies me. So I’m not going to preach that ageing is an unalloyed joy, but it’s also not quite the disaster modern Western women seem to think it is.

The advertising industry has long created problems so it can then sell us expensive solutions for them. The latest such ‘problem’ is ageing in women. I can’t turn on the TV without seeing messages about the visible signs of ageing and what I should be doing about them – and there is a very good reason for this: the next great untapped market is women over 50.

The fear so many women have of ageing, I think, is that they will lose their (usually illusory) power over men. If men don’t fancy you anymore then who are you? Yet there’s a liberation that comes from that. I saw it clearly quite early in my ageing process when I returned to work in an ad agency after five years at home raising my daughters. As a young ad creative in my 20s I found it very difficult to get the men I worked with to take me seriously. There was something that didn’t fit for them about a well-endowed blonde with serious points to make. Returning as a 35-year-old mother, the sexual tension had gone and suddenly the men I worked with took me seriously. I loved it. I’d never wanted to sleep with any of them anyway (I’ve been content with the same man for 35 years); I had only ever wanted them to listen to me. And now, as I aged, they did.

I read somewhere that the human female is the only living creature that lives longer than her reproductive capacity. This made me think that, far from being ashamed of our appearance, post menopausal women should realise they are very special. But, if we’re honest, women are never happy with how they look. My two daughters (19 and 22) bemoan their non-existent flaws despite me constantly telling them their youth and beauty will be wasted if they don’t allow themselves to enjoy it. I look back at old photos of myself and wonder why I never allowed myself to take pleasure in my appearance. Maybe advertising has something to answer for there, too.

Turning 50 was a shock and I am ashamed to confess it took a tragedy to shake me out of self-pity. A year ago a beautiful and talented friend died at 38 leaving two small children. She will never age. Her death made me realise I was lucky, because to age, of course, is to survive. The alternative to ageing is not plastic surgery, botox or expensive face creams. It is death.

As Hugh Grant said, there is only one way to age gracefully and that is to age. Because I’m over 50, some (very rude) people ask me if I will ever get work done (maybe it is my neck). I tell them I want to see how this face was meant to turn out. It won’t be pretty, perhaps, but it will be real.”



**SONYA PEMBERTON, 40,** IS A WRITER AND DIRECTOR FROM MELBOURNE. HER SBS DOCUMENTARY *IMMORTAL* EXPLORES THE SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY OF “TELOMERASE” – AN ENZYME THAT CAN STOP THE AGEING PROCESS.

→ “I don’t want to live forever, I want to live better, for as long as I can”

“I began looking into the *Immortal* story in 2004, after reading about molecular biologist Professor Elizabeth Blackburn. I thought her story was amazing: a woman from Tasmania goes to America and discovers not only how the human cell counts down to death, but also discovers the enzyme that stops it. When Liz was voted in *TIME* magazine’s top 100 most influential women of the year in 2007, I decided to make a documentary.

To understand the ramifications of Liz’s discovery for humankind, you need to wind back a bit. Prior to Liz, a famous microbiologist Dr Leonard Hayflick identified that human cells have a use-by date. As your cells age, you age – cell ageing is the main reason you get wrinkles, grey hair, sunspots. It’s why various organs start to slow down and degenerate – because your cells aren’t replenishing themselves like they do when you’re younger. Then along comes Liz who, in 1984, discovers that it is special ‘caps’ called telomeres at the end of every person’s DNA strands – much like the caps on the end of shoe laces – that are the part counting down the cell. As people get older, these caps become shorter. But not only that – Liz discovered an enzyme she named telomerase that can replace lost DNA in the telomere caps, effectively winding back ageing. If you look at someone’s DNA, you can measure how long or short their ‘caps’ are and be able to tell how well they’re

*The best thing about getting older?*

“I regret wasting time and energy during my younger years with that delusion that if I just ran a few more kms, ate more organic food, or just did something that I wasn’t currently doing, I’d look like Elle Macpherson. Never mind the fact that I’m only 160cm. Age (and having children) finally allowed me to truly realise that it’s about achieving my OWN optimal levels of health and wellbeing.”

WH nutrition expert Kristen Beck, 35