

Boomer Expert Maddy Dychtwald: What Boomer Women Should Know

By [ThirdAge Staff](#)
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Maddy Dychtwald is an author, lecturer and co-founder, with her husband Ken Dychtwald, of Age Wave, a leading organization that studies baby boomers and the impact on society of this demographic. A boomer herself, the author of three books—the latest [INFLUENCE: How Women's Soaring Economic Power Will Transform Our World for the Better](#)—Maddy spoke to ThirdAge about women, boomers, and her own busy life.

ThirdAge: Boomers were used to being center stage when they were younger. Now it seems as if they receive a lot less attention.

Maddy: I think they still get a lot of attention, and sometimes it is negative. And I am not sure it is deserved. But in the years ahead they will be center stage both as they cope with challenges themselves and as society copes with the needs of a large aging population. What worked before—health care, Social Security—won't work so well in the future. Remember, boomers are the major part of any debate about entitlements. A lot of the problems our economy faces are going to be blamed on them. There could be conflict between younger boomers and older boomers, boomers and younger adults.

ThirdAge: Are you talking about “age wars?”

Maddy: Well, possibly. But boomers have always been seen as the “me” generation and that doesn't help their PR when it comes to discussions about entitlements. But things are different now for boomers. They are focused on a lot more than themselves. Many boomers are now caring for their older parents and have kids, out of college, who are back home. But it is more than that their just being a sandwich generation. It is more like a Rubik's cube with all sorts of family needs that boomers are now involved in. I know that is true in our own family. Ken's mother has Alzheimer's. My mother has early stage Alzheimer's. There are real responsibilities, both financial and emotional, that caregivers have.

ThirdAge: What do you think is the biggest achievement of boomers?

Maddy: Undoubtedly it is about how we changed the role of women. Boomers have transformed that role. When we did a PBS program about boomers and asked what was this generation's greatest achievement, that was the #1 answer from everyone we asked. Yes, we have transformed the expectations and the opportunities for women.

ThirdAge: Do you really believe that sixty is the new thirty and other claims like that?

Maddy: Well, maybe fifty is the new forty. I certainly think people look younger and feel younger than they once did in their fifties, sixties, seventies and even eighties. Of course, genetics is important, but we all know we have a responsibility and can help keep ourselves healthier and more active as we age. Remember, there are 78 million boomers so there is a lot of diversity in that group, a lot of diversity about how healthy and fit people are. Ten per cent may be role models. And ten percent may be falling apart. I know there are days when I feel thirty and others when I don't quite feel like that. But I don't see myself falling down any time soon.

ThirdAge: You wrote a book about women and money. What is your advice to baby boomer women?

Maddy: Boomer women were the first generation to go to college, to go into the work force . We were raised with one reality, expecting our husbands to take care of us, but we learned this was not really the case. So we were pioneers in many ways. But I would still advise many of these women to never give away their economic power to their husbands. You must be financially responsible. Get savvy. It is never too late to learn. Tell your daughters and granddaughters they must be responsible for their own financial health and overall well-being.

ThirdAge: How do you feel about your own life at this time? How do you feel about aging?

Maddy: I have a personal philosophy. I think it is important to continually reinvent yourself, not retire. But it requires resiliency and energy. In my life my family comes first. I tried to combine work and family. I also have this burning desire to contribute to the greater good, goofy as it may sound. That wasn't on my radar screen ten years ago. To be happy as you get older, I think you need to make time for your health. Be realistic about financial needs. Have a strong social and business network. And for me, contribute in some way to make things better for others.