What does getting older mean to you? Being over the hill or raring to climb the next one? Believe it or not what you think about ageing can make quite a difference not only to how well you age but how long you live.

Sceptical? Well consider that our brains pilot our lives and that what we think or believe can influence our bodies quite profoundly. It really is a case of mind over matter. One of the most extraordinary examples of this is a story about the placebo effect which occurred during the second World War.

When Allied forces launched an attack in Italy at Anzio, American forces became trapped there. Henry Beecher was the young doctor in charge of treating casualties in a field hospital. Given the scale of the carnage he ran out of morphine and in an attempt to reassure the wounded before operating he gave soldiers salt water injections instead of morphine. Amazingly, patients were able to bear the agony of their procedures as though they had been anaesthetised. Later, Beecher wrote up his findings in a paper titled the Powerful Placebo as proof of the mind body connection.