

Gray Hair

Curtis Braxton

BEFORE YOU READ: What causes gray hair?

At the age of 30, 60 percent of my facial hair was gray. Now, I am 40, so you can imagine what I look like. Indeed, the gray has spread to my head and other parts of my body.

I felt like a farmer might feel who wakes up one morning to till the land, only to discover his wheat has been decimated by an infestation. That's

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how hard it hit me.

I believe the gray came from stress, spending long periods in solitary confinement.

I exercise and eat healthy to preserve my youth.

I want to look and feel young, so I conceived the gray hair as a bad thing. It made me feel insecure. I shaved the hair off my face to compliment my bald head. Being clean-shaven takes away the gray, and makes me look young or at least my age.

My comrade told me that the gray makes me look wise. Plus she said it's hereditary, which

made me feel better. In battling my insecurity with gray hair, I realized that there is no such thing as bad hair.

Genotype, phenotype, and environment play a role in the different types of human hair. Gray hair is a part of nature. Just like leaves change color, people grow gray hair in old age. It's also a symbol of wisdom. From now on, I will wear my gray hair as a badge of honor!



Curtis Braxton is an activist and a student of life. He has been incarcerated since 1997. Write to him at: Curtis Braxton, DT 0787, Box 9999, Labelle, PA 15450

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Research the relationship between stress and hair. Share what you find.
2. Explain the extended metaphor in the second paragraph, "I felt like a farmer..."
3. Do you agree that gray is a symbol of wisdom?

Vocabulary & Spelling

Genotype: The set of genes that you carry, which you inherit from your birth parents. See p. 5 for more on DNA and genes.

Phenotype: Your observable characteristics, which are influenced by both *genotype* and the *environment*.

Environment: Your surroundings—the land, air, water, and the conditions around you.

Gray or grey? Either is correct! Gray is the more common spelling in the U.S.

Solitary and Stress

According to <solitarywatch.com>, almost 100,000 people are currently being held in solitary confinement in the U.S. The United Nations considers solitary confinement to be a form of torture. What do you think?



A solitary confinement cell. Flickr/Matthew Thompson.