

Aging Fearlessly

By Kate McCarthy

We have all heard the old adage about aging gracefully. It implies an acceptance of the facts of aging and going gently with the flow of the passing years. It means forgoing the struggling to appear and behave unrealistically and ridiculously younger than one's age. There is a certain beauty about aging gracefully. The ability to live life with poise, dignity and few regrets is an amazing blessing. Yet a passive bow to the passing of time, as graceful as that might be, is not enough. There is also need for today's elderly to face the future fearlessly.



Aging is not for sissies. It is fearful business watching oneself and loved ones succumb to the ravages of time. Weakness, fatigue and loss of abilities to cope with the little tasks of life are often combined with the fear of becoming dependant and a burden on family and friends. Illness and disability surround the elderly and the awful specter of dementia lurks in the shadows of many elder's worries. There are no guarantees as we age, and as many older people will attest, life has a way of dealing all of us some difficult blows. It takes great courage to grow old. To be able to rise above the uncertainties of life and face the future with boldness is fearless aging.

How do the elderly face the future fearlessly? Those with courageous attitudes often know that age isn't just a number. Chronological age is based on the number of years since birth and is what most people think of as their age. Yet as a person ages their focus on the numbers may not be helpful. Functional age is based on how the body functions and can be a better measure of age if an elder is in good physical condition. Subjective age is the best measure of all, because it can be controlled. Subjective Age is all about frame of mind and attitude and is the age the fearless focus on.

Looking at how the fearless age, there are some common tips used by the most courageous elderly.

- Age with attitude – Abe Lincoln once said, “People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” We cannot change the past or control the future. We cannot change others but we can choose our attitudes. Attitude plays a major role in how people view their situation and how they feel psychologically and physically. Choose to be happy and content in today. A positive point of view affects every aspect of life and empowers the aging with courage.

- Take care of business – There are a lot of decisions to be made about aging. Beyond health care and finances, there is the business of settling estates and death to deal with. Take care of each decision ahead of time and reduce the stress of growing older for yourself and your family. Get all the business of aging organized and let your family know your plans and where to find the paperwork.
- Get busy – Retired does not mean inactive. There is a lot of work involved with remaining a healthy elder. Exercise of the mind and body should become the new employment of the elderly and it needs to be taken as seriously as any career move ever made. Being actively employed with physical exercise and brain stimulation can make the all the difference in the quality of life for the aging.
- Invest in the future – Pass on your wisdom and values to the next generation by spending your time and energy with your children and grandchildren. The legacy of your principles is a gift you pass on to the future which will affect generations to come.

Aging fearlessly takes a lot of effort and positive mental outlook. Many times it requires choosing thought patterns and behaviour quite the opposite of how one feels. Elders who exhibit such courage set the example for all of us and are truly heroic.

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