



February, 2016



10 Things That Make You Feel Old . . . And What to Do about Them

The following is a great article from www.AgingCare.com. Think about including some of these ideas in your daily routine.

Death and taxes are understood to be the only inevitable elements of life. But, there's a third issue that many of us automatically assume is unavoidable as well—getting old.

We chalk our flagging energy levels and stiffening joints up to what Larry Matson, Ed.D, co-author of the book, "Live Young, Think Young, Be Young...at Any Age," calls the, "immutable and mysterious aging process." But the notion of aging as an uncontrollable, unstoppable force may, in fact, be faulty.

According to Matson, once a person reaches their physical peak (somewhere between 30 and 35 years old) less than one percent of physical and mental decline each year can be attributed to the aging process alone.

"We think it's normal to be over-weight at 40, have multiple chronic diseases at 60 and be totally dependent at 70," he says. "But age is really a measure of time, not how 'old' we are."

How to avoid feeling your age

Matson provides a list of the factors that cause people to physically and mentally feel the effects of advancing years—and simple tips for reducing their impact:

1. **Absence of physical activity:** Matson points to physical disuse as the number one thing that accelerates age and is associated with the vast majority of chronic diseases. Even if you can't make it to the gym every day, there are still things you can do to stay active. Pay attention to your posture—keep your shoulders back, stand and sit up taller, and don't slouch. Take deeper breaths. Always walk as if you're going to be late for a meeting or an appointment, and look for ways to insert small bouts of physical activity into your day.
2. **Meager mental stimulation:** Mental neglect comes in a close second to physical disuse in the rankings of factors that make us feel older. "As we get older, we just don't realize how much less we use our mind," Matson says, "We get zoned into a particular job task

and get good at it, but we don't use other parts of our brain." After a long day of caregiving, you may be just wishing for a few minutes to sit and veg out in front of your favorite television show. Instead, try adding one mentally-stimulating activity to your nightly routine. Tackle a Sudoku puzzle, knock out a few chapters of that book club book you promised you'd read, commit to learning a new hobby. Anything that forces your brain to work in a way that it normally wouldn't.

3. **Disastrous dietary decisions:** Fruits, veggies, whole grains, lean proteins—you've heard the balanced nutrition spiel before. Another way to optimize your eating plan is to munch more mindfully and slowly. Recognize the rule of halves: half of the pleasure of eating happens in the first bite and is then reduced by half with each subsequent mouthful.
4. **Excessive stress:** Chronic stress, an epidemic among caregivers, can cause your cortisol levels to skyrocket, leading to inflammation and metabolic malfunctioning. Identify the things that stress you out, anticipate when they will occur, and take steps to manage your response. Take deep breaths, meditate, participate in a yoga class—whatever helps you feel more calm and centered.
5. **Attitude adjustment:** "Most people underestimate the effect of the mind, but research in this area is very powerful," Matson says. Caregivers often feel that they should be able to do everything for their loved one. They adopt a "fix it" mentality that can lead to feelings of guilt and low self-esteem. Try to become more in-tune with the tone of your inner voice and swap negative notions with positive affirmations. Matson also suggests searching for ways to help others—such as offering support and advice to fellow caregivers.
6. **Alcohol in abundance:** Research indicates that small amounts of alcohol may provide certain health benefits, but women especially should aim for imbibing no more than two drinks in a single day. Beyond that, the drawbacks of alcohol begin to outweigh the benefits.
7. **Second-hand smoke:** Plain and simple—don't put up with secondhand smoke. For non-smokers, long-term exposure to second hand smoke is nearly as bad as puffing on an actual cigarette. Set boundaries. "It is the smoker's responsibility to smoke away from you and others," Matson says.
8. **Chemical contaminants:** Since you don't have much control over the environment when you're outside, be sure to minimize your exposure to chemicals while in your own home. Invest in a water filter and cut down on how often you use aerosol cleaning and beauty products.
9. **Pill-popping:** Poly-pharmacy is a big problem for many adults, one that only get worse with age. Medications (both prescription and over-the-counter), while helpful for managing certain conditions, may end up doing more harm than good in the long run. "Know what you're taking and why you're taking it," Matson advises. He says that many medications are prescribed for conditions that can be otherwise managed by making lifestyle changes. Ask your doctor if there's any way you can safely reduce your dosage, or go off a prescription all together.
10. **The genetic gamble:** You may not be able to alter your genetic code, but you can take steps to reduce the impact of your detrimental genes. Research your family history and make the lifestyle changes necessary to accommodate your unique set of inherited vulnerabilities.

There's no magic bullet that can cure aging, no miracle restorative regimen that everyone can follow and never experience the symptoms of chronic disease.

But making small, simple lifestyle changes can improve your physical and mental wellbeing—no matter how many candles weigh down your birthday cake.



The Importance of Communication for Caregiving Families

by A. Michael Bloom, January 2016

The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.
- Peter Drucker

When you are communicating ideas, information, and requests, it is important to be prepared and clear in your presentation.

Know exactly what you are trying to communicate. Gather information in advance and have your ideas organized logically.

Placing your thoughts on a piece of notepaper can help. Having this information at your fingertips to refer to can ensure you get all the information out that you want.

It is easy to forget things when you are in the midst of a conversation that may feel uncomfortable. This is understandable because it is not easy to share some of the difficult information during the caregiving journey.

And, it is really hard to ask for help especially if you have been turned down in the past.

Once you have your thoughts organized and are ready to share with the selected person(s)....

1. Thank the other person(s) for giving you an opportunity to share your thoughts and needs. Conveying gratitude provides a nice way to start a conversation.
2. Focus on the here and now. Try to avoid talking about the past. Look at this new interaction as a clean slate with possibility.
3. Try not to ramble. Keep your message precise and specific to the information shared or request at hand.
4. After you share your information, be patient to allow the person to process what you have shared. Some people require a little more time to think about what has been said before responding.
5. Actively listen to what the other person has to say in response. Be sure not to interrupt even if you do not agree with it.



Recipe Corner

My daughter asked for a Veggetti Pro for Christmas so she can spiral cut her vegetables. I thought this would be a nice gift, and I included a cookbook with it. When we visited her for a few days during Christmas vacation, we had spiral-cut turnips and shredded brussel sprouts in one recipe (so good!). In another we had spiral cut beets, and in another we enjoyed spiral-cut zucchini. . .not to mention sweet potatoes and butternut squash. Did we ever get our veggies?! Yum! I highly recommend this gadget because most of the recipes were terrific and easier to eat for anyone with chewing problems. I think I'll have to get a Veggetti Pro for myself.

Skinny Chunkey Monkey Cookies

I haven't tried these yet, but it looks really interesting. I'm allergic to peanut butter so I would use sunflower butter.

3 ripe bananas
2 cups oats
¼ cup peanut butter
¼ cup cocoa powder
1/3 cup unsweet applesauce
1 tsp vanilla

Mash bananas and add rest of ingredients. Let sit 20 minutes. Drop by tsp. on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 350 for 10-12 minutes. Makes 30 cookies.

Crystal's Meatballs

For those who may have gotten an incomplete recipe in the December newsletter, here is the full recipe:

1 lb. ground chicken, turkey, or beef
2 cups shredded zucchini
2-3 green onions, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. oregano
1 tsp. basil
1 tsp. dried rosemary
½ tsp. black pepper
3-4 TB. fresh cilantro, minced
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

Mix together well. Form into balls (walnut-sized) and place on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake 350 until brown and well-cooked in centers. Serve with guacamole, if desired.



Meditation Corner

*Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own. – Matthew 6:34*

Portions of the following paragraphs are taken from Prayers for a Woman's Soul by Julie K. Gillies, Harvest House Publishers, 2013.

"My Tension-Filled Life"

I don't know about you, but all of life's daily stresses always seem to settle in my neck, shoulders, and jaws, creating tight muscle knots where they clearly don't belong. And it doesn't take much for the kinks to set in. Something as simple as an empty cereal box in the pantry, or a ringing telephone that no one else can answer, or even good stress like focusing intently causes me to clench my jaws.

Heavenly Father,

I don't want to live under the physical consequences of constant stress on my body and heart, yet I realize that every life contains a measure of stress – both good and not so good stressful events. So I'm asking You to help me release and entrust every situation to Your tender care. It is not Your intention for me to walk beneath the constant load of heavy stress that creates kinks in my muscles, so I willingly relinquish every concern to You.

Please make me aware of times when stress begins affecting me—when my heart and body begin to knot up. Help me, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, to breathe deeply and choose to relax instead of allowing myself to become more and more stressed—physically, emotionally, and mentally. I desire to live as a relaxed woman of grace, maintaining not only my composure but holding on to my peace in every situation. I can only do this by walking in the Holy Spirit and not in the flesh so help me, Lord. Enable me to quickly respond to Your promptings. "Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths" (Psalm 25:4).