

The Age Sage March 2007

Dear Age Sage,

I am well into the Baby Boomer years and have read a lot that has been published about how to age gracefully, keeping my mind and body healthy. So much of the information has been overwhelming including controversial “expert” opinions. How can I find the best path towards living with good health, inner peace and joy for the second half of my life?

Signed,
Concerned and Confused

Dear C and C...

You are absolutely right that there are so many books, videos, movies, internet articles and classes pertaining to how the Boomers can age by improving on what we have learned from previous generations. The list of healthy foods and healing supplements is endless depending on what “expert authority” you trust. We all know that daily exercise, plenty of water, support of friends, family and social organizations are essential to coping with changes, as well as stress management, including meditation and relaxation! Wow....I’m overwhelmed just writing all of the ingredients it might take to create a healthy and happy elder!

So what does it take to cope with all the changes that we experience as we become older adults? Art Linkletter wrote a book called, “Old Age is not for Sissies.” When I presented seminars about stress, I asked people what their thoughts were about that phrase. Not surprisingly, almost all agreed with him. To audiences of seniors I interact with, a “sissy” typically refers to one who lives as a victim and complains about the unfairness of life. This type of person shifts blame to others. To avoid being a “sissy,” they say, one needs to be courageous, brave...we can not label ourselves as being brave if we have not walked through fear and reached the other side. These people take responsibility for the direction of their life by finding solutions to their problems and realizing that there is always a choice...although, sometimes very difficult.

When I speak with older adults, many tell me that aging equals stress. But what really is stress and what can we do to cope with it so that we avoid being “sissies” when dealing with it. We all have different issues that stress us, and some of it is actually good for us while some of it is not. Positive stress results when we buy or sell a home, retire to a new lifestyle, even winning the lottery (Yes!). On the other hand, negative stress includes illnesses, crisis and loss or physical and emotional pain. Typically, stress is induced with change, whether good or bad, and it all depends on how we respond to change. If you reflect on your own life, you probably have a good idea of how you have coped with stress in the past. Notice whether you have looked at change as a positive challenge or an inevitable negative circumstance, or maybe always a victim of circumstance.

So much of what we do in our lives is based on habitual responses. The most important thing you can do for yourself is to stop and face the reality of your life. What habits can you let go of to make better decisions about how you want the second half of your life to look like. Decide to become a brave warrior and take control of your own attitude about aging. Have you seen the cup as half full or half empty? Research has proven that our attitude will determine how stress-hardy we are. Our attitude reflects our inner self and daily thoughts. Take a look inside and notice if you are still carrying pain from the past - getting older gives us permission to begin letting go of baggage - both physical and emotional. It gives us time to appreciate quality of life rather than just quantity. When we let go, we may find a quality that we never experienced before; we may feel more love, hear birds singing, notice beauty everywhere and perform random acts of kindness!

TIP:

It's never too late to change...each day we get to try again...it's not about being perfect...it's all about playing out the hand you've been dealt. SO...Be your own authority and trust yourself. BUT...do ask for help...you may greatly benefit from another perspective!

Until next month,

The Age Sage

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