

Volume 10, Issue 1

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

Growing Older Gracefully

7 Positive Aspects of Aging

Parenting from the Heart

Joy in caregiving



3

Growing Older Gracefully

4

7 Positive Aspects of Aging

5

Aging with Humor

6

Growing Up or Growing Old

7

The Rose

8

The Park Bench

10

Parenting from the Heart

Joy in caregiving

12

Notable Quotes

Aging

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Motivated Vol 10, Issue 1
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It's a fact of life—we all grow older. I've been reminded of that several times recently. First a dear friend passed away after a battle with cancer. Then a family member was hospitalized and developed complications after surgery, which made it necessary for him to be in the hospital for an extended period of time. Neither of them was particularly "old" in my opinion, and in both cases I had expected them to bounce back.

While they may not have felt "old", they were indeed "older" and in their senior years, as I am now. I realized that whether I like it or not, some things change when we get up in years. Our bodies change and our health can become more fragile. Our minds change, and we may be a little slower in learning new skills. Our energy level changes, and we may have to change our once active lifestyle for a quieter one. Our living arrangements may also change as children move out of the home, or we may lose a spouse or close friends to sickness or old age.

To be honest, thinking about this was depressing. Instead of my usual looking forward to the years ahead with anticipation, I felt a sense of dread. How am I going to be able to cope? Will someone look after me in case of sickness? Will I outlive my friends and loved ones and experience loneliness as a shut-in, as I have witnessed in some of my elderly friends? Thoughts like this kept running through my head.

I decided to research the topic and I am glad I did, because I was pleasantly surprised to find a number of wonderfully positive, and even humorous, experiences and tips about growing older.

Since everyone ages—there's just no way around it—I hope that the following stories and articles will cheer you up and change your outlook on growing older, too.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Growing Older Gracefully

By Elana Mizrahi, adapted



I have some gray hairs. Do I dare to count them? Just the fact that I have enough to count scares me, and turns getting old into a reality. Does having some gray hairs mean that I'm old? I'm certainly getting older. We all are. But why does it have to happen so quickly?

We just celebrated my birthday. I say "celebrated," because we had cake and ice cream. My children even made me a crown. For my kids, any excuse for ice cream and cake is a celebration. I'm not sure if to me it was a thing to celebrate, though. I like the special attention that birthdays bring, but I don't wait for them 364 days of the year like my children do. For them, another number means more privileges, more things that they get to do. For an adult, another number means *less* things that you can do, like: "I can't run as fast as I used to. I can't see as far as I used to..., etc."

I'm actually not sure what old feels like. I take another look in the mirror. Do I look older? Do I look old? I don't feel old, but I'm actually not sure what old feels like. My grandfather would say you are only as old as you feel. It's the mind that makes you old, not the body.

I go with my children to the old-age home near my apartment building. We walk inside the door. The contrast

between my bouncing preschooler and the women sitting in the wheelchair by the door stops me in my tracks. Not so long ago, I was the bouncing preschooler. Not so long ago, these women were the mothers of small children. Fifty years ago they were me, and in fifty years I could be them. The visit, like my birthday, serves as a reality check: "Elana, life is short and it goes by so quickly. Enjoy the moment that you are in, because you will never get it back."

"Enjoy the moment that you are in...." I decide that this is going to be my birthday present to myself. This is also what I want to leave behind to my children—the memory of a happy mommy who looked for the good in every situation and in every person. Is that possible? Can I do it? I decide to try to start just by not complaining. In any difficult situation that I find myself, I am going to try to find the one good thing about it, no matter how small that one good thing might be.

I look at my gray hairs once again. Really, there are not so many. I take another look. I tell myself that they are signs of wisdom and maturity. Positive thinking. This is my birthday gift to myself. And really, I have yet to meet a happy person who looks old. ■

7 Positive Aspects of Aging

By Michael Hodin, adapted

Growing “old” today is better than it has ever been before. Here are seven positive aspects of growing older. Some of them may be more relatable in the western world, but globally society is beginning to embrace many of these developments.

1. You’re not alone. Soon, there will be a billion of you over 60, and you’ll make up nearly 20 percent of the world’s population. By the way, that will be over 2 billion by mid-century, with the added phenomenon of more people than those under 15. If there’s strength in numbers, the power is yours.

2. Aging has become a time of vitality. You are not aging like your parents. “Seniors” are now becoming entrepreneurs and agents for social change in larger numbers than ever before. Over the past decade in the U.S., the most common age for an entrepreneur is somewhere between 55 and 64.

3. You still have plenty to contribute. When you turn 55, your employer isn’t going to give you a gold watch and send you off into the sunset. Business needs you. And, contrary to conventional wisdom, “seniors” are being hired in greater numbers than ever before.

4. You are a target demographic. Companies are gearing goods and services to your demographic. The Boomer cohort

has more buying power than any other, and there is concerted effort to sell you things that keep you young, hip, and in-the-know. This is true not only of the 77 million in the Western Hemisphere, but of the 450 million globally.

5. You are on the global agenda. Global organizations are paying due attention to the over-60 crowd. From the World Health Organization to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, you are now the target of discussion and focus. It’s great economics to have healthy and active 60, 70, and 80 year olds.

6. Maintaining good health is easier than ever before. The health care industry is teaming up with technology companies, entrepreneurs, and venture capital funds to create breakthrough innovations in the delivery of healthcare. You are becoming empowered to manage your own health. The lengthy, ineffective, and bureaucratic days of health care are numbered.

7. The world is becoming “age-friendly.” New forms of retail, education, transportation, care, and housing are emerging to keep the aging involved and engaged. Businesses are creating age-friendly campuses and workplaces. Aging is no longer a one-way ticket to golf-carts and bingo parlors. Cities from New York to Mumbai are transforming to meet the demands of aging. ■

Aging with Humor

Web Reprints

Two Old Men at Dinner

An elderly couple has dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives leave the table and go into the kitchen. The two gentlemen are talking, and one says, "Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly."

The other man asks, "What is the name of the restaurant?"

The first man thinks and thinks and finally asks, "What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know... The one that's red and has thorns."

"Do you mean a rose?"

"Yes, that's the one," replies the man. He then turns towards the kitchen and yells, "Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?"

Memories

A couple in their nineties are both having problems remembering things. During a checkup, the doctor tells them that they're physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember.

Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. "Want anything while I'm in the kitchen?" he asks.

"Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?"

"Sure."

"Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it?" she asks.

"No, I can remember it."

"Well, I'd like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so as not to forget it?"

He says, "I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries."

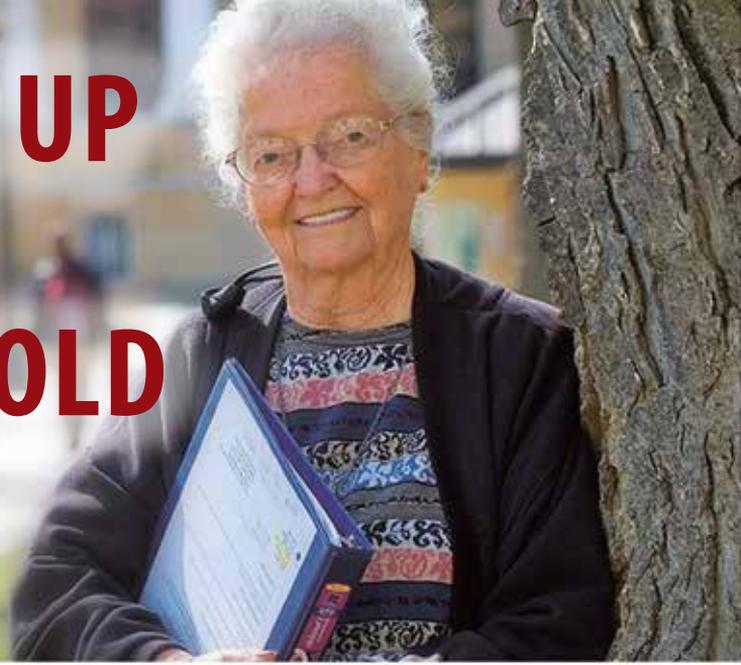
"I'd also like whipped cream. I'm certain you'll forget that, write it down," she says.

Irritated, he says, "I don't need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream.—I got it, for goodness sake!"

Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment.

"Where's my toast?" ■

GROWING UP OR GROWING OLD



Anonymous

The first day of school our professor introduced himself and challenged us to get to know someone we didn't already know.

I stood up to look around when a gentle hand touched my shoulder. I turned around to find a wrinkled, little old lady beaming up at me with a smile that lit up her entire being.

She said, "Hi, handsome! My name is Rose. I'm 87 years old. Can I give you a hug?"

I laughed and enthusiastically responded, "Of course you may!" and she gave me a giant squeeze.

"Why are you in college at such a young, innocent age?" I asked. She jokingly replied, "I'm here to meet a rich husband, get married, have a couple of children, and then retire and travel."

"No seriously," I asked. I was curious what may have motivated her to be taking on this challenge at her age.

"I always dreamed of having a college education and now I'm getting one!" she told me.

After class we walked to the student union building and shared a chocolate milkshake. We became instant friends. Every day for the next three months we would leave class together and talk nonstop.

I was always mesmerized listening to this "time machine" as she shared her wisdom and experience with me.

Over the course of the year, Rose became a campus icon and she easily made friends wherever she went. She loved to dress up and she reveled in the attention bestowed upon her from the other students. She was living it up.

At the end of the semester we invited Rose to speak at our banquet. I'll never forget what she taught us. She was introduced and stepped up to the podium. As she began to deliver her prepared speech, she dropped her 3x5 cards on the floor.

Frustrated, and a little embarrassed, she leaned into the microphone and simply said, "I'm sorry I'm so jittery. I'll never get my speech back in order,

so let me just tell you what I know.” As we laughed, she cleared her throat and began:

“We do not stop playing because we are old; we grow old because we stop playing. There are only four secrets to staying young, being happy, and achieving success. You have to laugh and find humor every day. You’ve got to have a dream. When you lose your dreams, you die. We have so many people walking around who are dead, and they don’t even know it!” she said.

“There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up. If you are nineteen years old and lie in bed for one full year and don’t do one productive thing, you will turn 20 years old. If I am 87 years old, and stay in bed for a year, and never do anything, I will turn 88. Anybody can grow older. That doesn’t

take any talent or ability,” she added.

“The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change. Have no regrets. The elderly usually don’t have regrets for what we did, but rather for things we did *not* do. The only people who fear death are those with regrets.”

She concluded her speech by courageously singing “The Rose.” She challenged each of us to study the lyrics and live them out in our daily lives.

At the year’s end, Rose finished the college degree she had begun all those years ago. One week after graduation Rose died peacefully in her sleep. Over two thousand college students attended her funeral in tribute to the wonderful woman who taught by example that it’s never too late to be all you can possibly be. ■

THE ROSE

(From “The Rose” soundtrack)

Some say, “Love. It is a river
That drowns the tender reed.”
Some say, “Love. It is a razor
That leaves your soul to bleed.”
Some say, “Love. It is a hunger,
An endless aching need.”
I say, “Love. It is a flower,
And you its only seed.”

It’s the heart afraid of breaking
That never learns to dance.
It’s the dream afraid of waking
That never takes the chance.



It’s the one who won’t be taken,
Who cannot seem to give,
And the soul afraid of dying
That never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely
And the road has been too long,
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong.
Just remember in the winter
Far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed that with the sun’s love
In the spring becomes the rose. ■

THE PARK BENCH



By Natalie Pratt, adapted

The old man sat on the park bench waiting. His face was lined with sorrow, and his shoulders stooped with despair. It seemed as if he noticed nothing. His beloved wife, Dora, had died nearly a year ago, and his life had lost all meaning without her by his side. “I will always be with you,” she had said. But the old man could not see her. He was all alone.

The old man was indeed alone. He spent most of his lonely days inside the solitude of his own home. His son had insisted on the old man taking a walk with him, so there the old man sat, waiting for his son.

He looked at the beautiful park, but, no matter where he looked, everything made him long for his Dora. He could not help but wish that he could die and be with her. Life seemed a miserable prison to him.

The park was scattered with people strolling in the beautiful spring air. Tears welled up in the old man’s eyes as he saw a blissful young couple walking hand-in-hand along the pathway.

“Ah! Dora! My sweet Dora! We were once young lovers. Where did the time go?” the old man thought.

When the couple passed his park bench,

the pretty young lady smiled at the old man. She stopped and gently handed him a flower from her small bouquet, which obviously had come from her companion. The old man smiled at her through his tears. But, when they had left, the old man broke down and sobbed.

Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder.

He thought, "That smell! Why, Dora must be here!"

A flood of memories came over the old man. He straightened up, and there stood a mother with her child.

"Are you alright?" she inquired kindly.

The old man nodded weakly. The mother spotted his tears.

"Please don't cry," she said offering him her handkerchief.

It was perfumed with the very fragrance Dora had once used. The man felt a lump forming in his throat.

He managed to croak out, "Thank you."

The mother said, "Oh, it is nothing. I hope you will feel better. I must be on my way. Good-bye."

The man smelled the handkerchief; that was her scent. His loneliness was replaced by sensing that Dora was somewhere near. His eyes searched the park, but of course she was nowhere to be seen. The old man felt like a fool, and disappointed, he fell back into his deep depression. His head into his hands, he cried out his loneliness, wishing his son would show up so they could go back home.

He nearly broke into tears again when he saw an elderly couple walking with their grandchild. She was quite a darling, waddling along between her grandparents, sucking on a lollipop.

They came along the path, and as they passed the old man's park bench, the little girl came up and put her arms on his knees. Smiling up at him, she offered him her lollipop as she babbled unintelligibly.

The grandparents were about to take her away and apologize for the disturbance when the old man said, "What are you trying to tell me, Dora?"

The two grandparents were shocked.

After a moment, the grandfather said, "How did you know her name was Dora?"

The old man looked up confused. Then, the expression on his face changed, and he chuckled.

"Why, Dora and I are old chums, aren't we sweetie?"

The little girl climbed onto the bench and sat next to the old man.

The four of them talked for a while and had a wonderful time. Before they went on their way, the old man and little Dora had become quite good friends.

As they were leaving, the old man smiled and looked up at the sky. "You never did leave me, did you, Dora?" he said softly.

The old man, freed from the bondage of sorrow, filled with happiness as he looked about the park. He noticed what a beautiful day it was, and smiled as he watched people throughout the park. He felt no longer lonely, and he knew he would never be alone. He was happy to be alive again.

It was not long before the old man's son returned. The old man stood up and walked toward him. The son was glad to see his father so much happier and improved by his outing to the park, and he congratulated himself on his fine idea. ■

JOY IN CAREGIVING

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



By Amy Goyer, AARP, adapted

As caregivers of aging parents we can be so focused on healthcare, safety, finances, and logistics that we can easily lose sight of quality of life—both for those we care for and for ourselves. Experiencing joy while caregiving isn't always easy, but I believe it's more than just a nice thing to do: It's a crucial survival skill. Every moment of joy and a little bit of fun can go a long way to relieve stress, motivate, connect, and relieve boredom.

Here are some ideas for infusing joy into your loved one's life, as well as your own.

Music. When I ask caregivers how they create joy and fun, music is the most common response. Play your loved one's favorite genre of music—from 1940s swing to rock. Listen on the radio or television, or set up a playlist on an MP3 player or phone to play songs that bring peace, ease pain, energize, distract from anxiety, induce memories, or trigger a spontaneous sing-along.

Adventures. I approach every outing as an adventure—whether it's to a medical appointment, shopping, dinner, a movie, a sports game, or just a car ride to get out of the house. Outings are more difficult for my dad these days (he's 93 and has Alzheimer's disease), but we still go out for drive-through coffee and lemonade on good days. Plan ahead for the best places for parking, and recruit someone else to drive or come along to lend a helping hand and make it more fun.

Food. The taste and scent of good food, as well as the act of making it, can stir happy memories for all of us. Try making your loved ones' favorite meal (or ask them to do so). Stop for a cup of coffee or tea. Bake together or watch cooking shows on television, and talk about the food you'd like to have. Savor every bite.

Physical activity. Get moving, and make it fun. I made the effort to keep Dad swimming as long as he could, and that helped me stay fit, too. What else? There's dancing—even chair dancing (move those arms!)—or you can try tossing a

ball back and forth, marching, and yoga breathing and poses. Even a short walk to the mailbox can change a mood.

Games. Think about games your loved ones can play, like familiar card games, board games or word games. Charades can be doable even for those with communication disorders. Work on crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles together, or even play “I Spy....” Games can help pass time in a waiting room and distract from boredom or pain.

Celebrations and holidays. Make any excuse for a party. Celebrate all anniversaries and birthdays. Every holiday, and even the first day of spring, offers the opportunity to decorate their home or room. Also celebrate accomplishments from small things like a successful shower or fastening their own buttons to large things like getting out of the hospital. Celebrations can be marked by a “Congratulations!” sign, a full-blown party, or a big hug and a happy dance.

Humor. Just be silly. Laugh at yourself, tell jokes, retell old family stories, watch funny movies or videos on YouTube, read funny stories. Have a wheelchair race or put your glasses on upside down. Laugh about the everyday mistakes and foibles we all experience (like when I forgot to give Dad his false teeth and didn’t realize it until we were out at a ball game. He just smiled, made a funny face and laughed it off).

Nature. For many people, simple nature brings the most joy. Bring fresh flowers, or visit a garden or nursery. You can also plant flowers, walk outside, build a snowman, cuddle up with a pet, watch an animal play, or go for a car ride

to see the spring blooms, the snow, or the fall leaves.

Home videos and scrapbooks. Put the old home movies on DVD or digitize them, and watch them together. If your loved ones don’t have scrapbooks, make some together—just sorting through old photos can be fun. Use your camera phone, too—take snapshots and selfies and share them, or look at family and friends’ photos on social media sites.

Intergenerational exchanges. Bring children and elders together for a visit. Holding or even just seeing a baby can bring great joy. Ask a grandchild to read a book aloud or recite a poem he or she memorized. Grandkids can also teach elders how to use a computer or smartphone. Ask a grandparent to share a hobby or teach the younger generation how to bake a pie, clean properly, or build something.

Notice the inherent joy in every day. Make an effort to be mindful of the joy that you might be missing when your mind is racing and stress is intensifying. The memory of Mom’s smile as I tucked her in bed every night will forever bring me joy. The small victories like Dad brushing his teeth by himself. The “Thank you, sweets” from Dad when I adjust his pillow. Dad tapping his toes under the blanket as he listens to music. Don’t miss a precious subtle moment.

Being creative and open to the humorous, joyful moments will help you face the tougher aspects of caregiving. You might consider keeping a “joy journal” and noting the joyful moments. They will bring you comfort in the future. ■

Aging



Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.—**David Bowie**

Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.
—**Samuel Ullman**

Don't try to be young. Just open your mind. Stay interested in stuff. There are so many things I won't live long enough to find out about, but I'm still curious about them. You know people who are already saying, "I'm going to be 30—oh, what am I going to do?" Well, use that decade! Use them all!—**Betty White**

My face carries all my memories. Why would I erase them?
—**Diane Von Furstenberg**

Aging is not "lost youth" but a new stage of opportunity and strength.
—**Betty Friedan**

The longer I live, the more beautiful life becomes.—**Frank Lloyd Wright**

We don't stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.—**George Bernard Shaw**

Aging gracefully means being flexible, being open, allowing change, enjoying change and loving yourself.—**Wendy Whelan**

Age is just a number. Life and aging are the greatest gifts that we could possibly ever have.—**Cicely Tyson**

