

Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford
Columnist

Over the years I have given up making New Year's resolutions. I decided it was just a way to beat up on myself when, after a few weeks into January, my burst of momentary resolve began to fade and wither away. And I was left feeling I failed — again.

Instead, I have developed what I like to call "guidelines for living" every day, not just part of each January. These are five simple-sounding suggestions that, when taken together, provide the guidance for the way I want to live my life. I share them with you, not to suggest that you should adopt them, but rather to encourage you to develop your own guidelines.

Please myself. I know, at first glance this sounds totally selfish, but let me explain what I mean. Being a woman and a mother, who grew up in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, my role in the world was to ask permission, not reach too high, let the boys win, and always put others' needs before my own.

Now in my 70s, after lots

of painful and frustrating experiences, I have decided that the most important person to please is me. If I please myself with the choices I make and the actions I take, my increased self-worth provides me with much more worthwhile things to offer the world, be that world in my backyard or across the globe. I don't need to ask permission for the things I want to do. And I don't have to take no for an answer. I can do what makes me happy and release what makes me unhappy.

Care. Care about myself, my community, my world, strangers, friends, family, the environment. Caring gives meaning to my life so apathy and hopelessness can't creep in. It is difficult to damage or destroy something or someone about whose welfare I care. I can care without giving over control of my life, by maintaining healthy boundaries.

Be good to others. This guideline naturally grows out of numbers one and two. If I am doing what makes me happy and caring about others and myself, then it

follows that my happiness and caring will spill out to others. If I get my eyes off all my technology screens — cell phone, iPad, and computer — and instead look into someone else's eyes, I can make a human connection in person.

When I take the time to have a conversation with someone — be it the grocery clerk, a stranger, or a close friend, I feel better for having made that connection and hopefully the other person feels seen and heard. Sometimes I am pleasantly surprised to learn something new. Whenever I do something meaningful for someone else, I always feel better and I generally get back more than I give. I like the Red Cross slogan — "Give something that means something."

Be curious. This advice comes from my friend Kelly Sheets, who has an entire business built around being curious. Curiosity opens up my mind and creates excitement, passion and seeing the potential in every day. Being curious allows me to experience my life and the world in ways I never imagined. I love being surprised

by what is revealed when I ask what, why who, how, and when. If I am full of curiosity, there isn't room for judgment or stubbornness, so I don't get stuck in those energy-draining ruts.

Accept that change is inevitable. The only certain thing in life, besides death, is change. No one second is exactly the same as another. If I am living my life in the moment, then I won't hinder others or myself with preconceived notions of what should or shouldn't be. I won't be trying to keep things or people in a static condition. Understanding earlier in my life this truth about change might have saved me and others a great deal of frustration, hurt, and disappointment. It was

difficult for me as a perfectionist to accept continual change. Thank goodness I have released that part of myself.

Everything and everyone is in a constant state of change — from the tiniest cell in my body to the stars in the far heavens. How boring it would be if all remained exactly the same forever. Change gives birth to new ideas, new energy, and new opportunities, which in turn promote change. Creativity creates change, which promotes more creativity.

So there they are: my guidelines for living, at this point in my life. Because change is inevitable, these guidelines will most likely give way to others.

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