



Of a certain AGE

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Columnist

Aging gracefully...

Recent disconcerting non-life-threatening health issues are proving frustrating, irritating, and a little limiting of my normal routine. On a scale of 1-10, however, they are maybe a 1.5. They are evident enough, though, to cause me to re-examine my goal of “aging gracefully” and what that really means.

Several years ago, graceful aging meant I didn't get upset with additional birthdays or hide my age. I'm 75 and glad to still be here and functioning, if not quite as smoothly. Aging gracefully simply meant I wasn't going to fight the inevitable — saggy skin, wrinkles, thinning hair, or a few “senior moments” when I can't recall a name or... or... what was I going to say?

With the onset of some age-related

physical limitations or changes, I definitely need to broaden my concept of aging gracefully. With my usual determination, I am assessing where I am in my life and where I want to be. At heart, I am a perennial student, so it is no surprise I have been educating myself on the entire field of aging since my days of working with seniors in Seattle and after moving to Sisters. My five years as the Transitions coordinator at Hospice of Redmond were invaluable in providing me with firsthand experience of what aging means on all fronts. It is one thing to experience it from the outside, quite another to find myself smack in the middle of my last act.

I have choices to make. I can try to deny, disregard, or downplay my changing abilities (not a wise choice). On the other hand, I can practice what I have preached to former clients and put into practice all those things I know on an intellectual level make for “successful” or “graceful” aging. My regimen may not be the same as yours, but there are some scientifically proven practices that are beneficial for all of us.

The primary building blocks for successful aging include staying active (mentally and physically), eating a healthy diet, getting appropriate sleep (not too little or too much), reducing or releasing stress, and finding a sense of purpose. Living by myself, I find it too easy to get lazy about healthy eating. After years

of preparing meals for the family, I derive little pleasure from meal prep, which leads to grazing and not getting enough essential nutrients. That is No. 1 on my list of improvements to make.

My writing keeps me mentally active and a dog needing three walks a day helps keep me moving. I could do other things as well. With no longer keeping regular working hours, I have turned from an early bird into a night owl, opting to watch late-night TV to end my day with a little humor. I try going to bed earlier, but sleep eludes me at 10 p.m. Another practice to add to my list.

I have always believed, and do so now even more, that a big part of aging gracefully has to do with my attitude (which is negatively impacted by unhealthy habits) about my life. I desire to enjoy whatever time is left. I am much more interested in quality rather than quantity of life. My doctor has me chasing blood pressure numbers, trying medications with all kinds of unpleasant side effects which limit my activities due to disequilibrium and tiredness. We will be having a conversation very soon.

Along the way, I have picked up sage — and some funny — advice from wise elders and I offer it here. Take what fits but do at least consider all of it.

• It is never too late to try something new and, while you're at it,

why settle for just one thing.

• Ask for help when needed and graciously accept it when offered.

• Do what you want to do. Don't worry what others think — they're not thinking about you.

• Cultivate younger friends. Sooner or later yours will all die off.

• Keep or develop a sense of humor. Laughter truly is the best medicine.

• Be adaptable, flexible. If you can bend, you won't break.

• Stay or get involved. It's been scientifically proven that volunteers are healthier and spend less time in hospitals. Share your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

• Stay curious — about yourself, other people, and the world around you.

• Look forward — to people you want to meet, things you want to do, and things you want to learn.

• You may no longer be employed, and your family may be grown, but that doesn't mean your life is over. What are you passionate about? What does your community or the world need? What are you good at?

• Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Nurture the ones you have and grow new ones. Find and connect with people.

• Don't isolate. We tend to equate living alone with independence. But when that independence results in loneliness, research has shown that loneliness gives rise to physical and



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Therapeutic Associates

For years, Therapeutic Associates has been keeping the active folks in Sisters active, despite the inevitable aches, pains and injuries of the Central Oregon lifestyle.

Their unique step-down program allows patients to continue their rehab at Sisters Athletic Club after they've completed formal physical therapy. Aquatherapy is also available through the SAC pool — a great way to recover.

Therapeutic Associates can also help with long-term mobility issues. You can schedule an assessment and learn how to move better, avoid injury and perform better in your activities. Therapeutic Associates also offers a free injury screening to Sisters Athletic Club members.

Matt Kirchoff of Therapeutic Associates and Andrew Loscutt of SAC will offer a foam rolling class in February. All of their work and all of their classes have one goal in mind: helping people in Sisters live the way they want to live in an environment that richly rewards an active, outdoor lifestyle.



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Lanie Tandy explains that she evaluates patients' lifestyles and their hearing needs, then works with them to choose a hearing aid that best fits all the criteria. She loves to get to know people and help them tailor hearing aid services to their specific needs and budget considerations.

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