

“Sixty is now the New Middle Age” Aging Gracefully in the 21a Century

By: Diane Lockard

Sixty is now the new middle age I believe the first thing to age gracefully is to remain active in mind and body and stay connected to people. It has been shown that people who are isolated are more likely to experience memory loss. When I retired, the camaraderie of my co-workers was gone. I wanted to stay connected to people.

The first item on my list was joining a group of ladies called the Red Hat Society who celebrate women over 50. I purchased my red hat two years in advance in anticipation of joining such an uplifting group. When a group of us dressed in our red hats and purple dresses, walk into a restaurant we always get a reaction. It is great to brighten a stranger's day by making them smile and laugh at our different hats. The lady who started the organization has replaced her stereotypical thinking for older women with a positive view of aging gracefully. People continue to stereotype older people. When I was in my forties, which was middle aged. At that time my friends and I went to a club. A younger patron looked at us and said, 'Here come the blue hair now.' We considered ourselves to be in the prime of our lives.

The Red Hatters come from all walks of life and have had many experiences. When I am wearing my red hat, I have had mainly positive responses from people because of the reputation of society. However, some might say, "She is just a silly old lady" Silly old ladies having fun.

Find things that are meaningful for you. Two of my main interests are traveling and lifelong learning. I love to visit exotic places and experience different cultures. Last year, my daughter and I took the Eco tour of the natural wonders of Costa Rica and discovered the meaning of pura vida the good life. After I returned, I enrolled in a writing class and we had so much fun, we formed a writing group called the The Scribes. I need to plan activities so not only do I have something to anticipate, but not stress out.

I am proud to be 67. It is all about attitude. Aging is inevitable but aging gracefully nets you a positive attitude. I have made several references to the Red Hat Society but the point is to do something uplifting and contribute in your own way. A smile can touch a person's life in ways you can never imagine. It's infectious and can cause a great reaction.

I want to spend my time participating in life, not standing on the sidelines. Aging gracefully in the 21 Century has changed to the better. As I get older, the definition of middle age keeps moving along with my generation.

(Diane Lockard)