

Aging Gracefully (Or How to Survive Life)

By: Judy Scheifres

A friend of mine once said, "I'm sitting in a chair, minding my own business, when suddenly a part of my body attacks me!" It's a good joke because it's so true. Life never ceases to surprise us and aging is the biggest surprise of all. We knew it was coming, but yet we are surprised by the limitations that age can impose. So many people that I know often say, "I can't believe this is happening to me" or "Inside I feel so young, but my body feels so old".

There's no doubt that the golden years are more like the "rusty years". There are some replacement parts available, and all of us hope that in this 21st Century there will be wonderful advancements that will keep us mobile and active. But mental attitude is still the irreplaceable ingredient for enjoyment of our later years.

We can dwell on the limitations, but the trick to aging gracefully is to change your focus. Focus on the limitless small joys of life and the mind can put the bad stuff on the back burner, at least for a while. A good example is sleep. Do you know why old people have wrinkles? Because they can't get a good night's sleep. Okay, that's another old age joke. Most of us sleep "in shifts". We wake up after three or four hours and toss and turn, hoping that sleepiness will return. This creates a lot of anxiety and so the odds of falling asleep again are slim. Instead of cussing out wakefulness, I've learned how to drift. It's a pleasant feeling, like floating on water or clouds and I forget to be anxious and eventually fall back to sleep.

Life gives us all a hard time in one way or the other and can wear us down. But we have a choice of either becoming a sour pickle or tangy relish. If you become the sour pickle, not only do others not want to be around you, you can't stand yourself either. So shift your focus. What gets your juices going? What brings you joy? Who can you help? Practicing kindness is a great way to feel better. What makes you laugh? Aging is too serious to take it seriously. Look what you've survived. Think about what you've experienced: the good, the bad and the ugly. Remember how ridiculous old spats and failures seem now. A lot of it seems pretty funny because the passage of time gives us another perspective.

It's all a question of choices. Shift your focus to laughter, to enjoying what's available. Above all, shift your focus from yourself to your family, to your friends, to new possibilities. Choose the relish.