



CONSCIENTIOUS CARE

Putting Aging Into Perspective

Aging is a fact of life. Whether facing the reality of turning 50 years old or stepping into retirement, we all face the uncertainty of tomorrow. What is interesting about aging is that it tends to creep up on most people. We think and hope that we are going to age gracefully, and then all of a sudden we wake up one day and realize we are not as young as we used to be, and that day-to-day activities have become challenging.

Have you ever noticed that when you are of a certain age, everything seems uphill from where you are? Stairs are steeper. Groceries are heavier. And, everything is farther away. Is it just me or are people speaking more softly? Is there a conspiracy to try and make all of us Baby Boomers a bunch of lip readers? Why do people seem much younger than I was at the same age? And why is it that the people my own age appear so much older than I am?

External and internal changes occur as people age. The external changes are often the most visible. As early as our 30's and 40's, we notice changes to our hair color and the thickness of our hair, our skin begins to change, and wrinkles begin to appear. Other noticeable changes may have to do with eyesight, hearing, physical strength, balance and coordination. Internal changes are also happening. Our bodies become more frail, our minds may not be as sharp, we process and do things slower, we are more susceptible to illness, and our memory may fail.

One question is which has a greater affect on our health and quality of life: Genetics (family health history) or Lifestyle choices such as smoking, excessive drinking, unhealthy diets and a lack of exercise? While the Nature (genetics) and Nurture (lifestyle choices and environment) controversy continues to be debated and research studies are underway seeking evidence to prove one theory or another, we suggest people follow the guidelines listed below:

- Seek regular medical check-up and health screenings
- Be aware of medical concerns for which you may be predisposed
- Eat foods that are healthy and nutritional
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes 3 or more times per week
- Modify unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and excessive drinking

Mary Doepke, owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs, says "If we take care of ourselves, live healthier lifestyles, and accept assistance with daily living when we need it, chances are our quality of life and satisfaction with everyday living will improve.

HINTS AND HAPPENINGS

THE TREASURE HUNT

Adult children often become involved in their parents' financial affairs due to aging or health-related challenges. The person appointed Power of Attorney typically assumes the lead role. Whether lending a helping hand, trying to figure out how to help your parents meet their monthly obligations or pay for long-term care, or settling an estate upon death, do not be surprised if your parents' affairs are not well organized. When a person's financial affairs are not inventoried and organized, it can be up to family to make sense of everything. The process can often be like a treasure hunt where you are searching for and following-up on clues. If you find yourself completing an inventory without the help of a loved one, here are some recommendations that might help you identify assets your parents own that may have a cash value.

1. Contact the...
 - a. bank(s) and inquire about checking and savings account balances
 - b. mortgage company to determine both the equity amount and the remaining liability on their home
 - c. financial advisor and/or broker to identify any saving plans, annuities or other investments
 - d. insurance company(ies) where they may have a policy (e.g. life, long-term care)
 - e. former employer(s) to inquire about retirement/pension plans.
2. Search the safety deposit box or other places where stock certificates, bonds or other securities might be located.
3. Make a list of collectible items (e.g. antiques, artwork) and any items that may have a significant cash value (e.g. vehicles/boats, time share property).
4. Refer to recent tax return(s) and bank statements to identify any other sources of income.
5. Follow-up on Privacy notices received in the US Mail. (If you receive a privacy notice chances are there is some type of client or financial relationship.)

Source: The Caregiver Resource Guide – www.AgingUSA.com
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



The following local events that might be of particular interest to Baby Boomers and Older Adults.

'I LOVE YOU' ARE POWERFUL WORDS

Quick, what comes to mind when you think of Valentine's Day? In addition to chocolate, roses or love, did you think about caregiving? Isn't caregiving all about love - providing loving and compassionate care for an aging parent or ill spouse?

Whether it is Valentine's Day, a birthday, an anniversary or any special occasion do not miss the opportunity to reminisce, express your gratitude, and tell your loved ones how much you care.

In your relationships, are the words 'I Love You' more of a salutation or a state of the heart? Many people use the words 'I Love You' as a salutation. For example, a person leaving a parent's house after a delicious dinner might say something like, "Thanks for dinner, Love Ya," as he or she is walking out the door.

Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs says, "If you have not looked a parent or loved one in the eyes and shared a heartfelt 'I Love You', I recommend you give it a try. All too often in this fast paced world, people take things like love for granted."

People pledge to love one another in sickness and in health when getting married. As an act of honor, adult children often make sacrifices to ensure their parents receive the care and support they need and deserve. Often it is when a loved one is ill and becomes dependant on others for the basic essentials of daily living that love is tested and experienced.

Doepke says "'I Love You' are powerful words that need to be said and heard by everyone. As professionals in the business of providing care to people who are aging and ill, we know the power of kind words. We see the joy our clients experience when loved ones visit or talk on the phone."

In your day-to-day conversations are you talking more about news, weather and sports or are you talking from the heart? Home Helpers offers a few ideas for special occasions that are easier on the wallet than buying a dozen roses and have fewer calories than a box of chocolates:

- **WRITE A LETTER.** Write a note that tells your parent or loved one how much you love him or her.
- **TAKE TIME TO REMINISCE.** Flip through photo albums, share stories and fond memories with the special people in your life.
- **TALK FROM YOUR HEART.** Tell a loved one how much you appreciate him or her, share things for which you are grateful and offer a heartfelt 'I Love You.'

In the best-selling book Tuesdays with Morrie, Morrie questioned why so many people wait until a person dies to say nice things, reminisce and share fond memories. He also indicated how unfortunate it is that the person, about whom the nice things were being said, isn't there to hear them. Doepke adds, "Why wait? We encourage families to share the things that are on their hearts and let others know how much you care."

HUMOR IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Have you heard the one about the elderly man who was telling his neighbor about his new hearing aid? He said "*I just bought a new top of the line hearing aid. It cost me five thousand dollars.*" "Really," answered the neighbor. "*What kind is it?*" The elderly man said "*It's twelve thirty.*"

CONTACT INFORMATION



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HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*TM

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs.

Home Helpers begins with a consultation, preferably at the care recipient's residence. This gives us the opportunity...

- To meet the client and assess the situation.
- To make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- To ensure the caregiver assigned possesses the personality, skill set and passion that best meet your loved one's needs.

Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. Our caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, thereby minimizing client liability.
