

Reflecting with Purpose

As the New Year begins, many people find themselves reflecting on the past year to help identify things they may want to do, or do differently, in 2009. The changes people tend to focus on reflect alternatives for which they are familiar. For example, we may see someone who is physically fit and choose to pursue an exercise regimen. But, what can we do when we lack awareness of issues or alternatives? Why not turn to the big screen?

Movies are remarkably accurate in the experiences, hopes, and fears they depict. They are often able to share perspectives and get people thinking about topics they might otherwise overlook or avoid. Two examples are *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), which debuted on Christmas Day, and the *Bucket List* (2007).

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is a story about of a man who ages backwards, while the *Bucket List* is the story of two men, both dying of cancer, and the adventures they have as they complete their to-do lists before they die. Both movies are powerful and will cause you to stop and reflect about life.

In an interview with the Today Show's Ann Curry on December 19, Brad Pitt, who stars as Benjamin Button, commented that one of the things people tend to avoid most is accepting life as finite. During the interview, he mentioned a friend who worked at a hospice and who said of his patients, "In their last days they never focus on accomplishments..., but rather they spoke about family and regrets."

"Regardless of age or health status, we encourage people to give consideration to their bucket list and the things they would most regret if life was cut short," said Mary Doepke, RN, co-owner of Home Helpers. It may be a list of adventures, sharing heartfelt words of appreciation and love, or something else.

The point is if you do not know where you are going, it is guaranteed that you will never get there. Likewise, if you are not purposeful about the things you want to do, or do differently, chances are few things will change.

"At Home Helpers, we find people who need assistance with daily living activities are often the ones who most appreciate the gift of life," said Mary. She added, "They are often the ones who focus more on what they have, instead of what they do not have."

The story of Alfred Noble demonstrates the point about being purposeful. As historians recount it, when his brother Ludwig died, the newspaper mistakenly ran Alfred's obituary instead. When he read what was said about him, he was filled with regret and, as a result, made sudden and significant changes in his life.

Albert is now best known for the Noble Peace Prize. While few may have the chance to make such a significant mark on history, we all have the chance to be the person we might have been. If you have not already seen it, you might start the New Year off by watching the *Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, reflecting on life, and making purposeful choices to minimize your regrets. **Happy New Year.**



S.T.O.P – “You Are What You Eat”

It is believed that sayings such as “An apple a day...” and “You are what you eat” became popular because they were a simple and memorable way to spur people to make healthy food choices. And, knowing there is a link between eating a balanced diet and overall health and well-being, there is clearly value in remembering these eat-well messages.

A healthy diet is important because it provides the fuel the human body needs. “While the term “diet” is often used to suggest rationing or changing eating habits for the purpose of losing weight, we use the word diet to refer to proper nutrition,” said Mary Doepke, RN, co-owner of Home Helpers.

As people age, it is important to S.T.O.P. and recognize the many factors that can affect eating and enjoying meals. S.T.O.P. stands for:

- **S**hopping – From the sheer size of the store to the weight of the groceries, grocery shopping can be an arduous task. Furthermore, people who do not drive and those with functional limitations are often challenged to get to the store and get their groceries to their kitchen and put away.
- **T**astebuds – Many factors can adversely affect the enjoyment of food. As part of the natural aging process, the intensity of sour, salty and bitter tastes diminishes while the ability to sense sweets tends to remain.
- **O**ther – A variety of individual factors can make meals less appealing. For example, dentures, smoking, illness and medications can adversely affect the desire to eat, the taste of food, and the overall enjoyment of the experience.
- **P**reparation – The time and effort associated with cooking and clean-up can be overwhelming. Functional limitations that result from arthritis, cancer, stroke, and other illnesses can affect everything from the stamina it takes to cook, to the ability to lift pots, manage utensils and more.



Doepke added, “S.T.O.P is a phrase we coined to help our clients and Caregivers become more intentional about taking steps to ensure proper nutrition. We know the importance of a healthy and balanced diet.”

One common concern is when people find eating to be less enjoyable or satisfying, they often eat less or they eat only those foods with a distinctive or strong flavor. To help folks begin to improve their eating habits, Home Helpers suggests the following ideas:

1. Simplify and share the shopping – Whether we go grocery shopping with or for our clients, we encourage people to keep a grocery list of things they need and want.
2. Plan meals – If you have ever gone to the grocery on an empty stomach you have probably purchased more than you expected because everything sounds so good. We find talking about meals and helping our clients with weekly meal plans often brings a similar enjoyment.
3. Switch seasoning – Consider alternatives to salt and sugar to help make foods more flavorful. For example, one popular alternative for salt is Mrs. Dash. We suggest people talk with their doctor or a registered dietitian to discuss specifics.
4. Prepare meals – When meal preparation is more than our clients can or care to handle, we can do the cooking and clean-up while they enjoy helping to the degree they are able or interested.

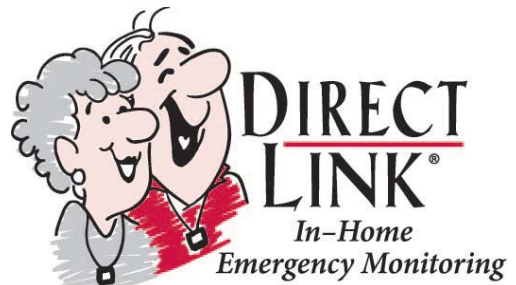
Personal Emergency Response Systems

While many people may have joked about the familiar line “I’ve fallen and need help,” a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) is no laughing matter. Thousands of people depend on a PERS every day for increased confidence and peace of mind. Ideally, a person with a PERS will never have to rely on the system for assistance, but just in case, it is nice to know that help is only a button push away.

Many people who have made arrangements for a PERS have found the use of a personal system goes well beyond emergencies. If someone you know may welcome the peace of mind a PERS offers, we would appreciate the chance to tell them about Direct Link In-Home Emergency Monitoring and show them how our system works. We offer a free in-home consultation.

Likewise, if a person is fiercely independent and has avoided the suggestions or attempts of others to provide assistance, as we begin 2009, it may be worth another try. If or when an incident occurs, chances are the person involved will not be near a telephone to call for help. In fact, most accidents and health emergencies occur in the bathtub or late at night.

A personal emergency monitoring system can often be the deciding factor that enables a person to maintain his or her independence. In fact, a PERS may help increase the feeling of safety and security. Studies indicate an increasing number of people are becoming less physically active. Having a PERS can help to help them move about the home and yard.





HOME HELPERS® – *Making Life Easier* SM

Home Helpers offers personalized care services similar to the care and support often provided by family members. Our flexible care plans are tailored to fit our clients' needs and budgets.

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

- Meet the client and assess the situation.
- Make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- Ensure the Caregiver assigned possesses the personality, skill set, and passion that best meet the care recipient's needs.

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

To learn more about Home Helpers, call (630) 323-7231, or visit us on the Web at www.MaryandMikeCare.com

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Compassionate Care is a bi-monthly newsletter produced by Home Helpers. We hope you found this edition to be informative and helpful.

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