

The other night as I was beginning to doze off I could hear the TV in the next room and the topic under discussion was aging. Since this is something that my mind goes to these days I started to listen just in case there were some words of wisdom that would give me hope.

It is not news that the population is aging. There is evidence all around us in school enrolment, the health care system, elder care accommodation, driving statistics, and a thousand other examples. People are still getting old, as they always have and most likely always will, but we are living longer and in North America we live in a society that thinks that aging can be held at bay. Unfortunately the definitive information on anti-aging is that products don't work. It would be nice to simply smear cream on your face and watch the wrinkles disappear before your eyes but it doesn't happen that way.

No, the answer is not in a bottle. The best advice is the old advice that has been with us through the ages. There is no way to beat the "getting old" system but there is a way to make the ride gratifying and graceful. Scientists tell us that how we age has to do mainly with environment and behaviour. If we look after ourselves as we age it will work out a lot better. That means building some concrete actions into your daily living plan. Nothing new here that we haven't heard before: don't smoke, cut down on fatty foods, drink alcohol in moderation, eat less calories. We know that it is essential to reduce stress in your life because stress takes away from all the good things that we are doing for ourselves.

In addition to these changes we need to be pro-active. The testimonials on the benefits of exercise are far reaching. Exercise is an easy one because there are so many options. You don't need money or special equipment. You can join a walking group at the mall, you can walk with a neighbour or join yoga classes at the rec centre.

Most of all, and it always comes down to this as far as I can tell, it is all about attitude. Our attitude about who we are and what we can do and what we have to offer is paramount. Take an in charge, can do attitude and pick your quality of life. Participate, be active, connect, and stay in touch. Choose to do what you like to do. Start a hobby, join a club, get a pet, volunteer in the many community activities that will appreciate what you have to offer. Remember that all the years of living have provided many valuable lessons. The older we are the more we have seen and done. Experience is the best teacher by far and that experience can be passed on as you connect with your family friends and community. This will keep you young. I guarantee it!

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