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Coach's Corner: A Twinkle in Your Wrinkle

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Published: Monday, August 3, 2009 10:18 PM PDT

I'm getting older ... Whoa! Not! Well, okay, this year has been difficult, with many medical situations that have curtailed the life I want to be living, making me feel older than my years. So, after a bit of denial, I finally asked myself, "What can I do to prevent these circumstances from getting the best of me and keep a twinkle in my wrinkle?" After a surprisingly short search, I found some good role models. Their message is that we are all getting older — no avoiding it — but having the right attitude makes the difference.

Take Aunt Angie, for instance, who at 96 decided it's never too late for tuning up. Last year, she started doing 100 crunches and leg lifts before she gets out of bed. Three times a week she goes to an exercise class and sings while she exercises. What a gal! I just read an article about a woman who is 106. She plays Scrabble to keep her brain alive and attributes her longevity to healthy habits: no meat, gobs of vegetables and no drinking or smoking. I have another 85-year-old friend who focuses her life on helping others. She always has a twinkle in her eye.

Acceptance of age does not always come easily or automatically. It demands things of us we may not want to give. But every one of my role models changed what she could change and accepted what she couldn't. This path helps us appreciate the life that we have, let go of fears and gain peace.

I think aging well needs to be intentional, especially in three key areas:

Staying Healthy. No matter what else is going on, do whatever possible to take care of the body, mind, and spirit through good diet, exercise, maintaining relationships, and finding continuing meaning and purpose in life.

Serve and Consider. Just take the focus away from "me." Our lifetimes of experience and wisdom would go a long way in making a difference in the lives of others.

Remain Hopeful. Even when there are struggles, focus on the positives and don't listen to "it's too hard." You never have before. Why start now?

I am also taking aging with a bad attitude off the table. Not an option. I have eight beautiful grandchildren. Right there are eight good reasons to ignore my wrinkles and focus on my twinkle.

Coaching Question: What does aging gracefully with acceptance mean to you?

Coaching Tip: Although it is more difficult as you age, never give up on striving for a full and meaningful life. Look for role models.

Homework: Make a list of all the things you can change and another of all the things you cannot change.

Quote: "To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living."

– Henri Frederic Amiel (1821-1881)

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.

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