



Full Circle

Where Behavioral Health and Spirituality Meet

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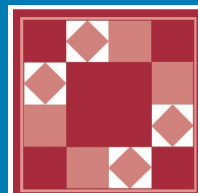
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"Aging is no accident. It is necessary to the human condition, intended by the soul. We become more characteristic of who we are simply by lasting into later years; the older we become, the more our true natures emerge. Thus, the final years have a very important purpose: the fulfillment and confirmation of one's character."

~ James Hillman, *The Force of Character and the Lasting Life*, 1999

"I had learned that all the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble...they can never be solved, only outgrown."

Carl Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*

Growing Old Gracefully

By: Rev. Carl Yusavitz, Director of Pastoral Services

One day, a tourist, tramping the mountain villages of northern Vermont, came upon a very old woman sitting in a rocking chair on her cabin porch. "Have you lived here all your life?" the visitor asked. "Not yet," the old lady replied!

We all live in this "not yet" time... not quite young, not yet so old that we can't enjoy many of the same things we did when we were younger. Some of us are Baby Boomers; as a demographic, baby boomers tell us that they will NEVER grow old. But Boomer or not, we're all going to grow old one day.

What does it mean, then, to "grow old gracefully?" Here are two views on aging - one secular and one from our Bible:

"Grow old along with me,
the best is yet to be,
the last of life –
for which the first was made."

~ Robert Browning



"You have taught me, O God, from my youth, and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds. And now that I am old and gray, O God, forsake me not, till I proclaim your strength to every generation that is to come."

~ Psalm 71: 17-18

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Chaplain friends who minister at our area retirement communities have told me that growing old gracefully often involves:

- Living as fully as possible with the strength that we still possess
- Facing the reality of our death with some inner preparedness, dignity, courage, and a sense of adventure
- Living in a place where we feel safe
- Enjoying some measure of privacy
- Remaining as independent as possible
- Still being in control of what we can still control
- Experiencing love and intimacy in new and creative ways
- Having daily experiences of physical touch
- Feeling needed by others
- Leaving a legacy behind

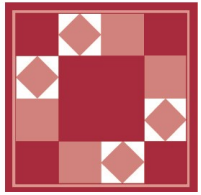


Shortly after I began ministering at Penn Foundation, we invited the UCC pastor and writer Robert Raines to talk to our community about what it meant for him to grow old gracefully. He outlined seven stages of aging:

- **Waking up** - which means recognizing our mortality, engaging (again) in meaning-making, and seeking new avenues of purpose in our life
- **Embracing our sorrow** - which means acknowledging our losses and using them to become more compassionate with others
- **Savoring our blessedness** - which means remembering and savoring our past, “counting our blessings,” if you will
- **Re-imagining what lies ahead** - which means figuring out new ways to contribute to society or completing our life work or experiencing our legacy
- **Nurturing intimacy** - which means deepening our connection to those we love and those who love us, including, of course, God
- **Seeking forgiveness** - which means “clearing the deck” of relationships that are burdensome and troubling, so that our later years can be forgiving of the past and hopeful of the future
- **Taking on the mystery of life** - which means exploring the meaning of our lives with thanksgiving and anticipating our future with hope



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For me, growing old gracefully involves activities like:

- Identifying people and activities which still “make my heart sing,” especially if they are intergenerational
- Reading literature or engaging in media that gives me hope
- Honoring my new place in society as an elder
- Spending more intentional time with God in prayer and scripture-reading/study

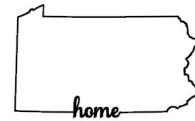
Remember that growing old is as much a part of our journey toward God as being born was. All of the gifts with which we were born came from God, and the God of our Sacred Scripture wants us to make the most of these gifts as long as we live.

So, whatever your age, may you continue to grow gracefully and gratefully.

4 Myths About Retirement

MYTH #1: People today are retiring and moving to the Sunbelt.

FACT: Some do, but more than 90% of Americans stay right where they've always lived, and most of the rest move only within their state of residence. Pennsylvania is just behind Florida in per capital elderly who prefer to stay put.



MYTH #2: Retired people spend most of their “free time” on hobbies, travel, and being with their family.

FACT: The largest item of time use for retired people is watching TV (43 hours per week on average).

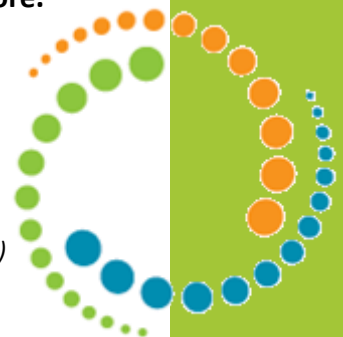
MYTH #3: In traditional societies, respect for elders meant giving people a decent retirement.

FACT: Retirement, as we understand it today, is a 20th century invention. Elderly people in traditional societies stay active as “wisdom bearers” and story-tellers in their society.



MYTH #4: People are retiring at an earlier age today than ever before.

FACT: Early retirement has been reversing dramatically for the past 10 years. “Retirement” is fast-becoming a thing of the past, particularly in these uncertain economic times.



(Source: Dr. Harry R. Moody, American Society on Aging)

SAVE-THE-DATE!

Penn Foundation presents

Understanding Autism: Tips and Tools for
Being an Inclusive House of Worship

A Special Event for Clergy

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

8:30 am | Registration & Breakfast

9:00 - 10:30 am | Presentation

St. John's United Church of Christ
500 W. Main Street | Lansdale



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807 Lawn Avenue | PO Box 32 | Sellersville, PA 18960

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