



Resourceful Thinking

Vol 21 No 2
Summer 2016

AGING ISSUES: WHAT'S NORMAL, WHAT'S NOT HOW CAN WE AGE WELL?

AGING NORMS

There is one thing that every one of us has in common. We are aging. Some of us are weathering the transitions from youth to middle age to 'advanced' age well, and some of us are facing challenges. Heredity, environment, lifestyle, tobacco use, substance abuse and preventive care all play major roles in how we age. Some of us are moving along the aging path with our parents so we may be getting a "sneak preview" of what can be in store for us. This can also give us some insight into a healthier approach to aging. So – what is "normal"? What can we expect?

Sensory changes

Our visual acuity changes. We tend to develop a degree of farsightedness, our sensitivity to glare increases, and we need a bit more light. We may have hearing difficulties. There is a strong correlation between hearing loss and depression, and we may

also come to misleading conclusions about dementia. (Could the problem be hearing loss instead of cognitive impairment?)

Tactile sensitivity decreases

Arthritic joints, decreased circulation and a reduced number of nerve endings add to the decreased sensitivity. As we age, we may have difficulty determining water temperature which can lead to burns, experience skin breakdown and/or be unable to withstand winter or colder temperatures

Taste & smell sensitivity

The ability to taste and smell declines and we have fewer taste buds. Medications can exacerbate the problems.

Balance & mobility issues

Several bodily changes affect our mobility and balance. Weakened muscles, reduced function of internal organs such as the heart and lungs, skeletal changes, medications, chronic illness such as arthritis, tennis, and diabetes, and acute illness such as ear infections and

injuries due to falls effect our mobility and balance.

Psychological & social changes

Several factors can impact this area of aging. Retirement, loss of a spouse, moving to a new home, health changes, income changes all contribute to our psychosocial well-being.

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL?

Just as there are issues that are normal, there are also issues that can impact our aging process that we may not expect.

Dementia

Some people age well into their 90's with no cognitive changes, others may develop Alzheimer's or a related dementia.

Cancer

Although anyone can develop cancer at any time, aging is the single biggest risk factor for cancer.

Osteoporosis

This is a disease of the bones that occurs when you lose bone too fast or fail to build new bone quickly enough – or both.

Diabetes

Our risk for Type 2 diabetes increases with age.

Cardio-vascular disease

Lifestyle, heredity, diet all impact our cardio-vascular health. (Do you realize how many times your heart has beaten in your life? You can get an average at:

<http://www.calculatorpro.com/calculator/beats-and-breaths-calculator/>)

These are just a few issues to be aware of as we age.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Although we can't avoid aging, nor can we avoid all of the challenges of aging, we can do some things to help us age better.

Exercise

Walk, do something to keep moving! Don't be a couch potato!

Nutrition

Watch your diet!

If you use tobacco, stop!

Don't smoke, chew, rub. Research is lagging behind popularity but the vapor cigs still contain the addictive substance nicotine.

Preventive health screens

Make sure to follow your doc's advice on preventive care. Hearing screens, colonoscopies, labs, mammograms / prostate exams – make sure you are taking care of what you can.

Be psychologically and spiritually healthy

Think positive. Be grateful. Research shows that those who are active in a faith community live longer.

Pets add to quality of life

Pets can help coping and help lower blood pressure.

Awareness

Be aware of heredity issues. What can you do to avoid some of the family aging issues?

We have to be our own best health care advocates. Nobody can make us healthy without our active involvement! Work at it and AGE HEALTHY!



FAITH
IN ACTION

JEANETTE WOJCIK RETIRES

Jeanette Wojcik, Executive Director of Faith in Action Caregivers for 21 years, retired effective June 15. (As many of you know, Altenheim Resource & Referral Services shared office space with Faith in Action for 18 years until the Resource Center was razed to make way for Altenheim's expanded retirement housing.) Our long-standing relationship resulted in many referrals, shared programs and a partnership of the Memory Bridge conference that was offered a few years ago. The relationship also produced several lasting friendships. What some of you don't know is that Jeanette and I started our respective positions on the same day of the same year. Faith in Action (then known as Ohio Valley Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers) had offices at the former Council of Churches office at Fourth Street Methodist and my office was here at

Altenheim. The Resource & Referral Center was completed in June, 1995 and became the home of Altenheim Resource & Referral Services, and Ohio Valley Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers moved in their offices on the 2nd floor of our building in October. Jeanette's passion for the ministry, her dedication to her volunteers and care receivers, and her professionalism allowed that organization to grow and to serve thousands of our area residents through the years. Although we miss Jeanette, we wish her all the best in her retirement. Jeanette will be on hand to assist Yvonne Verno (the new Executive Director) with the organization's 15th Annual Triathlon / Duathlon on July 9 at Wheeling Jesuit University. After that, Jeanette will have time to read, watch Westerns, and pursue other community endeavors! Good luck, Jeanette!

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP STARTED

Are you caring for someone with memory loss? It's a challenging task and one that exhausts many caregivers. Providing care can impact the health of a caregiver, often resulting in severe health problems or even death of the caregiver. Support groups can help! We now have a Caregiver Support Group meeting in Wheeling! Chris Gillis, trained support group facilitator, reports that the group is meeting on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Ohio County

Library, 52 – 16th Street. The group is an open group. Chris not only has had the Alzheimer's Association training but she has 'walked the caregiver walk' providing care to two of her family members. For information, call Chris at 304 780-6504.

LOCAL FACILITY PROVIDES MUSIC & MEMORY PROGRAM

Having worked in geriatrics and dementia care for a LONG time, it has always amazed me to see someone with memory loss who could no longer articulate their thoughts but who could sing the words to a favorite song or hymn. Research has shown that music plays a very strong role in memory care. (Refer to the article at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rita-altman-rn/music-and-memory_b_3639805.html)

Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Wheeling has incorporated the Music & Memory into their long term care, and many families report very positive results. One of the caregivers told me that negative behaviors have diminished, the resident seems much more content, and walks down the hall singing to her personal music selections. With this program, residents are provided an iPod and personal play lists are loaded. The music is anything that the resident likes. Staff has shared stories of increased engagement, more activity, decreased agitation and a perceived improvement in

the quality of life. When you're looking into care for a loved one, you may want to ask if there is a music program. There are many facilities that incorporate music into their residents' daily activities and the reports – across the board – are very positive!

CEU PROGRAM BEING PLANNED FOR JULY 18

A continuing education program will be offered on July 18, 2016 at West Virginia Northern Community College. Our topic will focus on 'suicide'. The program will run from 1pm – 4pm and there will be a fee. Details are incomplete but call us with your contact information and we'll be sure to contact you with finalized details! Continuing ed credit for social workers will be provided by Bethany College. Call me at 304 243-0996 or email me at akoegler@frontier.com.



WALK TO END ALZHEIMERS

The Annual Wheeling Walk to End Alzheimer's will be held at Wheeling Park on October 15, 2016 with event activities starting at the Schwertfeger Shelter (above the playground) at 8:30am. Plan to join us and help us FIGHT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE! Call Kelli Lewis at 800 272-3900 for information on registration or on how you

can help. (For those of you outside the area, Walks are held in several areas of WV and across the country.) Go to www.alz.org and find a Walk near you. There are several fundraisers coming up to help benefit the cause, too.

August 9 & September 20– Dine to Donate at Perkins, Wheeling. You MUST have a coupon to attach to your bill and the Walk will get 20%. Coupons for August's event will be available in July. Contact Ann to get your coupon!

August 20 – Peggy's Run Motorcycle Run sponsored by the Elm Grove Eagles Charity Riders. Sign up at 12pm and kick stands up at 1pm. If you don't ride, come to the Elm Grove Eagles at 4 and for \$10 you can eat, enjoy and benefit the cause. Call Missy at 304 559-5322 for more information.

Call Ann @ 304 243-0996 for information. All are welcome!

LET US HELP!

Altenheim Resource & Referral Services can help!

- Free confidential assessment
- Free confidential consultation
- Information on aging & caregiving
- Community programs
- Professional workshops

Contact us at 1387 National Road, Wheeling WV 26003, 304 243-0996 or akoegler@frontier.com.