

The Joy of Aging Optimally

An essay about embracing aging, finding the positives, and continuing to learn and grow as we get older.

BY CAROL LEISH, MA



"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

— Mark Twain

I agree with the above statement by Mark Twain because our attitude about growing older is important. For me, in addition to my positive attitude about aging, staying socially and religiously active is also essential in order to maintain a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Keeping physically active keeps me in good shape both physically and emotionally. These are my keys to optimal aging.

Wanting to improve other peoples' perceptions about aging is one of the reasons that I volunteered to become the advocate for people with disabilities on the Area Agency for Aging's Advisory Council in 2021.

Through my involvement on the Advisory Council, my motivational speaking, and my journalism, I work to

change attitudes toward people, like me, who are older and have challenges. I educate others that we are all more similar than different, regardless of our age or ability level. Awareness is the first step to eradicating prejudices and stereotypes.

My advocacy emphasizes my capabilities instead of focusing on my limitations. Others can also find meaning in what they are doing and accomplishing regardless of their age or ability level.

Just because I am now 61, it does not mean that I am getting weaker or less interested in accomplishing things. Having physical disabilities that affect my vision, voice, and general coordination does not mean that my intellect is affected, or that I do not have hopes and desires like everyone else does.

For me, aging optimally has meant finding the importance of being socially active with friends and being active

in my Jewish traditions. I am thankful for my friends, some of whom are like family to me. Going to the temple regularly fulfills my spiritual needs.

Hobbies are also important to me in being able to age optimally. Playing Broadway show tunes, popular music, and classical music on the piano enables me to realize and enjoy the beauty of music. By trying something new and learning to play new songs on the piano, I have been able to realize that I am always learning and improving. Thus, there is always room for learning new things in order to make my life better.

Keeping physically active by walking 30 minutes each day and occasionally swimming keeps me in good physical and emotional shape. This regular exercise helps to maintain my optimal health.

As I become older and wiser, I can also relate to the words of Frank Lloyd Wright. He said, "The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes." Yes, that is true, because with my positive perspective I continue to learn new things. I also have been able to enjoy more things, and to get to know more people. Thus, I am truly blessed as I age optimally.



Carol Leish, a member of the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging's Advisory Council, is a motivational speaker and journalist whose work appears in the Ventura Breeze and other publications. Her website, "Capable Carol," can be found at www.capablecarol.com.