

COPING WITH OLD AGE AND TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOUR BODY

That ancient book of wisdom, the Bible, declares, "The body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit . . . which you have from God." We are expected to take good care of this extraordinary house that contains our Spirit, mind, and soul.

- **Keep yourself clean.** The old saying by Benjamin Franklin, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" gets truer as the years go by. When suffering, sickness, and mental deterioration come upon older people it is more difficult for them to keep clean. But, it is a necessity, even if we must hire someone to help. To be unkempt is the surest way to hasten the problems of old age.
- **Exercise regularly and moderately.** Older people often are sedentary and have problems with exercise and activity; but to stay alive exercise isn't a choice; it's a necessity. A sedentary life-style can be a form of suicide. We must persuade ourselves and others to keep moving as old age approaches.
- **Eat a little less, but be sure the food is well balanced and nutritious.** Growing a garden is a neat idea. There is nothing better than fresh vegetables. It seems to me that some warning needs to be made about fad diets and peculiar eating habits. If a person has reached retirement age, probably they need to go slow in radically changing their mode of eating. The older we get, the less we eat for pleasure and the more we eat for survival. We eat, not so much to satisfy our appetites, but to satisfy our nutritional needs.
- **Take a sensible approach to dieting.** Many people who reach retirement age are overweight. Now is the time to do something about it. The magic formula is simple: Eat a little less and exercise a little more. Don't go on a crash diet. Fast weight loss only means fast weight gain. Gradually cut down on fat, sugar, and the amount you eat and increase the amount of exercise. Gradual weight loss by changing your life-style of eating and exercising is the only way. Unfortunately, many times weight loss is based on depression or some other serious condition. It is possible to be very slender because of a mental disorder known as anorexia nervosa or bulimia in which a person forces vomiting after each meal. Preoccupation with slenderness can often be more debilitating than plain ol' fat.
- **Eliminate bad habits.** It's never too late to stop smoking, boozing, or kicking any addictive condition. A true religious faith is stronger than any addiction. With the help of God and our faithful friends, the world of booze and narcotics can be conquered.
- **Fight back at sickness and disease.** In our day of Social Security and Medicare there is little excuse for older people to let health conditions slip up on them. With little expense, we senior citizens can get regular checkups; and if something is coming, we can take preventive steps. If you have a medical problem find out as much as you can about it. The government has free booklets on every health subject imaginable. The booklets are easy

to read and contain the latest information on every item of health. Examine the health information source listings, pages 246 and 247 and write for a list of publications relating to the subject you would like information on. This way you can stay up on the latest information about good health.

The rules for good body health are so simple that they are taught early in grade-school years to children. However, those simple rules are often so neglected and so costly to health that the U.S. Department of Health estimates that 25% of our senior citizens die needlessly of simple neglect years before their time.

The body is a marvelous machine; but, like all machines, it will eventually wear out. However, we know that with a little care a machine may go for 100,000 miles or more before it gives up; but, with a little neglect the best of machines can be brought to an untimely end. **A major rule in coping with old age consists of taking care of our machine--our body.**

MAINTAIN A GOOD MENTAL OUTLOOK

Obviously the mind and body can't be separated, so what you do for one, you do for the other. One of the saddest sights the world has ever known is Alzheimer's disease. Of course, we do not at present know the cause or the cure. How terrible it is when an older person loses his or her memory and the ability to think. Believe it or not, more people do it by default than do it by catching the disease.

We need to keep our minds vigorous and active up until the end of our body. Here are some things that help to preserve the mind until the end:

- **Do useful work for the fun of it and sometimes for pay.** Retirement really does mean changing occupations. Don't let yourself sit around and stare into space. Get occupied. Be careful for people who can and will take advantage of you; but, usually we have friends, family, or church that can advise and keep us from being hurt.
- **Go places, if possible.** See the world. Travel to faraway places and gasp in amazement at the beauty, the glory, the majesty, and the wonder of life. Some people can't travel because of physical conditions. Then travel with brochures, magazines, TV programs, and your imagination.
- **Write letters to relatives and friends.** An old song goes, "Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold." Don't lose track of your relatives--call them, write to them, talk to them, share their joys and sorrows, and they will do the same for you. Never go to a gathering and say the people aren't friendly. What you really mean is that you didn't go out of your way to be friendly with them. Often people can pick up our coldness and they avoid us
- **Maintain your hobbies and get some new ones.** Hobbies are fun things to do. If you don't have a hobby, arbitrarily choose one and stick with it long enough for it to grow on you. Or, if it is not for you, you can honestly reject it. Then, choose another hobby and

stick with it long enough to gain some expertise. Keep choosing hobbies, until one becomes so fascinating you can go for broke. Hobbies do not necessarily cost a lot of money. Most reputable hobbies have clubs of interested people. Join the club, read their literature, and get involved in having fun.

- **Read good books.** If you can't read, go back to school and learn, or join Frank C. Laubach's program of "Each One Teach One," and get someone to be your tutor. If your eyes are too bad to read, then get some tape-recorded books and listen to them. If you can't hear or see, then get some help from the government, take some braille courses, and have the Reader's Digest send to you their books in braille. Radio and television have some interesting educational channels that on occasion can substitute for good reading.
- **Go to community and school activities.** Get yourself involved with the programs of your area. *Go to the monthly clubhouse programs, the grade-school festivals, the county fair, the high school ball games, etc.* Go to community functions and talk to people. When you get involved you won't be bored, and better than that, senility slows to a halt.
- **Play games and enjoy sports.** Learn how to play the parlor games that kept the families of yesteryear together. Checkers, chess, backgammon--there are a thousand games that are fun and will keep your mind alert. T.V. often will not. It keeps us young.

Seldom retirees can't afford to go to a big league or professional game. But, we can afford to go to the local high school and grade-school sports. When you get acquainted with some people, it becomes even more exciting, particularly if one of the participants is a grandchild.

- **Avoid negative daydreaming about the past.** The past is over and done with. Whenever you think about it, remember the pleasant and good times, but don't even dwell on them. Provide for yourself some new pleasant good times. Do not end your days with regrets on how you lived--good or bad. End your days like Moses, full of life, energy, and exciting happenings.
- **Go back to school and take some courses and find out what our kids are doing and learning.** If you have a community college close take some classes. Even if you find it awkward or embarrassing to sit in a class or be taught by someone barely out of college forget that and remember you want to learn things and keep your mind alert.
- **Monitor your attitudes by keeping a daily journal.** There are certain mental attitudes that are destructive to the happy life of anyone and particularly to senior citizens.
 - Avoid crankiness and bad temper. Record your slips. Give yourself a daily grade on temperament and strive to improve through daily monitoring.
 - Avoid seeing only the negative side of things by counting your blessings, not your curses. It is so easy to become negative. Older people have lots of aches and pains and sometimes severe financial worries. We older people must fight hard to keep a positive attitude and maintain our faith.

- Check yourself against the fruits of the spirit. The good Book tells us to grow the fruits of the spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." As a person begins to deteriorate physically and mentally, it is easy to let the spiritual life ebb away, by developing a strong self-righteous, complaining (ain't it awful) attitude. Check that the fruits of the spirit are growing.
- **Fill your mind with positive words** like:
 YES, YES, I CAN; rather than no, I can't
 FINE, WONDERFUL, SPLENDID; rather than terrible
 HOW NICE, THANK YOU; rather than ugh, I don't like it
 I'M GETTING BETTER; rather than I'm getting worse

KEEP YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE INTACT

Sadly, I have seen too many devoutly religious people work hard for the good most of their lives and then as they approach the end of their journey give up, waste away, and lose their faith. Here are some suggestions:

- **Keep practicing your faith.** Not so long ago in a big city area a famous bishop of a great denomination approached old age, developed a severely painful case of arthritis, cursed a God that could visit such agony on one of his servants, publicly proclaimed he had given up his faith, became a snarling skeptic, and died a bitter old man. What a sad thing for a quarterback to give up just before the touchdown.
- **Get in touch with nature.** Spend some time each day outside in nature. If that is not possible, get some plants in your room and grow something. Get your fingers in the dirt, lift your head toward the sky, watch the stars, the clouds, the changing heavens, and then turn your eyes upon the beautiful growing things and exult in the glory of life.
- **Speak a good word, or do a good deed, or think a good thought about the positive nature of things.** You might not ever know what a smile might do for someone.
- **Never give up your hopes for the future.** Death is only a step away for those who lose hope and eternal life is available to those who keep up their hope. The great master was crucified between two thieves: one who lost hope and scoffed and sneered; one who still thought life contained some answers and cried out for the master to remember him.
- **Don't let yourself get bitter or mean.** A person can't get away from problems. "Life consists of solving problems, and the good life consists of solving them without becoming bitter."

If people are not tactful and hurt your feelings, show them how to be tactful. E. Stanley Jones, a missionary to India, once said, "I never allow people to hurt my feelings or insult me. No matter what they say, I never take offense; because, the deeper my offense, the shallower my faith." Most of us might find that policy a bit too much, but it works.

- **Fight off death to the very end.** You believe in life, not death. Show by your eagerness, vitality, and enthusiastic living that you want to live forever. Fill yourself with love of life and keep yourself alive as long as you can and death will be for you a magnificent graduation ceremony.