



Lakeview Beacon

Helping People Find Solutions
Spring 2008 Edition

Lakeview Counseling
1844 Oak Hollow Drive, Suite B

Phone: 231.929.0300
Traverse City, MI 49686

*The most beautiful
people are those
who have
known defeat,
known suffering,
known struggle,
known loss,
And
have found
their way out
of the depths.
These persons have
an appreciation,
a sensitivity,
and an
understanding of life
that fills them with
compassion,
gentleness,
and a deep loving
concern.
Beautiful people do
not just happen.*

*Elisabeth
Kübler-Ross*

Aging Gracefully by Jill Kimball, ACSW

"Aging Gracefully". It probably sounds better than *"Getting Old!"* Of course we are all aging. We're all getting closer to facing some losses as we age. These losses may have to do with changes in appearance, health, professional recognition, mobility or our own mortality. We're also all getting closer to celebrating important milestones that represent successes in our lives! Each of our lives is filled with changes and transitions that we must adjust to as we age. Successfully maneuvering these changes requires a positive attitude and a healthy lifestyle.

Most of us can identify those people in our lives that seem to reflect a sort of grace or ease in the way they deal with adversity or change. They are the living proof, "That which does not kill me, only makes me stronger". This is the type of positive attitude that helps us cope with our constantly changing lives. How many times have you looked back on a difficult experience only to understand that you probably could of handled things with less anxiety, less drama and stress?

Stress, like aging, is in the eye of the beholder. When you believe you can handle the outcomes of any change, you can. It would be easy to become overwhelmed with the expectations and surprises that life presents, but how you cope with that demand, greatly impacts your physical and emotional health now and in the future. Approaching life (and aging) like an opportunity instead of a chore allows us to look forward to the challenges that life presents to us. Our efforts towards pursuing a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude are both within our reach and well worth our attempts as we embrace our own aging. Certainly our expectations about aging have as much to do with how we experience aging as our genetics do. This newsletter explores ways to maintain vitality and develop your understanding of yourself and your relationships through out your life.

Clearly Aging Gracefully comes from Living Gracefully.

Staying Socially Active Throughout Life by Barb Cain, ACSW



While some people struggle with the aging process, others embrace it looking for improved quality of life. Research shows that how stress is managed and which activities people are involved in are key indicators for improved feelings of functioning and vitality.

Long-term stress, the kind you can't control or resolve can have far-reaching, harmful consequences. Research at the University of California, San Francisco, has shown that chronic stress appears to lead to the premature aging of our cells. Says Elissa Epel, Ph.D., a psychologist and leading stress researcher at UC, San Francisco: "We know that stress plays a role in health and aging."

Though loneliness has been linked to making all people more susceptible to stress, depression, loss of cognitive ability, and other ills, friendships seem especially protective for women. Shelley Taylor, a researcher at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), has found that most women deal with stress by relying on long chats with one another. While men are more likely to go into "fight or flight" mode, women are more likely to "tend and befriend". While males and females both produce the soothing hormone oxytocin under stress, estrogen tends to enhance the hormone, while testosterone inhibits it. When oxytocin levels are high, people are calmer, more social, and less anxious. These friendships not only help fight stress but may partially explain why women tend to outlive men.

Perception of stress is a big factor for individuals. For some, "stress is like water off a duck's back", says Thomas Perls, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at Boston University and the director of the New England Centenarian Project, a nationwide study of 1,500 people over the age of 100 and their children. "It isn't the amount of stress that matters but how you manage it." In fact, a number of the centenarians Perls has studied have endured plenty of stress. They lived through the Great Depression and World Wars I and II; not to mention the usual array of divorces, deaths of loved ones, and even job losses. "Yet they don't seem to internalize it", Perls says. "They just let it go."

When you develop more social contacts the personal connections can make your senior years more enjoyable, reduce stress and increase vitality— games, humor, friends, optimism, altruism, music, meditation and prayer zap stress. There are many ideas to consider if you are looking to improve well-being and social connections.

Continued involvement in areas that you have found fulfilling throughout adulthood can strengthen old social contacts and help you make new connections. These might include your religious community, as well as professional organizations and clubs that often have groups for retirees.

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Aging and Marriage by Carol Murray, ACSW



Marriages age, just like our bodies. They slow down and aren't as quick to repair. They aren't as energetic, flexible, exciting or interesting anymore. For some people, this sense of disappointment and loss leads to thinking: "I must be in a bad marriage" or "I must be married to the wrong person". As the fire dies out, we are at risk for believing that we will find something more lasting with someone else. If we reframe how we look at an aging marriage, then we are open to learning ways to reinvest in the relationship and even rekindle the sense of romance.

First of all, remember that love requires action. By now, you should know what your spouse likes, whether it is a certain type of food, entertainment, hobbies, people, gifts or intimate activity. If you aren't sure about his or her preferences, start relearning those important details. Provide these things for your spouse, even at times that are not a special occasion. Find time for romance in everyday situations through the use of words, notes and cards, music, scents, and physical contact. Spice up your intimacy by talking about what you like and flirting with each other. Be playful and introduce excitement and surprise.

After so many years of a shared life, there are bound to be areas of stress. Identify these sources of stress and address them constructively. Demonstrate that your partner and marriage are a priority and you are willing to listen, be mindful, and participate in counseling if necessary. If you have adult children and/or grandchildren, discuss your expectations of these relationships. Research tells us that couples have positive associations with their marriage when it includes shared memories, novelty, open communication and expressions of respect and validation.

You should not only share activities of daily life and recreation, but travel/vacations, dates, intimate conversation and talks of hopes and dreams. Reminisce about the tender and loving ways you interacted earlier in your relationship. Tell each other what you like and admire about the other. Talk about your achievements and the new challenges you are facing. Talk about your mistakes, and what you have learned from them. And, don't forget to laugh, laugh, and laugh even more with each other.

Finally, thinking positive, giving to others and reminding yourself regularly of all the things you have to be grateful for promotes a sense of happiness....and happy people make happy marriages.

“ Love at first sight is easy to understand; it's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle.”

Amy Bloom.

SENIOR RESOURCES

TC Senior Center
922-4911

GT County
Comm. On Aging
1-877-686-4688
or 922-4688

Benzie County
Comm. On Aging
325-4851

Antrim County
Comm. On Aging
533-8703

Lakeview Counseling

TO REACH US:

PHONE:
231.929.0300

FAX:
231.933.6378

ON THE WEB!
WWW.LAKEVIEWTC.COM



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Suite B
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Staying Active, Staying Involved

- Make a list of activities you enjoy and some you'd like to try then set up a schedule to participate in as many as you can. Organized activities provide excellent opportunities to meet new people.
- Visit a gym/ senior center or community center that has workout facilities. Improving your health and staying active along side other seniors allows for social time, fun and improved fitness and energy leads to greater quality of life. Exercise improves memory, concentration, and abstract reasoning among older adults, and may even delay the onset of Alzheimer's.
- Join or create a book club. Check at your local library or book store for groups that meet regularly to share views on books and authors.
- Check your local senior center to join activities and trips offered by the facility. There are often social opportunities at a variety of activity levels available and geared specifically to older community members.
- Develop your computer skills and access information online that might spark new ideas on how you want to live your life and connect with others.
- Learn to meditate, either in a class or on your own. Researchers have shown that a regular practice of meditation adds to the thickness of the cortex—a region of the brain, associated with attention and sensory processing, that tends to thin with age.
- Ask neighbors or former coworkers to join you for a walk, a meal or attend a concert or play.

****If you have questions or comments regarding our newsletter please contact our editor,
Jill Kimball, ACSW at 929-0300, ext. 105***

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1844 Oak Hollow Drive, Suite B
Traverse City, MI 49686

Barbara Cain, ACSW
Laura Slaughter, ACSW

Carol Murray, ACSW
Director

Jill Kimball, ACSW
Beth Boshoven, LMSW