

Old Age, I Decided, is a Gift

I am now, probably for the first time in my life, the person I have always wanted to be, Oh, not my body! I sometime despair over my body, the wrinkles, the baggy eyes and the sagging butt. And often I am taken aback by that older person that lives in my mirror (who looks like my mother!), but I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life or my loving family for less grey hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become more kind to myself and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but looks so avant-garde on my patio. I am entitled to a treat, to be messy, to be extravagant. I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 a.m. and sleep until noon?

I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 50's and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love... I will.

I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They, too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful; but then again, some of life is just as well forgotten. I eventually remember the important things.

Sure, over the year my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one or when a child suffers or when a beloved pet passes on. But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the job of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turn gray and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer the question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been or worrying about what will be. AND I shall eat dessert every single day!

*Reprinted from **the Florida East Coast Post-Polio Support Group** Newsletter
Jan-Feb. 2007 issue*