

Excuse Me, How Can I Grow Old Gracefully?

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Abstract

Some people grow old disgracefully; they quarrel often with their spouses and children. They go babbling on, keep repeating things, haranguing, criticizing and nagging. The question is how can a person be more graceful as (s)he grows older. Instead of being referred to as “an old fart” (“an offensive phrase usually referring to someone in authority who is set in their ways or lacking a sense of fun” (Candappa, 2004: 9); older persons can, in fact have, more licenses to enjoy their work, living and leading. And this is what this paper is all about.

Keywords: Aging, aging management, detachment; people-person; learning; positive thinking

Introduction

Getting old? Get over it!

In our mind’s eye, all of us should not see ‘old’ as being a negative thing. Verily, age is just a number. And indeed all of us should age gracefully. And interestingly so, as Robert (Bo) Bennett once said, “having a positive mental attitude is asking how something can be done rather than saying it can’t be done”.

Paper’s Objectives

All of us “should have a graceful manner. We should respect those who are older than us and sympathize with those who are younger than us.” (Kamal Bani-Hani, ResearchGate, 2014). The aim and objectives of this research review paper are to investigate on the areas in a person gets better and as (s)he gets older, (s)he becomes more graceful. Here, where possible, some negative examples are highlighted on growing old disgracefully so that all of us can learn on how to avoid such situations. Older people are to be better able to cope with old age and they have, in fact, more licenses to enjoy their life, living (and even if they are working, enjoy their work). And these are what this qualitative research paper is intended to examine; this paper, in a way, can also offer some tips for healthy and graceful aging/ living.

True, one can’t help getting older yet one does not have to get old; one just “don’t retire, (but) retread!” (Robert Otterbourg cited in Vale and Rattle, 2006: 90).

What Is Aging or Getting Old?

Aging means “advanced years; old age”. Currently, there is no United Nations standard numerical criterion, but the United Nations agreed the cutoff is 60 years and above to refer to the older population (WHO, 2014).

The ageing process is of course a natural reality which has its own dynamic, hugely beyond human control. Nonetheless, it is also subject to the constructions by which each society makes appreciation of old age. In the developed world, chronological time plays a dominant role. The age of 60 or 65, roughly equivalent to retirement ages in most developed countries is said to be the start of old age. In most developing world, chronological or sequential time has little or no importance in the importance of old age. Other socially created meanings of age are more significant such as the roles assigned to older people; in some cases it is the loss of roles accompanying physical decline which is significant in defining old age. Thus, in contrast to the chronological signposts or indicators which point to life stages in the developed world, old age in most developing countries is seen to begin at the point when active contribution is no longer viable. (Gorman, 2000; also quoted in WHO, 2014).

What Change for the Better With Age?

To begin with old age is just a stage, another part of one's life and living. It is worthy to note the words of Hermann Hesse; he spoke of "the task of being old is as beautiful and sacred as that of being young." And to this one can add the Buddhist perspective of life; and that is, accepting what is, accepting what we can't change and letting go. These, to this author, are vital keys to aging that help us see or open up in new ways.

Martha Graham danced professionally until she was 70, Benjamin Franklin invented bifocals at the age of 78, and Georgia O'Keefe continued painting well into her 90s. Vitality in 'later life' is just not for the famous. Undoubtedly everyone knows at least one person who is living a vital fulfilling life 'despite' their age. This is truly the way it should be – life should become better as one ages. (Heart of Healing, 2014).

Many of us still believe that aging is something that just occurs and that we have no control over it. In a world that elevates youth and degrades old age, Chittister's (2008) spoke of aging as a precious gift, and that youthfulness and happiness come from the inside. Aging really starts in the mind. "One needs to be youthful at heart." (Nageswara Posinasetto; Umesh Sharma, ResearchGate, 2014). "Forever young". (Vale and Rattle, 2006: 114). "Some old people remain young at heart all the time" (Mahfuz Judeh, ResearchGate, 2014), and this is indeed good. "There's certainly going to be some changes that occur with getting older but it doesn't have to mean disability, it doesn't have to mean disease." (Moore cited in Rettner, 2010). It is worthy to note that "happiness stems from the heart. It is not manifested from the external."

(<http://phantasmaphantasma.blogspot.sg/>). Even so, wrinkles give one the face and character, And as Mark Twain said (Vale and Rattle, 2006: 151), "wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been."

Interestingly, "anyone who limits her vision to memories of yesterday is already dead." (Lillie Langtry, quoted in Life Goes By, 2014). Charles Dickens once said that indeed "regrets are the natural property of grey hairs." One should "not brood over (one's) past mistakes and failures as this will only fill (one's) mind with grief, regret and depression" (Swami Sivananda cited in Chittister, 2008: 1). Do not look back and be regretful for regret is one of the most terrible ghosts of aging. Regretting is an exhausting and truly a dangerous, unhappy exercise (Time Goes By, 2014); instead be happy.

It is indeed worthy to note that happy people live longer, given the gift of years and not burden, and that they are happy. A 2011 study in Biological Psychiatry found that aging successfully is linked with a choice to live a happy, productive life. (Francis, 2013). Once one makes up one's mind and is determined to be happy, life gets better and everything becomes easier. Admittedly, no person is going to be happy all the time, but if a person chooses to be happy, most of the time, (s)he will be. And one can grow old gracefully. "One gets more experiences and wiser as one gets older" (The inputs of two interviewees who readily rendered their comments upon learning that the researcher was doing this review research on aging and aging management). They also continued that "for problem-solving, we have certain ready reliable templates and tried-out checklists to resolve certain issues and problems." One thus can be smarter and wiser to be graceful.

The above ties-in with the Chinese proverb - an old horse knows the way. Today, it means a person who is very experienced at any given thing may be referred as "the old horse who knows the way" ("lao ma shi tu"). The proverb is referred to as a way to ascribe an experienced person who knows how to deal with difficult situations or people. It reflects the Chinese idea about the elderly. True, the old or elderly may not run or skip like the young people, but they are surely indispensable at the critical moment.

One too can help oneself by looking around at role models and examples where people have or had grown old gracefully. Look at the ancient texts, in the Bible, for instance; the Old Testament speaks of Moses, at the age of 120 (note the vigor of the speeches in Deuteronomy 34: 7). And in the New Testament, Peter aging gracefully... becoming an elder (1 Peter 5: 1-2) and remaining hardworking and diligent as death approached (2 Peter 1: 13-15). Then again, this author is sure that one does not need to go to the Bible to find the only examples of people growing old gracefully, he's sure that we have all known such people.

Having looked at what improves with age, aging really does not have to condemn old people to solitude, loneliness, suffering degradation or solitary. It, in fact, can thus be said that one truly becomes more graceful in one's old age by taking these steps; and they are as follows:

1. Exercising and Taking Preventive Measures, the Physical Pathway

Aging is often taken as “going downhill” though it can be measured by a number of ways and positively, it is good to take the body as accumulating repairs, repairing deficits – and many of these repairs take place during sleep. One needs to maintain one’s body well, promoting repairs and limiting damage. One needs to reduce stress and as a healthy prevention and healthcare measure, one should have less sugar intake too.

Interestingly so, a 2012 study published in *Nature* looked at toxicity of sugar and concluded that sugars found in processed foods and drinks are to be blamed for increasing rates of chronic disease, accelerated aging and premature death. It is said that sugar damages us through the formation of dangerous compounds called advanced glycation end products (AGEs); it has been known that diabetics age faster than non-diabetics, suffering problems in the eyes, brain, vascular system and kidneys. Glycation occurs when a sugar chemically bonds to proteins or certain fats to form AGEs; glycation plays an important role in the aging process as well as in developing or worsening of diseases including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, chronic renal failure and Alzheimer’s (Francis, 2013; Vistoli, De Maddis; Cipak, Zarkovic; Carini and Aldini, 2013). Better still, one should avoid high temperatures cooking such as broiling, frying, grilling and roasting; don’t brown or blacken foods. And overall, if one does not want oneself to be old and sick, one should avoid, if not take, less sugar. (Francis, 2013: 74-78).

Older adults can act or take action, even well into their 60s and 70s, to minimize or decrease the risk of developing chronic disease and avoid injury.

It is Plato (cited in Francis, 2013: 231) who once said, “Lack of activity destroy the good condition of every human being while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it”.

Interestingly too, physical exercise contributes much to one’s happiness; study shows that regular exercise, three times a week for 30 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise, be it jogging, walking, aerobics or dancing, three times a week of 30 to 40 minutes of exercise is comparable to some of the most powerful psychiatric drugs in dealing with depression or sadness or anxiety (Ben Shahar, 2009 cited in Bigthink.com, 2009).

Debi Saini (ResearchGate, 2014) advised, “Focus on your health; do exercises, yoga and morning walks; form a group of similar-minded people.” Old people can exercise and take preventive measures. “Keeping an eye on other disease indicators, such as high blood pressure and the early stages of diabetes, can also make a difference in terms of the degree of disability people experience later in life”, Moore cited in Vettner (2010). Preventive measures, such as getting a yearly flu shot, and screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers are also vital for growing old gracefully. (Vettner, 2010).

It is also good to exercise one’s brain to keep it young. One needs to challenge oneself and keep learning. (Francis, 2013).

2. Keeping a Healthy Mind Growth, the Mental Pathway

Pointing to an Upanishad mantra, Gandhi (1961) once highlighted that, “a man becomes what he thinks. Experience of wise men testifies to the truth of the aphorism.” With this in mind, of significance, prevention/preventive measures and positive thinking “(can really) help to give us the youthful spirit.” (K. C. Patrick Low, ResearchGate, 2014a). One needs to keep one’s optimism high – as advised by Francis (2013) and de Hennezel (2011). Note that in de Hennezel’s (a psychologist and psychotherapist) native France, she was a household name as she became known as the therapist who helped the late French President Francois Mitterand through the later stages of his cancer, and had advised French health ministers.

And interestingly so, Sophia Loren (cited in Beliefnet.com, 2014; capital letters, author’s emphasis) spoke of “a fountain of youth: it is YOUR MIND, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.”

“The brain is learning machine and like all machines it needs to be continually maintained” (Life After Retirement, 2014). One truly needs to have a healthy mind growth, one that is learning and growing. Here, Low (2012: Abstract) speaks of mind growth as, “the untrapped mind (that) leads to the widening of the mind, mind expansion and the breaking down of boundaries – knocking existing notions, unlearning and learning. There is much learning and in fact, continuous learning.”

And to paraphrase Konosuke Matsushita's (1991: 174-175) words, we can add that an old person must maintain a broad perspective; (s)he needs to see the big picture. And such a mind must be with a positive or optimistic frame of mind (Francis, 2013). A person, especially an older one, needs to be positive in his or her thinking if (s)he is to grow old gracefully. (Debi Saini, Research Gate, 2014). One can choose to see life as CARPE DIEM (seize the day), a HELP to others and oneself, a BIG CONVENIENCE or as one BIG TROUBLE/ INCONVENIENCE, one can simply choose whichever that one wants to choose and chooses to see.

Think about all the positive things around oneself; and focus on those (WikiHow, 2014). This author would extend Field's (1999) advice to women to all (old) people, that is, accept compliments gracefully and keep away from complainers. One needs to recognize what's happening and do not get sucked down into other people's negativity. Some people simply love to burst a positive bubble, so stay away from them and defend or secure one's positive feelings. It is also said that "churchgoing and a generally sunny outlook on life have also been linked to longer, healthier lives" (Vettner, 2010). Various studies also indicate that optimistic people live longer, and are less likely to develop certain chronic conditions, such as heart disease. (Vettner, 2010).

One can babble on, talk repeatedly without substance and content or knowledge (Candappa, 2004), but is that what one would like to do and irritate others? Or one can simply learn and grow our ideas, knowledge and mind. Interestingly, one should have a mind growth, and this means that one learns and keeps learning. One also unlearns, learns and relearns. Learning is essential to have a flexible mind, and not to have a stubborn or rigid mindset. A stubborn refuses to learn much, if not a little or to unlearn and relearn. de Hennezel (2011) pointed out that one indeed needs to be alert to learning and new experiences while being receptive to new people and ideas.

3. Enjoying Oneself, the Making-the-Most Pathway

Stop grumbling about old age and start making the most of it. Old age is not a complete disaster or a golden age, but it has its ups and downs and challenges; it is as rich and as worthy of being lived as all the others – an exciting age to live in too (de Hennezel, 2011). De Hennezel (2011) sagely indicated that by maintaining joy and warmth in our hearts, all of us, can in fact, transform the way we see the world, and grow old gracefully.

So, just "enjoy yourself wherever you are, do not crave to be where others may be" (Chakravarty, 1997: 29). One needs to "enjoy life as it is" (Nageswara Posinasetti, ResearchGate, 2014). Savor every moment of one's life. Enjoy a daily soak in a hot-bath, with bath oil or a weekly massage if one can afford it. (Ironsides, 2009).

Interestingly, one can care and attend to (not the silence of the lambs, that's the movie but) one's groaning of the limbs and painful joints, and focus on oneself. [Do you want to be vulnerable to others; do you want others to stay far away from you. Is this what you want?]

One can really be a tyranny gran or grandpa, nagging, criticizing and getting one's children and/ or grandchildren to controlling/ detailing them and getting them to totally care for or attend to one. One can also sit on the high-horse, playing the Ethics Granny or Grand-dad, "object(ing) to everything. For ethical reasons. Ethical reasons that (s)he expounds loud and clear at every possible opportunity. Especially when in the company of ...children." (Candappa, 2004: 126).

Conversely, rather than growing old disgracefully, one can choose these, that is, seizing and attending to whatever opportunities to learn and also to helping others around. One can, in fact, do good and make friends: "The only things death cannot erase are our good deeds", said The Buddha, quoted by Chakravarty (1997: 27). Or as advised by Nageswara Posinasetti (ResearchGate, 2014), one should perhaps "distribute (one's) knowledge to others young and old". Have fewer or no expectations of others (de Hennezel, 2011). And instead make others feel important or spread one's kindness to one's family members and others. And get others to like you. Or be with you.

Be a charm and making the most of oneself by being valuable to others. And all in all, "live the life you have. It may not be perfect but it is the only life you have" (WikiHow, 2014). Enjoy.

To add further, and I must say I like what Gandhi once said, and would like to share these. To paraphrase Gandhi's words: There is but really only one prayer or tenet that one may offer: "Thy will be done." Someone will ask where the sense in offering such a prayer is; the answer lies in: Prayer should not be understood in an uncivilized sense. One is aware of the presence of God, the Absolute or Supreme Universe in one's heart, and to shake off attachment, all of us for the moment perceive of God as being with us and pray to Him. That is to say, one does not wish to go where one's wayward spirit may lead one, but where the Lord takes us.

One doesn't know whether it's good to live or to die. Thus, one should not take delight in living, nor should one tremble at the thought of death. One should be equal-minded towards both. This is the ideal; it may be long before one reaches it, and only a few of us can attain it. Even then, one must keep it constantly in view, and the more difficult it seems of attainment, the greater should be the effort one puts forth (Gandhi, 1961: 95) and more so in one's old age. All of us accept what may come, and come what may, live well and "Thy will be done!"

4. Focusing and Ensuring that One Is In Sync with One's Family

It is wisely said that charm or attraction comes from the soul; attraction comes from the knack or ability to take an interest in others and in the world, to look at life with confidence, surprise, awe and gratitude. "People imagine that once we are past a certain age, we lose interest in life," Olivier de Ladoucette, cited in de Hennezel (2011). "But they are mistaken. They do not realize that as they grow older, their psyche evolves. Things that are unimportant when we are young take on an incredible importance when we grow older: a child's smile, for example. For an 80-year-old, it's worth as much as a good three-star banquet when you are 40." As one grows older, one has every chance or possibility of laying aside one's ego and turning towards others. That is one way to upkeep a network of friends and good relations with one's children.

One can indeed grow old gracefully by focusing on one's family and family members. After all, one's (extended) family can really support one as one grows older; this is more so in an Asian cultural setting. They can talk or communicate to the older members and make them feel appreciated as well as giving them a sense of self-worth.

"The key thing is focus on your sync with your family. Give them quality time. Most problems in life are caused by inadequate communication." (Debi Saini, ResearchGate, 2104). He also added that the need to "expect the least from others, and give the maximum". (Debi Saini, ResearchGate, 2104).

And verily this author wishes to add, a person indeed needs to love more, listen more, reason out more, encourage more and give more strokes and cuddle as well as give more rather than argue, nag and manipulate or make demands on one's family members.

Generally-speaking, older people should avoid looking at things from their own eyes and instead start appreciating the views of other family members and others. By respecting others, they get respect; and that brings peace. There is a need to be neutral and humble. One also gives advice but only when asked and without any expectations. (Manjuntha Sulur G, ResearchGate 2014; Life After Retirement, 2014).

5. Socializing, and Keep on Socializing

At whatever age – and especially as one gets older, one needs to socialize more. Abraham Lincoln (quoted in Bingham, 2003) once said that "the better part of one's life consists of friendships".

Alexandre Beluco (ResearchGate, 2014) perceptively spoke of, "with peace and tranquility, *one should have* the company of *one's* friends" to grow old gracefully. And to have long term relationships instil the art of listening. One's body language and voice message should coordinate or match to convince one's listeners. And the old can also enjoy the companionship of friends who have interest in the world around them. (Life After Retirement, 2014).

Remember if one's social world gets smaller, all the more one's brain gets smaller. The smaller one's social world is, the smaller one's brain gets (Francis, 2013). Ben-Shahar and Woodman (2007) advised their *Happier* readers to write empathetic e-mail to their dear ones and well-wishers as a habit, and at least one in a fortnight.

Socialize. Rightly so, one should relate and extend out, give and love others, and be young by loving. Give love and one gets loved. Be alive until one is dead. Love till one dies; after all, "being loved keep you young." (Madonna quoted by Vale and Rattle, 2006: 115).

6. Smiling, Having a Good Sense of Humor and Laughing

One, even when young, should keep one's smiles; and keeps smiling. One can choose to "be a smile millionaire – the more you smile, laugh and look at the bright side, the richer (one's) life will be. (Besides,) knowing (one) can choose to be happy is liberating." (Francis, 2013: 217).

Remember, as Bingham (2003) advised, "Keep only cheerful friends".

He added that: “For many years I had on my office wall a poster that daughter Wilma gave me, with the sage advice, often immediately offered to me, often thought of, and shared with others: ‘If you see someone that needs a smile, give them yours!’ (Anonymous).” (Bingham, 2003).

One should laugh often, and long as well as loud. And why not, after all, laughter makes one feel happy.

7. Embracing Detachment

One truly needs to “learn to enjoy (one’s) wealth by renouncing it (*tena tyaq tena bhunjitha*); give to the needy as far as (one) can (Islam talks of 2 per cent zakaat; I like it very much)” (Debi Saini, ResearchGate, 2104).

Interestingly, rather than rebelling against the tiredness and the slowing down that affects one when one grows older, why not stretch out and rest, use it as a way to take time to embrace the here and now? “I am beginning to understand the pleasure that the old experience when they sit on a bench for hours in the shade of a plane tree, doing nothing, gazing into the distance, silent, motionless, their hands folded,” François Mitterrand (cited in de Hennezel, 2011) in the last months of his life; he had been so active yet he understood the beauty and merits of ‘non-action’ (de Hennezel, 2011).

One should also not be so attached and/ or reminiscing about one’s past and is unduly dissatisfied for not getting certain things done or achieved. One should thus be detached, and let the past be forgotten. One should thus “shed (one’s) past like a snake sheds its skin” (Chakravarty, 1997: 28). “There is beautiful poem in Kannada language in which the poet says ‘Do not look back on the path you have walked in your life’. Further the poet says ‘you might take a look but don’t repent or get worried and see that this will not block or affect your journey.’ I am trying my best to practice this.” Expressed Manjunatha Sular G. (cited in ResearchGate, 2014). Besides, he continued that, “It would be good to share with others our experiences, the good and bad decisions we have made. This might give direction to others. But we have to do this gracefully and without any expectation. Such habits if we cultivate in our day to day activity we can grow old gracefully.”

Spending too much time regretting in one’s old age will indeed place one firmly in victim-land (Time Goes By, 2014; Chittister, 2008). Though some people may not equate regret with discontentment (Time Goes By, 2014), it is good, by and large or principally, to avoid regretting (Chittister, 2008) for it drags us down to the center of ourselves. It brings everything we are and we were into question or doubt. When one laments the roads that had led one, one risks the loss of the future. Regretting often makes one miss understanding or without realizing the value of the choices one made in the past while indeed failing to see the gifts they instead have brought to one. Yes, look into the past by all means, but wisely use it as a blessing process for one to become and grow (what one did not do what one thought; but one needs to understand what makes why one today is; what one is and where one is). [Regrets are what have had helped one to mature and be the person one is today (Time Goes By, 2014).]

According to Chittister (2008), old age is not a drawing away from a fulfilling life, but a new life unto itself. Citing E.M. Foster’s “We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us”, Chittister (2008) wrote that indeed the older years are meant for us to find the beauty of aging – while letting go the fantasies of youthfulness and the fears of getting older. This stage of aging is not non-life but another stage of life – a new stage of life – and of good years. There is indeed a purpose, and old age enlightens. It is dusk, it is getting dark; it’s coming to the end of our earthly life, yes, but we bring the light within. And this is important; and one must realize this.

8. Believing in Work and Continuing Working and Contributing

This author agrees with what is fundamentally called throughout Chittister’s (2008) work, that is, a person needs to prize or cherish the blessings of aging as life’s natural portion, and one that is active, productive, and deeply rewarding.

“When old, retire from work, not from life.” (M.K. Soni, quoted in Vale and Rattle, 2006: 99). Retirement is a dirty word. Not working or not contributing is no good when one is growing old; one needs to feel good or gratified by doing good and/ or contributing even if one has contributed or achieved much in one’s previous life.

Essentially, one needs to “believe in ‘work is worship’. If (one) can enjoy (one’s) work ...there is no greater blessing than that. Academics and researchers (in particular) are fortunate in that regard, as bossism is least compared to other vocations. (*To grow old gracefully, one should*) continue to do what one enjoy(s)”. (Debi Saini, ResearchGate, 2014; *italics author’s*).

One can in fact become an example to others. Or become mentor, and after all, one should not “not neglect the gift that is in (one)” (1Timothy 4:14). If one has children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, one has people to mentor and be one’s mentees. The neighbor’s kid(s), a younger person at church or in one’s social circle who would be blessed with one’s knowledge. Teaching keeps one young, and it lets one pour out of one’s heart what has been in there so long and not to let it get rusty (WikiHow, 2014).

9. Relaxing and Resting

In old age, “no day is so bad it can’t be fixed with a nap.” (Carrie Snow quoted in Vale and Rattle, 2006: 143). And as a person ages; there are changes to the person’s body; these changes can either stress the person out or (s)he can smile and say, “I am still living!” (Starkey, 2014).

Indeed, as all of us get older, there is a need to maintain the balance between acceptance of the inevitability of old age and doing what we can to stay healthy and vital as long as possible. Once again, there is a need to stress on the importance of relaxing. Acceptance involves relaxation into life and ability to flow with change. As we relax, we stop fighting the inevitable; relaxation is the key to better health, greater vitality and more energy. (Heart of Healing, 2014).

In old age, the fear of death can be terrible. However, a wise person is not afraid of death. Death can, in fact, be one big rest. The Mahatma (Gandhi, 1961: 87) spoke of, “All must die some day. No one could escape death. Then, why be afraid of it? In fact, death is a friend which brings deliverance from sufferings.”

Citing Confucius, Gandhi (1961: 89-90) spoke of death as rest.

“Tzu Kung said to Confucius: ‘Master, I am weary, and would fain have rest.’

‘In life,’ replied the sage, ‘there is no rest.’

‘Shall I then never have rest?’ asked the disciple.

‘You will,’ said Confucius. ‘Behold the tombs which lie around; some magnificent, some mean. In one of these, you will find rest!’

‘How wonderful is Death!’ rejoined Tzu Kung.

‘The wise man rests, the worldly man is engulfed therein’,

‘My son,’ said Confucius, ‘I see that you understand. Other men know life only as a boon; they do not perceive that it is a bane. They know old age as a stage of weakness; they do not perceive that it is a state of ease. They know Death only as an abomination; they do not perceive that it is a state of rest.’

‘How grand,’ cried Yen Txu, ‘is the old conception of Death! The virtuous find rest; the wicked are engulfed therein. In Death, each reverts to that from which he came. The ancients regarded Death as a return to, and life as an absence from, home. And he, who forgets his home, becomes an outcaste and a byword in his generation.’”

Indeed, there should be no fear of death. As Gandhi (1961: 81) argued that, “DEATH is at any time blessed, but it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, i.e., Truth. Death is no fiend; he is the truest of friends. He delivers us from agony. He helps us against ourselves.” He also said that no one should fear death; death is unavoidable for every human being. However, if one dies smiling, one would enter into a new life. As such, in most ways, old age is one’s preparation to death. “The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.” (Mark twain quoted in The Quote Garden, 2014).

10. Meditating and Praying

“The older I get, the more I feel almost beautiful” (Sharon Olds quoted in Vale and Rattle, 2006: 155). “I find meditating and praying so relaxing and it gives me the peace of mind or a form of rest I value most” (One interviewee’s inputs). This perhaps coincides with the Bible, the Gospel according to Matthew 11: 28, he spoke of “come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST”.

Meditating and praying also help all of us to age gracefully; they are time-honored methods for reducing the effects of stress and for cultivating health, harmony and balance. (Francis, 2013). Scientific studies have shown that both practices perk up physical and mental health and extend life expectancy (Francis, 2013).

Chakravarty (1997: 66-67) spoke of “meditat(ing) on serenity when you can contemplate your own fate with impartial calmness and perfect tranquility” and “the path is for everyone who can destroy craving”. One can thus direct one’s mind to improve oneself as well as one’s thinking and living.

If one perceives goodness and one's intention is good, then whatever, everything one does and/ or the results will also be good – goodness will follow suit. One can also meditate on love so that one longs and be mindful for the welfare of others and all; one is mindful too of loving all and serving all.

One can also meditate to be detached. If one works with detachment, one will refuse to be rushed and one will refuse to let anything get on one's nerves; one chooses to remain calm.

Limitations and Benefits of the Research

In carrying out this review research, the author deems that one of the key limitations is the time and costs constraints – there were no funds – even for publications and sponsorships for the study yet the researcher self-financed and supported it himself.

It is worthy to note that the paper should and could be better off with more interviews made with several more respondents. Having said that, however it should also be noted that the study was supported by the two interviewees who voluntarily responded and provided answers to the researcher's interviews plus ResearchGate's Question and Answer Sections (ResearchGate, 2014). Interestingly, ResearchGate's Question and Answer Sections (ResearchGate, 2014) were answered by various multi-disciplinary/ faculties ResearchGate international members and besides, they indeed gave the evidence and furtherance to the key findings discussed.

Concluding Remarks

Positively speaking, “aging seems to be the only available to live a long life” Daniel Auber quoted in Vale and Rattle (2006: 83).

Do not allow the fear of growing old assail you. All of us – as we get older – can be a help and/ or good luck charms to others around us. And yes, grow old but do not be bitter and despairing; don't oppose reality but do not prevent life from fulfilling its potential to bring forth new things, right to one's very last breath.

An older person, to this author, is like wine; (s)he can in fact be a vintage or a classic respectable older person, valued in the family and a treasure. All of us must continue to keep the heart unwrinkled, be positive, cheery and kind as well as loving – and that is to have triumph over old age, and see old age an age indeed exciting to live with its difficulties, but there are joys too.

Disclaimer

This paper and its contents contained therein are not to be used as a substitute for the advice and/or medical care of the reader's physician nor it is intended to discourage or dissuade the reader from the advice of his or her physician. The reader should regularly consult with his or her physician in matters relating to his or her health, especially relating to symptoms that may require diagnosis. Any eating, exercise, lifestyle regimen should not be undertaken without consulting the reader's physician.

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Vol. 5, No. 6(1); May 2014. Excuse Me, How Can I Grow Old Gracefully? Prof Dr. Kim Cheng Patrick Low Ph.D. & Chartered Marketer (UK) Behavioral Consultant and Chartered Consultant (US). Associate University of South Australia/ Adjunct Professor. Some people grow old disgracefully; they quarrel often with their spouses and children. They go babbling on, keep repeating things, haranguing, criticizing and nagging. The question is how can a person be more graceful as (s)he grows older. Instead of being referred to as "an old fart" (an offensive phrase usually referring to someone in authority who is set in their ways or lacking a sense of fun) (Candappa, 2004: 9); older persons can, in fact have, more licenses to enjoy their work, living and leading. Growing old gracefully from head to toes, in a respectful and dignified way, in an attractively elegant way is not easy but can be either partially or fully achieved with a long-term change of lifestyle. For the willing and determined people, there is plenty to attend covering every aspect of nutrition and physical activity programming. I can only say how I see things. The aging physical appearance is at least partly modifiable. There are all sorts of procedures, invasive and non-invasive that can make a person look younger. The other part can be a challenge. To me, the self-knowledge and self-acceptance that came only when I was in my forties far outweighs the numbers. I would not trade my proudly earned 50 years old (just reached this number in July!) for all the gold in Fort Knox. Aging is inevitable, but to grow old gracefully is a choice. While we know that getting old is unavoidable, how we perceive this natural process depends greatly upon our social and cultural influences. In western culture, we tend to idolize youth, while aging is stigmatized as undesirable, even shameful. We worry about what we will look like, how our bodies will function, how our minds will deteriorate and how or where we will die. In many ways as we get older we become less visible; in popular culture, in employment, in our communities, even in our own families and this can have a greater imp