

May is Older Americans Month

May is a time of renewal; a time of growth, sunlight and warmth. It is also a time to celebrate the pleasures which can come with aging. Some of the true pleasures are increased leisure; being yourself; and the ability to be present and aware.

Time is yours as you age. You don't have to punch a time clock – you can make your own schedule. You can choose to read at 2 a.m. – view it not as insomnia but precious reading time. Patricia Morrisroe wrote in the NY Times, “For some people waking up in the middle of the night is a terrible curse; unable to drift back to sleep, they're confronted with a big gaping hole that represents hours of lost time. For my mother-in-law, that time is a gift. At 87, she is acquiring the education she never had by working her way through the canon of great literature.” Sometimes what seems a curse can be a blessing: instead of lost sleep, she is gaining the equivalent of a doctorate in literature!

Instead of fighting her insomnia, she turned those midnights into “all-nighters” like a college freshman. Aging brings physical and mental changes. Some cope with surgery and cosmetics. Others embrace – or at least accept - the process by maintaining a positive attitude; taking care of mind and body; and being true to oneself. One person who comes to mind is Katharine Hepburn - who never gave a hoot about what other people thought of her. This authenticity is difficult for some who can't accept the changes that come with aging; for others it provides a relief.

As we age, some find it helpful to distinguish between “what is outside and fleeting, and what is inside and eternal”, writes Ron Valle, PhD and Mary Mohs, LVN, MA. They go on, “It is understandable that many feel trapped in an aging body while the world around us constantly celebrates the pleasures of youth.” They argue that there is value to being present in the moment, including seeing one's inner self. Sometimes when we experience an emotion we try to analyze it and ruminate on what we can't change, we miss an opportunity to just observe our feelings and accept ourselves just as we are. During this month, I encourage everyone to **celebrate** – turn those challenges into advantages; accept and be authentic; and live every day to its fullest.