

Attitude – Not Just a Little Thing

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference...Winston Churchill.” We’ve heard it before -- attitude is everything!

There are a lot of things that can contribute to a long, happy life. Our hope is that our bodies will age with us in good form as we grow older. We reinforce that concept by encouraging the need to take care of ourselves through a healthful diet, keeping physically active, and challenging ourselves over the lifespan – our minds in particular.

By the time we have reached the last third of our life we have seen and experienced a lot of changes. Along the way, we will learn to compensate in order to attain our goals. We may not bend and move like we once did, but we will still get the job done one way or another. Even if it involves asking for help, we will likely achieve the task.

What does attitude have to do with the aging process? Research shows that going about life with a more positive outlook can add 7 ½ years to your life, according to K-State Research and Extension specialist on aging, Erin Yelland. When you consider the average U.S. life expectancy is 78.5 years, that calculates to your attitude having an almost 10% effect on your life span. That is a considerable factor!

How can we go about fostering a more positive attitude?

--Start your day on a positive note. Think about what you are grateful for when you first wake up. If there is something you find particularly uplifting, spend a few moments with that.

--Focus on the good. Bad things happen at times, but if we really take time to look at those instances, we can usually find something positive from each situation.

--Embrace life’s challenges. Our personal aging process may not always be the process we would like – being more difficult at times than others. We can be okay with that if we adjust our expectations and take advantage of that compensation or assistance I mentioned earlier.

--Surround yourself with positive people. The outlooks and attitudes of those we hang around with often rub off on us in subtle ways. What better way to infuse positivity in your life?

--Choose to be happy. Happiness is what we all ultimately strive for. It’s a deep need in our being. not only for ourselves, but for those around us. Remember those positive people in your circle.

--Be gracious, helpful and kind. We have a need to feel needed – something that gives us purpose in life. What is your reason for getting out of bed? Having a positive impact on someone else could help you change your own outlook. Acts of kindness can boost your mood and help in creating a more optimistic attitude.

It takes practice to develop positivity. However, if we keep striving for positivity, we are more likely to make changes and implement healthy behaviors that will help us be more successful in the aging process.

I’m reminded of a Peanuts© cartoon quote: “Attitude is contagious... is yours worth catching?”

For more information and guidance on aging well, call 620-625-8620.

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