

# Ageing Happily

When I was asked to do a service I was reluctant (it has been five years since the last service I did) but decided I would do one on Community Living or maybe Ageing Happily or maybe Aging Successfully, this service probably could be called Lynne's story.

I am the most content and the happiest I have ever been, I love this time of my life, the most important jobs of my adult life are now complete, children have been brought up, my paid working life finished. Now it is my time.

- time to find the answers to any questions that intrigue me
- time for long lunches
- time to meet friends
- time to volunteer
- time to read
- time to walk, swim

or just appreciate the world or life.

Of course when I said I would do this service, I reflected on my own life and did lots of reading.

Renee since sent me a link for five week course on Strategies for Successful Ageing with Trinity College, I enrolled and completed the course. Also I read a few books. I realized that I had instinctively been on the right track for ageing successfully.

I liked the definition of someone old. It is a person who is 15 years older than oneself. I also liked the heading of a TED talk "How to die young at a very old age"

Before we can age successfully or happily we need to realise we start ageing from a young age or indeed from when we are born, so to age successfully or happily we need to work out what works for us to live a happy, content and productive life, we can't age happily if we have not worked out some answers to what is important to us as individuals, love, family our spirituality, work, fitness or maybe friendships, the list goes on.

I was given the book " Everything I Need to Know I learned from a Little Golden Book" for Christmas from my daughter. It says in the introduction "that many of us learned pretty much everything that really matters about life from what we read between those sturdy gilt bound cardboard covers" It reminded me of how I loved those books as a child as a mother is was gift I could afford to give my children. I have a fond memory of my son Michael as a tot taking his stuffed toys and his Little golden books to bed, apparently he could read them in the dark, I would like to share this some excerpts from the book with you.....There is more than I can read now.

Is your life starting to feel like a circus?

- Don't panic
- Today's a new day
- **Get dressed first thing**
- Have some pancakes
- **Get some exercise every day**
- Frolic
- Daydream
- Go on a joyride
- Stargaze
- Stroll
- Bird watch
- **Treat yourself**
- **The simplest things are often the most fun**
- So go on a picnic
- and make music part of your life
- Be a hugger

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- kiss
- Turn off the TV from time to time
- and crack open a book
- Use your imagination
- **And savour the season as they roll around**
- Stay curious
- Take in some culture once in a while
- Learn something new
- **Dare to explore What's out there for you**
- Express yourself
- Try a new look
- Be unique
- Just don't go overboard
- **Start planning your dream trip**
- **Soon you'll be on your way**
- **Be open to making new friends even if you're very shy**
- **Keep in touch**
- Hang out
- Steer clear of shady characters
- Be discriminating
- **Choose you companions wisely**
- **Break bread together every day**
- Don't forget your antioxidants
- Go ahead and make a big deal over your birthday
- 
- Dress up and go dancing any kind of dancing
- Learn to cook and clean
- Make a budget and stick to it
- **Have you had a check up lately?**
- Weren't you going to learn how to swim?
- Always keep a medical kit handy
- Take mental health day now and then
- **Give in to a good cry, You'll feel better afterward**
- **Get plenty of sleep too.**
- Go fly a kite
- but remember to stop and smell the strawberries
- Be romantic
- Don't forget to enjoy your wedding
- let your children know you love them
- **Work hard, play hard but not too hard**
- **Do no harm**
- Be proud of your country
- Don't let the parade pass you by!
- Thing big
- Toot your own horn
- Harvest
- **Give thanks**
- Believe in Santa Claus
- day love at first sight
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It made me realise that we start forming our moral code at a very young age I just loved reading this little book it summed up so much on actually how I live my life.

Another big influence growing up was reading the book Pollyanna, I learnt to play the "Glad" game those who have not read Pollyanna she was a little girl who saw the bright sight of any situation and taught those around her to play the GLAD game too. I certainly learnt how to play it, I read the book again just before I married and I reread the book again when I knew I was doing this service. It had such a big influence in how I lived my life, I realised now what I learnt from this child's book was gratitude and I still play the "Glad" game.

I think playing the "Glad" game or gratitude has helped me to think positively about aging .We all need to focus on what we have and rather than what we don't have.

Also we need to realise life is full of ups and downs or issues and problems to deal with and neither an up or down lasts forever, it just a part of our journey through life.

There came a time my life and probably in most other people's life when I realised that I was "aging" or I like the expression I was entering my third age. I was often being offered a seat in bus on the way to work and retirement age was approaching. I think there is an acceptance and maybe even a grieving stage to go through, realising that I wasn't a young chick now, the wrinkles, grey hair and some lost of some physical strength and not recovering as quickly from a night out became obvious I was ageing .

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I did start thinking about my third age, where I was going to live, how I was going to occupy myself, did I have enough finances and started to make some preparations for my "third age".

My first thought was I going to be financially secure?

Those that don't know me, I can tell you a little of my life story, I became a single mum in my early forties with 3 children my 2 boys were teenagers and a younger daughter and we were left with a house to live in but no income, I had to retrain and re enter the workforce.

I had very little money but would say to myself that I could cope being poor now but it would be awful in old age. I had learnt to live frugally and when I started earning I started putting extra in super and started saving plans. I would suggest especially younger women to become financially savvy It certainly paid off for me.

I know that if I was not financially secure now and living a pleasant environment that I would not be as happy or content. It is hard to live week to week with very little money and run out of food before next pension or pay day and my heart goes out to older people who still have to live like that.

I did manage to achieve financial security, find suitable accommodation for my third age, and certainly found enough to keep me busy and fulfilled

With the reading I have done and my own observations, there are three messages I believe for happy and successfully aging and keep in mind no matter what your chronicle age is we are all aging.

Manage your health

Continue with Personal development

Staying involved

I can only briefly dip into these headings but there is a wealth of information in books, on the internet I have been overwhelmed with information, it must be that the baby boomers are aging and it has become a growth market

## **Managing your health**

It is important not only to look after our physical health but our mental health as well. Physically we need to eat nutritionally well and exercise. Walking is nearly could be classed as a new wonder drug. Where I live in the Coorparoo Retirement Village, there is a physiotherapist who conducts tailored programs for us and other programs such as Pilates, yoga, heart moves, tai chi We now have residents who have gone from wheelie walkers to sticks or have given up walking sticks.

Mentally if you have a purpose in life, the more content you will be.

## **Personal Development**

Keep learning. It could be learning new software, mastering your smart phone, reading, learn bridge or any other game or become a tourist in your own city or better still plan holidays. Just keep challenging yourself, doing new things and learning.. You can challenge your brain in lots of ways but it doesn't have to be all crossword puzzles and Sudoku. I have read this is vital for your brain health.

## **Staying Involved**

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I do think this is the most important aspect of "ageing". It is actually something we can start planning for. There can be a large void in life when one retires from the workforce.

One piece of good advice is to make sure that you cultivate and develop interests and social networks outside of work long before you retire.

Volunteering can give you a sense of purpose, it is not for everyone but it can be enjoyable and fulfilling and can create a new social network. Volunteering in the office at U3A has done this for me, not only has it expanded my social net work but keeps my brain active too.

I read an article in the book Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul "Keeping up with Granny and the Old Guys" which illustrates just how much fun some older people have. Read article!!

From the internet "global studies support the idea that we get happier as we get older, due to a combination of financial security, fewer day-to-day worries, and less responsibility. The majority of retired people, at least in developed nations, have more money and more time than those who are still stuck in middle age. There's experience and wisdom to consider too: studies show older people are better at dealing with negative emotions, and are more trusting of those around them, which also adds to feelings of contentment."

So don't let thoughts of getting old fill you with dread - it's probably a lot more enjoyable than you think.