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The Good News About Getting Older

Happy New Year! With a new year, we are starting out by discussing the good news about getting older. These things can be true for everyone, including those with developmental disabilities. Those of us who provide care or services to someone with a disability can make a significant difference in someone's life by looking for the good and assisting them in creating positive experiences in the senior years.

There are some things that get better as we age. On our best days, we have a kind of grace. We are works-in-progress and even in later life new qualities surface. Some aspects are coming along faster than others.

Other features come and go. In general, certain emerging attitudes seem to unlock the rewards of getting older.

We can enjoy life. We are often playful and like to laugh. As we let go of the need to look cool, it opens up fun at unexpected moments. Even our idiosyncrasies can be quite entertaining. We've had enough disenchantment for a lifetime. We're willing to be enchanted again.

We make the most of what we have. We are finally gaining some perspective and even a little wisdom. We have a bit more inner stability. We are coming to terms with our limits, and mainly celebrate what we can do. At long last, we seem to have a sense of who we are. We like ourselves more than we expected. We are getting better at trusting our own tastes and preferences. A grateful heart lets us take pleasure where we find it.

We appreciate people. Friends, acquaintances, and even strangers have unexpected qualities. Also, we have decided that most people are good enough as they are. There's no need to change anyone. We realize it wouldn't do much good to try, anyway. We appreciate those who have been kind to us. We are thankful to have had good company on the journey.

We accept our flaws. We don't have to be perfect. On most days, we relish the diversity of our personalities. We can be flexible or stubborn, clueless or profound, depending on the moment. We tend to honor the delicate parts of ourselves. A life with nothing to be sorry about would be rather uneventful.

We are at home in the world. We enjoy our surroundings and often discover new secrets about familiar places. Watching the explorations of small children and animals can delight us. The piece of cake we allow ourselves is especially delicious now. The scent of a flower or gentle touch of a breeze seems more sensually rich than before. Sometimes, we glance around our home spaces to relish how our belongings reflect our personalities. Maybe, having had our share of difficulties, we just appreciate things more.

We have less to prove. We are learning to avoid comparing ourselves with others- or even with our former selves. By focusing on our best personal qualities, and favorite current interests, we can find something fulfilling in almost every day. We might have more contributions to make, but don't feel quite as driven to do something of great importance. Most of the time, we are able to work and play for its own sake, not to look good in the eyes of others. Now that the need to show off has eased a bit, finding opportunities to use our talents is a manageable task.

We have strong priorities. We are getting better at tending to our deeper yearnings. We are free to devote our energies to neglected passions. It may be creative expression, reading, gardening, hobbies or working on causes. It might surprise friends that we are so energized by these activities, but we feel no need to explain ourselves. On most days, we use time in more immediate and present ways than ever before.

We accept our moods. We know that life is rich with nuances of emotion. We like being happy, by indulging in a little grumpiness has its rewards, too. We can usually let sadness come and go when it wants, without making a big deal about it. Life has its ups and downs. No point in getting frustrated when it won't help. We avoid fretting about things, if at all possible. When we can accept our feelings, a natural buoyancy usually restores tranquility soon enough.

We take time to reflect. Allowing quiet to enter us seems to change the flow of time and make it larger. We find ways to open to the mysteries within. For some it is meditating, for others it is knitting, still others find it during a daily walk. It is simply being receptive to something beyond our ordinary thoughts. Reflecting on fine moments in the journey reminds us of the riches of our lives.

*Adapted from a blog by Joseph Campbell
for the Center for Story and Symbol*

ACTIVITY TIP FOR JANUARY 2019

January 5 is National Bird Day. Here are a few activities to help celebrate this day.

1. Take a trip to the local metro parks and watch the birds.
2. Get a book from the library and discuss the different birds that are common in northwest Ohio.
3. Make a bird feeder. String orange slices onto twine and put it outside for the birds to eat.
4. Make a Burlap Bird Collage. See the following materials and directions.

Materials

Small frame with cardboard backing, and glass.

Piece of fabric cut to fit.

Piece of burlap.

Black 3D "puffy" paint (outlines), black acrylics with pointed paint brush or black marker

Water container

Gun glue or good craft glue

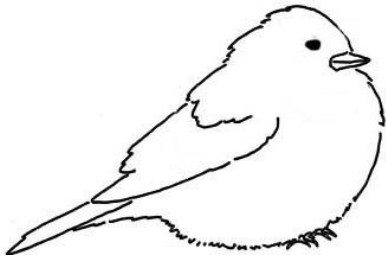
Scissors

Button or googly eye (optional, for eye)

Stick to use a branch (optional, not shown)

Trace a simple bird pattern onto the burlap and cut it out. See examples below. Center and glue the burlap into the middle of your fabric. Let glue dry.

Then, outline the bird shape in black. Black marker, acrylics paint or 3D paint will give the art work dimension. Use markers to draw on a wing and feather design. Also, instead of making feet, you can glue on a flat twig under the bird, as if he's sitting on it. When the art work is dry, put it into the frame.



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