

# Enjoy the Later Years

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**As the years pass, we can consciously choose to embrace social activities, maintain an inquiring mind and indulge our passions – silly or serious.**

Fred, the oldest known goldfish, lived to forty-one years of age. It's a mystery how he did it. But, unlike Fred, we don't need to live inside a fishbowl to enjoy a long, full and vibrant life.

Certainly a sense of playful humor seems to be a key ingredient for seniors who live an energetic and meaningful life. For people like my mother, it's true that aging bodies *disintegrate* or *rust out* and health challenges may minimize some choices. Yet **an attitude of optimism, good humor and passion can ease the day.**

Mom's passion for gardening excites her each morning. Rising to the edge of her bed, she wraps, straps and bandages various body parts before heading out the back door. Her garden has a ceramic bunny village nestled under a bush and one particular flower species is called *stolen*. She secretly *stole* a snippet at the local park and sprouted it in a glass of water.

A fake hand peeks out from her front porch foundation. She declares. "My doors are unlocked and I've never been robbed. They think the axe murderer lives here." Yet, one summer, Mom reported experiencing sexual harassment in her garden. While kneeling down to clean her ornamental pond a jumping frog "came less than an inch from landing in my bra!"

Although many seniors fuss over a failing memory, others lament that "I have a beautiful, young wife and I'm grief stricken because I don't know where I left her." One evening Mom sensed she was supposed to *be somewhere* else. The next morning her friend Peggy called saying her dinner guest did not arrive but she couldn't remember whom she had invited. Mom asked, "Was that me?" They still don't know who was supposed to be where.

While memories can weaken, **an inquiring and firm mind** can strengthen. My mother keeps an eye on world events and has sharpened her opinions. "What's with President Bush's zeal for war? He needs to be given some estrogen (female hormone) to settle him down."

Many successful seniors have learned that while they have little control over the aging process they do have control over their attitude. **Needless worry and trying to control others is fruitless.**

Some seniors discover that sinking their teeth into a steak means they stay there. But real staying power comes from a lighthearted approach. As our eighty-something old neighbor and friend, Izora says, “Aging isn’t for sissies or the humorless.” As the years pass we can consciously choose to embrace social activities, maintain an inquiring mind and indulge our passions – silly or serious. One day we will have our own brand of senior smile and feel grateful to live *outside the fish bowl*.

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