

ONE DAY AT A TIME

AGING WITH DISABILITIES

LATELY, IN MY LATE LIFE YEARS AS A POLIO SURVIVOR, I HAVE BECOME CURIOUS & CONCERNED ABOUT GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY AND HAPPILY. WE HAVE THE SAME LIFE EXPECTANCY NOW AS OUR NON-DISABLED FRIENDS. HOW DO WE WHO HAVE STRUGGLED AND SUCCEEDED WITH A PROGRESSIVE DISABILITY AS CHILDREN, BEING A TEENAGER, YOUNG AND MIDDLE AGED ADULTS, FACE THIS TIME IN LIFE WITH HOPE AND OPTIMISM? WITH THE HYPOTHETICAL "GIFT" OF LONGEVITY, WILL OUR PAIN INCREASE, OUR FUNCTION DECREASE, OUR FINANCES DRY UP AND OUR LOSSES BE SO HUGE THAT WE WILL END UP DEPRESSED, ABUSED AND LONELY? THAT IS SCARY—SO SCARY THAT I DECIDED TO SEEK THE TRUTH ABOUT GROWING OLD SUCCESSFULLY AS A POLIO SURVIVOR. I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CORRESPOND AND RECEIVE NEWSLETTERS FROM POST-POLIO SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUPS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY FROM CALIFORNIA TO MAINE, AND FROM MICHIGAN TO TEXAS. THERE ARE PEOPLE JUST LIKE ME ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WHO ARE MAKING LATE LIFE WORK WELL AND WHAT ADVICE THEY HAVE FOR ME. THEY TELL ME TO STAY CONNECTED AND OPEN TO OTHER PEOPLE WHICH INCLUDES FAMILY; TO CONTINUE TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN A STRONG SOCIAL NETWORK, AS WE GROW OLDER. THIS INCLUDES STAYING CLOSE TO RELIABLE FRIENDS WHO CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO US. BUILDING AND STAYING CLOSE IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IS VERY IMPORTANT. THEY TOLD ME THAT NETWORKING WITH GROUPS OF FRIENDS IN THE COMMUNITY IS VERY IMPORTANT, WHICH INCLUDES REACHING OUT AND HELPING OTHERS, WHICH I TRY TO ALWAYS DO.

THE SUGGESTIONS FOR GREATER SUCCESS FROM THE WISE ELDERS THAT SURPRISED AND PLEASED ME THE MOST HAD TO DO WITH OPENING OUR HEARTS UP MORE THAN EVER TO FRESH JOY & PLEASURE. THEY TOLD ME HOW VITAL IT IS TO ENJOY LIFE AND HAVE FUN! WE HAVE WORKED SO HARD ALL THESE YEARS PROVING WE COULD MAKE IT WITH A DISABILITY, RAISING FAMILIES, EARNING A LIVING, AND JUST GETTING FROM PLACE TO PLACE. NOW IS THE TIME: LET GO TO JUST LAUGH AND PLAY AGAIN. **WORKS FOR ME!**

PERHAPS MORE UNIQUE TO POLIO SURVIVORS THAN OTHER ELDERS WHO HAD NOT GROWN UP WITH A DISABILITY, THEY DECLARED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT AT THIS STAGE IN LIFE TO COMPLETELY ACCEPT WHO WE REALLY ARE NOW.

WE NEED TO FULLY EMBRACE OURSELVES WITH OUR UNIQUE LIFE STORIES, OUR POLIO-AFFECTED BODIES WITH OLD & NEW PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS. DENIAL DOESN'T WORK ONE BIT ANYMORE. (I WAS IN DENIAL FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS MYSELF). THESE WISE ELDERS HAVE LEARNED THE FINE ART OF BEING COMFORTABLE WITH THEMSELVES AS THEY REALLY ARE AND OPEN TO WHO THEY ARE REALLY BECOMING. **“ACCEPT YOURSELF“** SOUNDS SIMPLE, **BUT IS TREMENDOUSLY COMPLICATED, CHALLENGING AND PROFOUND. I BELIEVE THIS WE ALL KNOW.**

THEY TOLD ME IN A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT WAYS THAT IT IS IMPORTANT 4 ME TO CONTINUE USING MY BRAINPOWER 2 ADAPT TO LIFE ONCE I HAVE ACCEPTED WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME.

ADAPT IN SMART WAYS, BE PROACTIVE AND ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF. I NEED TO BE ASSERTIVE AND GO AFTER WHAT I NEED AND WANT.

AS I AM NOT FINANCIALLY PREPARED FOR THIS TIME IN MY LIFE, I DO TRY TO DEVELOP NEW WAYS TO ASSURE MORE FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR WHATEVER TIME I HAVE LEFT, BEFORE WALKING WITH THE LORD. GETTING A GOOD EDUCATION WAS ONE OF THE MOST REPEATED COPING TACTICS THAT PEOPLE HAVE USED TO GET THROUGH LIFE. THEY HAVE ADVISED ME TO CONTINUE LEARNING AND STAY CONNECTED TO THE YOUNG MINDS AROUND ME. IT SEEMS SOMETIMES, I AM TRULY HELPING THE YOUNG MINDS AROUND ME!

PERHAPS THE FINAL ADVICE THAT STRUCK HOME THE STRONGEST WITH ME HAD TO DO WITH THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE NOW. **EVERY SINGLE WISE ELDER HAS TOLD ME THAT ATTITUDE IS POWERFUL AND THAT IT IS CRITICAL TO LOOK FOR THE POSITIVE IN ALL THINGS I DO LIFE WITH A SENSE OF ANTICIPATION AND HOPE! YOU???**

JACK