



mindset

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2010

On a recent trip to Charleston I happened across an article in the January 2005 issue of a publication for women, called *Skirts*. In it was a brief essay by Kathleen Denny, a woman who was diagnosed with cancer in her early twenties and has spent the past 20 years devoted to living her life to the max. She writes “Aging is a privilege and we might as well enjoy the journey.”

Aging is a privilege! What a great quote! I have put it differently: “growing older is hard but it sure beats the alternative.” Kathleen Denny’s quote is much more positive and true. Aging is indeed a privilege.

This issue of *Health&Healing* is all about possible changes in health care in 2010. I want to make that topic more personal. In 2010, we all hope to have had the privilege of growing five years older. What changes will we want to see in our lives? What will we think if we look back at the previous five years? What will we have accomplished? How will we have spent our time?

All too often we simply live from moment to moment, coping with whatever comes our way. A sensitive and clear look at our lives reveals so much about us. What we do in fact reveals our priorities and indeed who we are. By what we do I mean what we actually do! How do we spend our time? And perhaps more importantly how do we do what we do? Do we go about our days cheerfully? Do we enjoy most of what we do? Are we surrounded by people—family, friends, co-workers—who really know us and who help us to be the best people we can be? Do we eat well, get enough exercise, have fun and meaning in our lives?

If the answer to any of the preceding questions is no, then now is the time to seriously think about what we need to change. Time slips away and few things improve on their own. If there are a number of things we want to change, we increase our chances of success if we chose the one we are the most serious about changing.

Once we decide what we want to change, then it is time to make sure that we identify the problem correctly. An example is weight loss. An examination of what we eat, when we eat and if we eat for emotional reasons, may unearth an underlying problem. We may comfort ourselves with food all day long at a stressful job. Efforts to make our job less stressful or to find other sources of comfort during the day will increase our chances of cutting back on our emotional eating. Problems that seem simple are often fairly complex; talking with friends can be very helpful.

Once we have identified the problem we need to look for possible blocks that we need to remove in order to change. Who can we ask for help? Do we need to talk to a coach, mentor, friend or therapist? Much of what prevents us from making the changes we want is based on fear. There is always risk involved in change but then life itself is a pretty risky business and playing it safe doesn’t necessarily lead to happiness.

When we finally initiate the changes we want to make it is of utmost importance to have supportive people around. You may find that to your dismay people who you thought would be supportive subtly undermine your efforts. You may need to talk to them directly about their behavior; after all they can change too!

In 2010 we will hopefully all still be here. Let’s work to make sure that when we look back over the next five years we will feel grateful that we have made changes, however small or grand, that have made our life better.

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