Aging With Attitude

Throughout my life I have been involved in many conversations about attitude. Some of these discussions have been positive, some have been negative and some have been downright comical. I never will forget the time when our granddaughter showcased her sassy attitude for the first time and I laughed because it reminded me of her mother when she was that age!

I learned a lot about attitude from my dad. He was the most positive person I have ever known. No matter what challenges he faced in life, he always moved forward with a positive attitude.

The connection between the mind and body is strong, so an overall positive attitude – including an upbeat outlook on life – can affect overall happiness, health and well-being. Similar to good health practices such as eating well and getting plenty of exercise, a positive attitude should be a habit that starts early in life. I thank my dad for instilling this value in me.

A positive attitude can impact both our mental health as well as physical health, including the ability to fight disease and infection. Our attitude can also affect relationships, social networks and our ability to be successful. In a nutshell, being more positive across our lifespan causes less stress and enables us to live happier, healthier lives.

As we grow older, having a positive attitude can help us live longer. To develop a positive attitude work on being confident, patient and accepting of change. Set goals and work hard. Most of all – have fun! Don’t take yourself too seriously.

Being able to accept and adapt to change plays a very important part in having a positive attitude, especially as life is filled with ups and downs. A positive attitude allows us to meet challenges, both good and bad, with less resistance. Approaching change with rigid thoughts and apprehension leaves us open to stress and frustration, which can lead to feelings of failure and may even contribute to depression.

A positive attitude about growing old through the lifespan can help us live longer, yet society constantly reinforces negative stereotypes of old age and aging. Aging adults are perceived as being senile, frail and cranky and that growing old is generally something to be lamented. When faced with this negativity it is easy for us to live up to these low expectations, performing at lower functioning levels as we grow older.

It is important for us to recognize and value the contributions, accomplishments and wisdom we bring with us as we age. Sharing our positive attitude about aging will enable us to create a societal change that will affect both today’s and tomorrow’s seniors for the better. When armed
with a sense of happiness and purpose, reinforced by our positive attitude, we are more apt to suppress negative thoughts and carry on as the competent, productive members of society that we are – regardless of age or ability.

Source: Keys to Embracing Aging: Erin Yelland, Ph.D., CFLE K-State Research & Extension, Amy F. Hosier, University of Kentucky and LaVona S. Traywick, University of Arkansas.