

Growing Old: Bitter or Better?

By Lianne Trevarthen

Some old women and men grow bitter with age. 'The more their teeth drop out the more biting they get', said George Dennison Prentice. There is an expectation of bitterness and hopelessness that tends to colour our view of old age, not with bright laughter, sunshine, and hope, but with the grey of despair and regret. While you might think you will never be like that, what are you doing now to stop growing bitter with age?

We can prepare for growing older by living our lives now in a fruitful way, growing in wisdom, investing

our time in things that matter. Time is short, and wisdom helps us use what little time we have to its fullest.

In ancient Israel there was a king, Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, who wrote:

Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
and the man who gains understanding;

For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver,
and her gain than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies,
and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

Length of days is in her right hand,
in her left hand riches and honour.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
and happy are all who retain her.¹

Why do we disregard this precious gift of time? Why carry on as if we will never get old, and waste our lives 'living for the moment' and on things that have no lasting value? We reap what we sow, and it is better to avoid the pitfalls which can lead to us bearing sad consequences later in life. Make the best use of your talents while you can, and use them as the lining of your future.

Growing old gracefully is possible!

What does growing old gracefully look like? It is beautiful! Novelist Victor Hugo said: 'When grace is joined with wrinkles, it is adorable. There is an unspeakable dawn in happy old age'.

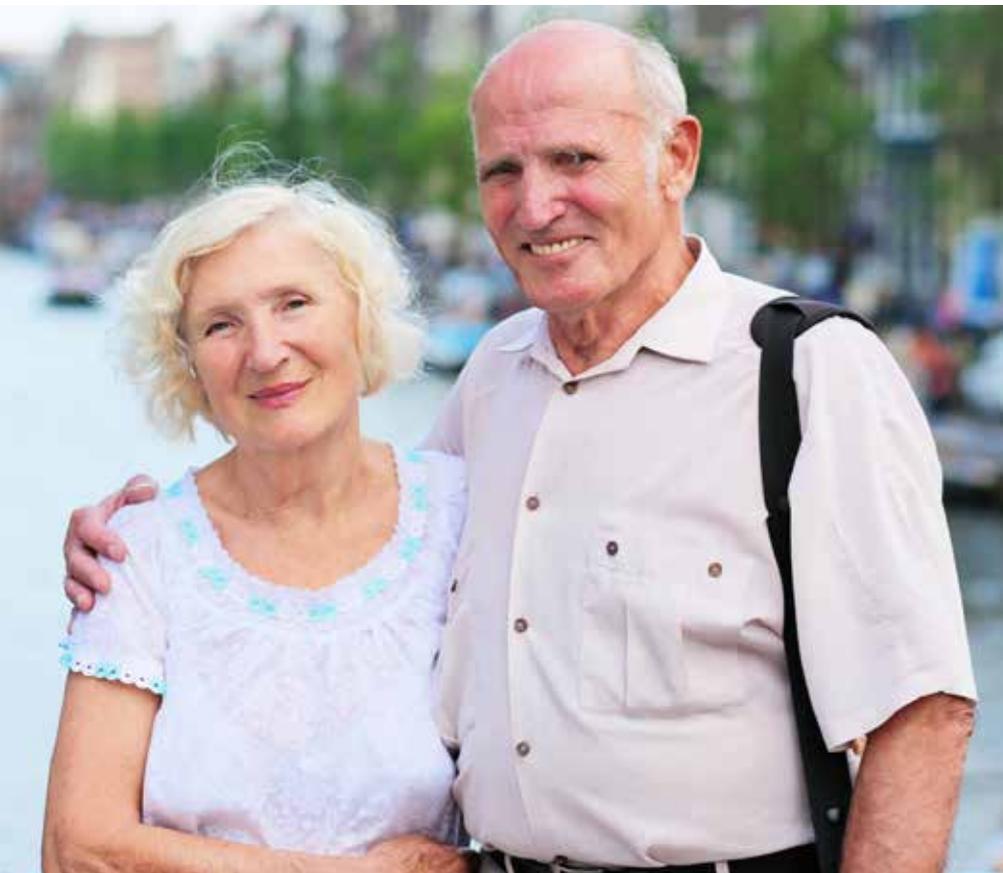
Put aside regrets, seek forgiveness for things you did or didn't do, accept what can't, or couldn't, be changed, and keep moving forward.

Nineteenth century American poet and novelist, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, wrote: 'To keep the heart unwrinkled, to be hopeful, kindly, cheerful, reverent—that is to triumph over old age'.

Which would you rather be as you grow old? Bitter or better?

Note

¹ Proverbs 3:13-18



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Victor Hugo