

Positive Outlook is Critical in Positive Aging Process

As a child, you are carefree and energetic, but may sometimes get frustrated that you cannot do things without the help of an adult. As a teenager, you relish in your newfound independence, but crave even more. As a young adult, you enjoy entering into new relationships and making all your own decisions, but with that comes a lot more responsibility.

Each stage of life has its ups and downs, fun times and challenging times. As each of the stages during the first half of life are different and present new challenges, the same goes for middle to older adulthood. When entering the second half of life, it is important to keep yourself healthy in several domains to ensure a positive aging experience. The four key areas of self to focus on include mental, physical, social and emotional selves.

To keep your mind sharp as you age, it is important to continue to learn and try new things. Learning is not just for those who are in school. Older adults can benefit from lifelong learning by decreasing their chances of Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Older adults can continue learning by exploring their curiosities. If you have ever wondered about a particular topic, now is the time to learn about it. Older adults can also attend adult education or community classes to learn about new things.

Physical health is important at any age. For older adults, caring for their bodies and participating in regular exercise are keys to good physical health. At any age, individuals should eat a healthful, balanced diet, control their portion sizes, and make sure to get plenty of fluids. Also, visiting doctors and dentists regularly is an important part of healthy aging.

Staying close with family and friends and keeping involved in the community are ways older adults can maintain good social health. Ways to accomplish this include making plans with family and friends on a regular basis, or acting as a resource to other family members and friends. Perhaps you can provide good advice or stories from your own experiences or pass along a special skill or talent that you have. Volunteering is also a good activity that benefits social health in older adults.

To maintain a healthy emotional self, older adults should be sure to keep a positive outlook and attitude and also reduce their stress and anxiety. One way to achieve this is by avoiding negative thoughts or thinking negatively about yourself. As soon as you catch these thoughts in your head, stop them before you can begin to dwell on them, and turn them into positive thoughts, memories, or ideas. One way to manage stress is by implementing relaxation strategies such as meditation, deep breathing or positive visualization.

There are many ways older adults can maintain a healthy lifestyle. For more information on this topic, contact Christina Rittenbach, Stutsman County Extension agent, at 252-9030 or christina.rittenbach@ndsu.edu.