

Counseling Corner

Making Sure A "Mid-Life Crisis" Isn't A Crisis!

from the American Counseling Association

Getting older happens to all of us, but it can be a frightening experience as we first recognize our own signs of aging. Those first few gray hairs... that morning stiffness... realizing your eyesight isn't what it used to be. It may be a gradual process, but the signs are certainly clear.

The reality of aging can bring out a variety of responses. If a person sees aging as a natural experience and one associated with gaining wisdom, mid-life can be a positive experience. But for someone who places a lot of value on the virtues of youth, such as looks and strength, mid-life can seem devastating.

However, there are ways to combat such feelings and gain a more a positive attitude about maturing. One starting point is simply to make a list of the lessons that have been learned since adolescence and how this knowledge has served you. On such a list you'll probably find your success at work, the ease you now have at social gatherings, and your ability to build stronger personal relationships.

Another positive step can be to explore new activities to help you feel healthy and relaxed. No, not that under-30 baseball team, tennis tournament, or hockey league to "prove" you've still got it. That will only bring frustration (and probably injuries). Instead, look to jogging, swimming, yoga or other enjoyable but more age-appropriate activities.

Try becoming more involved with children, your own or in the community, and pass on some of the skills you learned when their age.

You might set some new goals, both individual and social, that you'd like to achieve, then begin planning on how to make them happen. Too often we find we're unthinkingly following the plans of our earlier years, when our experience and maturity can instead now give us a clearer vision of what's important and achievable.

Sometimes people find it very difficult to accept growing older and find it leading to depression or other problems. That's a good time to talk to a professional counselor. He or she can't stop the aging process, but can assist you in coming to terms with the parts of your life that you find troubling.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACACorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at counseling.org

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364 words

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