

CARING FOR OTHERS by Nancy Webre for The Bulletin

Elder Women of Inspiration: An Untapped Resource

The average life expectancy for women in the United States is among the highest in the world and has improved markedly over this century. Furthermore, women who were 65 in 1996 can expect to live approximately another 20 years. There is a lot of wisdom out there that isn't being tapped into. Age adds value, the older the better, the older the wiser – all these sayings conjure up a positive outlook for our older years.

In keeping with the theme of this issue of U Magazine, "Women of Inspiration," older women can be an invaluable and inspiring resource. Elders offer an alternative to conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom is what we learn while growing up. It ultimately becomes the basis of our identity and self-esteem. Elders possess accumulated wisdom; they are our experts on living and can serve as a helpful guide for younger people. They bring life experience and knowledge of just about every problem. Older women have the knowledge to say, "I went through that, I did that or I understand that." This unique perspective is a valuable lens through which younger people can view their own lives. Reflecting back to conversations with my grandmother, her knowledge and wisdom continue to resonate in my life daily.

In an article written by Margaret Manning for the Huffington Post, "60 Things Older Women Want Younger Women to Know," many 30-year-

old women wish they'd had more older women in their lives at that age, contributing to a more balanced perspective on aging earlier in life. Upon retirement, Manning developed a community of women over 60 (Sixty and Me) and asked the women to share one piece of advice they would give to women half their age. Their advice reflected the collective wisdom that they wished they'd had in their 30s. Following are a few of their inspiring thoughts on the topics of lifestyle, attitude, beauty, relationships, and getting older:

- Remember you have only one life, this is not a dress rehearsal
- Try to stay positive and look for the good in every life experience
- Live each day fully because you don't know what's around the corner
- Love all the stages of your life and fear none because they're all magical
- Learn to live in the moment
- Be yourself. Age with grace
- Focus on positive aging instead of anti-aging
- Make memories, but always keep a soft landing place
- Never cease to be inspired
- Age is only a number, it does not define who you are
- Give your love freely and unconditionally
- Learn to forgive at a younger age
- Give yourself "me" time every day
- Be grateful for every day, even bad days. There's always a lesson to learn
- Many struggles actually become easier with age
- Every age has its advantages and challenges. Accept where you are now
- Don't waste time worrying about the things you can't change, but change the things you can
- Learn to be resourceful and self-sufficient
- Embrace the positive aspect of aging, like having less responsibility and more freedom

For those of us who are older women, our life experience is a gift. We can be a uniquely important source of guidance for the not-yet-old. Let our lives be an inspiration to others.



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