

# Growing Old Is a Journey

## Less Daunting When People Care

By Vanessa Valerio



With sufficient information and time, most individuals will make sound decisions. Decisions can involve something as simple as ordering a meal for themselves—without being rushed.

Our seniors fear losing their independence. Sometimes we need to step back and understand what it's like to be in their shoes.

Have you ever wondered how challenging it is to read with failing vision? Have you thought how difficult it would be to access basic services in the community when you can no longer drive? Have you imagined how hard it is to walk or even write when you suffer from arthritis? If and when you see an elderly who is struggling to cross a street or sign his name, give him or her some time.

Let's value and treat our seniors with respect. Let's help them maintain a positive self-image. Let's encourage them to participate in life's pleasurable activities. Let's listen to their stories; this will help us learn what is important to them or what they truly want during life's final chapter.

**One Sunday morning, I decided to enjoy a quiet moment. Away from the chaos and deadlines that I have become accustomed to. I stopped by a small breakfast place with an ocean view.**

The wind was chilly and the atmosphere was serene. Then I saw an old man in his 90s come in, struggling with each labored step. He was with his family. As he sat down slowly, his son handed him the menu. The old man started to look at the menu; he was obviously having a hard time reading each word. After a few minutes his son blurted out, "There's not much choice there. What's taking you so long?"

I was taken aback by his son's behavior. Growing old is not easy. Some people are fortunate that they are able, or given a chance, to deal with aging gracefully. Older adults do not like to be rushed. When they are allowed to function at a moderately slow pace, their comprehension is enhanced.

The incident that I witnessed is the opposite of what I'd like to see. I have provided care to many seniors and I know that a loving relationship with their family is a positive influence during this stage of life.

Perhaps the best gift that we can offer our seniors is compassion. Encouraging our seniors to make decisions that affect their lives seems only natural but it is frequently ignored.

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