

<p>COPING with CHANGE: a personal journey</p>	<p>Slide</p>
	<p>Baby The only person who likes change is a wet baby</p>
<p>Hello. I'm Helen and I am an Octogenarian. I love that word because of its Latin roots. BUT, I did not like the word at first, when I turned 80, but I am getting used to being one of them, so I am learning to love it even more</p>	<p>OCTOGENARIAN</p>
<p>Hello. I'm Helen and I am a Widow. Now, I really hate this word. It conjures up images of black spiders, ugly warts, grief, depression, women in black, dark babooshkas, abandonment, and loneliness. Very 15th century.</p>	<p>WIDOW</p>
<p>Hello. I'm Helen and I am NOT ALONE. I am ON MY OWN. When my husband passed 3 years ago, my good friend Marina appeared at my door at 6am the day after, to extend her condolences and to tell me: YOU ARE NOT ALONE. You are now ON YOUR OWN....and that as a professional I had been on my own before:</p>	<p>ON MY OWN</p>

<p>“when your husband travelled on business, when YOU travelled on business.”</p> <p>Her message was clear to me that I had done things on my own before and that I would now be doing them that way again.</p>	
<p>So, here I am, sometimes still struggling with grief, as we ALL experience it differently.</p> <p>In the time I have today, I would like to offer some of the strategies I have learned, am learning and continue to learn as an Octogenarian widow dealing with CHANGE and “ALONENESS”.</p>	<p>ALONENESS</p>
<p>1. WALK According to everything I have read and researched, keeping active is one of the most important ways to stay healthy and engaged.</p> <p>I have a dog, a puppy, now 10 months old, so I walk about 8km per day.</p> <p>I have also joined a gym and do exercise classes and yoga.</p> <p>The experts say that, at any age, walking between 5 & 7 thousand steps a day is sufficient. They add that this number of steps can reduce risks of cancer and heart disease.</p>	<p>WALK</p> <p>FITNESS</p>

<p>2. SAY HELLO – Social interaction is very important for those of us on our own. The old circle of friends keeps changing (old friends sometimes die too) and just going out and saying hello in a store, on the bus, on the street, keeps our brains active in a new situation. I try to say HELLO at least 5 times a day. It’s often not easy as sometimes I just want to curl up in a corner and cry. However, it’s easier at the dog park. And if I can’t say HELLO at least I try to SMILE at someone to get that smile back.</p>	<p>HELLO/ SMILE</p>
<p>3. TAKE TIME to have conversations...with old friends or new friends. Meet up for lunch or just coffee. I have worked hard at reconnecting with old friends, from high school and university days, and also in making new friends. This can sometimes be very hard, but I keep forcing myself to make the effort.</p>	<p>TIME</p>

<p>4. SEEK the company of people younger than yourself! This is very important for outlook and mental health. The simple truth is that my Octogenarian friends may die, but chances are that my fifty-something friends will outlive me! I have been very fortunate to have many young friends re-enter my life: former students, long lost neighbours, former colleagues ...and these people bring me joy, excitement, and keep me a bit more informed on topics they love: music, politics, technology, AI etc.</p> <p>It takes work to find and reconnect with these people but well worth the effort.</p> <p>I am also part of a small group of 3 other women in their '50s who get together every other week or so to play a board game called TOCK. THAT is fun!</p>	<p>SEEK YOUNGER</p>
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<p>5. GET SOCIAL. Recently I joined the Canadian Legion. Anyone can join and this year, an anniversary year for them, it's FREE. But getting involved in any Community activities, large or small, will help.</p>	<p>SOCIALIZE</p>
<p>6. And lastly on my list: CONNECT! Use the phone to call a friend. Personally, I still find this hard but I force myself to do it. Right now I succeed about 3-4 times a week. My goal is to do it daily but, that is still hard. The Retired Teachers group actually have a program where the newly retired call the older retirees. But I do connect on FACEBOOK. I love reading the posts from others and I enjoy posting things myself. I also play word games where I can chat with the person. My favourite right now is WORDS with FRIENDS...good for my brain and good for my social interactions. And soon, I will be connecting to play with Eva, the 16-year-old daughter of my goddaughter in London UK. (I'll let you know how that turns out as she is very competitive!)</p>	<p>CONNECT SOCIAL MEDIA</p>

<p>7. In a recent (March) edition of PREVENTION magazine, there was a very interesting article on AGING and DR. Krieger, a specialist in aging, stated: Mindset is everything. Why not view aging positively? You've learned so much and you have so much experience. So, enjoy all the benefits of aging including all the pricing discounts offered!</p> <p>Another medical expert added that having a positive attitude can add up to 7 years to your life.</p>	<p>MINDSET</p>
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But I am planning a bit more. Here is my list to keep me more active, positive, and social:

1. The local library has a book club once a month. I will try to attend.
2. Now that I have joined the LEGION, I must attend.
3. I am Chairing the Garden Tour committee for the garden tour in June in Cabbagetown.
4. I plan to host an informal dinner for some current University students (from St. Michael's College, my alma mater) to offer a home-cooked meal and conversation....maybe in September.....

5. I am discussing with 2-3 friends about moving to a duplex or triplex for security and looking out for each other. I have begun some research but no results yet and I have just started talking to a lawyer about the legal implications of sharing costs (taxes etc).
I know of a group of women who lived in one house with shared expenses and am trying to contact them.

And may I leave you with some thoughts from some pretty cool OLDER folks:

Bette Davis once said: “Aging is not for sissies!” died at 76

Betty White: who lived to be just a few weeks short of 100 – said: “I spend time reading, walking and always expressing GRATITUDE.”

Hazel McCallion, lived to 101: she came to speak to my MEd students in the course on LEADERSHIP. At the time, she was into her 80s and left them to ponder this message: “DO your homework and MAKE your bed.” I still follow that advice every day.

And my very favourite: CHER at (79) was once asked by some reporter: “Don’t you think you’re too old to sing rock ‘n roll?” & she replied: “You’d better check with Mick Jagger.”⁸²

And we can all quote Jack Benny and always say we are 39!
Thank you.