

#291

September 3, 2011

WELL EARNED WRINKLES

Did 'Hurricane Irene' give you a few new wrinkles?

Even if we could remove wrinkles I'm not sure that we should.

A wrinkle is really a very special kind of badge of honor that is an outward and visible sign of all the worry that each of us has invested in protecting the people we love. While the cause of our worry might go away – the wrinkles remains as reminder of what we have been through. Being '*wrinkle free*' might be important if you are a shirt --- not so much if you are a person!

It seems that the older we get the smarter we get about choosing what to worry about and what not to worry about. When we were younger we had less patience and tended to worry about everything. The '*Serenity Prayer*' by Reinhold Niebuhr is one that we tend to identify with more with as we get older:

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference."*

Younger people don't always like to accept that there are things that they cannot change. You have to love that spirit! It's not that older people are pessimistic -- they just tend to be more practical. Older people realize and accept that some things are beyond our control – and they find a certain calmness in acknowledging that. In Matthew 6:34 the Bible tells us: "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*" Younger people worry about the future while older people tend to worry about it less and plan for it more --- but they do so with a sense of humor -- they have learned that Woody Allen is often right: "*If you want to make God laugh – Tell him your plans*". Plans are good – but more important is the ability to improvise and adapt when things do not go according to plan.

Last weekend's Tropical Storm Irene provided an opportunity to see the difference in response between older and younger adults.

Younger adults were scrambling around doing everything possible in order to manage and control the situation and ensure that the storm would have a minimal affect on their lifestyle. They started the week worrying and didn't stop until the storm was done.

Older people knew the storm was coming, they prepared for the worst and then they stopped worrying. They knew that no matter how much they worried that it would not change a thing about the storm. These are people who lived through the Hurricane of 1938. These are people who have lived through World War II and multiple other conflicts. These are people who have lived through multiple health crisis's over the years. They have learned well the 'acceptance' part of the Serenity Prayer. Older people had the confidence that comes with experience to know that they would be able to adapt and improvise to meet whatever Mother Nature threw at them!

Over the years I have been inspired by the calm way that older people accept all the many inconveniences that come with major 'weather events' such as Irene and our more common run of the mill blizzards. If they lose heat, they add a blanket or two. If they can't get to the store they make do with what they have. If they can help their neighbor they do all they can. They don't expect things to be 'business as usual' and they accept the inconveniences and sacrifices that they have to make --- usually reminding the rest of us that others have it far more difficult and that they have seen much worst.

Older people have earned those wrinkles and the wisdom and patience that come along with them. During a crisis the easiest (and the most fun) people to be around are older people because once they have prepared for the worst they just sit back and enjoy the show!

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated. chandler@metrocast.net and at meredithbaycolonyclub.org and on Facebook.