

So, How Do You Age Gracefully?

There are pros and cons to getting older, let's face it. Well, speaking of faces, that's one of the cons. Sometimes I look in the mirror and study my face like a science project as I ask myself, "What the heck happened, and who are you, anyway?"

As I reflect on my younger years, I marvel at how age has changed me. I am more serious but comfortable, much like my shoes. I think shoes are a major indicator of such change. I used to wear stilettos and didn't care that they'd cause bunions one day. My motto was "Beauty is pain." Now I try on shoes for comfort, not looks. This came as a slightly sad realization.

As a young person, I lived in the moment—in the carefree moment, I might add. I baked in the sun because deep tans were "in," and we didn't have spray tans or tanning beds back then. We did have this stuff called QT that turned your skin orange, and I mean "like a carrot" orange! Otherwise, we got our tans the hard way, and it was like a part-time job for us. We would lay out on the roof, rub iodine and butter on our skin, and fry like eggs in the heat.

Now that I'm older, I have hot flashes—I hate the heat! I travel with my own internal furnace that came as a gift with **middle age**. I avoid the sun to prevent wrinkles and skin cancer, both of which were never mentioned in the 1970s. So, I live with my pale skin, since I fear the spray-tan ordeal. It appears way too complicated, and I don't fancy the idea of disrobing anywhere. As my husband says, "Some things are just beggin' to be covered up!" And I must agree, which brings me to the next thing: dressing rooms.

I used to take my young, skinny self and sashay into the

dressing room without a thought. Now wild horses and a pushy salesgirl have to drag me in! First, the lighting is harsh and severe, as well as unforgiving. I need and want my sunglasses in there. I'm certain the same lights that land airplanes are in dressing rooms.

Next, what's the deal with the three-way fat mirrors? Honestly, I don't want to see myself at every angle. Certain body parts aren't where they used to be, and I don't need or want to observe this **middle-age milestone**—and I certainly don't want to see it all showcased with glaring search lights!

Then, you can always count on “Miss Size 2 Salesgirl” to peek in and tell you how great you look. Seriously, do you need a sale so bad that you're willing to lie like a dog? If a person is standing there unable to zip a dress or looks like a stuffed sausage in an outfit, how great do they look? Besides, I can't see anyway, as I am blinded by the killer lights. I want to tell her to shut up and go eat some doughnuts, but instead I leave in utter disgust and despair as I look for the nearest chocolate anything.

As I walk down the mall—in my comfortable shoes, mind you—I swear off chocolate for the millionth time in a year. Again, **losing weight** was so easy when I was younger. When my tiny jeans would feel snug, I'd just not eat for a few days and drop five pounds. I liked working out and ate pretty much what I wanted. Well, those days are over! I have to eat lettuce leaves for a month before I can lose five pounds, and as for working out, blah! I sweat enough with the hot flashes, so why intentionally do something to sweat some more? I use the excuse that I fear dehydration. I don't know. Whatever reason works at the moment. Exercise used to give me this feeling of **exhilaration**—uh, not anymore. I just feel **old** and **achy** afterwards.

Am I going to end up a **curmudgeon**? I used to love going out on

the town to dance the night away. I'd spend two hours getting ready and wouldn't leave until after 10:00 p.m. What? At 10, I've been in my PJs for hours, and bedtime is right around the corner! I'd rather have a good book by the fire and a few yummy lettuce leaves chased with a bottle of purified water.

But seriously, there is an assurance that comes with aging if you decide to **embrace it**. These seasons of our lives are inevitable, so why fret? There is a level of comfort and peace that comes when we determine to flow with every season God has for us. If it comes from Him, there is always good to be found.

I don't look the same, but my outlook is not the same either. I like me on the inside much more now; I'm more settled and resolved and **understand God on a deeper level**.

I know what's important and valuable, and it's not found in having a tan or wearing five-inch heels. Years are a gift—they add, rather than take away from our lives. With every year, we are richer with experiences and the wealth of knowledge that accompanies them.

I don't want a drink from the **fountain of youth**. I prefer the fountain of **wisdom** that has been packaged in the **beautiful years** that God has blessed me with. Have they always been easy? No. Some days feel like a trip to the dressing room, but others feel like I'm up on the roof—carefree and loving life, and doing it all in my comfortable shoes.

Joni Parsley stands alongside her husband, Rod, at the head of well-known national and international ministries, including World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio. She writes a popular blog at .