

Relationship Tip of The Day



Elderly Wealth

Now that I'm getting older, I'm beginning to see the perspective of the elderly more clearly. Someone might see me in public, now age 71, and come to a number of conclusions based on who-knows-what.

But I am not just an old lady going about her daily duties, but a mother of three and a grandmother to eleven wonderful grandchildren. My husband and I have been married for over 50 years. I had a career as a public school teacher and have worked in Christian ministry most of my adult life. I am an ordained minister. Most people who know me well feel loved by me.

We older folks carry within us a lifetime of joys and heartaches, decades of learning and experience. The "package" that is currently our home might not be the world's image of perfection, but inside you might find someone full of faith, insight, love, and intelligence.

Listen, older people don't want to be tolerated. They want to be treated with respect. They don't want to be patronized and patted on their heads as those in need of pity. Ok, maybe they don't know all the current technology, but keep in mind, it was our generation who started it all. Bill Gates is 70. Our President is 79. There are so many examples of older people who are still active and productive.

Each person we meet has a history, no matter how short. We won't have time to know every person we see, but we can approach them as those with their own experiences who are worthy of our respect.

To illustrate this point, the other day I was shopping at Home Goods. An older woman was circling the same shelf I was looking for paper goods for Christmas. She was a bit disheveled. Her clothes seemed to casual for a shopping trip, and her hair and makeup were a mess. She just kept circling and looking, waiting for the perfect item to stand out to her, just as I was doing. I felt a certain pity for her and decided I would say something to her to be kind to this poor soul (in my estimation), fully expecting she would be a bit incoherent.

Was I ever surprised. This woman was perfectly normal and sharp as a tack. She engaged in conversation with confidence and kindness and then proceeded to help me decide what to buy to go with my place setting. We could have been best friends. After my set was complete, we together attempted to get her set perfected.

The whole time I was thinking how unfairly I had judged her, not even knowing her. She was surely someone's mom and grandma and had her own circle of friends. Suddenly, we were equals. I repented of looking

down on her and assuming things about her I could not have possibly known.

When you see someone old, don't talk to them as if they are a child. If you are younger, treat them with extra respect and humility. If you are nearly the same age, behave like a friend. If you know this person, engage in conversation. Ask their opinions about things. They probably have some things to share that will help you in your own life.

My brother once chided me about thinking I was "so wise."

I answered him, "Well, I hope after all these years I have some wisdom to share." Old people do have much to share. Just listen and learn. One day, you'll be able to take from their wealth of experience as you face similar situations, and before long, you will be sharing your experiences with those younger than you.