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News Release

Ageless Aging

How old would you be if you did not know how old you were? The question sounds to be a bit of a twister; however, it gets at the ideal of examining yourself without the usual focus on number of birthdays. It's easy as we age to begin to fall, and sometimes too prematurely, into the rut of thinking and doing what is deemed as characteristic of a particular age. Unfortunately, often it can mean that seniors and others may find themselves no longer engaging in those things that keep them the most happiest, help maintain optimal health, as well as keep them updated on various issues of age relevant importance. You've probably heard of people feeling younger than their chronological age due to their attitude, exercise regimen and spirituality amongst other elements. However the opposite can exist due to possibly the same as well as a combination of events that occur throughout a person's lifetime. Despite trend or statistic, the golden years are still hailed as some of life's best years by many. However as with most things golden, how it is cared for determines the quality and shine it retains over time.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) suggests that the secret to "aging gracefully" is to establish a healthy lifestyle as early as possible and work to adhere to it as one grows older. Also, much research often makes reference to the concept of "self-perception about aging can be more important than the traditional success markers." At best, successful aging is reached through a mixture of these ideologies that gets at merging inside and outside changes into one.

The NIA has identified some practical tips regarding basic steps to successful aging:

- Stay active through work, recreation, and community.
- Get regular check-ups.
- Maintain contacts with family and friends.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Avoid overexposure to the sun and the cold.
- Exercise regularly.
- Don't smoke. It's never too late to quit.
- Practice safety habits at home to prevent falls and fractures.
- Keep personal and financial records in order to simplify budgeting and investing. Plan for long-term housing and financial needs.
- Keep a positive attitude toward life. Do things that make you happy.

When it comes to “ageless aging” or maintaining quality of life despite age, it appears that three H’s are key; hobbies, health and happiness. Hobbies are those things such as reading, gardening, listening to music and more that keep you stimulated mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially. Health speaks to engaging in proper eating, sleeping and exercise habits. Lastly, happiness is a catch-all for family, friends and anything that brings true joy.

Publications regarding many of the topics from the tip list as well as others are available for download at www.aces.edu as well as in your local Extension office.

For more information on this or related topics, contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at (205) 338-9416 or email at willisl@aces.edu.

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