

News Column – Donna Krug, Family & Consumer Science Agent and District Director, Cottonwood Extension District

Keys to Embracing Life

Three years ago I enjoyed piloting a series of programs targeting our senior population titled, Keys to Embracing Aging. Each month for a year I brought a new topic complete with a well written fact sheet to a consistent audience of around twenty seniors. It is time to bring out those fact sheets again but this time, instead of just focusing on seniors, I'm calling it "Keys to Embracing Life."

Today I'm sharing information from the Positive Attitude fact sheet. It's no secret that the connection between mind and body is strong. An overall positive attitude, including an upbeat outlook on life, can affect overall happiness, health, and well-being. Similar to good health practices such as eating well and getting plenty of exercise, a positive attitude should be a habit that starts early in life.

A positive attitude can impact mental health and physical functioning, including the ability to fight disease and infection. Attitude can also affect relationships, social networks, and help make success in life more likely. The bottom line, being more positive across the lifespan causes less stress and enables people to live healthier, happy lives.

Dr. Martin Seligman, the creator of positive psychology, believes that happiness helps provide a sense of purpose in life because it is something that you can create and nurture. He identified seven habits of happy people. Happy people:

- Build close relationships
- Care for others
- Engage in healthy, active lifestyles
- Embrace spirituality
- Practice positive thinking
- Embrace a hobby or activity
- Identify strengths

We all know people who are positive and almost always have a smile on their face. Our five-year-old grandson, Bo, is one happy kid. If the weather is nice, Bo and his mom will be practicing hitting or catching a baseball, or shooting baskets at their driveway basketball goal. After a recent rainy day, Bo and his two sisters, went on a worm hunt. It was such a success that a weekend fishing trip is planned. Our daughter, Kristen, sent a picture of three smiling kids with their gallon pail almost half full of worms.

Everyone has an occasional bad day, but in general, a positive attitude and happy outlook can help pull you through life's challenges. Having an upbeat and proactive outlook on life over time can also contribute to better health and optimal aging, including longevity.

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