



LOPEZ ISLAND
HOSPICE
& HOME
SUPPORT

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Winter 2019

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Lopez Island
Hospice & Home Support
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
volunteer organization.
All services are free.

Ways to Support Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support

- Donate on our website via Paypal
- Make your Amazon purchases at smile.amazon.com. .5% of the purchase price goes to LIHHS.
- Write us a check – we've included an envelope for your convenience.
- Credit card.

Many thanks for your continued generosity.

Coping with Changes in Aging

By Elizabeth Landrum, Ph.D.

The poet Stanley Kunitz, who continued to write and publish until his death at 100, left us with these beautiful words: "I have walked through many lives,/some of them my own,/and I am not who I was,/though some principle of being/abides, from which I struggle/not to stray/...I am not done with my changes." (The Layers, 1978). Indeed, aging means continual change, change means loss, and loss means grief — all accompanying our need to maintain a sense of personal identity and purpose.

As social scientists explore the social and emotional aspects of aging, viewing the process as **adaptation** and not just decline, we are learning more about what factors lead to emotional and physical well-being, as well as to distress, depression and poorer health. Although individuals age differently, changes are inevitable, some gradual, some sudden, and all requiring adjustment. Looking at once at the many adaptations we must make as we age, the myriad of losses can feel overwhelming.

An increasingly aware and aging population is experiencing continual change, not only in physical abilities, appearance, robustness and energy, but also in cognitive and sexual functioning, feelings of self-efficacy, self-esteem, pride, independence, comfort, and freedom. Along with these changes, there are likely to be observable changes in social roles and relationships, lifestyle, work/hobbies, living conditions, and future plans, as well as losses of loved ones.

Of course, it is changes in the specific parts of ourselves we most identify with and value (e.g. physical strength or mental acuity, attractiveness or accomplishments, certain social roles) that are the hardest to accept. We must let go of the self we once were before we can fully inhabit the self we've become, while "some principle of being abides." A natural **grieving process** will lead to **acceptance** if the various emotions involved in letting go are not blocked, discounted or denied. Then one may engage in the process of learning to absorb, adapt to, and live with limitations. "It's like discovering how the machine still works when some parts are broken or missing," an elder told me. A compassionate listener, who understands grief as natural, necessary, and different from depression, can often be of help to someone dealing with these changes.

Beyond the letting go, what is known about coping with changes that come with aging? Recent research has shown that social isolation is the most

significant predictor of poor adaptation, poor health and cognitive functioning. As people age, those who report stronger **social networks** not only have a greater sense of well-being, but statistically are at lower risk for morbidity and mortality, the effect being comparable to traditional medical indicators such as high cholesterol and smoking.

People who perceive their friends and family members as supportive have the strongest sense of meaning in their lives and experience living with a broader purpose.

What we deem as important for happiness changes with age, as do our priorities. With increased awareness of ourselves and of limited time, we shift our focus even more to the things that bring **pleasure, purpose, and meaning**. "What makes me feel most alive?" is a helpful question to ask ourselves at any stage of life, though the answers change with age. Successful aging may be seen as the ongoing development or unfolding of one's life story, even in the presence of physical decline and other losses.

We know that feeling in control gives one a sense of **mastery** and **accomplishment** and that well-being is associated with **setting goals** that are both personally important and realistically obtainable. Although compromised physical functioning makes some activities effortful or even impossible, anyone can be encouraged to continue engaging in valued activities and pursuing goals, **doing the best one can with what one has**. If an objective cannot be met using the usual strategies, people fare best when they find compensations (e.g. enlisting the help of other people or devices) rather than giving up the goal.

For many, the worst part of getting older is **ageism**, or negative biases and perceptions of aging, whether projected by others or internalized. At least one study has shown that believing these negative stereotypes is more highly correlated with longevity than gender, socioeconomic status, loneliness, or functional health. Currently, **Positive Aging** is a concept being researched and promoted by the World Health Organization and others. Scientists who are exploring attributes of successful aging are concentrating on positive scenarios, highlighting techniques and policies that can help develop more **resilience** while strengthening our sense of **fulfillment** and **control**, despite the challenges associated with growing older.

Positive aging involves positive relationships, self-efficacy, self-compassion, self-awareness, meaningful activities, and the ability to accept change, as we are "not done with our changes."

*I am not
done with
my changes.*

~ Stanley
Kunitz

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We can lend a hand

Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support averages over 3,400 volunteer hours per year, allowing more than 25 clients to remain in their homes or in the care of family by assisting with shopping, providing relief for primary caregivers, grief and caregiver support counseling, and other support services.

We provide, free of charge, durable medical equipment such as wheel chairs, walkers, and crutches. We also help educate Lopez Islanders about medical and healthcare options through the Living Long on Lopez series of seminars.

None of this could happen without the help of our volunteers. We thank them for their service.



On Aging

When you see me sitting quietly,
Like a sack left on the shelf,
Don't think I need your chattering.
I'm listening to myself.
Hold! Stop! Don't pity me!
Hold! Stop your sympathy!
Understanding if you got it,
Otherwise I'll do without it!
When my bones are stiff and aching,
And my feet won't climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor:
Don't bring me no rocking chair.
When you see me walking, stumbling,
Don't study and get it wrong.
'Cause tired don't mean lazy
And every goodbye ain't gone.
I'm the same person I was back then,
A little less hair, a little less chin,
A lot less lungs and much less wind.
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.

~ Maya Angelou

What is Home Support?

Did you know that Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support has a large group of well-trained volunteers ready to assist any member of our community dealing with illness, injury or loss? Every day our volunteers are contributing their time so that others may have a higher quality of life, stay in their homes, counteract isolation, or simply be able to focus on what brings value and meaning to their lives.

For example, someone who can't stand for long in the kitchen may be able to spend time in the garden if a volunteer assists with a meal. Or one who is experiencing grief might find comfort in someone to help with the chores, give a ride to the clinic or pharmacy, or provide a trained compassionate ear.

These gifts could be helpful to you, no matter your level of need. It only takes a phone call to find out how our volunteer services could help you. Call 360-468-4446, or you can email admin@lihhs.org for more information.

Your Generosity in 2018

Our donors were so generous in 2018, donating more than \$100,000 to help us help our neighbors in need.

One of the many services we provide the community is the purchase and supply of durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, walkers, and knee scooters. This service saves members of the community money and stress, because when you need a walker, you need a walker.

Please consider making a donation to Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support in your annual giving.

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LOCAL POSTAL PATRON

Winter 2019

More than Twenty Years of Service to the Community

Thank you, Judy & Fons

During the January 16, 2019 board meeting, Judy Dern was elected President of Lopez Island Hospice & Home Support. Judy has a BSN from the University of Washington and 35 years of valuable experience in nursing and hospice care. She has served on the board for four years.

Our new officers are as follows:

President - Judy Dern

Vice President - Jeremy Rempel

Secretary - Kathleen Pallansch

Treasurer - Charles Givens

Many thanks to Fons Wynen, who served as president from 2015 through 2018.

THE TENTH ANNUAL JINGLE BELL DINNER

2018's Dinner a Smashing Success

November's Jingle Bell Dinner was a special night, netting more than \$40,000 from sponsorships, ticket sales, and a silent auction.

Thanks to the Lopez Community Singers, Jack Tate, Haven for the fabulous food, our servers, and Debbie Collins for the beautiful centerpieces.

And great thanks to all who sponsored, attended, bid on the silent auction, and donated their time and talents. See you in November!