Senior Advice: New technology displacing elders' wisdom

by Doug_Mayberry

Q: Perhaps it is because we are getting older, but when we observe our grandchildren's actions regarding their lives with which we disagree, we try to keep our mouths shut. Occasionally we do speak up, but are finding it harder and harder to do so. Recently, when I did so, my granddaughter disagreed and said, "All my friends are doing it."

Are we the only grandparents getting this treatment?

A: No! Allowing older members of the family to participate in family decisions has changed dramatically. Education and technology are now major influences on their decision-making. The explosive new players, the Internet and the cell phone, allow everyone to access multiple opinions. The power and influence of the "old" gatekeeper's information providers such as books, encyclopedias, radio and newspapers have diminished.

Electronic capability transfers any new information or interpretation immediately.

Cell phones are being used everywhere, all the time. Often, we all are irritated by a husband walking the supermarket aisles asking his wife if she wants the national or house brand, a daughter asking her mom if she should buy the yellow or blue skirt, or being startled as you walk to your car to hear a girl arguing with her boyfriend.

As a partial result of these capabilities, some experts believe many children do not mature until about age 32. This is based on younger peopleno longer allowed the luxury of making their own right or wrong decisions. Seeking advice from multiple sources for their opinions, anyone can then shift the responsibility for their actions onto others. It's like "Johnny made me do it".

Our "wisdom" spoken to our family is based on our love and caring. When you believe in the validity of your opinion, simply toss out these words to your grandchildren, "It's really your business, not mine, but for what it's worth this is what happened to me when I was faced with the same decision". Let it out, and if they choose your path sometimes, this will validate how important your advice is to them.

Q: As we are aging, both my husband and I have changed our sleep patterns. Between the two of us we are up and down all night, and disturb one another. Are their updated techniques that would be helpful?

A: Getting a good night's sleep becomes more important as we age. It takes longer to get to sleep and our

sleep efficiency is reduced. We awaken earlier because of our natural circadian rhythm influence. Drs. Shyam Subramanian and Salim Surani at Baylor College of Medicine writing in Geriatrics magazine (December) recommend avoiding naps and restricting nighttime sleeping to the average number of hours you have actually slept per night in the preceding week. Also important is getting regular exercise, taking a warm bath within two hours of bedtime, having a light snack and/or warm drink, and going to bed and waking up at a consistent time.

The doctors also suggest avoiding smoking and caffeine (limiting you to two cups of daily coffee, none later than 10 a.m.), alcohol and clock-watching. Use the bedroom only for sleep and sex.

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