

Senior Advice: Widow seeks the way out of her shell

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q. My friends believe I am shy. They are right. Now, as a recent widow, I want to become more outgoing, make new friends, and be happier. I find myself hesitating to respond to strangers for fear of saying the wrong thing and looking stupid. How can I teach myself to be more outgoing?

A. Become more comfortable by anticipating how to respond when meeting strangers. Learn to bond by remembering individuals are primarily interested in themselves. Respond to others with a question related to what they just said. Most of us want to have someone really listen to us.

For example, if you learn of a neighbor who is caretaking a parent, you might offer to bring or prepare a meal for them. Caretakers need a wide range of support.

Volunteering is also an excellent way to make friends. Helping others makes you feel as if you are doing the right thing. As a volunteer, you could find you have something in common with fellow a volunteer. Perhaps that individual is also going through a grieving process.

Should you meet someone preparing for a vacation, ask if you could pick up his or her papers, mail, or keep a key in the event of an emergency. Helping others creates friendships.

Every individual has a story to tell. Learn to tell "sunbeam stories" and laugh a lot. These are good medicines. Happiness becomes a habit. Be contented with what you have, not what you want. If you want more happiness, give some away to others. Unconsciously, your shyness will disappear.

Q. My neighbor is so fantastic about getting things done. I am 10 years younger, and have a lady who comes to do my cleaning But my neighbor seems able to do all her cleaning herself. She has five grandchildren and always has their birthday gifts in the mail on time. What can I do to get more things done?

A. It is difficult to compare capabilities and accomplishments. Your neighbor sounds like she enjoys terrific energy, which her parents passed on. However, here are some tips that might be helpful to you.

Begin by identifying goals that are most important to you. Then make lists to track how you are progressing.

Determine how much time each goal will require. Do first the tasks you dislike the most. As you accomplish more, your lists get longer!

Mark everything on your calendar with the scheduled time, contact, and phone number should you need to make changes. Do not put time wasters or things you would just like to do on your calendar. These items you will not forget!

If you determine you cannot do something yourself, check out friends and neighbors who have hired professionals to tile their floor, change electrical plugs, or install new garden lighting. In today's economy, even though it takes longer, get those three bids. You will be amazed how they differ and how much you can save.

If your vacuum is not doing an efficient job, consider buying a new one. The same goes for your computer. Bringing in a computer doctor may be cheaper than purchasing a new model.

Ask your neighbor how she gets so much work accomplished. Learning her techniques and listening to her advice might provide you with the information you need. Successful individuals are usually helpful in sharing their talents and knowledge!

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