

Senior Advice: Time to tap into the information age

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: Both my husband and I will retire in about five months. We have been encouraged by our children and grandchildren, who do not live near us, to learn how to use the computer. We talk about doing so, but have not. My husband seems to be more willing, but I am resisting because I am afraid of it. Does it really make any sense to spend the money and time to learn to do so?

A: YES, YES, YES! You are missing the opportunity of your lifetime by not having access to computer e-mail, which provides instant communication capability to your family and friends. In our daily scramble to do our chores, marketing and medical appointments all of us complain about not having enough time in the day to get everything done.

In being able to "talk your talk" when it's convenient and on your mind, e-mail is easier than trying to reach each other by phone. E-mail permits your contacts to respond at their convenience rather than being restricted by both of your schedules.

Free computer instruction is available through friends, associates, senior centers, libraries and community colleges. Postal officials, in preparing their budgets, are well aware of the competition and decline of personal mailing because of increasing use of e-mail communication. Think of saving 41 cents in postage time you e-mail. Even the greeting card companies are concerned about the slowing volume of postal greeting cards.

Don't miss being in the loop with your family and friends. Another bonus is having the capability to use the search engines such as www.google.com. The search engines could be compared to having access to the world's greatest library and information systems without leaving home. These providers not only provide data but also allow you shopping details and pricing. E-mail can pay your bills and offer instant access to your banking credit availability and other financial bases.

Many seniors declare they don't want anything to do with the computer. They say they don't need it. For various reasons, as we age, we automatically begin to slow down and become more insular. Stay in touch with others and don't miss the joy of and being a regular member of the family because of computer fear. You can overcome that issue as you learn how easily and quickly you can master your computer. It's much easier to use than the old typewriter!

Q: I am a 66-year-old widower, lonely and unhappy and believe I am getting older too fast. I regularly spend my exciting week by going to church, reading the paper and watching television. My major outside contact is my son's weekly phone call. That's my life! My question is, as Peggy Lee sang, "Is that all there is?"

A: Take action! You can change your life for the better. Don't expect immediate success, but realize you have gotten yourself into an unpleasant routine.

Throw yourself out of balance. Go back to school, join a community library book club, become a volunteer, buy a computer and work at getting involved with others. Accept your responsibilities for your actions. Empowering yourself should be your primary motivation.

Transformation isn't easy. Make a list of the positive changes you want to make for yourself. Visualize how your personal appearance and attitude affects others. Everyone of us needs to be involved with life. Remember we were not born to be alone, others need you, too.

Watch the old funny television episodes such as Desi and Lucy or the Three Stooges. As corny as many of them can be, they will make you laugh at their stupidity. Getting older doesn't have to be taken too seriously. We are still here.

Remember, if we get older, how lucky we are.

Doug Mayberry lives in a retirement community in Southern California. Send your questions to him at deardoug@msn.com or write to him at P.O. Box 2649, Carlsbad, CA 92018.

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