

Senior Advice: Love can heal rifts between teens, seniors

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: My grandmother is in her mid-80s and all of us - including our 16-year-old daughter - love her dearly. However, when they get together, our daughter gets upset because her grandmother bugs her, asks exactly what she is doing with her friends and then tells her how to run her life. Sometimes their different points of view become confrontational. Is there a way to minimize their differences?

A: Generational differences have changed dramatically. Often it is difficult for many of us seniors to accept the new lifestyles. Religious beliefs, the ease of divorce, the likelihood of cohabitation, dual working careers and the turning over of raising children to a caretaker are among some major concerns. Research reflects that younger women clearly do not see themselves staying home to care for the children and the house, according to Sandra Zimmermann, Ed.D., director of MetLife Mature Market Institute.

On her side, your daughter is probably expecting too much of her grandmother because she feels she is not in step with today's realities. Recommend to your daughter that she become more accepting of her grandmother's attitudes. Ask her to be more patient and accept her grandmother as she is, not what she wants her to be. It may be helpful also to suggest to your daughter that she consider how the challenges she will face in the next 60 years or so will impact her future thinking.

Focus on the good times together by sharing memories and looking at childhood photographs as reminders of what fun your family has enjoyed. In the future there will be moments when your daughter misses her grandmother, so now is the time to cement those memories.

Why be upset over issues not solvable? Let your family's love supersede the details. Learning to celebrate differences is every family's key to happiness, contentment and well-being. Vive la difference!

Q: I am 73 years old and have what I believe to be enough money to pay for retirement for the rest of my life. I do not want my children to be responsible for my expenses. But I find myself worrying about whether I am managing my investments well enough to make this possible. How much money will I need if I require assisted living, for example. Is there a way to accept and get over my ongoing worries?

A: I wish I had the secret and the answers. Your goal should be to maintain your dollar's purchasing power, which has been decreasing in recent years. What determines its value? Primary factors include the quantity of dollars our government prints, taxes, inflation, competitive international issues, the difference in our nation's income versus its expenditures, and climatic and natural disasters. Some are somewhat predictable, others not.

Many believe that, over time, there is a strong tendency for stock market prices to increase in value. Of course, the dramatic losses in the Depression of the 1920s and '30s invalidate these opinions.

Nevertheless, numerous investors have chosen an investment strategy called dollar-cost-averaging. This means they invest an equal number of dollars on a regular calendar basis to minimize the highs and lows of the market.

Obviously this means their average price will include some stocks they bought at higher prices along with some at lower ones. Then, should they sell, it helps balance the differences in their average price. Of course there is no guarantee this will be so.

Choosing to invest or not to invest in the market reflects our beliefs and often our gut feelings. It also forces us to decide how much investment risk we are willing to accept. A person can always find a reason not to invest.

However, if you lose your purchasing power in any investments such as bonds, CDs, real estate, housing or other possibilities, you'll fall behind. Balancing your portfolio in a basket of different entities can also be a wise choice. If you elect to use an investment counselor, find one who accepts your strategy and objectives and who will help guide you.

Don't beat yourself up. You are giving your plan your best shot. Who knows? You may leave your heirs more than they expected. Then they'll know how smart an investor you were.

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