

Senior Advice: Tips to stay organized and up-to-date

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: As a 72-year-old lively widow I realize I am slipping a little mentally. Some mornings when I awake I don't remember what day it is and what my schedule is, if any. I never share my confusion with my family because I don't want them to learn I am going a little "gaga." They would probably threaten to take my car keys. How do others mask their aging?

A: We all try to hide, too. Most of us deal with it by simply accepting it as a part of life's process. We become irritated and react negatively when we find we can't balance our checkbook, aren't patient when we have to deal with store employees with an attitude, have drivers honking at us because we don't drive faster, have to wait past our appointment times in doctors' offices, forget our children's birthdays and have younger people give us the finger.

When we react by becoming angry and upset we only impact our own functioning. Computer technology has taken over the responsibility for much of our being. We are a number in a computer and can only voice our issues if we can remember our secret code.

Some suggestions that may help you are to remember to always put your checkbook, keys, bills and birthday lists in the same place. Write down your regular to-do dates like cleaning, volunteering, bridge game, visiting neighbors and paying bills day. Don't forget to schedule a day to do nothing.

Declutter your home by getting rid of "stuff" every month. Donate clothes you haven't worn, and give your family things they can use like silver, china, furniture, heirlooms and tools. Why not enjoy seeing these things being used in their homes rather than gathering dust in yours? Giving now may also later defuse in-family fighting over who got and who didn't get what they were expecting.

Do you have a will, health directive, financial and insurance papers, inheritance instructions and other information handy? If you are hesitating to get your affairs in order and don't know for sure what you want to do, you can always change your paperwork later.

By accomplishing these goals now you can have fewer concerns with life's details. Hopefully this will help you relax, and eliminate some of the confusion that now bothers you. It's your time to disengage from some of your unneeded responsibilities and worries, and to enjoy your life and have fun.

Q: My husband had a major medical emergency last week. I called 911 and rushed him to the hospital. The next day I became unhappy over the caretaking the staff was giving him. My solution was to report at 5 a.m. every day to help supervise. Several of my friends said they, too, had similar "bad experiences" in

hospitals. They charge enough.

What is the problem?

A: Your concerns, along with others, are valid. Hospital administrators live under a great deal of pressure in dealing with governmental payment and billing issues, ongoing hospital personnel turnover, inadequate facilities scheduling emergency personnel, language problems, multiple medical procedures and medications, and doctors' schedules. A major given is that we also are living a lot longer.

Many individuals are voicing their belief that our medical system is out of control. The pressure to improve hospital care is hitting the front pages. Voters want something done about it. Some positive efforts are being put into place.

Later this year, Medicare will require hospitals to publish on their Medicare Web site customer satisfaction information before paying full reimbursement for their services. Also, some hospital administrators are asking patients to participate on their new hospital family advisory councils. Stronger communication and cooperation between the public, doctors and hospitals should enhance the quality of care now being given.

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