



IS 60 THE NEW 40?

Recently, as Boomers began to see traditional retirement and Medicare age looming, we began to see the campaign “60 is the new 40” popping up everywhere. Hope springs eternal and we know Boomers have not planned well for their aging years, so it seems the popular media encourages us to believe that aging isn’t happening. I’m not convinced.

Marc Freedman of Encore! declares that “60 is the new 60;” that we are in a new age in which we are inventing a new stage of life between midlife and old age, characterized by active engagement, investing the wisdom we’ve learned in life, in our communities, and in the truly young, upon whom the future rests.

I know I’m not 40; I remember 40. I had a husband, an 8-year old and an infant, and I was working full time. My parents, then in their early 70s, were very independently travelling and volunteering. They helped us more than we helped them. Conversations with friends focused on children, relationships and jobs. There wasn’t much time left over to do other things. Today I don’t feel 40. I don’t have the energy I once had. More parts of my body ache on a regular basis. I write down more things so I remember them. Names sometimes elude me. It takes me longer to learn new things.

Now at 60+, my kids are nearly independent adults (the younger finishes college next year). My friends talk about grandchildren, retirement and their various activities. We care for aging parents. Yes, we also talk about our own health as more of us face life-threatening illnesses or live with chronic disease. Most of us expect that we might well live into our 90s, and the prospect of doing so with dementia scares the daylights out IS 60 THE NEW 40? of us. My friends are not focused on how to move up the career ladder; rather, they want to feel purposeful but not exhausted. They want to make a difference but have fewer responsibilities.

Few in our generation have guaranteed payout pensions, and many are working into their 70s. Others have retired to follow their passions, either in new careers or volunteering. We now plan events without children. Most are physically active: hiking, biking, kayaking and working out. This is 60 today.

Perhaps the most critical difference in this generation of Boomers is between those who feel excited by the potential of learning about technology and those who don’t; I have some friends who have retired from jobs rather than learn a new technology, and others who stand in line

for each new release. Most of us struggle to keep up, and marvel at the facile digital adaptability of younger generations.

Yet, at 60, we are more able to roll with what happens, to find pleasure in the small things, and to let go of the inconsequential things. We have some life experience behind us and we're trying to stay healthy and independent. We are the Boomers. We'll take the senior discount, but don't call us elderly and don't offer us a rocking chair!

So, I conclude that today's 60 is the new 60. I think readers might feel similarly about the new 70 and 80 and 90. Your age may not feel the same as your parents and grandparents experienced it, but it isn't 40 either. The reality is that we are aging. Let's face it and embrace it. Let's be proud of the wisdom and experience we've gained and demand the respect we have earned.

Let's live life to the fullest as long as we can.

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