Slowing Down to Help Aging Parents

Most of us are happy to help our older friends and relatives with errands and chores around the house. However, the slow pace at which many older adults seem to do things can drive many younger people around the bend.

Caregivers need to understand that they have probably learned to move very fast to meet their increasing responsibilities over the years. Older relatives and friends on the other hand, may have slowed down as their responsibilities have eased; in other words, learned to stop and smell the roses! Younger adults won't be able to speed the older generation up—and would it be fair to try?

Although slowing down is never easy when you have a myriad of other responsibilities waiting for you, but try to learn from your elders and enjoy the "here and now"—at least when you are with them! Here is some information to keep in mind:

Older Relatives Have Time to Slow Down

- An older person may have carried many responsibilities in the past, but now that children have left home, he or she can finally ease the pace.
- He or she is learning to enjoy the moment.
- He or she may have medical ailments that make speedy physical movements difficult.
- Your elder relative has no reason to race from one thing to another—and may have forgotten how.
- Accept that your older loved one is not likely to speed back up again.

Younger People are Usually Racing

- If you're like most caregivers, you've had to learn to move fast to meet your many challenges at home and at work.
- Multi-tasking has become a way of survival. Many of us can do the laundry, defrost tomorrow's meal, plan next day's wardrobe for ourselves and our children—all while putting our children to bed! We never stop
- When we are at home, we are thinking about what we have to do at work. When we are at work, our minds are racing on to what we have to do at home.

Slowing Down Can Benefit Us

- Reflect on how fast your life is moving. Recognize that older adults can't keep up to that pace.
- Give up the thought of racing through your visits with older adults.
- Accept that their pace is slower and try to build in more time to assist them.
- If multiple responsibilities leave you with little time for yourself, try to view your visits with older relatives as "forced slow-down" breaks in your hectic schedule.
- Try to turn this time into "quality time" with your older relative and restful or enjoyable time for yourself.
- Take a deep breath before you arrive and remind yourself that "slow-down time" is a treat.
- Try to learn from your older relative and enjoy the moment.

In the time-crunch of today's fast-paced world, it can be hard to slow down. This is where, sometimes, older relatives can show us the way. When you're with them, try to take things at their pace. Enjoy the time you have together. With a little planning and a little commitment, you, too, can learn to stop and smell the roses.