



A Community #ForAllAges

Age-Friendly Sarasota

May 2020

Days Fly By....

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH



MAKE YOUR MARK: MAY 2020



THIS BOOK IS COOL!

For *qualifying children (Grades Prek-3)
June 1 - August 7

By Sue Firestone, Sarasota County's Aging System Policy Coordinator

Each year during May, we [celebrate Older American's Month](#), and this year is no exception. Not even a pandemic can prevent Americans from recognizing and honoring older adults as proclaimed on April 30, 2020.

This year's theme, "Make Your Mark," was fitting for these unprecedented times. Certainly, we will not forget the collective impact this pandemic has made, not only on our nation, but specifically on our elder population.

While many older adults are self-isolating, there are many out on the front lines continuing to work in the healthcare field, leading nonprofits, ministering to those in need, sewing countless masks, volunteering at testing sites, delivering meals, and distributing food through pantries and drive up donation sites.

We recognize these contributions and offer our sincerest thanks. We have seen a significant shift in how both the country and the world view older adults. It is not just about fragility or diminished abilities, though there are many with needs. It is also about active aging, participation, and recognition of talents and resources older adults bring to the table, which is clearly demonstrated by the creation of the global Age-Friendly movement.

How to start a daily gratitude practice

By by Elli Baldwin,
president of Sunways
Assisted Living
Concierge



Integrating a daily gratitude practice can be such a powerful tool, especially for family caregivers. Even though we may think, "well yeah, I'm grateful,"

With that, let's get going, make a difference, and continue to "Make Your Mark."

IT JUST MAKES CENSUS!



[Make Your Family Count | 2020 Census Sesame Street \[1 minute\]](#)

The most underrepresented population in the last Census count was children ages 0-4.

Children ages 0-4 benefit from Head Start funding, which promotes school readiness and family well-being; school funding, which pays for teachers, lunches, and transportation (among other things); and Title 1 funding, which helps low-achieving children meet state standards in core academic subjects.

Without these programs, it makes it more challenging to provide the support our children need to succeed. So remember, everybody counts...including the little ones!

Florida ranks #32 in census response rates. With your help, we can encourage more families to [complete the census, and make sure no one is left uncounted!](#) Edgar Wright, of U.S. Census Bureau's Atlanta Regional Census Center [shares the specifics of why each question is asked](#) on the census.

KEEP YOUR DANCE CARD FULL SIX FEET APART

By Nancy K. Schlossberg

We are in the midst of a dramatic transition. Before, we were encouraged to keep our dance card full, and now we are experiencing a world where

having a daily ritual where you take time to be intentional and pause to focus on only gratitude can truly transform the way you think about your day.

The most important thing to remember is that being grateful is not about ignoring negative feelings or realities. Rather, it is about **SHIFTING** your focus from the negative to the positive.

A gratitude practice, it's just a fancy way of saying a daily habit of being grateful. Anytime you make a change, physical or mental, you need to put routines in place to hold yourself to it. Just like going to the gym is a daily practice to get fit, a daily practice of being grateful will re-wire the way your brain looks at the world in a more positive way.

Having a daily gratitude practice can help you create a habit of simply noticing good things that happen in your day-to-day life...both big and small. It also focuses on the things you **DO** have and positive things that **ARE** in your life. This is the beginning of training your brain to become more naturally optimistic.

So now, **HOW** do we implement this daily gratitude practice?

1. As soon as you open your eyes in the morning, lay in bed and

to keep our dance card full, and now we are experiencing a world where isolation is a necessity, and there is no touching. The spread of the disease has forced us into this unexpected, unwanted transition that is changing our way of being in the world. It is filled with ambiguity, has no endpoint, and is out of our control.

My understanding of the pandemic's effect on older people is guided by my research on numerous transitions plus my volunteer work with the Senior Friendship Centers in Sarasota, Florida. As co-leader with Michael Karp, retired lawyer, our group, The Aging Rebels, discuss issues of intimacy, loneliness, invisibility, irrelevance... and now, the impact of Covid-19.

For example, Jill's husband's dementia is accelerating; he sleeps most of the time. Except for weekly visits to the grocery store, she is afraid to leave him since he falls. As she said, "If I knew when this would end, maybe I could relax. I feel like spaghetti without the sauce."

The pandemic transition

A transition can be an event like the pandemic or retirement or great-grandparenthood. But it can also be a non-event like not getting to retire as planned, missing the birth of a great-grandchild, or the delay in your daughter's wedding. In either case, a transition has the effect of changing, our assumptions, routines, roles and / or relationships.

Changing Assumptions: Michael Karp summed up his changing assumptions: What will the new normal look like when this is behind us? How will we communicate with each other? Will we continue to practice safe distancing? Will we ever again hug and embrace a good friend? Will this experience teach us more about the meaning of love and provide more compassion for others? Will this make us more sensitive to making the planet a safer place?

Changing Routines:

Marcia and her significant other Stan, both in their mid-80s, had a

monogamous relationship but lived in separate apartments. Instead of weathering the crisis alone in separate apartments, they offer each other mutual support and make the best of the situation by ascending to the roof of her apartment building to dance free-style.

Myra lives in a senior community with a great deal of outdoor space. During this period, she and several others agreed to meet every night at 7 pm to bike around the property. This provides structure to her evenings, provides socialization, and is fun.

Changing Roles:

Carol, a 67-year-old nurse practitioner in a medical clinic, had to give up community outreach and educational projects to become a virtual and phone 'clinician.' She is pleased she can interact virtually with patients and their families, but she suffers from the loss of human contact, both with patients and with clinic staff.

Changing Relationships: Loss or weakening of attachments as a result of social distancing and isolation is one of the biggest challenges.

On the negative side, I feel the loss of physical, in-person connection with my children and grandchildren. Zoom and FaceTime are great, but

morning, day in, sea and think of 3 things you're grateful for. Sounds super simple, right? Well, it is the first few days when we go through the old standbys: kids, roof over our head, a significant other, maybe your health, but it's around day 5 or 6 that we will start to have to LOOK for new things to be grateful for. It's here that the big breakthroughs start, and the re-wiring happens. You will begin to notice the little things in your day that you can use in your morning gratitude practice. That shift of mindset is what makes this so powerful.

2. Start a Gratitude Journal. This can be as easy as numbering 1, 2, 3 at the bottom of your daily planner, or you can start a notebook designated to your gratitude practice. The same routine above applies, but this takes it up a notch as you are writing it down. This allows you to have a working list of all your blessings. This record can be especially helpful during times of extreme stress and fatigue.

3. Create a Gratitude Jar. This is a great practice to do together with a loved one. Once a day, or whenever the moment hits you, write down on a piece of paper one thing you are grateful for. Put it in the jar. You will begin to visualize all the things you are thankful for

with my children and grandchildren. Zoom and FaceTime are great, but they do not substitute for the visit my daughter and two grandchildren had to cancel because of the virus.

On the positive side, Henry, 82, one of The Aging Rebel members wrote: 'We have the luxury of using this enforced downtime for reading, conversation, and reflection on our life -- past and future. We grieve for the many neighbors who have a less comfortable present and an uncertain future.'

Paths to the future

For elders who are poor, unemployed, homeless, or suffering from chronic illness, the change occurring now is almost certainly exaggerating the difficulties they already faced. While all older individuals face enormous, within this group the ones who suffer the most are those with fewer financial and emotional resources.

We can respond to the transition by analyzing the degree to which our life has changed, and then strategize ways to shore up the weak spots to enhance our prospects for the future. For example, if a planned retirement is delayed - maybe forever - a worker will probably experience a period of grieving for what might have been. If the pandemic has forced a change in our routines, we can develop a new structure for the day. If the change has interrupted relationships, we can stay in touch - if not by physical touch, instead by e-mail, phone, or Zoom. Most importantly, when our assumptions have been shattered, we must strive to realize that today is not forever, and we will survive this.

you are thankful for because the scraps of paper will accumulate fast! Even better, you can dump out the jar on a day you need a boost.

At Sunways, we're grateful for YOU and our community of caregivers who are sharing their heart daily with the ones they love.

To share news or information, contact the editor at ssternberg@thepattersonfoundation.org.