

Long life secrets: Wisdom from elders

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We live in extraordinary times. Those living to 100 are now a growing demographic. By 2050, there could be more than 800,000 Americans who will celebrate their personal century mark.

Is there a formula — some mix of love, work and adaptation for hardship — that make for a long life?

Over the last two decades, many studies have suggested that there is a connection between health and a positive attitude. One famous research project called the Grant Study followed a group of Harvard undergraduates from 1939 and into their elder years. The results show that optimism in younger years predicted their health and longevity 35 years later.

It's a wonder of their optimism and longevity when you consider they lived through the Great Depression and World War II. Those who are living to 90 and beyond grew up in an era that few have experienced.

If we listen to their words, we may learn from their perspective.

Today's seniors at Port Charlotte Rehabilitation Center were each asked about the reasons for their longevity, and their comments are as follows:

"My secret to a long life has been my faith in God. Most importantly, my children make me so proud and give me incentive to move forward in living a happy life." — Hazel Wiles, 83.

"I just enjoyed life and didn't work until I was older." — Maria Loreda, 99.

"I gave up chasing girls, drinking and smoking too. They're just more



trouble than they're worth. But I do have my daily soda ... ginger ale." — Patrick Cullen, 88.

"I am 82 and a half. I drink a lot of milk and eat peanut butter." — Myra Hill, 82.

"Prayer. Faith in God and being good to one another. It's about God's grace and mercy." — Jean Ferguson, 82.

"I try to eat healthy and eat at least half of my meals. I give to help others even if they need just a hug. Family is another reason for my long life. We all support each other and worked to get each other through good times and bad. Just be laid back and think of everyone around you. I love to socialize and always smile at others even if they

are not happy." —Helen Troken, 88.

Every generation imprints a legacy not just from the lives they've lived but also how they show examples of continuing to get through health crisis into their elder years. Those that serve this generation readily know their optimism.

Kristin Cardona, administrator for Port Charlotte Rehabilitation Center, gives historical insights. "They're our Greatest Generation — Tom Brokaw gave them that name," she says. To her it's not a bold claim, she fully proclaims it.

"As a whole, they're a cut above the rest," says Cardona. "They deny the self-indulgence and immediate

gratification that come from material things. Instead they focus on the values learned during their life. It's easy to see they knew the meaning of sacrifice. Not just with lacking in material possessions, but with real blood, sweat and tears — and I can't think of a greater example of longevity through optimism than this generation," she says.

For more information regarding advanced rehabilitation, call Port Charlotte Rehabilitation Center at 941-235-8011. They offer comprehensive outpatient and inpatient services for short- or long- term care, located at 25325 Rampart Blvd., Port Charlotte.