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Facing the Middle Years

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ACCEPTANCE of aging is difficult for many persons in our culture because Americans tend to place great value on youth and vigor. Unlike European, Asiatic, and other societies we place little prestige on growing older.

At middle life people often face changes in their personal life as well as physiological changes.

Some people accept the aging process and face the middle years with ease and confidence, as they have faced the other adjustments life has demanded. Others are fearful and desperately try to cling to the past.

Nearly every individual feels some concern and anxiety as he moves from the familiar into the unknown.

What determines your adjustment during the middle years?

Your attitude is the most important factor in determining how you face these years. Test your attitudes against these beliefs:

- The happiest time of life is when children are small.
- There will be nothing left to live for after the children are grown.
- Leaders of youth groups should be parents of children who belong to these groups.
- You are too old to learn.

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- Your husband or wife does not understand you.
- Other people get all the breaks.
- Everyone takes advantage of you.
- Others fail to appreciate all you have done for them.
- The middle years are a time of ill health.
- You have done all you can for your children; the rest is up to them.
- The middle years are a time to do some things you have always wanted to do.
- Now is the time to spend some money just for the things you'd like to have.
- There are advantages to being older.
- One needs to live in the present and the future instead of the past.

If you agree with more than five of these statements, take a serious look at your attitude toward aging.

How are you going to face the middle years?

Are you going to . . .

- Worry about your health or do something about it?
- Have a complete physical check up?
- Follow your doctor's recommendation?
- Ask your doctor questions about bodily changes which concern you?

If you are tired, will you . . .

- Improve your management and learn short cuts?
- Get sufficient rest and take care of your body?
- Recognize that a great deal of fatigue is emotional in origin?
- Develop some new interests?
- Plan to do only what can be accomplished in one day?
- Remember that work undone makes you tired?

If no one understands you . . .

- Are you helping others to understand or do you enjoy being misunderstood?
- Are you really saying, "I do not understand myself?"
- Are you enjoying being a martyr?
- Do you ever listen to yourself?

If you find yourself using "my age" or "my stage of life" as an excuse for disagreeable behavior, will you . . .

- Remember that the physical changes of middle life do not give you a license to be obnoxious?
- Find another way to release your tensions?
- Make an attempt to understand your own behavior?

At this stage of life you may need to . . .

- Retire from active parenthood and adjust to a new role as the parent of a young adult.
- Adjust to life as a couple instead of life as a family.
- Work out an affectionate and independent relationship with aging parents.
- Come to terms with your age and the process of aging.
- Accept and adjust to the physical changes of middle age.
- Develop new activities in place of activities centered around your own children.
- Adjust to your new role as parent-in-law and grandparents.
- Accept new community responsibilities.
- Develop a new purpose in life.
- Plan for your future.

Your adjustment to the middle years is determined by your past, the present, and how you look toward the future.

You cannot change the past, but you can do something about the present which will improve the future.

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