**MUSINGS OF AN AGEING WOMAN (4)**

My friend told me that getting old is not the problem, it’s the getting there that is. So true. And there are many things that I learnt on the journey that I wished that someone had told/warned me. I did not have to learn some of these lessons painfully, at first hand. So I thought that I would share them. And as I am doing so, I realize that some of them ring faintly familiar. They are the same warnings that I had given my children when they were young. Here goes.

**Walk, don’t run.** Unless you are engaged in a sport or running for exercise, there is no need to run. At our age, we have lots of time and there is little that demands the urgency of running. The ringing phone can wait. The person will either call back or leave a message so that you can return the call. If they don’t, then it was not important. Running out of the bath to get the phone before the caller hangs up, is a big NO, NO, because it is an accident waiting to happen.

**Do one thing at a time.**

Multi-tasking, I firmly believe, is a talent specially bestowed upon mothers, especially working mothers who must juggle the demands of paid employment and housework. Now that you are retired and the children are grown, there is no need for that talent and God has taken it back. It has been my experience that trying to do more than one thing at a time, has led to accidents. Therefore I reiterate that now you have the time, do one thing at a time.

**Do not stretch to reach anything.**

Another theory of mine is that our centre of gravity shifts as we age. Maintaining balance becomes increasingly challenging so that even the slightest lean to the left or to the right can result in a tumble as we seek futilely to straighten up. It is safer to move to well within arm’s reach of the object.

**When you lie/sit/bend, get up slowly.**

Sudden movements are another no-no. Jumping up from a lying or sitting position can cause orthostatic hypotension which can result in dizziness and possibly lead to falls. Bending and then straightening up suddenly could bring the head into violent contact with an overhead object. I watched a fellow passenger get up and bang his head into the overhead cabin of an aircraft – cervical injury was the outcome. So get up slowly. Indeed, do everything slowly – we have the time.

**Look where you’re going.**

We were taught to walk erectly, heads held high. For the not-so-young, that advice only works if your steps are also high when you walk. Because we tend to shuffle as we age, the uneven path or the tiniest of stones becomes a major hurdle just lying in wait to trip you and make you fall. So at the risk of becoming a hunchback, look where you walk, and walk carefully.

**Hold on to the handrail when ascending or descending steps.**

I used to laugh at the sign, ”Hold on to the hand rail”. It is very good advice. And hold on until you are on the flat, Do not let go at the last step thinking that you have arrived. That last step can do you in. It has done it to me

**Don’t stop**

 **Going to the dentist**

My father’s side of the family have very strong teeth. I think that is why my Mom fell in love with him because she (and her siblings) lost all their teeth in their teens. And since my early childhood was spent mostly with maternal relatives, as a very young child, I thought that teeth were naturally detachable. They were supposed to be taken out at night, cleaned, put to sleep in a glass of water and installed next morning. One night, my mother found me tugging away at my mouth. Puzzled, she asked what I was doing? And crying in utter frustration, I replied, “My teeth won’t come out!”. Anyway, back to my Dad. At 80, he decided that he did not have much longer to live. He had buried two wives, had survived two strokes and had battled prostate cancer for more than four decades, so going to the dentist was a waste of money and time, he thought. God apparently had other plans. He lived another 10 years but lost half a mouthful of teeth, unnecessarily. DON”T STOP GOING TO THE DENTIST.

 **Singing**

Even if you are just a bathroom singer with a raucous, off-key voice, sing. Better yet, if you play an instrument, keep on playing too. I started life as a soprano with a voice that was good enough to enter Music Festival as a child. Studies and the family responsibilities left no time either for singing or playing. But with children grown and an early separation from work, there was time for music again. The choir at church was looking for singers, so I joined, only to discover that I could no longer consistently make the high notes. No problem, I became a mezzo-soprano, then a contralto, and eventually an alto, while consoling myself that I would sing harmonies. Now, it’s not only the high notes that I can’t consistently hit, it’s also the middle and low notes. In fact, it’s any note! If you don’t use it, you lose it. I also played the piano as a child, to the point where I had to choose between music and mathematics as a career. I chose the latter as affording more stability and gradually stopped playing. I did return to the piano and started the organ as a way to combat arthritis in my fingers. But the mobility and agility of youth are gone, perhaps never to return. At least, I could still sight read, although I have difficulty reaching the pedals. However, with COVID-induced church closures and/or reduced operations, opportunities to keep on are severely limited, reduced to at-home music, preferably in the bathroom. But we WON’T STOP SINGING!!!

 **Dancing**

Dancing is therapeutic, physically and emotionally. No more public feteing and partying for me, thanks to COVID compounded by arthritis. But some golden oldies at home and a slow dance will keep the feet moving and the heart lifted. And even if the feet can’t move, chair dancing in the privacy of your home is still possible. DON’T STOP DANCING.

 **Moving**

DON’T STOP MOVING. But remember, walk, don’t run.

**JUST DON’T STOP!**

As youths, we were told, “Never leave for tomorrow, what can be done today”. The senior’s counter mantra must be, “If it can’t be done today, it may be done tomorrow”.