THE

SUNSET YEARS



Aging: Issues & Concerns

# LAUREL HALL

# Other books by this author:

# Providence

# Expressions

# Betrayed

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# **For**

# **Dr. Jack**

# **Author’s Introduction**

I really did not want to write another book. Having just completed *Betrayed,* I was worn-out. I gave the first copy of the book to a friend, who is also a medical doctor. After reading it he said: “*I wish you had written something on elder abuse. That is a huge group that I encounter in my daily practice.”* Being unfamiliar with elder abuse, I decided to look into it as a future book. Researching the topic was incredibly disheartening. No one would want to read solely about the abuse some seniors endured. It would be too depressing. I decided to change the format to include other issues and concerns faced by the elderly including dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and more. Then the question entered my mind: *What can people do to have a* healthier and happier sunset? That needed to be addressed as well.

So, here it is. It is my hope you find this information useful in your life’s journey. Let me also say, this book was not intended to be an in-depth study, but rather a snapshot of the issues and concerns of aging. Sources and references have been included at the end for further reading. LH

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 ***Reflection***

# I look in the mirror

# and what do I see?

# I don’t see the girl

# I used to be.

*I see a woman*

*with sagging skin;*

*not really fat,*

*definitely not thin.*

*I’ d like to be younger,*

*but not really young;*

*I like the person*

*I have become.*

*But yet, somehow*

*inside of me,*

*I think myself young*

*as I used to be.*

  *Laurel Hall, 2012*

 

# Make the most of yourself

#  for that’s all there is of you.

 Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Chapter One

# Overview

t was a cold January day. The storm had been raging for several hours creating drifts several feet high. Emma was sitting by the fireplace in her favorite brown leather recliner with her legs up. She felt so relaxed, savoring the moment when Jon came in with the mail.

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 “Here’s a letter for you from the hospital.”

“Wonder what they want”? She opened the letter and began to read.

*Dear Ms. Johnson,*

*As a hospital we are frequently providing our employees with continuing education to keep them current on medical topics. We are planning a seminar on issues and concerns of our elderly population. We have prepared a syllabus and have enclosed it for you to review. We would like to interview you for the teaching position. We are aware of your teaching skills and the books you have written on abuse. Would you be interested in conducting the class? Our staff feels you would be the perfect candidate. If you are interested please call us to set up an interview within two weeks.*

 Jon ran his fingers through his hair. “That would entail a lot of preparation. How do you feel about that?”

“I have to think about it.” Emma held the letter in her hands, wondering how she would teach such a class. She hadn’t taught in years, and when she did, her classes were high school students. This would be totally different. Her students would be nurses, medical students doing their internship, technicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and doctors. She was well aware of the amount of time it would take to prepare to teach this class. She would have to educate herself on the concerns of elders, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, the various types of elder abuse, and the laws dealing with elder abuse. Most people have heard of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, but elder abuse is not a common topic of conversation. How to present the course of study was another matter. Perhaps she might break the classes up with abuse and another topic. Perhaps she would use a ‘hands-on’ style of teaching where the students present as well. Maybe she would use guest speakers. All these thoughts circled through her mind.

The next day she called the hospital to set up an interview. It went well. They presented her with a course outline including all the topics they would like her to cover during the seminar. The class would not begin until mid-June giving her three months to prepare. After discussing it with Jon, Emma decided to take the assignment.

First, she chose to learn about elder abuse and was dismayed with what she discovered. Although most seniors and elderly were enjoying a good life, for some it was pure misery. The importance of solid family relationships became all too evident. Emma was lucky that she had a wonderful family who would watch after her as she aged and she felt certain that they would never abuse her.

She then studied what issues and concerns seniors have in general. As the body ages and grows weak, elders become afraid of falling and perhaps breaking a hip or leg. Also, as their friends die, loneliness becomes an issue.

Dementia and Alzheimer’s were next on her list. Here she learned that some forms of dementia were reversible, but most were not. She discovered there were two different types of Alzheimer’s disease, one genetic, one not. The more she studied she found herself becoming depressed with the situation of the elderly, especially with the tragedy of elder abuse. She found a website, Terra Nova Films, which specialized in movies and videos dealing with problems some older people face. Some were difficult to watch, but they would be another tool to use in the class.

Emma spent hours each day reviewing the subject matter and after nine weeks of preparation she felt ready to teach the class.

The ringing phone startled her. “Emma, this is Marcie Withers, the hospital coordinator for education. I wanted to check in with you about the seminar you will be presenting. Will you be ready to begin teaching in three weeks?”

“I will” Emma replied. “I have just about completed preparation for the class and am eagerly looking forward to presenting it.”

“That’s good news. We are anticipating forty students. Class will be held in a large conference room on the sixth floor of the hospital. Are Wednesday mornings from 7-9 a.m. a good time for you?”

“Yes, that will be fine.”

“Great. We will see you then. Good bye, Emma.”

Putting down the phone, Emma turned to Jon.

 “I must say I feel a bit intimidated. The students probably know more than I do. Am I competent to teach this class? There are going to be doctors listening to me, a lay person, speak!”

“They’re people just like you, and they want to know what you have learned. You were a terrific math teacher, and received outstanding scores in your teaching skills. You’re going to do great. ”

Emma smiled. Jon always knew the right thing to say. He was her biggest cheerleader.

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The day for class had finally come. Today it was going to be hot! *This is really unusual for June, but I’m glad I’m not in Houston,* Emma thought as she walked from her car to the building. She and Jon had lived in Houston some forty years, and she was well familiar with the weather in that part of the country. *In addition to being hot it would be unbearably muggy. At least here in Colorado the humidity is fairly low.* A pleasant breeze contributed to making the walk more comfortable.

Emma had dressed in blue slacks with a blue and white three-quarter length cotton shirt. She added a long blue and silver necklace along with silver earrings, and a pair of blue sandals to complete her outfit. Her hair was cut short in a pixie style hairdo with a few curls on top. On a recent trip to California she had purchased a pair of “professional looking” eyeglasses which she felt made her look more qualified for the role. All this to build up her confidence to speak to such an esteemed group.

As she entered the building the cool air-conditioned air was a welcome relief. A middle-aged woman came up to her, extending her hand.

“Are you Emma Johnson?”

“Yes,” Emma replied.

“My name is Marcie Withers. I’m with the hospital and will introduce you to your class. We have a number of students eager to learn about the problems of aging.”

Emma smiled. “Hi Marcie. It’s so good to finally meet you after talking with you on the telephone.”

“We are excited to have you here to teach this class. Would you like to go to the conference room where class will be held, or have a cup of coffee first?”

“I think I would like to see where I will be teaching.” The room was on the top floor of the building, large, open, and airy. Two walls were all glass and afforded a spectacular view of the mountains. Room darkening shades had been provided to be used if needed as well as a pull down screen to show video material. At the front of the room was a podium. Someone had placed a bottle of water there for her. The remaining walls were painted a pale silver blue. The tables were round and could seat up to eight students each in comfortable looking, padded leather folding chairs.

“Oh, this is perfect!” exclaimed Emma. “I was hoping the students could be seated in groups. I plan to use a ‘hands-on’ style method of teaching, where the students are totally involved. Was each student given a number from one to eight as I had requested?”

“Oh, yes,” Marcie said and smiled. “They were curious about the purpose of those numbers.”

“I like to group students that perhaps do not know each other, have different skills, and such. I brought numbers to put on each table, and students with that number will all sit together at the table with the same number.”

“Hmm. Sounds interesting,” said Marcie. “That way all the doctors don’t sit together, all the nurses, etc.”

“Right” Emma replied. “Students will get to know each other and will be able to interact on a personal level alongside those with different abilities and positions. I’ve used it in the past. Here’s hoping I get the same results here.”

“We have a few minutes before class starts. Would you like to go get a cup of coffee?” asked Marcie.

“No thank you, Marcie. I think I would just as soon stay here and get organized and greet the students as they arrive.”

“Good idea. I’ll be back shortly.”

Emma looked around the room. *This is perfect*, she thought. She had never held class in such posh surroundings. A table with ice water, coffee and a few cookies and pastries had been provided for the students. Walking around the room she placed a piece of paper with a number on each of the tables as well as a stack of booklets. She removed the notes she had on elder abuse from her briefcase and put them on the podium. She planned to discuss abuse with the class in-depth, but today would only be an overview of the issue. Each type of abuse would be discussed in detail later. Turning around, she stood there looking out at the empty chairs that would soon be occupied. Emma felt the teacher in her return as her heart swelled with excitement. She was ready!