

Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

DEI Committee Friday Thoughts

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Why I Think It's Important to Age Your Way by Vivian Coda, Therapeutic Recreation

Every May since 1963, the United States has celebrated and honored older Americans. I believe there are many reasons why older Americans need to be celebrated, especially those who defended and supported our beautiful country. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has chosen the theme of Older Americans Month this year: *Age My Way*. I think there is truly no better way to age than doing so the way you choose. As you "age your way" you will ensure the best quality of life for yourself and continue to create meaningful experiences.

I admire Glen Campbell, who is an influential older American who has been a tremendous advocate. He was a professional guitarist and country music artist who went public with his diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and even invited a camera crew to track its every effect. When he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2011, he made the decision to continue going on tour and share his experience with all his supporters and fans. Campbell's "Goodbye Tour" was originally supposed to last five weeks, but he ended up performing another 151 marvelous, sold-out shows. The film "Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me" was released in 2015. It documents the journey of Glen and his family navigating Alzheimer's disease, using love, laughter and music as the best choice of medicine. I think Glen Campbell is an excellent example of "aging your way".

From my experiences working with older adults, I think there are things you need to think about when deciding what that future looks like for you. To begin with, you should think about what is important to you and where you see yourself in the future. Think about what is important to you now and what you see yourself doing in your later years. During this process, think about what you would look for in a home or what activities and programs interest you. It's important to start identifying what is important to you and what you value most. It's important to also think about accessibility and what assistance you may need in the future.

I think another important aspect of "aging your way" is identifying what your leisure activities are. Do you like community service projects or attending weekly bible studies? Do you like painting, going on trips or reading? It is important to start thinking about what makes you happy and what you find meaningful. Staying involved in activities is very important to your brain health, whether you're doing them on your own or with others.

At Goodwin House, we strive to create meaningful, person-centered and engaging programs for residents. Person-centered care means providing the best quality of care across all [seven dimensions of wellness](#). Goodwin House offers many leisure activities for residents to choose from, which you can engage in independently or in a group setting.

There is another topic that is personal to me that I think should be personal to everyone as we age. It is important to ask and discuss what types of therapeutic programs are available. [Therapeutic recreation](#) uses recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the needs of individuals with illnesses or disabling conditions. The process is designed to promote psychological and physical health, recovery and well-being. At Goodwin House, therapeutic programs can be offered to residents in all levels of care, with adapting activities if needed. Inclusivity is also important to think about when discovering what types of therapeutic programs are available.

As we age, accessibility becomes more vital and can greatly assist someone with the goal of maintaining their independence. The small house design model that you can find in the healthcare center at Goodwin House Alexandria (GHA) is an excellent example of a home-like and person-centered environment that is built for accessibility. Throughout these spaces, you'll notice wider doors that make it easier for residents who use wheelchairs. You'll also find Amazon Alexas in every house for residents to easily prompt Alexa to play specific musical artists or an audiobook. Additional examples of accessibility in our healthcare center small house environments include our Books on Tape program and our large print books.

We have even more innovative and accessible programs such as our Elder Grow horticulture garden, the interactive IN2L brain health tablets and personalized music and memory playlists. GHA also has other innovative and accessible programs that all residents can use, such as raised flower beds, hearing amplifiers that can be used in the auditorium and adaptive silverware.

Lastly, I think another aspect to consider when "aging your way" is the importance of relationships and building connections. Of course, if you are an introvert or if you do not like socializing with others, you may not want to attend large group programs. There are still many health benefits of being engaged in small group programs or independent leisure activities. For example, if you are a bookworm you may wish to read books. Reading is an excellent way to engage your brain in an independent setting. On the other hand, if you are very social, you may enjoy going from group to group and socializing with everyone. Staying involved in activities of choice or staying connected can help combat social isolation.

Person-centered care is about respecting the residents' choices and dignity and empowering them to do as much as they can, for as long as they can. The team members at Goodwin House truly care about the residents and take the time to get to know them individually. Living at Goodwin House is an excellent example of aging the way you choose.

To learn more about the celebration of Older Americans Month please go to <https://acl.gov/oam/2022/older-americans-month-2022>

About the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Committee: We are a group of staff and residents who together serve a mission to educate, embrace and empower a workplace of diversity, equality and inclusion. Our vision is to seek open and honest communication and collaboration that will inform and celebrate the cultural, ethnic and sexual orientation of all members of our staff without bias.

Questions or comments? Please contact us at dei@goodwinhouse.org.