



Accepting the Aging Challenge

By Vanessa M. Dazio, OTD

I am now in my fifties. Things are definitely changing. For about 5 years, I have been wearing cheap glasses from the dollar store to read fine print, regularly increasing magnification when things got a little fuzzy. Now, it is getting hard to read captions on TV or to see clear details on highway signs. I need more light to read recipes in the kitchen, to read a book at night in the bedroom, and to apply make up in the bathroom. I can't read the difference between "shampoo" and "conditioner" without the specs!

Recently, I attended a conference and realized it was impossible to clearly distinguish faces from a "reasonable" distance. As a big time **former** back row hugger, I reluctantly moved to the front. Forget shopping without glasses. I can't see the tiny little prices or sizes. The reality is my vision is declining. Age happens.

I write more lists now, so I can remember the thousands of things I have to do every day. Now, my biggest problem is remembering the list!

I am not as strong as I used to be in my twenties. Arthritis causes the general aches and pains that plague me now. I use joint protection techniques to reduce wear and tear on my joints, especially my hands! It pains me to twist open jar lids, pinch packets or grip things too hard. I use my scissors a lot more to open packages, and even look toward products with easy to remove lids. I just bought an under the counter jar opener that makes it possible to remove a jar lid, without using my own hand strength. This gets the job done without hurting my hands. I love it!



Low back and neck pain are irritants. Now, I prefer to use a cart to carry my laundry or other things from one end of the house to the other. I like the cart to carry my groceries, too. I use it when emptying the dishwasher, too. The cart makes it possible to empty the dishwasher all at once. I then roll the cart from cabinet to cabinet. Why waste the energy walking back and forth?

The garbage can is now on wheels. So are all of my suitcases. I have a mixer to make cakes and can't believe I actually mixed them by hand only a few years ago! My potato peeler has a large, easy to hold grip. I now look for good contrasting grip colors so kitchen implements stand out in the dark drawers. It makes them so much easier to see and find. My knives are really sharp, because that eliminates hand and joint strain. The bucket we use for mopping the

floors in now on industrial wheels. Who needs carrying that extra weight around? I have enough of my own to worry about!

My kitchen is now organized into stations, based on what task has to be done. Silverware, dishes, placemats are in the area closest to the dining table. Pots, pans and cooking utensils are closest to the stove. Baking supplies, my mixer, bowls, pans and other related equipment are all in one place, close to the sink. The heaviest things are located as close to the comfort zone as possible, always between the knees and shoulders. Glassware, plastic ware and food items are closest to the refrigerator. Unnecessary bending and stooping is minimized, and work is so much more efficient. Organizing my kitchen made working in it so much easier, and frees up precious time for other fun things.

I plan to face my Aging Challenge head on! Every adjustment that can be made in the interest of making my life easier, safer, or more comfortable is an adjustment I am willing to make. There will be plenty more to come in my future. I am winning my aging challenge. Won't it be fun to see what happens next?