



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

New Year's resolution: Let's call growing old — growing young

family

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From the time we are capable of understanding the simplest of words told to us by our parents, we are reinforced with the thought that growing old is terrific and the process will perpare us for adult life. As adults in our 40s, 50s and 60s, we come to realize all too quickly the negative connotation associated with growing old. There really is no dignity to growing old. The older you get, the less one is supposed to be capable of doing. True, organic brain syndrome and a stroke can physiologically alter a person's ability to cerebrally attend to life, but getting old does not automatically mean you have OBS or are a stroke victim.

A new year-1982-is coming and it may not be a bad idea to change our reference point about growing old. Let us call it growing young. Really, growing young makes a lot more sense.

Young and imagination

According to Ashley Montagu, celebrated anthropologist and author of "Growing Young" (McGraw Hill, 1981), "Culture, Society, schools and families conspire against the full human potential by suppressing such natural capacities as imagination, enthusiasm, curiosity and humor." I know full well what Montagu suggests. Having a terminal degree and looking back on the concentrated effort I have applied to my academic studies and applied professional interest in business and management, I honestly feel I have become narrow-minded. My concentration has significantly reduced my perusal in general interest matters. Of course, I can perform my learned skills with sharpness and a clarity of intent. However, I, as a human being, seem to have lost a vital intricate capacity to have an "open mind" and "swirling imagination." I have become a prisoner of my own education, if you will.

And there is the issue of settling down and becoming serious about one's work. Our society indicates

we shouldn't have fun with our work; rather we are rolling for high stakes and must treat our every thought and action with reverence. Montagu feels that this lack of fun and seriousness "Imposes a straitjacket of maturity... thereby aging the individual prematurely."

Think young in '82

Our job for 1982 is clear. Time and attention must be given to how we can keep ourselves and children always mentally and physically youthful, creative, imaginative and enthusiastic. The need to learn and change with the times must be kindled now. Montagu tells us to think of our children not as kids that will lose their youthful designation at a socially or culturally predetermined age, but rather that the kids we raise are on a never-ending journey—a journey that becomes richer with time because of the brilliance of previously learned experiences.

Play with life—have fun. Take the advice of autobiographers who often relate to their lives as one big game. Don't set up a litany of stereotypical behaviors and attitudes about work and life that will ultimately strangle you and your family.

It sounds all so philosophical, doesn't it. That's because it is. GROWING YOUNG offers an intriguing exploration into a different frame of reference about life and all it encompasses.

I believe Montagu has started me back on the road to youthfulness. It's great to be back. Now to spend 1982 in making sure it will stick and is understood by my kids. If I follow a thought of G.P. Hardy, I think I can get my message across:

"Sometimes one has to say difficult things.

But one has to say them as simply as possible."

May you and your family share the riches of the world during the new year—1982.