

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I don't know where you are, but it is HOT here in Texas. That being said I hope each of you are having a good summer and planning a getaway sometime! Your association has been hard at work planning the Leadership Conference to be held in October and preparing to review the candidates for the DEGN designation.

Now to continue with Ashton Applewhite's book, *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism*. Chapter 3 is about Forget Memory: The Older Brain. What the author shares is something we need to remember. One of the greatest myths is that old age and mental incompetence go hand-in-hand. As a result, discrimination occurs on a number of fronts. For instance, a belief that older workers are slow learners and computer illiterate. I have had personal experience with this in that I had a relative watch me one day while I was on my computer and he said "Gee . . . you really know how to use a computer well considering . . ." The "look" came over me and needless to say he and I had a discussion on pre-conceived notions about aging. A second example I often hear as a nurse is "I know best what my mom/dad needs and will make their decisions" despite the individual being perfectly capable of understanding and making their own wishes known. Age does not equate to cognitive decline, though I do think it is important to not allow anyone to be taken advantage of at any time.

All that being said, we do know that memory processing speed, verbal reasoning, and visuospatial abilities do decline as we age. Courtesy of our ageist society, natural transitions are equated with pathology. The brain of a healthy older person can do almost everything a much younger brain can do; it just may take a little longer. Older brains are resilient, they can handle negative emotions like anger, envy, and fear and experience less social anxiety and fewer social phobias. Because the older brain has access to more information, a pause may reflect mental processes at work. After all, we are sifting through a life time of information and trying place information in context. Some say this is wisdom. What is wisdom? Seeing wholes and not rushing to the only truth we know. May I have wisdom and be able to help those around me enjoy the present.

Best wishes,



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