

Penning A “Bucket List” – Macabre or A Worthwhile Exercise?



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Younger generations may have become acquainted with the notion of a “Bucket List” from the 2007 feature film of the same name starring Academy Award winners Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman as two terminally ill cancer patients who abscond from their hospital beds to complete a to-do inventory of activities before they die.

But the idea of doing the things (or some of the things, anyway) you’ve never had a chance to do before you “kick the bucket” isn’t a novel concept and can be somewhat disturbing to folks who don’t want to think about their eventual demise. While there are those who might feel the concept of a bucket list is downright morbid, many others encourage seniors to pursue their long-held dreams and transition fantasy into reality.

Such is the case with the committed team of skilled clinicians who work at **Remain At Home Senior Care** – one of our many principal care goals is a dogged commitment to helping facilitate the very best life has to offer for our clients and families. *All while doing so while they age with dignity and comfort in the place they call home, as opposed to an institution.*

The first step of any worthwhile endeavor is a list, right? Crossing every item off your bucket list is certainly an admirable goal, but most of us are well aware that some wishes just aren’t ever going to come true. Still,

a catalog of what we have yet to achieve provides a tremendous insight into what really makes a person tick, which can prove to be of great comfort in one’s twilight years.

For some, the bucket list might include something as simple as re-connecting with friends/family from long ago or perhaps an exotic trip or just a sojourn back to an old stomping ground. Some might be much loftier, such as playing a round of golf at Augusta National. Or a hot-air balloon ride? The list could literally be endless and should contain even the wildest of fantasies. Why not?

I’ve seen many-a-bucket-list throughout my career in geriatrics and let’s just say that all have varied wildly. Personal observation (note: not clinically or psychologically proven): The subtext of any bucket-list compilation isn’t what we all may think it to be on the surface. It is actually a *historical record or catalog of accomplishments* that people have already achieved in their lives – a time-warp or “pride diary” of sorts. This is a wonderful thing, since it lends to and an over-arching sense of triumph for a life well-led.

Here’s the quandary, though: Reminiscing about the past is a wonderful exercise and one’s life’s milestones should be shared (and even recorded) as often as possible with caregivers, friends and family. But the notion of “I’ve lived my life and there is nothing left for me to do...nor do I have the energy to do so”...is hogwash. Until our very last minute here on earth, our biological hard-wiring dictates curiosity, aspiration and an overwhelming need of achievement – and those “must do’s” don’t have to involve sky-diving or climbing Mt. Everest, either – they could be as something simple as a stroll with a beloved grandchild to the end of your street or a commitment to make it to a religious service every week.

Penning a bucket list should never be a stressful endeavor, but it should be gently encouraged (and maybe even offer hands-on assistance) from family-members, caregivers, etc. And like most things of real worth, everyone’s bucket-list will be a *moving target* and will continually evolve and be augmented over time. Seniors know this more than anyone – there is no such thing as permanency when dealing with the human element.

There’s even a web site (www.BucketList.org) that posts bucket lists from folks of all ages, providing a forum to share which hopes and dreams actually play out and to *draw inspiration in the accomplishments of others.*

As people grow older, they’ll often take stock of where they’ve been and what they’ve done, and it’s hard to imagine anyone reaching their sunset years with the feeling they’d fulfilled all their ambitions. So break out the pen and pad (or the iPad) and wish away. Creating a bucket list isn’t the development of a death calendar – it’s taking advantage and celebrating your life’s experiences as well as dreaming, with the determination to make them one.

Keeping the promise,



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