



A few years ago, my husband and I made the decision to retire from our "day jobs" and move to Naples. It didn't take long for me to notice that despite the many losses people face, the health issues and the other challenges that accompany growing older, a significant number of people in Southwest Florida who are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s seem to be incredibly resilient. They bounce back when adversity occurs, and live vibrant, productive and satisfying lives.

I began to see retirement as an opportunity to create a new me and a new vision for my life. In my usual "nerdy" approach to things, I began to study research on what is known as "aging successfully" Researchers in the field of gerontology are just now discovering what people who live in Southwest Florida have been proving for years - that quality of life as we grow older has more to do with lifestyle than genetics. Studies show that 30 percent of the aging process is due to genetics, while your lifestyle has a 70 percent influence. That means that while we are in our 40s and 50s, we can start creating a lifestyle and developing habits that will maximize our health and our life satisfaction in our 60s and beyond.

It quickly became apparent to me that people who are particularly resilient as they grow older seem to have several traits in common contributing to their ability to rise above the challenges they face and look to the future with enthusiasm. They have a clear vision for life as they want it to be. They also have role models. For example, I remember many years ago seeing a

life, a sense of meaning and purpose. I made up my mind right then that she would be one of my role models and a part of my vision for what I wanted for my life (and how I wanted to look!) as I grew older.

Having a vision for this stage of-my life has given me the sense of meaning and purpose that motivates me and moves me to action. That picture in my head of the beautiful, slim Dinah Shore keeps me going to the fitness center and watching my diet. Her obvious zest for life has inspired me to become involved in volunteer activities, including visits to nursing homes with my Golden Retriever, Abby Her contagious smile reminds me of the value of a positive attitude.

On a deeper level, my vision for life in my 60s and beyond, along with my lifestyle choices have been strongly influenced by asking and answering these simple questions: If I were to attend my own funeral years from now, and if the speakers at my funeral included a friend, a family member, a former work colleague,

A new year is a wonderful opportunity to start to shape the rest of your life. It all starts with creating a vision for your life as you want it to be, and maximizing the satisfaction you will experience as you grow older.

Take action: Think about how you want your life to be as you grow older. Here are some things you can do to create your vision:

- Mentally "audition" the people you might want as role models. Your standards for role models for your mature years may be different from the role models of your youth or professional life.
- Give yourself the "funeral quiz." Ask "What do I want my family, friends, and people I work/volunteer with to be able to say about my life?" The next step is to make your words and actions reflect the YOU that you want to be as you grow older.

Once you begin to develop a clear vision for the life you want, your vision will soon become the compass that will guide your

