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Attitude Towards Elderly People

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Invite to World of Aging

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Abstract

Everyone has their own experiences with elderly people. Some experiences are more positive than others, but both affect you in some way. In this paper you will see both spectrums of the aging process. One aging process where the elderly person is still highly functioning and the other aging process where the elderly person struggles from Alzheimer's and needs assistance to maintain daily route.

Since the day I was born my grandparents have been an important part of my life. However, shortly after I was born my paternal grandmother passed away from polycystic kidney disease. Although this was a very sad time for my parents, this did not impact my life hugely because I was only six months of age. Yet, when my maternal grandfather passed away five years later from a heart attack, my life was changed forever. This was the first time I experienced death in my short five years of life. Nevertheless, my other two grandparents are both still alive, and have shaped me into the person I am today.

We just celebrated my maternal grandmother's 80th birthday. Meem, as my grandmother is affectionately known to her 14 grandchildren and three great grandchildren, is basically like a second mother to me. She has always been there for me from a very young age. Meem was the family babysitter. Now at the age of 80, she is still babysitting children, but now they are her great grandchildren. Meem is the fun grandma. We loved going to Meem's house for cousin sleepovers. She would let us stay up late and eat all the snacks we wanted. Meem always came to all of my school functions and all of my sporting events. She always has something kind and loving to say when I see her. Even though Meem is 80 years old, she still lives a very full and independent life. I love her with all my heart and I could not thank her enough for all she has done for me and my family.

My paternal grandfather, who we call Grandpa, has suffered many strokes and now lives with Alzheimer's. He needs help throughout the day just to complete daily routines such as eating and personal hygiene. He is basically non-verbal and it is very difficult to communicate with him. Grandpa comes to dinner at my parent's house every Thursday night but seeing him progressively get worse over the years has been difficult.

He needs his food cut for him and struggles to feed himself. I try to talk to him but he can not carry on a conversation. I've learned to look for non verbal cues from him to help me anticipate his needs. Seeing a grown man, who was once very strong and active, having to be taken care of as if he were a child again, is extremely sad. Growing up seeing this has been tough, and my heart melts every time I see him struggle.

My two grandparent relationships have shown me both spectrums of aging. Meem is the perfect example of how every 80 year old hopes to be at that age. She is completely independent and enjoying life to its fullest. However, as with my Grandpa I have seen that older age can be miserable and depressing. Out of all of my experiences, I have learned that life is short and to be grateful for what you have because you never know when it will be gone.

If you were to ask me, "would you like to work with elderly people?" I would respond, "No" for two different reasons. First, is because from a very young age I have always wanted to work with teenagers that struggle with depression. This desire stems from other family experiences. The second reason I might be hesitant to work with elderly people is that I have seen how difficult it can be on the family and people close to an elderly person that is struggling with the aging process. I think this would be a difficult thing for me to handle in my day to day job as a social worker. However, my experiences with elderly people growing up could make me a good social worker in this field. I have developed patience, and the ability to communicate with someone who struggles greatly. However, working in this field may be tough because there is a good chance that your clients get worse, not better, which can have a huge impact on your confidence and happiness as a worker in this line of work.