



March 2012



UPFRONT

Doris Soley

Beat Those Winter Blues!

Many people will be glad of the open winter we have been having so far. Winter is often seen as the most difficult time of year for many people. Cold, ice and snow may tend to keep us in our homes more, and this can lead to boredom, isolation and depression. I find that it takes more effort to keep active and in good spirits in winter than in other seasons. It's something that I work on every day!

I find that getting out in nature really helps to make winter enjoyable. My husband and I love to snowmobile, and have been members of the Off Highway Vehicle Association for some time. ATV's and snowmobiling are important family recreational activities where I live, and many of those who take part are 55plus. This is an activity that can be enjoyed by all ages. In fact, we need the young people in our groups to maintain the trails! I haven't been snowmobiling this winter, partly because there hasn't been enough snow. However, going for a walk is a regular part of my routine.

I believe that keeping involved in community is what keeps us young.

In addition to volunteering on the Board of Community Links, I am an active member of Five Islands Seniors. Our membership has dropped off somewhat, but we continue to get good attendance at our weekly card parties. I am also involved with our hospital foundation, and have been volunteering to help furnish and decorate the new palliative care rooms at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre.

Having a hobby or special interest is also a good way to avoid the winter blues. As an artist, I enjoy painting with friends, and working on a variety of projects. There are clubs, classes and workshops for many activities and interests. Try contacting your local recreation department or public library to find out what's going on in your area.

Doris Soley is Board member and Treasurer of Community Links. In addition to her community and volunteer activities, Doris is a talented artist. Her metal sculptures are currently on display (until March 31) at the McCarthy Gallery of the Truro Campus, Nova Scotia Community College. Doris resides in Five Islands with her husband Claude.

“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.”

— [John Steinbeck](#)



Is Your Workplace Age Friendly?

With recent news that the age to receive OAS might increase, and the reduction in the value of investments, many of us may be thinking that we will have to work longer. In fact, many people over the age of 65 are still in the workforce. Some are there out of financial necessity, and others because they like their work and aren't ready to retire.

But is the working world a welcoming place for older workers? Community Links has recently been doing research on what makes an "age friendly workplace." Focus groups and a survey have gathered information from those employed in the non-profit sector, and an Age Friendly Workplace Forum was planned for February 27th in Truro. Funding for this project is through the Voluntary Sector Professional Capacity Trust, Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

The non-profit sector employs over 35,000 workers in Nova Scotia. With more and more baby boomers reaching retirement age, this sector is challenged to compete with the business and public sectors for a dwindling pool of experienced employees. Many organizations lack the resources to match the competitive salary and benefit packages offered outside the sector. In fact, many nonprofit employers (65%) do not offer pension plans and over 30% do not offer benefit packages and this directly impacts the financial ability of some workers to retire.

Although this project has focused on those who work for non-profit organizations, the issues that affect older workers are similar for any workplace. Results from the research done over the last few months have suggested that flexible work hours, job sharing opportunities, providing pension and benefits

for part-time workers, and providing opportunities for training for older workers are some of the practical things that can be done to make our workplaces age friendly

Attitude changes are perhaps more difficult. There may be a perception that older workers are slower, more "set in their ways", and less innovative than younger workers. Some of these ideas are based on ageism rather than reality. However, even if there is some truth to these ideas, older workers can compensate by offering the benefit of experience and the wisdom that comes with it. They may tend to have a more flexible approach to problems, and be less perfectionist than younger employees. Loyalty and a strong work ethic are other qualities that older workers often exhibit.

To find out more about the Age Friendly Workplace Project or to get a report on findings, contact Community Links. www.nscommunitylinks.ca, or call 902-422-0914.

Changes to Canada Pension

Several recent changes to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) will possibly change our decisions about when to apply for CPP. These changes include:

- If you are 60 or over, you no longer have to have an interruption of work to apply and start receiving CPP (from January 2012)
- If you are 60-65, and continue working while receiving CPP, you and your employer will continue to contribute. This will increase your CPP retirement pension.
- If you are age 65 to 70 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension, you can choose to make CPP contributions. Your employer must also agree to continue contributions.

For more information, call 1-800-277-9914 or visit www.servicecanada.gc.ca

Square Dance – for Fun and Fitness

This is a perfect time of year to get your exercise indoors. Have you considered square dance? Cathy Langille of the Sunrise Squares and the Nova Scotia Square and Round Dance Federation is passionate about the benefits of square dancing. Recently Cathy became a member of Community Links and the Lunenburg Ageing Well Together Coalition. She provided the following information about the benefits of square dance:

Social: Square Dancing is a great way to meet people in a non-threatening, relaxed social atmosphere. You never know who you are going to meet.

Stress relief: Square dancing is led by a leader who calls the moves... you become focused on the music and the calls- A pleasant diversion from the stresses of modern living.

Cardiovascular fitness Dancing is a safe way to exercise. The level of exertion is up to each participant. You can rev it up for a high intensity workout or take it easy for a relaxing, yet beneficial workout. Dancing regularly can lead to a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure, and an improved cholesterol profile.

Body and Brain boost: Studies have shown that activities involving both physical and mental exercise at the same time keeps the brain sharp and can slow the onset of Alzheimers.

Calorie Burn: Dancing burns between 200-400 calories per 30 minutes



PARTICIPACTION Canada recommends 10,000 steps per day to maintain physical fitness. The typical square dancer can expect to clock 9,000-10,000 steps per session.

Falls Prevention: The side to side movements of square dancing strengthen weight-bearing bones. Adults who have a history of activities like square dance tend to have less incidence of falling as they grow older.

Lets Go Dancing! There are dance groups in most areas of the province. For more information or to find a group near you, contact The Square and Round Dance Federation of Nova Scotia
www.squaredance.ns.ca



Members of the Square and Round Dance Federation of NS at the 50 Plus Expo June 2011 in Halifax.

Square dance for all ages: Lunenburg Ageing Well Together Coalition is partnering with Bridgewater and Area Senior Safety, South Shore Health, Sunrise Squares, 4-H, the YMCA and Big Brothers and Sisters to host intergenerational learning events. For more information, contact Carla Malay
nswest@ageingwelltogether.ca

Older Adults and Depression

Anyone can become sad at some point in their lives. Most people experience occasional depression and some may call it the “winter blues” or “having a bad day.” But being “down in the dumps” over a period of weeks may be a sign of more serious depression. Our brains contain special chemicals called serotonin. These brain chemicals help us to feel happy and content. If these chemicals get too low or out of balance, we can become depressed.

- Women are more susceptible to depression than men, but we do not know why.
- Depression often runs in families.
- People who have experienced depression earlier in life may see it come back in later life.
- Being depressed is not a matter of not having enough will power.

Alcohol and Depression

Some older adults drink to try to escape feeling lonely or feeling sad and blue. It may temporarily lift their spirits. However, even drinking a little may make the depression worse. Many medications used to treat depression are unsafe if you drink alcohol. Talk with your doctor about which medications can be taken if you do drink.

Some medications for arthritis, high blood pressure, or heart disease can make you feel depressed.

Depression can happen at any age. About one in 20 older adults experience severe

depression, and as many as one in five may experience less severe forms. Major changes in life can often lead to depression. So can changes to health. Some health conditions, such as heart disease, serious breathing problems, stroke, and Parkinson’s disease, can lead to depression. Ongoing pain that is not being treated adequately can also lead to depression.

What are the signs of depression in later life? You may:

Lack energy
Feel sad or anxious
Feel that life is hopeless or empty
Have trouble concentrating
Have trouble remembering
Have trouble sleeping
Lose your appetite
Have chest pains or stomach problems

Getting Help

Talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider about how you feel. Ask them, “*Is it possible I’m feeling this way because I am depressed?*” There are many different types of help available, including grief or other counseling to help you deal with concerns, social supports and medications. Good nutrition and a little exercise can also help fight off “the blues”. Be good to yourself.

Used with permission from: Department of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University
Provided by Nova Scotia Health and Wellness Department. Submitted by the Guysborough Ageing Well Together Coalition



Body Disconnect- and What You Can Do

By Barbara Nicholls

Body disconnect, simply put, means unable to recognize the body, your body, as a living thing with a distinct set of needs. Food, water, and exercise, are needed to function optimally, and to be free of disease or discomfort. As we age, many of us get less exercise. Now with the reduction of exercise the body's muscles begins to atrophy, which leads to a precarious and perpetual cycle of less and less movement. We know that without exercise, particularly resistance type exercise, our muscles lose 2%-5% of muscle mass each year after the age of 25. So the answer to this dilemma is regular physical activity. Sounds simple, except that this is only one of the physiological issues.

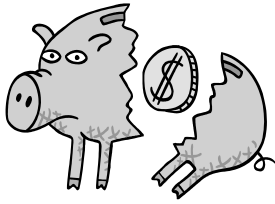
Along with lack of physical activity, vision changes, loss of foot sensitivity and changes within the inner ear are all conditions which affect balance as we get older. The "body disconnect" means that we may lack awareness of these gradual changes. I propose we achieve and maintain balance by some easy to perform balance exercises, such as standing beside a counter or other sturdy object, lightly touching or holding it if necessary, raising one foot off the ground and holding your knee up for about 10 seconds. Then place the foot back down and lift the other foot for 10 seconds as with the first foot. You may notice that the ankle is wobbly. This is normal. Strengthening of the ankle is crucial in creating good balance.

Another case of body disconnect is mood swings. How many of us get a little cranky around the middle of the afternoon? How many of us didn't have a nutritious lunch, or any lunch at all? We need to eat healthful food in order to keep our brains functioning well. Not only do we need healthy foods, but we need them often, about every 2-3 hours. The older we get, the less appetite we seem to have. Perhaps this is due to the lack of expending calories, but if we don't eat, our metabolism will slow down, storing fat as if preparing for a famine.

Ironically, the more often we eat the more the metabolism burns energy, i.e. calories. I'm prescribing small meals more frequently, rather than the traditional 3 big meals a day. Trying to include at least 3 servings of fruit and munching on vegetables throughout your day should help take the bite out of your bark, if you are experiencing mood swings.

Water is another valuable ingredient in the prevention of mood swings, or low energy levels. If you're feeling the lag coming on and can't get the food into you; try drinking a glass of water. Did you know that we lose about 2 litres of water a day through normal bodily functions, without even doing exercise? Rehydration is imperative for health. The complaint I hear most often, is the frequent trips to the bathroom, but this should subside after about two weeks when the body's tissues realize that this foreign substance is its sustenance. Cheers to your good health. I'll drink to that, water that is.

*Barbara Nicholls is a certified personal trainer and nutrition and wellness specialist, Bridgetown N.S.,
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Debt and Retirement, - You are not Alone!

Recent news stories have highlighted the fact that Canadians are more in debt than ever before. Retirees are no exception. Information from Statistics Canada says that one in three retirees has some form of debt, and a recent RBC poll found that “there has been a significant rise in the number of retirees returning to the work force because they need the income (41 per cent in 2011 compared to 32 per cent in 2010), as well as a drop in the number of Canadians retiring debt-free (56 per cent in 2011; 61 per cent in 2010).

Financial experts put credit card debt squarely in the “bad debt” category. Statistics Canada estimates that in May 2009, 85% of Canadians held a balance on their credit cards.

Knowing that you are “in the same boat” as many other Canadians may be some consolation, and most people can turn the situation around in time. Financial experts recommend taking an organized approach to eliminating consumer debt, especially if you are nearing, or already at retirement: Some tips include:

- Take stock of what you owe, and make a debt repayment plan.
- Be patient and take it in bite size pieces. Reducing cash flow to an unreasonable amount will only increase anxiety and possibly end up in more debt.
- Pay off higher interest credit first. When that is eliminated, go on the next highest

Source: RBC, Statistics Canada



On the Lighter Side: How to recognize a Canadian

- You put on shorts as soon as it hits plus 10, even if there is still snow around
- You know what a tuque (toque?) is
- You are excited whenever an American television show mentions Canada
- You use a red pen on your non-Canadian textbooks and fill in the missing 'u's from labor, honor, and color
- You have Canadian Tire money in your kitchen drawers
- You know what a Robertson screwdriver is
- You know that the Friendly Giant isn't a vegetable product line
- You drink pop, not soda
- Someone accidently stepped on your foot. You apologize.
- You know several people who have hit a deer more than once
- You install security lights on your house and garage, but leave both unlocked
- Driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow
- You know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction.
- You participated in "Participaction."

Source- The Internet



Notes and Notices

Save the date:

Community Links celebrates its **20th Anniversary** on June 1, 2012. More information to follow.

Visit Community Links at the 50+ Expo June 8 and 9, 2012 at Exhibition Park in Halifax

We ♥ Volunteers! Each year, communities all across Canada recognize the contribution of volunteers. Volunteer Week 2012 takes place from April 15 to April 21.

Customized Training for Registered Charities

Atlantic Charities Learning Exchange (ACLE) is offering free sessions to Nova Scotia registered charities and those who work with charities. These sessions are geared to your needs, and cover such topics as Board accountability in charities reporting, planning for fundraising and the fundraising ratio, moving from the financial statements to the T3010, seminar on receipting, and more. ACLE is funded by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), and all information is approved by CRA. To inquire about a session for your organization, go to www.atlanticcharities.ca or call 902-422-0914.

Community Links is a Nova Scotia partner in the ACLE project.



Mobility Workshops

How do I know when I need a cane or walker? What is the proper height for my cane? How can I make my bathroom safer? These questions and others can be answered through our popular Mobility Workshops. To arrange for a workshop for your group, contact Community Links Provincial Office at 902-422-0914

Ageing Well Photo Contest



Coming Again this Spring

Back by popular demand! Our Ageing Well Together Coalitions are making plans to produce the Year of Ageing Well Calendar 2013. One of the highlights of our 2012 Calendar was the response we received to our ageing well photo contest. This allowed us to fill our calendar with photos of 'real' Nova Scotians who demonstrate different aspects of ageing well. Look for details of our new contest, which we hope will be even bigger than last year. For more information, contact Anne at our Provincial Office. 902-422-0914 or nscapital@ageingwelltogether.ca

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