

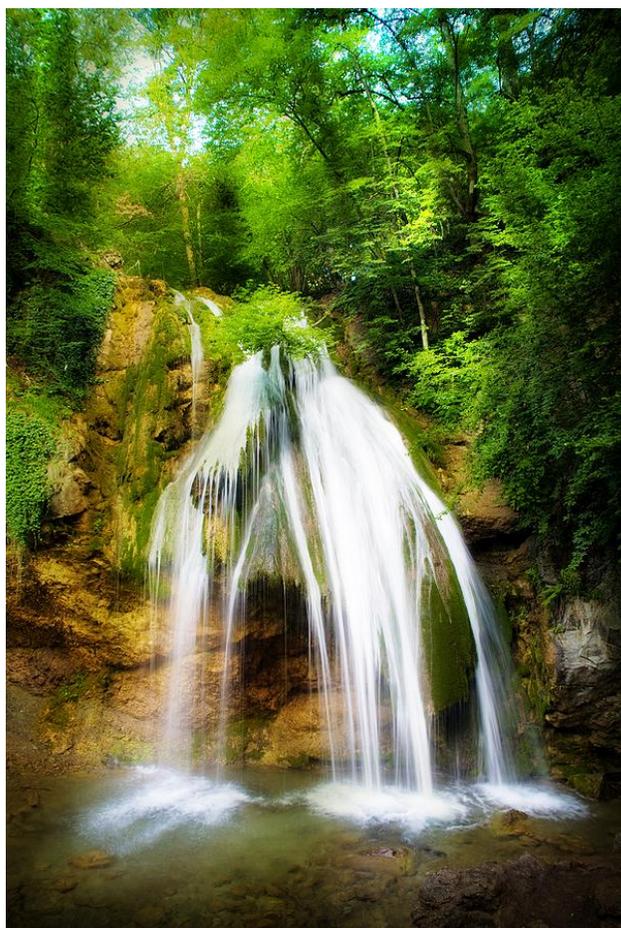


Ageing Wisely With Linda

Consultations/Consulting • Counseling/Coaching
Expert on Dementia • Speaking/Teaching

February 2022

Hope & Proactive Joy



“Hope Springs Eternal.” That saying is from “An Essay on Man,” by Alexander Pope. People always hope for the best, even in the face of adversity. This is what we want to hang onto and what I try to help all my clients find. However, in the midst of pain, this “elusive hope” can be a forgotten blur.

Waiting and wishing for a change in our physical health, mental health, or relationships can bring us down. Often, we hear that it is not the right time for something: a procedure, a sensitive conversation, or a move to senior living. Then there are illnesses that have no treatments to cure them: Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, some cancer and cardiac diagnoses, as well as some relentless mental health challenges to name a few. Grief can be added to this list as well. All of these circumstances may also include denial or resistance from us and/or the person we are concerned about. The combination of stress, delays, and the unknown in these situations often results in feelings of depression and hopelessness.

Even spiritual individuals may have difficulty connecting with God when pain, dependence, and disappointment are a constant presence. So, what do we mortals need to do? Where will we get our motivation to go on each day? People will question their faith and during Covid, many houses of worship are not as open as they were. Many feel excluded and forgotten, especially those who don't do Zoom or can't get to the only service that might be too early for a disabled individual to attend.

In my career I have come across numerous individuals that survived many trials and tribulations during their long lives and still are filled with joy. There are two common themes that I have seen in these people: one is gratefulness, and the other is joy seeking. I am going to call these people the "Resilient."

Seeking joy is much more a proactive move than expecting joy to just happen. True, occasionally we are surprised by nature or an unexpected gift or visit. The Resilient actually seek out joy; they read positive daily meditations, they read the comics, they listen to uplifting music or anything that ever brought them joy. They find a way to remain connected to that passion. A sailing enthusiast might not be able to sail due to vision or mobility, but they can still get to the water and observe, smell the air, or feel the sand or a moving dock. The Resilient do so not with regret, but with gratefulness and joy.

Forest bathing, known as shinrin-yoku in Japan, is a therapeutic, meditative practice of reconnecting with nature and being distracted by any of those "joy stealing" feelings. It usually starts with a breathing relaxation exercise and then a walk/stroll or even just sitting in a wooded area. See the resources below for a great book that will guide you in "forest bathing". During my own daily walks I look for shapes and geometry in the nature; I also love to focus on the colors in the sky and clouds.



February is thought of as the month of love because of Valentine 's Day, but if you are burdened with a life challenge, it can be a sad time, especially if you have had a major loss or have a serious health challenge. This month I challenge you to seek "Joy" if only for a few moments on February 14th and then seek just a few more such moments on each day to follow. Find someone to confide in and to be your companion on this journey of seeking joy in the snippets of life.

Dr. Atul Gawande in his book "Being Mortal" (a good read) says we want to live till we die – not die years before. This is what you do: you plant the seeds of joy. They won't cure or fill the scars of life, but they will allow you to live and smile.



Affirmation: "I find joy even in the darkness of life's journey."

Resources:

[The Joy of Forest Bathing](#) by Melanie Choukas-Bradley

[Being Mortal](#) by Dr. Atul Gawande

Any daily meditation that directs you to positive thoughts.