

Alice Liber
Wise council

My obstacles

There are words which don't mean anything to me, over which I always stumble. An example: caring for an adult. Elder, an elderly person, high age, very old. I have a problem how these designations are used.

When we speak about an elderly person, do we mean an old person like up from the age of 50 or 60? A high aged person is a very old person. Therefore they must be cared and treated differently. There are trainings for their care, how to deal with them.

When we met in Denmark, I was 83, today I am 85. The age brings deficits, physically sometimes mentally too. But those deficits don't occur to everybody at the same time or at the same age. Due to that they don't need help and care at the same time, and probably not at the time the society defines them as high-aged, but when the personal fate sets in.

There are people, who are mentally and physically fit even at the age of 90 or older, even though they were never really sportive and they never overworked their brain. They always were and still are: natural, uncomplicated, self centered and attentive to their surroundings.

There are sportive people who are exercising more, also mentally, but nevertheless they might have to fight against more and more deficits in earlier years, maybe already at 60.

That's why I have my problems with high-aged and the care of high-aged people.

I have a real struggle with elderly elderly person. Everyone gets older from the day of birth, elder up to his/her death. That can occur sooner or in higher age.

I've worked my whole life with elderly people, only a few of them were really old. They were only older than me, or younger than me, like most of you in the audience. . But they weren't children after all.

I learned to hate the word caring whether it's about old, younger or very young ones. Or about handicapped people. I automatically translate caring with infantilizes.

That might be coming with my profession: my task as physiotherapist is: to help people so that they can keep, extend and / or rebuild their independence.

That means I have to push them very close to their limits, if they want it themselves. To admit that fact needs a lot of courage from the therapist. It needs even more: you have to honestly deal with the patient, cause you can never treat two individuals with the same diagnosis the same way. I have to listen to them, to make clear that we can only succeed together, and that 2/3 of the success is his/her own merit. My contribution is at most 1/3. One learns to be modest.

When I treated handicapped children I was always astonished at how much we could achieve together, if only I can get it's trust, when I can provide the following understanding: we all have our limits which each of us shouldn't surpass.

Is the same also valid for old people? Maybe. Help for sure.

We should be wary about not to impose help on someone if that person isn't ready for it.

Too often I've heard residents of nursing homes saying: they mean well for me: I can do handicrafts, cooking with the help of a therapist, watering the flowersí but. That helps no one. No one dares to let residents do something on their own. Flowers, garden, children, animals, all belong to human beings. Even as an Oldie, Elderly or high-aged person I want to be part of it, to be useful, to belong.

A short example: a lady of a nursing home was complaining. She's physically and mentally very fit. She used to wash herself or shower without any help. Once in the nursing home, suddenly she wasn't allowed to shower, she had to take a bath. Worst of all a nurse helped her with it. The lady was enraged, even more so when they charged her CHF 50.- for it.

I had my troubles with the high prize. I told that story a befriended home manager. He said: of course, that way they get more money, the resident is put in a higher tax rank. This has also to do with unwanted care.

Maybe I got physically, maybe also mentally, a bit slower. Please event though you mean well: I'd like to be in the middle of life, with you, self-determined. Thankful for every help or care that I needí even if I'm not high-aged. How ever you might understand this word. But please never care for me. That smells too much of tutelage. Thanks.

Violence

The violence doesn't start
When one strangles an other
It starts
When one says:
I love you, you belong to me

The violence doesn't start
When sick people get killed
It starts
When one says:
You have to do what I'm saying

Beginning of a poem by Erich Fried