



PO Box 312
Westminster, VT 05158
(802) 722-3607

The Fine Line

This article is directed toward the adults who have parents or loved ones in their life who have shown signs of giving up on the future.

There is a fine line between wanting to help someone stay active and positive and allowing them to be comfortable with their position in life. It's not unusual to hear someone complain because their elderly parents have become uninterested in life. "All they want to do is sit around and watch TV" "They never want to go anywhere" "They won't leave the house." "What's the matter with them?" To the active adults in the family this seems to be intolerable. And the nagging can't be much fun for the elders. Obviously it is very unhealthy to be idle and to be disconnected socially. Depression sets in. Physical health is impaired. So we try to encourage activity. We try to encourage socializing within or outside the family. And we do it with the best intentions. However, is this in the best interest of "Mom and Dad"? Every family is different. Every situation requires thoughtful consideration. In some cases magic can be performed and the parents can become happier and healthier with the smallest amount of encouragement. In other cases we could be adding to the pain of growing old that many are experiencing. So what is the answer? There isn't a one size fits all conclusion. But here is a suggestion. Have you noticed how much more improved parenting has become over the years? Today's parents are masters at disciplining their children while at the same time, considering the child's self esteem. Try it on the elderly. Give them your best advice. Share with them all you know. Gently remind them how important they are and how valuable their lives are, not only to themselves, but to others. But be careful not to take away any more of their self esteem than the aging process has. Remember, many of their friends are gone, much of their energy has diminished, and the horizon is getting closer and closer. Encourage positive living while maintaining understanding and dignity.

Pete Harrison has been a resident of Westminster for approx. 40 years. Pete is President of the Westminster Cares Board and an active community member.