



CARING TIMES
Neighborhood Groups

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Downtown 2



Union Square

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

Alternative Housing

A number of our members have been concerned about housing alternatives as they continue to age. Mona Kreaden's presentation at the Positive Aging Conference in Washington D.C., which was broadcast on C-Span, spurred a discussion on this topic. The group spent the first hour watching the C-Span video, and the second hour discussing what did or didn't apply to NYC residents (at least with regard to Manhattan, where all members present currently live). Since a number of our regular members were not able to make this meeting, the group decided to continue the conversation at the next meeting. Below are some highlights:

- NYC is a great city in which to age in place – no need to drive, availability of so many cultural activities, convenience of so many other things, ability to get just about anything delivered. All except one member prefers to stay here.
- Potential for home-sharing - a number of TTN members live alone in multiple bedroom apartments, and may be interested in renting out a room.
- If financially viable, availability of several good progressive care facilities (amount of care increases as needs increase) are in NYC. Need to apply early due to long wait lists.
- Leave NYC: One member, who has lived in NYC all her life, is now in contract to sell her studio apartment and will be moving to "The Villages" in Florida. This is a 55+ golf cart community of over 100,000 residents--with over 2,000 clubs to join, and she will be "trading in" her studio for a 3 bedroom, 2 bath villa!

NOVEMBER

Political Action

Although we had selected a different topic for this meeting, we were all still in shell-shock over the election so chose to discuss options for actions we could take:

- Donate to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. The Action Fund engages in educational and electoral activity, including voter education, grassroots organizing and legislative advocacy.
- Contact local democratic clubs to find out what you can do to help.
- Join the Women's March, either in NYC or in Washington DC.
- Contact MaryLou Floyd (marylfloyd19@gmail.com) or Marti Madory (mmadory1@verizon.net) re: participating in the NYC Chapter's Political Action SIG.
- One member has gone on strike and dropped her cable company and her New York Times subscription because she blames the cable news media and the NYT for enabling Trump instead of holding his feet to the fire.

Downtown 3



Union Square Green Market

SEPTEMBER

How to Let Go

The group's first meeting of the fall season was also the first with Joan Reigel in the role of group Coordinator. Jane McCarthy was thanked for running the meetings since the group was formed.

- One member was very proud that she was able to give up her alcoholism by going to AA and sticking to the program. She has been sober for many years.
- Others spoke of habits or personal traits they would like to give up or change.

- A member said she would like to give up her vanity and not worry about how she looks.
- Someone was attempting to let go of her shyness.
- Others are working at getting more organized and not being late.
- Two talked of close friends, for one reason or another, who had distanced themselves, and they are working on how to let go of the feelings of loss, hurt, etc. that they felt.

Midtown East Afternoon



Ed Koch Bridge

NOVEMBER

Tips for Keeping a Positive Attitude

Group Leader Wendy Ceracche recited her original poem below.

Other good tips mentioned were:

- Lower your expectations.
- Have a Plan B.
- Keep positive friends & disassociate with the negative ones.
- Keep smiling until it becomes real.
- Watch fun movies or TV and tune out the negative, violent news.
- Keep busy with activities that you enjoy.

"To Life"

By Wendy Ceracche 2007

In my neck I have a pain. I think it's here to stay.

My bones do creak, my knees are weak.
I hope they don't give way.

One finger is bent. My vision is poor.
I wish my kidneys could do more.
Headaches, mood swings, pills galore,
Fatigue and insomnia beckon at my door.

I have a compulsion to be neat,
At movies & theatre, I need an aisle seat.

My cholesterol is high.
My legs can't run.
But I'm so glad I can still have fun.

Allen makes my heart pound, especially when he's around.
Liz is my pride and joy, so special and so dear.
They both love me no matter what, & I'm thankful they're both here.

I still can walk.
I still can talk.
I still can write.
I still have my appetite.
I still can hear
Have that occasional beer.

I'm grateful for the friends I have & things I still can do.
So I'll say a prayer & you can bet
That I'm so glad, I ain't dead yet.

Upper East Side 2



The Frick

OCTOBER

Loneliness

We focused on "alone vs. loneliness" and discovered that neither is necessarily a negative in our lives. We often like to be alone and sometimes loneliness can be a motivator to get out and make friends. Where it is a negative we talked about possible ways to overcome that loneliness by reaching out to members in our various TTN groups.

- We also explored the concept of "being alone in a crowd" and what we really are looking for is a connection, a feeling of being in touch with a few people on a more personal level. To that end we decided that some of us want more "connectivity" than a monthly meeting with our Neighborhood Group. It can be difficult to make personal connections of any depth because different people show up at different meetings.
- We agreed to suggest that CC could announce something like "Further Collaboration" and let people "opt in" to a group email from which people could contact people on the list to go to a movie, lunch, etc, together - purely social. We could open it up to all the UES groups. It would be a "side bar" to our monthly meetings to develop deeper friendships and really get to know people. We have a head start on this because, unlike other groups, we have already been together for quite a while. Our next step is plan how we might go about doing this.

November

Dealing with the Holiday Season

We discussed our feelings about this time of year and discovered we feel differently about different holidays. We recognize that for many of us (if not all) circumstances have changed since our younger days through the loss of loved ones or simply the distance from them that imposes restrictions on us. So new traditions have sprung up.

- The city seems so alive during the holidays, but most of us experience a certain sense of sadness or nostalgia for another time. A member quoted something from the Mayo Clinic which recommends acknowledging those feelings - it is okay to feel that way.
- We then discussed ways to deal with the sadness. The most discussed option was to REACH OUT in a variety of ways. For example, volunteer to help others. A lengthy discussion ensued as to volunteer opportunities for the needy on the holidays, especially in food preparation and serving in soup kitchens and other venues.
- Another way to reach out is to friends, family, fellow-TTNers. One member mentioned she belongs to a Holiday group that meets at a restaurant for the holidays. There are other ways - such as potluck dinners.

- We then went on to discuss some practical aspects of the holidays such as tipping service people and gift giving. Some apartment buildings have holiday funds to ensure all its non-resident-facing people receive some of the appreciation - not just the ones who are visible. The question arose as to whether to tip all people who service us - answers varied widely according to our circumstances. An excellent suggestion was to think, "how important is that person to you?"
- We discussed what and how much to give children and especially grandchildren. We felt it important to ensure we give a charitable gift in the child's name so they start to experience gift giving to the less fortunate. Other ideas: stick to a budget; don't buy love; plan ahead so as not to get stressed.

Upper East Side 4



Gracie Mansion

SEPTEMBER

Neighborhood Resources

It was determined that the resources we were sharing did not necessarily have to be recommendations only from our neighborhood if the resource was a good one.

- Hair Coloring – One of our members shared how quickly her gray hair grows and has been feeling the expense of having her hair colored every two weeks. She recommended Dramatics Salon on 84th Street and Third Avenue. Ask for the Stylist, Soho. She's very knowledgeable. This time she added highlights and gloss to tone down the gray in between colorings.
- Places to go for lunch – Luke's for burgers; The Barking Dog on 77th Street and York – they have great salads.

- Shoemaker – on Third between 79-80th Streets (near where David's Jeweler's used to be).
- Tailoring – There's one on Second Avenue between 80-81st Streets; another on 80th between Second-Third Avenues. One member goes to a seamstress at the Chinese Laundry at 80th between Second-Third Avenues location. Another possibility is one near Bloomingdales on Lexington and Third Avenue.
- Recommendations we are looking for: Art Appraiser; Sofa cushions – One of our members is looking for a recommendation because her sofa cushions are too soft; Tailor who specialized in suede.

Note: The members also discussed their experiences with neighborhood medical practitioners. This information is only available to members of the Caring Collaborative

- Community Connections - There was also discussion about reaching out to people in a building who don't have friendships. The model would be Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) such as Kip's Bay, Bay Ridge, and Penn South. Some members indicated they were interested in starting one in their building but were hit with opposition from the Board of Directors about potential liability issues.
- One of the local churches just started a Senior Ministry which may be an avenue for more community connections. Another member indicated the staff of her building knows a great deal about the residents who live there and may help out with tasks like cat sitting or watering plants.
- We talked about how getting connected adds another dimension. Friendship is encouraged through TTN in the Peer, Special Interest and Caring Collaborative Neighborhood Groups.

OCTOBER

Organizations and activities that enrich our lives. Some of these include:

- Central Park Paws, (<http://www.centralparknyc.org/about/programs/central-park-paws/dog-fair.html>) a program of the Central Park Conservancy. Central Park Paws encourages dog owners to become stewards of the Park and serves as the connector between the dog community, Central Park, and the Conservancy.

- As an avid lover of gardening, one member volunteers at the Central Park Conservancy. www.centralparknyc.org
- Another organization of interest is Give an Hour (GAH) (<https://www.giveanhour.org/>). This organization's mission is to harness the expertise and generosity of volunteer mental health professionals capable of responding to both acute and chronic conditions that arise within our society. Currently, GAH is dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of the troops and families affected by their time of service. They provide counseling to individuals, couples and families, and children and adolescents.
- Helping displaced people is of interest to another member. She's putting her energy into the Multi-faith Alliance for Syrian Refugees. Their mission is to mobilize global multi-faith support to alleviate the Syrian humanitarian crisis, heighten awareness of its growing dangers, and advance future stability in the region. <http://www.multifaithalliance.org/>
- There was also an interest expressed in a TTN Musicians Group and a TTN Language Group, particularly for French. Any woodwind players out there?

Upper West Side 1



Fairway Market

JUNE

Money

Based on our own experience with money what advice would we want to give others? Or do we have a question we'd like to pose? Or do both.

- One person noted that in her experience it's really a question of attitude. Her husband was very tight with money but it was not out of necessity. It was simply his personality. She has a more relaxed attitude.
- Another member said that for her money is a means to an end and expresses our values and priorities. She invited us to identify the

things that enrich our life and use money accordingly. She has recently booked trips to Zurich and Munich to enjoy operas. How much stuff do we need, she asked rhetorically. Five years after her cancer, she is reassessing her choices in life.

- Several members have the fear of “running out” of money. She has observed friends becoming stingy as they age, but surmises that many have these fears.
- One person gave basic advice on these matters: "You can't live beyond your means." She used to be very frugal, avoiding subway rides, keeping just everything. But now she is downsizing and wants to spend money as long as she feels vital.
- Another said living within a budget means being able to leave money to her children, a real priority for her. She also believes that her children will take care of her should it come to that. One member gives the allowed annual \$14,000 tax free gift to her son in the understanding that he will take care of her later.
- Some members have concerns about getting financial advice: sometimes trust in the experts was difficult.
- A member said she didn't have money growing up but was very lucky to have been advised to acquire an annuity available through the Teachers Retirement System when she taught in the public schools. She receives a very good return on it. Others also have annuities. It was noted that you need to find a stable company and can choose between fixed and variable.
- Recommendations: that we read the business section of the Times, if only "The Haggler," every Sunday, and Ron Lieber's, "Your Money" column and interviews.

AUGUST

Stress

- Mind/Body Connection: We started out with an anecdote about the time when one member's husband was sick and her ophthalmologist noted that she was stressed. She read Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response* and *The Relaxation Revolution*. He makes the claim that the mind can actually heal the body; consistent relaxation helps rewire our brains and even our genetic makeup can be changed. Daily, we should do at least one of the following:
A: Do a visualization for 12 -15 minutes.

B. Meditate.

C. Just "veg out" and think of nothing in particular to "trigger the relaxation response."

However this relationship between mind and body is often ignored and even denied by mainstream medicine.

- One person noted that we often don't know that stress is causing a physical response. Another member agreed, noting that at the time of her mother's dying, she developed a crushing chest pain that lasted for three days and had her on the floor in agony. Medical examination confirmed that it was not the heart. It was evidently a kind of panic/anxiety attack and after day three, it just lifted.
- Of course "stress" is not simply something bad. Without stress we wouldn't do much of what we achieve simply because we feel under pressure to accomplish something. There's some evidence that people deal with stress differently and that the same level of stress may, for one person, be facilitative and advantageous while for the other, paralyzing or corrosive. It was noted that some people brush it off while others agonize. Which group actually experiences more stress?
- One member's mother who had become a quadriplegic was someone who simply accepted her illness. As a result, everyone loved her. She was able to accept the fact that she needed help, and for that reason, people were glad to give it to her. A recent article in the Times outlined these questions of assuming the "identity" of a disabled person and being able to request accommodation without defensiveness ("*Becoming Disabled*," by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *NY Times*, 8/21/16)
- The idea of being present to your current feelings and state of mind made someone think of Daniel Goleman, especially his work on social intelligence, and the challenge to "be yourself" with others. Not "being real" leads to a lack of connection with others. How can we connect even when we don't feel immediate affinity?
- Since so much about the positive effects of relaxation techniques as an antidote to too much stress are so well known, we wondered why it is that we resist incorporating them into our lives. Overall, the "mindfulness" approach seemed a potent approach, becoming more aware of the ways in which we fail to resist stressors. Can we remember to eat more slowly and deliberately?
- Instead of watching the news, we could read literature or do meditation. In an interview Cornell West was asked how he manages to continue on. "I turn to literature," he said. Reading helps us find

out how we feel and know ourselves better. Some recommendations: *The Door* by Magda Szabo, *The Balkan Trilogy* by Olivia Mannin, *The Summer Before the War* by Helen Simonson and the Elena Ferrante Neapolitan novels.

- Social media and media in general was seen as something that prevents us from "being present to the moment". For some, social media seemed, ironically, to be something that isolates people rather than connecting them.
- There was consensus that exercise helps. When one member swims every day for hours in the Ozarks, she had no back problems, but they reappear the moment she returns to NYC. Although the city is stressful, there was consensus that it also gives us so much. Yoga or Pilates were beneficial for many.
- At the more esoteric end of things, silent retreats, walking meditations, work with the Buddhists in the Zendo had been beneficial for members of our group at various times in their lives. One member in particular, owes a debt to the deep/controlled breathing techniques known as pranayama in the Hindu tradition. She also told the story of what might be regarded as a "religious experience" she had while trying to give up smoking. Her first exposure to meditation in three early morning sessions at the Omega Institute allowed her to simply quit, cold turkey, with nary a backward glance.
- Writing is another method to "get it all out" for a member who was caring for her husband in his illness. She would write on small pieces of paper and later find them everywhere. Using language to "give form" and get the feelings outside yourself - in finding the words - had been a potent strategy for several members of the group.
- A member has also has used writing to calm herself, to give form to what otherwise might be upsetting. She noted that her Hidden Child group leader had just published the collection of their memoirs and the resulting volume included her work. For her, this was a tremendous milestone and the perfect occasion to heed her desire to give up the burden of completing a full memoir of her life. This is a stressor she just doesn't need any more. The group agreed they would love for her to read this chapter to us.
- We ended the meeting with a reading of the Serenity Prayer.

Upper West Side 2



116th St. Subway Station

SEPTEMBER

A study in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry reports that **older people tend to be happier than younger people, and their happiness increases with age.** Do you agree or disagree with this conclusion?

For the most part, there was no yes or no answer. Here are some comments.

Pluses:

- No need to please anyone but self.
- Doesn't care what anyone thinks about behavior or dress.
- No need to always be doing something important.
- Happy to have good health.
- Takes one day at a time - freedom to arrange time.
- Freedom to travel.
- Wonderful not to work if financially secure.
- Can lose self in activity without being side-tracked by other things - is able to disengage

But:

- Health concerns limit "happiness".
- Thinks about "How Much time is Left?"
- Doesn't like living alone now.
- Has no children and wants to leave a legacy - something by which to be remembered.
- Would like to do something important.

Recommendations:

- Look into "Aging in Place" - shared housing.

- Important to make new friends. Find others who are alone and want to connect.
- Small things can make a legacy to family and friends.
- Some volunteer work can be very meaningful and self-fulfilling.

OCTOBER

What would you like to accomplish in the next year?

- One person has been completing a book with detailed information about her legal and medical documents. Included is detailed information and location of documents.
- One member would like to get back to painting and find a way to sell her work online.
- Plan some trips.
- Another member has a goal to stay strong and healthy so that she can continue to join her family every summer in their summer place which is rustic and challenging to get around.
- A short term goal: To wake up each morning and look forward to the day - since 9/11 she doesn't make long range plans.
- Several people said that they don't make plans to accomplish anything. They are fine with staying home and doing things in the city. One questioned whether there is a big deficit in her life.
- One member visited very elderly relatives who were very negative about life. After that she is determined to be positive and uncomplaining as she ages. She also had a very good experience visiting old friends and seeing her former home.
- We discussed what "Accomplishment" means since the goals are varied. Is it necessary to have a passion or be excited about what you are doing or planning?
- It was generally agreed that we should accept who we are as we age or in general. Comparing ourselves to others is not helpful. No need to apologize for what we are doing or not doing.

Upper West Side 3



West End Avenue

AUGUST

With Age Comes Freedom

Betty Friedan said, *"Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength."* Members were asked whether they agreed with Friedan's statement, and then discussed these questions:

- Has your decision making process changed as you matured?
- Who/what do you have to consider when you are making decisions about your life?
- How are you a different person now than when you were building your career?
- Are you freer now to make decisions than you were 20 years ago?
-
- Some attendees agreed with Betty Friedan's view that aging is a new stage of opportunity and strength, while others definitely did not agree. By sharing career and family experiences members illustrated their viewpoints.
- Several members reported that they were definitely a different and more contented person now, compared to when their younger selves were trying to advance in their professions. They did not appreciate how stressful that part of their life had been until they were no longer working full-time.

- Some members felt the loss of youth. They experienced it most directly when thinking about health issues. Those who are widowed also recalled their youth as a time when they and their husbands were active and healthy.
- The decision making process changed in different ways. Some members felt that age made them wiser and more confident in their decisions - freer than 20 years ago.
- A few regretted that they rarely make quick, spontaneous, decisions now, mostly due to health and financial concerns. Most consider the impact on family, health, and finances when making all their decisions.
- "Are you a different person now?" generated diverse responses:
 - No, I'm the same person.
 - Yes, I am kinder now, and take an interest in the people I meet every day.
 - Yes, I'm learning to appreciate the simpler pleasures of life.
 - Yes, I'm adjusting to doing things on my own.
 - Yes, I choose how I spend my time more carefully, and prioritize my activities.
 - Yes, I am less tolerant of everyday annoyances –I want to get things done.
 - Yes, I'm not the risk taker I was when I was younger

OCTOBER

Tell us about an organization or cause that is important to you

Here are some of the activities/causes that our members described:

- Originally, teaching, and now, volunteering to advise families about education, health and social services for Autistic young people through Autism Speaks: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- The path from a young volunteer with developmentally disabled children to social work, public health, and ultimately administrator at teaching hospitals serving disadvantaged patients.
- Teaching music, organizing the teachers at their music school into a union, and playing chamber music professionally.
- Studying writing, completing a memoir about her childhood in Hungary during WWII, and the challenges of getting the memoir published
- Staying physically and intellectually active after some health challenges

- Moving alone to Manhattan after a career as a psychotherapist; supporting women's access to the services of Planned Parenthood <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>
- Previously a professional nature photographer and biologist, and now focused on the dangers of Global Warming. Organizations providing education on this issue include <https://sierraclub.org> and www.nyc.sierraclub.org

Queens



The Unisphere

SEPTEMBER

How to De-Clutter your Home/Life

Clutter causes stress. It nags at you, drags you down psychologically, and slows you down physically. So how can we motivate ourselves to start what may seem like the overwhelming task of decluttering our homes.

- You can't do it in 5 or 10 minute chunks of time. You need to put a few hours on your calendar and honor the commitment.
- Sort things into three piles – Keep, Toss and Donate.
- Tools you'll need – label maker, trash bags, file folders and nice boxes for storing things you wish to keep
- Keep the memories, get rid of the stuff!

Removing toxic people from your life is another story. They can introduce unnecessary stress into your life and cause chaos that will drag you down. Dealing with toxic people can be unavoidable but the way you respond to toxic people is your choice.

If toxic people are getting the best of you, it's important to limit their influence. In some cases, that may mean refusing to waste time thinking about that person. In more serious cases, it may mean cutting a toxic person out of your life.

Nine telltale signs toxic people are getting the best of you:

- You Talk About Them a Lot.
- You Lose Your Temper.
- Your Self-Esteem Dwindles.
- You Blame Them for Your Behavior.
- You Dread Spending Time With Them.
- You Stoop to Their Level.
- You Don't Set Healthy Boundaries.
- You Resort to Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms.
- Your Relationships Suffer.