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Downtown 1



The High Line

JUNE

TOPIC(S): **Medical resources, Falling, and All the stuff we've accumulated in our life.**

Medical resources:

- On 24th Street and Seventh Avenue – the Gerontology Center through Beth Israel Hospital. You must be a Beth Israel patient, and the Doctor has to be affiliated. Wright Center on Aging which is affiliated through Cornell on First Avenue between 76-77th Streets.
- Falling and not reaching out. A member shared that she fell and isolated herself for a few weeks without telling family or friends about her injury. She said that she just wanted some time for herself without everyone getting all caught up and wanting to give her attention. It turned out to be a great time to read a few good books.
- Stuff. We also talked about holding onto stuff others have given us over the years. Can we let it go? What if we want to move to a smaller apartment because you're selling the one you have? Is it okay to let go of your stuff and buy new stuff? Also, the whole process of going through all your stuff can be overwhelming.

SEPTEMBER

TOPIC: **Health issues**

- Back pain. Our member doesn't want surgery because she's concerned with possible negative results that she's heard and read about. This led to a discussion on alternative non-surgical pain relief such as yoga. It was suggested trying a gentle yoga class. One of our local centers is Integral Yoga on 13th Street between 6-7th Avenues.
- Trying to be vegetarian. Another member talked about an earlier experience in her life when she went to the Kushi Institute in Northampton, Massachusetts. She spent almost two weeks there learning how to eat vegetarian. She was able to get off her rheumatoid arthritis medicine. She also eliminated sugar and caffeine from her diet. She indicated she lived that way for a good number of years, and it made a big difference in her life.

- We also talked about clinical depression. Do we go to a grief group or take a pill? There seem to be so many people around us who are leaving, either from death or they have moved away.
Could meditation be helpful? Shambhala Meditation Center on 22nd Street between 6-7th Avenues was mentioned. They offer a Mindfulness Meditation course where you can learn how to establish a meditation practice and bring mindfulness into daily life. They also have a course for seniors.
We talked about medical marijuana to help alleviate chronic pain. It's now legal in New York. Unfortunately, depression is not currently covered.

DECEMBER

TOPIC: Is there a person in your life that had a profound impact and what did you get from that person?

For some, confidence was not given as a child. They had low self-esteem. Her teacher helped her see something else, and she developed a love of learning.

One member shared how working with a Personal Trainer for many years changed her life. Another member developed an appreciation for art because of her teacher. They also felt confident about public speaking and found out how much they like language.

Midtown East Afternoon



Ed Koch Bridge

JANUARY

TOPIC: 5 Things You Can't Live Without

It was interesting how wide-ranging our needs are. The list included: family and friends, a telephone land-line, color TV, healthy food, water, vitamins, tennis, music, art, museums, iPhone/iPad, sweets, automatic garage door opener, ice cream, chocolate, TV, theatre, health, classical music, synagogue community, running, swimming, work, email, dancing, being in nature and hope. This is what sustains us.

Midtown East



Citicorp

JANUARY

TOPIC: Our changing perceptions of time and stress.

Some of the women noted that as they're getting older it takes them longer to do things, cutting into their time and increasing their stress levels. They felt they needed to manage their time better, particularly in terms of calculating how long it will take to get somewhere or to complete a project.

Others said that now that they have so much time they worry they're not being productive enough and look for ways to do more with that time.

A couple of others said they were not stressed about time and were enjoying their retirement. "I've rewired, not retired" said one. "You need to make a new structure for yourself when you retire. I always volunteered and still do," she said. Another said that the key to a perfect retirement for her was never setting the alarm or making appointments before 11 am.

They were the exception, though. Most talked about the stress that has come with their time management problems. They agreed that while they felt stressed to accomplish a task or meet a deadline, it was a terrific feeling if they succeeded.

It was determined that the guilt about wasting time was cultural, because ours is a business culture; we're trained to follow the rules and make the most of our time. And most were planning to do just that.

Upper East Side 2



The Frick

NOVEMBER

TOPIC: **Our mothers and how they have affected our lives**

It was surprising how emotional it was for many people. Several women discussed not liking their Mothers or having a difficult relationship with them. Several talked about missing their Mothers and how much they admired them. One member teared up remembering how much she enjoyed doing things with her Mother and how much her Mother sacrificed to help her. It was an intimate evening and I was pleased that members felt safe discussing the topic.

JANUARY

TOPIC: **Resources**

One member recommended a book helpful to her "Who Will Take Care of me when I'm Old" She also recommended Health Advocates (hafop.org.) which offers free chair yoga and other free exercise programs held at UES churches. They also offer a free home safety visit. She also recommended classes at Asphalt Green. JCC has a "What Matters" program to discuss end of life issues.

JASA, Jewish Association of Social Service Agencies, offers all sorts of programs for seniors. www.jasa.org.

IDNYC offers different participating cultural associations each year. For example, this year Symphony Space and Soho Playhouse are new. See www.nyc.gov/idnyc for details. Members do not need to obtain a new IDNYC card each year.

Others recommended free lectures at local hospitals including HSS and Weill Cornell. NY Presbyterian Weill Cornell offers "A Matter of Balance" program which started Feb 15 at a cost of \$50 for 8 sessions. Call Health Outreach at [212- 746-4351](tel:212-746-4351).

MoMA offers a free program called MoMA Prime Time for seniors. Information is available through mom.org/primetime. One member attended a collage making class there where MoMA offered free materials. They offer free gallery talks, film screenings and all sorts of events.

Another member distributed a two-page handout, "NY on a Shoe String." This includes Museums (free days), Theatre/Concert/Dance at a reduced cost, Summer Activities in NYC, Travel, Education, and other great sites for seniors.

Another member distributed directions from the NY Public Library for downloading books to kindle or a computer (at no cost). The library also offers a film program.

Movie pass, which offers unlimited movies for \$7.95 a month, billed annually was discussed.

Rockefeller University offers free concerts at noon on Fridays. There are "Peoples Concerts" on line. Manhattan School of Music and Julliard offer free concerts Wednesdays.

Liz Krueger has a great monthly newsletter. The JCC has great inexpensive movies and other programs.

Upper East Side 3



The Met

JANUARY

TOPIC: Long-Term Friends

Some of our friends have moved away; some of us have lost friends because their spouse retired, and they've disappeared from our lives. They're no longer there for us in our time of need. One member shared that her best friend had passed away.

We reflected that friends get seriously ill, and some fall away. You don't know what to say in this situation. People don't know what's expected of them. What if this happens to me? I don't want to confront it.

We realized that later in life people aren't looking for new friends – even though we're looking. Getting older, we don't socialize as much. One member shared that she moved away and came back. She mentioned that some of her friends had moved on (without her). Relationships require energy and attention.

Some of the characteristics we're looking for in friends, now that we're older include: surrounding ourselves with people who have positive energy, compatibility, not willing to accept those with less patience.

We remarked about how precious friends from childhood are – for those of us who still have our best friend. They knew you before you became who you are. They validate the history of who you are – the audience for your life.

Another member commented how hard it is to be spontaneous. How challenging it is to call up a friend and say, “Hey, let’s get together now.”

TOPIC: Eating Alone

(A copy of, “My Tips for Eating Alone,” which was featured in the December 2017 issue of the Caring Times was given out.”

Many members expressed difficulty in going out to a restaurant by themselves for dinner. It’s okay for lunch, though. Another member looks for tables where other people are also by themselves to see if she can start a conversation with them. It was recommended that you take a seat at the bar of the restaurant. You could also take a book or newspaper to read until your food arrives. New York City has the best places to eat alone or go to the movies.

Upper West Side 1



Fairway Market

JANUARY

TOPIC: Could we have gotten further in our career if we hadn't been women?

One member did not believe that women could do things like be a surgeon or lawyer. She thought they were not capable of it. Another reminded us of the "doctor's wife" idea: they shouldn't work. Question of mores. And the fact that a woman had even graduated from Harvard Medical School was cause for wonder back in the day.

Another member noted the working-class values of her family discouraged reading. It was seen as valueless. But it was in group therapy that she discovered that she wanted an education.

Perhaps, someone observed, because "you'll become a snob." Although her mother didn't see the point in her going to college, her father helped her get a loan for her education. No stranger to betterment through education, later in life, he had had his education paid for by two entrepreneurs who saw his potential and wanted to invest in it. He was always creating things in the basement, for example milling metal plates. But while her brother also learned to

mill metal, another member cleaned and decorated her father's workspace. True to gender stereotypes, she wanted to study literature and become a writer, but of course, everyone knew when English majors graduated they would become secretaries.

A speaker said that she provided all the options she could to her daughters, but they were not particularly interested in demanding careers.

Our host reminded us of the traditional advice to women: work for the government, become a teacher -- think of the benefits and the security. While her career in direct response advertising, first at CBS and then the NY Times, was a better fit than teaching, it was very much a "Mad Men" kind of world in which women could not advance to management positions.

Someone else recalled that she too used to think when she called a firm that she needed to talk to a man because women "wouldn't know anything." But after graduating with a major in French literature from Hunter College, she discovered feminism. Her husband objected to her attending meetings with "man haters;" a prisoner of his "Weltanschauung" she noted about this largely absent man.

Another person recalled leaving Bryn Mawr to return to NYC and study English literature at Columbia. Although her father had always said she could do anything, as it turned out, pre-med was absolutely not for her. In the heady 1960's and 70's, she threw in her lot with a counter-cultural community on the Upper West Side; looking back, she regrets having made this decision.

"The place for women in the movement is prone" (Stokely Carmichael) described a disturbing contradiction in the progressive 1960's. Our member was part of the opposition, writing for "Off our Backs."

NEXT SESSION'S POSSIBLE TOPIC: What it means to be female in workplace and beyond. What it means to be a feminist, especially now with Me Too movement and all.

Upper West Side 2



116th St. Subway Station

NOVEMBER

TOPIC: **What Gives You Peace of Mind?**

Which issues, situations cause agitation, anxiety, stress, etc.? What coping strategies have you used to get back “Peace of Mind.”

First, we attempted a definition for “Peace of Mind”:

- Waking up without dreading anything
- Absence of worrying, stressing, obsessing
- Sense of completion
- Knowing children are okay

Next, we talked about how we attempt to reach Peace of Mind when in states of worry or anxiety. It was agreed that it is hard to achieve.

Here are some of the strategies:

- Physical exercise
- Talking it through with somebody
- TV, Reading, Listening to Music, Crossword Puzzles
- Being in a completely silent place (which is hard to find). Some turn off all media and stay silent at home
- Taking care of house plants
- Looking at a pretty view; many said they feel calm when near water
- Painting
- Meditation - some people are trying it
- Attempts to think we can deal with anything, as we have in the past, since there will always be problems

DECEMBER

TOPIC: Describe the negative and positive attributes of your parents and how they have formed some of your behaviors, attitudes, choices, etc.

JANUARY

TOPIC: End of Life Issues

Although the topic may seem daunting or depressing, we had a very fruitful discussion, with many useful suggestions.

Funerals and Cremations

One member reported that she had pre-paid her funeral and that in doing so, feels she has organized things so that nobody will have to make all these decisions. She learned a lot in the process:

- Be sure and understand the fees being paid and whether they will go up in the future. The money goes into a special account which keeps the changes to a minimum.
- By law you must be given a price list of all the details
- Read the contract
- Include details such as who should be informed, where the burial will take place, whether a notice should be put in the paper.

Other members of the group have planned for cremations or want to have one. It is necessary to be careful since there are special places which handle them, and they are much cheaper than standard funeral homes. One number: "All-Boro Cremation - 718 887 8168. The same check list applies to this planning.

Digital Estate

It was brought up that after death all online accounts, subscriptions, credit cards, and automatic payments must be stopped by someone. Some members have set up a Password Manager which puts all your passwords in one place so that someone can find them and deal with one's accounts. Some names of these vaults: "LastPass"; "Password Safe." We were also reminded that all legal documents such as Power of Attorney, Living Will, etc. should be checked occasionally.

Health Concerns

Most of us are worried about the prospect of dementia and other debilitating health illnesses. Some discussion took place about how to end one's life. Half of the people over 85 will get Alzheimer's. One organization named that gives advice: "Compassion and Choices" One member has instructed her daughter that if she has dementia, to stop treatment of any illness other than for pain.

Help When Unable to Care for Oneself

Time was spent on how to get help, especially if you can't afford it. For example, there are ways to qualify for Medicaid even if you have money. There are Geriatric Social Workers or Case Managers who work with people when their physical and mental resources are less strong. One of the members of the group has a contact who is a geriatric social worker. She (the social worker) has offered to answer questions about these issues either by email or attending a meeting. She is very knowledgeable about city agencies and services for older people.

Other comments under the topic: What if you live alone? How does anyone know about your situation? Some people have installed Alexa or Google Home - automatic speaker systems that respond to voice requests.

Upper West Side 3



West End Avenue

JANUARY

TOPIC: **What do you do to relax and de-stress?**

Members described the activities they utilize to relieve daily stress, including:

- Walking in Riverside Park
- Leisurely walking around the neighborhood
- Gardening, as a park volunteer
- Going to a movie
- Listening to music
- Binge-watching streamed TV programs
- Cooking; then inviting friends and family to enjoy the food
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Reading books
- Avoiding TV news and political shows
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Upper West Side 4



Soldiers and Sailors Monument

NOVEMBER

TOPIC: **The Road Not Taken**

As a group, except for one, we realized that looking back on our lives they should have, would have, could have were not taken and quite frankly, we are the better for having done what we

did. By and large all of us are satisfied that we made the best of what we could at that point in time and were proud of our successes. Only one person said that she wished that she had taken off a year when just out of college to be a personal assistant to a man who wanted to travel all over Europe. But then she may not have been in our NG! We are happy with who we are and what we have accomplished.

The discussion veered off to what we would like to tell young people now realizing that life for them is so different from ours. We also talked about mean managers and realized that sometimes you just need to leave jerks behind.

JANUARY

TOPIC: What I like about getting older

Initially, a couple of people admitted they first thought they didn't like anything about getting older. But, when they gave it some thought, they decided they appreciated the topic gave them the opportunity to think more positively about the reality of aging and of just being more positive in general. Some of the things mentioned were very practical, such as: I don't shop as much. I just shop my closet! And others were more about appreciating one's accumulated wisdom and experience, not caring as much about what others think of us, living in the moment instead of setting long term goals, having the freedom to decide one's priorities instead of dealing with job schedules, being grateful every day for small things as well as appreciating life's accomplishments, having self-confidence, being able to eliminate stress, and appreciating friends and family.

We also had some time at the end to get to know one another a bit more and that was a nice way to conclude the meeting.