

Sue Thompson's Beexceptional

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Have an Older, Bolder Christmas— It's the Best Time

"We grow neither better nor worse as we get old," wrote May Lamberton Becker, "but more like ourselves." I've written before of my dislike of the propensity those of my generation show in deciding they are old, which they gloomily communicate means decline and despair. What I'd like to see is what I know is true: getting older means some really, *really* good things. I'm taking this opportunity to consider how happy I am that I am more like myself than ever. I'm enjoying the wonderment that things that used to bother me a lot bother me not so much anymore. I'm celebrating knowing that as long as birds are flying and flowers are growing, God is taking care of me and I can rest in that, so there's no need to exert effort in making sure the earth revolves and the stars don't collide.

Among the benefits of growing older with style, I treasure these:

- I am becoming less insecure (and I say "becoming" because I can't shake it entirely). When I was younger, I would have fallen apart at feedback that I seem to show an inappropriate desire for attention or praise. (Heck, I would have fallen apart ten years ago over something like that.) Today I think, "Well, okay. That's probably true, even though I'd like to argue it, because I do like attention. I'm still a little insecure and I want to know I'm liked. Yeah, probably true. *C'est la vie.*" I'm older, and I know for a fact it doesn't mean the end of all good things to hear hard things.
- I admit I don't like the physical effects of aging, but I am far more aware than ever of the beauty that shines through those my age and older who have fun. Their skin looks healthier, their smiles are bigger, there's a glow of self-acceptance and comfort that speaks volumes—it attracts, and it's attractive. We take photographs and we realize sometimes that while those pictures show our friends, our pals look older in them than we experience them to be. It gives me a lift to know that if I really feel youthful and pretty, I will act that way—not inappropriately, mind you, but in a way

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that shows I'm grateful and lighthearted—and thus will often be perceived that way.

- I can make decisions without agonizing about the consequences. If things don't work out, they just don't, and I can still arise in the morning with a song. Granted, there are some decisions that can have major impact and I certainly take them seriously; it's just that I'm less afraid of what happens if the worst occurs, because a couple of times I've experienced the worst, and guess what? I'm still here.
- Friends mean more to me than ever. There have been five deaths of friends and relatives this year that have caused me to stop and deeply ponder how much my life was changed, enhanced, enriched by their presence. I have funny and touching stories about all of them, and I like a little tear now and then as I remember how I loved them. They were gifts who are worth a tear of loving remembrance. I'm insanely happy that I have friends with whom to share these memories, and that I have friends of all ages.

My high school friend, Jessica, tells me she has said to her daughter's friends when they are surprised she has some insight into their concerns, "What you don't understand is that I have been your age, but you have never been my age." I could preach a sermon on that! I truly believe no matter how old we are, as long as we are embracing the joys and available pleasures of life at any given moment, and growing not only older but more forgiving, more circumspect, more willing to let go, more accepting that we are flawed and people can see it but so what, more serious about being not-so-serious, more reasonable and less rules-oriented, more *real*—the young will see they need us. Generational differences do not have to mean impassable obstacles or intolerance of the slower / faster / grey-haired / pierced / balding / tattooed / opinionated / clueless; they can mean rich interactions and relationships that make all of us wiser.

Happy 2013. *

What's Up with "Your Character"?

I haven't done any interviews lately for my website, www.YourCharacterIsShowing.com, because I've been busy learning a new job, getting comfortable with a new working environment and new coworkers, and still doing my speaking/writing/stuff-that-makes-my-blood-sing on the side. But I will get to it again when I feel that I'm in the groove and

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Click here listen to interesting people talk about their character strengths!

YOUR CHARACTER IS SHOWING

can pay it the quality of attention it deserves. In the meantime, if you'd like to find out what strengths of character are your motivating forces, go to www.viacharacter.org and register to take the free survey. It's great to know what your wine is—what resides in you that can get better as the years go on! *

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There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.

Sophia Loren

You don't stop laughing when you grow old; you grow old when you stop laughing.

George Bernard Shaw

I'm pretty sure that eating chocolate keeps wrinkles away because I have never seen a 10 year-old with a Hershey bar and crow's feet.

Amy Neftzger

About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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