

Book review on Tuesdays with Morrie
By Nancy Wu

Is aging frightful?

We, at least many of us, try to keep our age secret as we grow older. The older we are, the more sensitive we are about our age. We are afraid of aging. We are uneasy about getting older; while Morrie had a special perspective about it. "I embrace aging," he said.

Why are we afraid of aging? When we are in our childhood, we hope to grow up faster. Yet, we try hard to stay in youth when we have to grow old. Some pay for treatments to make themselves look like younger than their real age. In some extreme cases people are so anxious about growing old that they suffer psychological problems. The most possible reason accounting for the fear is the overemphasis on the value of youth. When we think about youth, we associate it with vitality and freedom and many regard youth as the zenith of their lives. Thus, we try our best to retain youthfulness. No wonder we are disgusted at or even scared of getting older as it means losing our vigor and getting further away from birth and closer to death.

It seems that we have magnified the bright side of youth and underestimated the advantages of being old. It is true that youth is the heyday of our physical vigor. When we are young, we can go swimming, go dancing, even act at will, playing and working all the day without feeling tired. We cannot imagine how we could stand the decay in the sixties. However, we harbor this kind of fear because we do not realize what aging truly means. In fact, every stage in life has its bright side. Youth has its beauty, its advantages, its joy and its reasons to be admired and so does old age. Aging is not just decay but also growth. We are learning from the past while aging. We accumulate experience as we grow. One day we will be surprised by how valuable these lessons are as they prevent us from making the same mistake we saw or

committed in the past. Morrie is a great example to illustrate this point as he embodied the advantages of being experienced. When Morrie was a teenager, he was brought to a fur factory and saw how people made money off the sweat of others. Thus, as he grew, he determined that he would never do any work that exploited others. Moreover the working experience in a mental hospital made Morrie understand that money could not bring real satisfaction to people. Though the patients there were rich, they still lacked love, happiness and contentment since wealth could buy none of these things. To Morrie, the older he grew, the more he understood the value of love and the meaning of life. Similarly, we shall learn more about the world and recognize what the indispensable things in life are as we grow. Through years we lose youthfulness but acquire wisdom. Why should we fear aging?

Some middle-aged people always try to preserve their youthfulness and are reluctant to admit that they are aging. Yet, no matter how they deny, get angry about or bargain for their age, they still grow old as aging is inevitable in life. We are all aging from the minute we were born. Aging is a natural process of life and our age is part of ourselves. Ruminating on something over which we have no control only serves to raise anxiety. We should face the reality rather than trying to escape from it. It is no use pretending to be always 18. Instead of letting the deep uneasiness about aging weaken our self-esteem, we should accept aging. Remember Morrie's saying, "I embrace aging". He serenely accepted aging when it came. Once we accept how old we are, we can lead a life based on what we are able to do at each stage in life. Like Morrie, we should be delighted to be a child when we are, and be delighted to be middle-aged in our forties. Otherwise we will be trapped in anxiety and dismay and could not find the way-out.

Another thing that Morrie inspired me is that indeed what fears us is not aging but unsatisfied life. We are afraid of growing old because it implies that time for us to realize our dreams and to adjust our mistakes is running out. Some people have lived

without purposes for decades. When they finally find out what they want, not enough time is left for them to fulfill it. And there are people who pursue money and luxuries, however, are unsatisfied even till the end of their lives. Actually, we tend to look back to seek chance to remedy mistakes and achieve aims. If we have no regrets in the past, we will not look back and feel sorry about them. If we find clear goals in our lives, we try to achieve them utilizing all the opportunities. If we have found meaning in our lives, we want to go forward rather than going back. Morrie was very positive towards aging because he utilized every day to give out love and let it come in. So he did not bother about aging and wanted to go forward to see more in his life. Therefore, what we should do is not to slow down aging, but to find meaning and purpose in our lives and cherish the limited time to lead a fulfilled life.

Morrie is really a great man as well as a great teacher. He knew how to act appropriately in every stage of life. He accepted what he could do at different ages and even enjoyed his dependence in the final stage of his life. He was able to overcome the fear of aging. He told us it is foolish to resist the natural progress in life. We would better embrace it pleasantly. Morrie is our mentor who enlightens us to develop a healthier and positive attitude towards aging.

Aging is a blessing in disguise. "The only way to get wise is to get experienced," as the saying goes. We acquire knowledge and wisdom from the past. I remember I was naïve and aimless in childhood. Now being a teenager, I understand myself and the world more. I set my goals and direction. Though up till now I cannot face aging fearlessly, I try to appreciate the growing process and different advantages of each life stage. Hoping that everyone can learn to be glad to go forward and age gracefully.

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