

Men and AgeSong

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Why are few men involved with AgeSong Marin?

The Independent Journal has run several articles over the past year suggesting that aging presents men with a greater psychological challenge than it does women.

There is much in the literature to suggest that men are far more likely than women to either deny their aging or resign themselves to it. While women still live longer than men, men are closing the age gap. So how are men facing the challenge of a longer life? Or are they?

While we can't stop the aging process we can prepare for it, and one of the best ways to prepare is to share one's feelings, experiences and concerns (yes, even fears) with others at the same stage in life. AgeSong Marin (agesongmarin.org) is an eight-year-old program designed to assist its participants to prepare for the physical, emotional and personal challenges that come with life's third act.

Yet only 15 percent of the hundreds of participants over the years have been male. One has to ask why.

Perhaps it's because, until this past generation, men have been counted on to be their family's bread-winners. Men persevered in spite of the doubts, fears and concerns about aging that might bother them internally. Aging often signaled the first step towards retirement and the eventual loss of one's livelihood, often the most positive aspect of a man's self-image.

Retirement too often turned a vital breadwinner into a passive couch potato augmented with occasional breakfasts at the corner diner with male peers to kibbutz sports, grandkids and days of yore.

This is unfortunate because men are no more immune from the challenges of aging than women even though Viagra might make us believe otherwise.

Sharing ideas and feelings with peers, be they men or women, is a source of strength, not a sign of weakness. In the face of aging we are all vulnerable.

As has been said before, aging is not for sissies. The best source of strength are your peers, many of whom are facing the same challenges as you. For almost a decade AgeSong Marin has facilitated positive and often light-hearted discussions among one's peers. A number of women have taken advantage of this very worthwhile program in Marin. Why not men?

— *Mark Hoffman, San Rafael; group facilitator, AgeSong Marin*