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Lessons from the Elderly

A law of life that I find important is to respect and appreciate the elderly. The elderly are a precious gift. They give us insight to what the past was like and what may become of the future. Unfortunately, many times the elderly do not get treated with the respect they deserve. We, as a society, have become arrogant, and we don't realize how important the older generation is. Some treat them as if they were nuisances, rather than blessings; others treat them as if they were incompetent children, rather than the wise, experienced adults they really are. If we could just open our hearts to them, it is amazing how much we could learn from them. If nothing else, we could learn about compassion and how to listen and care for someone else.

When I was about 12 or 13 years old, my 89-year-old great-grandmother had a stroke. My sister had to live with her in order to take care of her. At that point in my life, I barely knew my grandma. Sure, I saw her on Christmas Eve and Easter, but other than that I rarely had a chance to see her. In a way, the stroke was a blessing in disguise. It allowed me to get to know and love my great-grandmother in a way I never knew I could.

After about a year in her own home, my great-grandma had a devastating fall and had to come live with my family. It was the best thing that has ever happened to me. It allowed me to talk to her and see her every day. She told me stories of when she was a child, playing with her brothers and sisters, and when she first met and fell in love with the man of her dreams. She told me about the pain of losing a person she had cared about deeply.

My great-grandma taught me so much about what life is supposed to be about. I know now that it is about living with no regrets. It is about living my life to the fullest and not worrying about the little things that can go wrong in my everyday routine. Life is about showing love and compassion to my family and friends because in a blink of an eye, they could be gone. She taught me that it is important to learn to forgive, because life is too short to hold grudges against someone. She also told me that everyone deserves my respect, no matter how much I may dislike him or her.

My great-grandma was a major influence in my life. If she hadn't lived with us, I don't think I would be the person I am today. She gave me so much insight into how I should live my life. When she died at the age of 91, I was obviously upset; however, she left a beautiful legacy that I will forever be grateful for. She shared with me her most sacred memories and lessons in life. In a way, she gave me a head start in life. I have learned from my great-grandma's mistakes and triumphs.

The point of this story is to prove that the elderly are more than just old people who can be put in a nursing home and forgotten about. They are our mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. They are the backbone of this society. They have taught us all of the values and lessons that we have learned in life thus far; but that doesn't mean they're finished teaching us yet. Just because they are physically weaker in body doesn't mean they are mentally inferior as well. To them they are still vibrant 22 year olds, just stuck in someone else's worn out body. My grandma told me so many times that she was shocked at the reflection in the mirror, because it wasn't her. Even up to the day she died, she pictured herself the young, vivacious woman she had always been. She loved life and wanted me to do the same.

The elderly have so much to offer if we just listen to them. They could tell us how to improve our lives by the experiences, lessons, and mistakes they have made in their own. I know my great-grandma has

changed my life; now it is time for all of us, as a society, to listen to the older generation and learn from what they are trying to teach us.