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FHS 1500 – Observation 5  
October 31, 2012

### **Late Adulthood (65 years and older)**

I happily chose to interview my mother about the senior issues she faces. My mother is 76-years old but she is a young-old. As the text points a young-old is mostly healthy, active, financially secure and independent and that is my mother. She loves to exercise and garden and she walks faster than most people. She recently has had a couple of medical scares and that has slowed her down a little. But she has every intention of getting back to speed.

We began our conversation discussing ageism. I have accompanied my mother to several doctor's appointments and I have witnessed firsthand the way my mother has been spoken to. The text describes elderspeak as the condescending way many speak to the elderly. I would often have a conversation with the receptionist, nurse or doctor and they would speak normally. Then they would turn to my mother and shorten their sentences and talk slower and sweeter. They often called her honey or sweetheart. I was offended by it but when I recently asked my mother if she had ever experienced anything like that she responded "no, I can't think of it." I reminded her of what I had witnessed and she passed that off as people just being polite. She did bring up a couple of instances when the billing offices had been rude. But she decided they were just rude people and that had nothing to do with age.

My mother has a theory that as she has gotten older she has gotten nicer. In turn people are just being nicer to her. She explained that she is rarely in a hurry now and she realizes other people have more important things they need to get done so she is happy to defer to others while

waiting in line or on the phone. Because of this almost everyone is sweet to her. I don't know that this is true but she believes it so I'm happy that in her world people are happy.

We discussed at length her health and senses. My mother has always had bad eyesight and stopped driving about 15 years ago. A few years ago she began to develop cataracts and her vision continued to worsen. However, she was able to have cataract surgery about a year ago and in the process they were able to correct her vision. So, ironically for my mother while most people's senses are getting worse at her age she actually can see better now than she ever has. She has decided not to start driving though because it makes her too nervous.

The text stresses the importance of exercise for the physical and mental health of the senior. My mother takes her health very seriously. Because she doesn't drive she walks almost everywhere. She started to jog a little about 8 years ago and has completed several 5K races. She explained to me that "the best part of the races is that she frequently wins in her age group because no one else in her age group is still alive." The University of Utah sends students to the senior center in her town and they work out with the seniors twice a week for 2 hours. She asked me to come observe the class and it was delightful. There were about ten people in the class. Many of them wore loafers or jeans with jackets and vests. My mom almost looked out of place at the exercise class in her workout clothes and Nikes. They went through a series of exercises that stressed balance and core. There were various abilities and the U of U students worked individually with those that needed more help. It was such a great class with such a positive atmosphere. While talking to my mother about exercise she did say she regretted that she didn't start earlier. She feels like she could be much stronger if she had begun lifting weights or jogging when she was in her 20s and not in her 60s.

I loved just talking to my mom about my mom. We spend a lot of time talking about my kids or politics but to hear her talk about her fears or her concerns along with the things that she is proud of or the things she remembers was delightful. My mother is not young and I realize that our time together is limited and so I will be conducting an interview every week so I can hear everything this wonderful, wise woman has to say about her life.