

**Growing older has its challenges,
but it's important to stay active**



My wife's mother is 94 and has lived with us the past three years, and she has been inspiring. She has inspired me by my not wanting to be like her if I ever reach that age, which probably is unlikely.

How does she inspire me? I have seen the value of staying active by watching her the past 14 years or so just settle into her recliner and watch TV as her main activity. As a result, she has deteriorated physically. She hasn't been able to walk for at least the past four-five years without a walker and then she can go maybe 30 feet on a good day before needing to take a rest. We've had therapists work with her, but she has no drive to improve herself. If someone isn't goading her into exercising, she won't do it. She has little quality of life. She keeps telling me, "Just wait until you're 94 and you'll see."

She might be right. There's no way for me to know at my age. But I hope I never lose the drive to exercise and to try maintaining a somewhat quality of life. She says growing old "ain't no fun." As the miles seem to get longer and longer when I'm jogging, I sometimes tend to agree with her.

But as I advance through the age divisions, she has given me perspectives on life that I had not had before. One, is to stay active, not matter how much you might want to sit down and maybe just turn on the TV and sip a beer. I had committed somewhat to the idea of staying active when I started running at age 40. I told myself then that I wanted to keep running or jogging (or walking) until I'm at least 80. But I will admit, it's getting harder and harder to hit the trails and maintain a semblance of a jogging schedule.

I'm certainly not as hard core about running as I once was. Missing a day almost wasn't an option...even on vacations. But now when grandkid activities or other stuff comes up that interferes with my jogging, I just shrug and say, I'll do it tomorrow. But I make sure I do it. My mind-set has changed in several ways; there was a time during my training runs that walking was seldom an option. Now, I will walk when I feel I need to, though I still have the mentality of not wanting to do it.

A person has to have the self-drive to be a runner or with any other activity. Sometimes, it isn't fun, but by watching my mother-in-law, I know that staying active is worth doing. Of course, I might be being a little harsh on her. I can't know how she's feeling. Yet, I know she has quit trying to help herself.

So, as you're lacing your running shoes and continue to advance through the age divisions, just remember to make your activity -- running, cycling, walking, etc. -- a lifelong commitment. Otherwise, getting into that older age division just might not be so much fun.