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# Culture Change in Practice

## What Are Old People For?



POSTED BY LAVRENE  
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Send your answer to this question  
in 25 words or less to  
[lavrene@actionpact.com](mailto:lavrene@actionpact.com). Include  
your Name, Facility and  
Occupation

***"Culture Change in Practice" is our own weblog where people can become involved in a conversation about Culture Change as it is practiced by professionals in real nursing homes. Feel free to join the conversation, or post a comment about something you have learned on your journey.***

**[www.culturechangenow.com/weblog.html](http://www.culturechangenow.com/weblog.html)**

We just finished Bill (Thomas') upcoming book, and it's a great read. Here's just one of many, many powerful thoughts, particularly interesting right now while we're all focused on the Olympics:

"Compared with the fluid stride of youth, the marks made by an older person can seem tentative and ungainly. This appearance is deceiving. The reality is that older people execute a highly evolved, richly detailed strategy that maintains upright ambulation into the last decades of life. Old people alter their gait in specific ways that account for very real changes in strength, endurance, coordination, sensation, and reaction time. The 'shuffling gait' keeps the feet close

to the ground and maximizes input from position sensors. The stance is widened to improve balance. The number of steps taken per minute is decreased to accommodate changes in endurance and to allow for increased reaction time. Keeping a human body upright and moving is a spectacular feat of coordination and reaction under any circumstances. Doing so in the ninth decade of life magnifies rather than diminishes the beauty of this achievement... similar to the Tour de France... when you see an old man or woman walking, you are witnessing a high-level performance. This is a tightly choreographed ballet, the product of decades of refinement. Watch and marvel. Miracles are all around you, once you know where to look."

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## What Are Old People For? *cont'd*

Responses so far:

9. To give us a guiding light in the fog of youth!

Jason Burton, Manager of Consultancy Services, Alzheimer's Australia

8. Old people bridge generations. They provide pearls of wisdom about perseverance, strength, truth and love. Their work has enabled us to have a future.

Darnell Simpson-Hampton, [St. Francis Country House](#)

7. Old people are the historians, teachers - the gatekeepers of future generations, embrace and honor them and the tasks ahead will seem less daunting.

Judy Lewis, Lancaster Health Group

6. "Old Folks" are living portraits that offer knowledge and compasses from their past as assistance to those younger in choosing and mapping their life pathways.

Roz Messerly

5. Old People are life enhancers who wrap us with a comforter of wisdom and experience.

Kathleen Eilers, President, Saint John's Communities, Inc., Milwaukee WI

4. What are old people for?  
**KNOWLEDGE.**

Brett de Wolf, Director of Maintenance, Halcyon House, Wesley Retirement Services, Washington, IA

3. Older people are here to teach us patience and the ability to love because they have experienced life.

Rita Hutton Kilsyth, Dutchcare, Melbourne, AU

2. Old people are the embodiment of our histories, our memories, and our culture.

Joyce T. Snodgrass, Direct Care Worker, Austin State School For the Mentally Retarded, Austin Texas.

1. They remind us from where we've come and to where we need to go. They encourage us to remember the past, as we look cautiously to the future while always remembering to live today for today.

Kevin Warren, MHA, CPHQ, Director of Quality Improvement, Texas Medical Foundation

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