

MAKING INTENTIONAL CHOICES – Submitted by Dr. Dale Johnson

In order to develop resiliency one must develop skills throughout life, such as making good intentional decisions. A personal story might illustrate this. A young couple in their mid-twenties were concerned about getting cancer because of family genetic history and were told by the physician, “don’t worry about getting cancer because there is a 65% chance that you will, but get a physical examination every year and it will be detected early and we can treat it.” The couple has been “cured” of cancer four times. Another family member seldom went to the doctor and at age 73 it was detected that he had stage four-colon cancer. He died seven months later. **Intentional choices do make a difference!**

Mary Pipher’s book entitled “*Women Rowing North, Navigating Life’s Current and Flourishing as We Age*” is primarily directed to women age 65 and older. (1) However, many of the concepts can be generalized to other ages and to men. Mary Pipher is a psychologist and has written several *New York Times* best sellers. **She describes and discusses intentional choices and how they relate to resiliency.**

Attitude trumps circumstances. We determine our own history, but not necessarily under conditions that we choose. **We all keep appointments we did not make.** Still we have the freedom to choose how we respond to inner or outer events. Luck is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for happiness. **However, attitude is a necessity and a sufficient condition for happiness.**

Happiness is a choice and a set of skills. We all live within the confines of the world as it is **but we have the freedom to frame that world in ways that allow us to be positive and grateful.** Once we have made the choice to be happy, we can develop a repertoire of skills to achieve our goals. It is never too late to be a happy person. **Hopelessness and happiness are both self-fulfilling prophecies.** We become who we believe we can be. We can reframe our situations in positive ways, being thankful and giving to others.

We all feel hopeless at times. Events have the power to knock us to our knees. Even with self-awareness, it’s too much to expect that our response to everything be transcendent. **We all grow weary of trying. However, we can move toward acceptance and resilience.** And our tragedies can teach us to trust and connect to others.

We have the opportunity for reflective decision making around time. We can regularly examine our current routines and habits and decide whether they are enjoyable or just habitual. We can set priorities and separate the essential from the nonessential. **Each of us has the freedom to decide what is essential. We can be intentional in our use of time, of money, and in relating to others.**

(1) Mary Pipher, *Women Rowing North, Navigating Life’s Currents and Flourishing as We Age*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) pp. 109 – 121.