

# Peace, Love and the 60s

## People of a certain age need to lighten up, get involved and make plans

By Jim Comer  
Special to this section

If you are on the far side of 50, you probably read the obituaries every day. Like this writer, you hope to stay out of that section while retaining your wits, health and independence. Here are a few proven strategies to help achieve that goal.

★ Hang out with people of all ages, opinions and hair styles. Do not limit yourself to those of your own age, political party or religion. Challenge yourself. Listen to rap. Go to a slam poetry club. Read War and Peace. Do yoga.

Three of the brightest, liveliest and youngest people I know are 79, 83 and 90. One runs a speakers' bureau and coaches aspiring keynoters. Another writes books, gives lectures and has a Rolodex that includes presidents and potentates. The

ninety-year-old gives speeches from her wheelchair and runs seminars on creativity and intuition. Two of them are cancer survivors and one can't walk, but their spirits are ageless.

★ Avoid the 10 o'clock news. Who can sleep peacefully after hearing about murder, car wrecks and rapes? That is not information you need to know. If you must watch television at all, which is highly questionable, stick with Jim Lehrer, Charlie Rose or The Daily Show.

★ Find a worthy cause and give yourself to it. Don't send a check, send yourself. It's hard to concentrate on minor aches and pains when you are trying to help end world hunger, raise funds to fight breast cancer or participate in an AIDS walk.

★ Get your legal house in order. There is peace of mind in knowing that your ducks are in a row. Seven out of 10 Americans, including many reading



Photo by Margaret Thomas-Barry  
Jim Comer's experiences in coping with his parents' aging have provided him with insights into how to age effectively. Here he is shown visiting with his mother.

this sentence, do not have a will. Ten out of ten are going to die. Those in their seventh decade without a will are deep into

mortality denial. They are likely to leave their money to the State of Texas and undeserving lawyers. Having a will does not mean you're going to die sooner. It simply guarantees that your estate goes to the people you love, not the nephew you loathe.

★ Forgive someone who did you wrong. Practice on your significant other. Resentment is cholesterol of the spirit. It's bad for your digestion, hard on your heart and takes up storage space on your hard drive.

★ Don't let your last act be written by someone else. Purchase a burial plan so your children won't squander 10,000 dollars on a showy casket for your funeral. Write down what you want for your memorial service. Unless you put it in writing, they may show home videos or have someone sing "You Light Up My Life." Choose someone who really likes you to

do the eulogy.

★ Say yes more often. If a friend invites you to hear her grandson's rock band, take your ear plugs and go. Try Sushi. Take a Baptist to Esther's Follies. Wear clothes to Hippie Hollow.

★ Replay the great moments of your life and share them with your kids. Tell them about your senior prom, your first love, and the day they were born. Talk about anything but your gall bladder.

No one can guarantee that your attitude will keep you from a premature arrival at the Pearly Gates. However, when your face does appear on the obituary page you may be smiling.

*Jim Comer is a speaker and writer living in Austin. His new book, "Parenting Your Parents" will be published in November.*