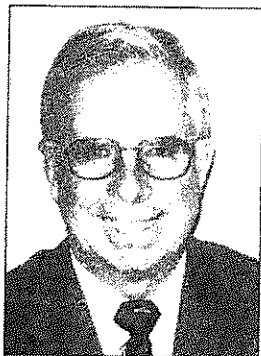


Adapting to a New Normal

I like to play golf, although I don't get to play very often and I don't play very well—perhaps there's a connection there. I sometimes play with an eighty-year old gentleman, let's call him Jim (not his real name). His friends tell me that in his younger days he was an outstanding golfer and all-round athlete. Now, even when he hits a good drive, he shakes his head and says "I used to hit 'em

On the Senior Agenda



By William F. Flynn Jr.

a lot longer," or "I don't know if I can do it again." My encouragement doesn't penetrate his frustration. Geriatricians would say that Jim is struggling to adapt to a new normal. That's a challenge we all face as we age, particularly with respect to our physical powers. I think the challenge depends on one's starting point. Unlike Jim, since I never was a very

good golfer, my new golf normal represents less of a decline than Jim's.

On golf holes there are markers for teeing off located at various distances away from the hole. The tee marker closest to the hole, often by as much as forty or more yards, is known as the women's tee. Despite that title, even some women golfers disdain using it. Recently a golf pro at a very challenging course told me he tries to persuade older players, both men and women, to move up to tees closer to the hole. He said that on most par four holes, if a player hits their normal tee shot, they should have an opportunity to hit a good second shot onto the green. If they insist on hitting from the most distant tee markers, despite an inevitable decline in how far they can drive the ball, they will make a hard game even harder, and a lot less enjoy-

able. Worst of all, at least on the golf course, they may become that dreaded

in life. That starts with allowing our imagination to consider alternatives. If we

"I believe our aging journey requires us to adapt to a new normal, whether on the golf course or elsewhere in life. That starts with allowing our imagination to consider alternatives."

stereotype—the cranky old person.

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do, we may uncover options and opportunities we had never considered. Joan Chittister writes, "Limitations, at any age and every age, call out something in

us that we never considered before." The second, and perhaps more difficult, step in doing something new or unconventional often involves overcoming the fear of what other people, especially close friends, will think of us as we try something different. "Imagine that—he teed off from the 'women's tee'!" Maggie Kuhn, founder of the Gray Panthers, should be our inspiration. She urged us, as seniors, to act boldly by saying or doing something outrageous every day. Our greatest limitations are those we place upon ourselves, or allow others to place upon us.

William F. Flynn Jr. is executive director of the Senior Agenda Coalition. Contact him at senioragenda@yaho.com.
