



### Facts on Aging Series #3

Celebrate Elderhood is a Kalamazoo County initiative that brings attention to the issues of aging, challenging myths and misconceptions so elders can reach their full potential no matter what their circumstances are, benefiting themselves, their families and communities. In this column we will continue to explore the myths and realities of aging.

#### **Myth #4 – Older adults are less anxious about death than are younger and middle-aged adults.**

**True.** Although death in industrialized society has come to be associated primarily with old age, studies generally indicate that death anxiety in adults decreases as age increases. Some of the factors that may contribute to lower anxiety are a sense that goals have been fulfilled, living longer than expected, coming to terms with the end of life, and dealing with the death of friends and relatives. However, this shouldn't obscure the fact that some groups have great concern about death and dying, and that the process of dying might be feared more than death itself.

The topic of death and dying is not one that people want to discuss, but it is something that needs more understanding and discussion by everyone, including the medical community and long term care facilities that are often a part of the end of life journey.

Celebrate Elderhood is pleased to be a partner with Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan as they bring the documentary, "Being Mortal" to the Kalamazoo area. It is based on Dr. Atul Gawande's acclaimed book, "Being Mortal" which delves into the hopes of patients and families facing terminal illness. The film investigates the practice of caring for the dying and explores the relationships between patients and their doctors. Dr. Gawande uses his own experiences to share stories from the people and families he encounters, laying down a foundation of how we can do better as a medical community and society to assist people to live out their lives with dignity.

All the film's screenings will be at Oakland Centre, 2255 W. Centre Avenue, Portage the following dates:

January 18, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

February 19, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

March 15, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

After the film's screening, attendees can participate in a conversation on how to take concrete steps to identify and communicate wishes about end-of-life goals and preferences. There is no charge to attend but space is limited. RSVP to [laura.latiolais@hospiceswmi.org](mailto:laura.latiolais@hospiceswmi.org) or call 269-488-0789.

*Contributors to this article include Judy Sivak, Area Agency on Aging IIIA Director and L. Breytspraak & L. Badura (2015), "Facts on Aging Quiz" (revised; based on Palmore (1977; 1981).*