

SENIOR SCAPE: Wicked winter wanes...

... what now?

By Sylvia Dickens

It's been a long, bitter winter, hasn't it? Are you glad it's coming to a close? How did you spend your time? Have you watched everything that television has to offer, including the ads? Have you read the entire Internet? Then you definitely need a lifestyle boost.

Has winter turned you into a claustrophobic or an agoraphobic? Whichever it is, it's time to get out of the house.

Claustrophobia

This is a common condition experienced by people who are stuck indoors for extended periods of time. What happens initially is they become anxious and restless. They feel suffocated. Over time, this can morph into agoraphobia.

Fear of open spaces

Being housebound might not necessarily be because of the weather. For some seniors, it can be either because of mobility restrictions, health issues or a case of agoraphobia. This debilitating condition affects people of all ages. When staying home overrides all other options, it can trigger depression and varying degrees of anxiety at the mere thought of going out. For them, staying in is less painful than the alternative, but far from ideal.

Senior health is directly affected by a person's lifestyle, apart from the many problems that can occur from lack of exercise. Without human contact, communication skills can suffer. Self esteem diminishes. Low self confidence paralyses the individual. Going out becomes a fearful experience that cannot easily be overcome.

The strange thing about agoraphobia is that it can creep up on you. If you find yourself preferring to staying home more, and reluctant to get out, then you could be headed in that direction. Even if you enjoy your own company, you still should get out and mingle.

Solutions

If mobility is an issue, there are services to help. CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors) offers a transportation program to help seniors with shopping, personal errands and social outings. Driver assistance includes support in and out of the vehicle, with groceries and some mobility equipment. While there is a flat fee per trip, it is one option for you. Call them at 905-713-6596 for more information.

You might want to make the Aurora Seniors' Centre your first outing, where you will find a welcoming group who are more than happy to help you find a good activity for you. Once you get to the Seniors' Centre, you might find someone who lives near you who would be glad to give you a lift to and from the Center. Before long, you will feel comfortable there and will look forward to your next visit.

If you would like to see a movie, you can do that at the Centre. Do you like eating out? You can do that, too. How about dancing? They have that as well. You can play bingo, Scrabble, cards, carpet bowling, badminton, or pickle ball, just for starters.

Do you like walking, but don't want to go alone? Join the Walkers' Club. The members take weekly walks through local parks and wild areas, as long as weather and trail conditions permit. What a great way to make a few acquaintances, have lively and stimulating chats and experience the peace and serenity of the forests while getting valuable exercise and fresh air.

Established members

Are you stuck in a rut? How about trying something else for a change? You can still participate in your regular activities, but why not toss in a few alternatives? You'll add some spice to your day which, in turn, will trigger different emotions and stimulate your brain to think in a new direction. That's something we all should do on a regular basis. Otherwise, our brains become stagnant which can lead to brain dysfunction on varying levels.

It's important to our overall health to get out from behind our own four walls. A visit to the library offers a great experience because it's serene, you become aware of other people without having to mingle, and there is a wealth of excitement and entertainment in those books. The library at the Seniors' Centre offers a similar experience. Drop in anytime.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre and all it has to offer, drop by 90 John West Way, visit the web site www.auroraseniors.ca, email auroraseniors@rogers.com or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.