Words of wisdom for returning snowbirds

Anne Palumbo

nowbirds, can we talk? Now that the weather is warming up, many of you will be returning in droves if you haven't (already). You'll be tuned and rested, and full of care-free stories about walking here and getting there and dining out nightly. We Northerners who stayed put got it. You're happy. And you're especially happy now that our weather is improving. It's why you smell south, after all.

The problem is, we stay-putters are not feeling so jubilant these days. Much of our flirty resolve to embrace the winter has flown the frozen coop, so to speak, and we've had it up to our chapped lips with shoveling and layering and wiping our dripping noses. We're grumpy, okay? Which means that, as much as we're excited about your return, we're not. Truth is, we're feeling a bit battered about and fragile, some of us hanging on by a thread. Whereas an April dusting of snow may be novel for you ("Honey, oh look! It's all fluffy and sparkly!") it's downright spirit-breaking for us ("Honey, oh god! It's ( sob) not ( sob, sob, sob) fair!"). And being said, you returning snowbirds might want to take some precautions during your first encounters with family and friends to ensure a friendly visit. You should begin by minimizing your healthy glow. Seriously, dust your skin with powder, wear colors that don't offset your radiance, cover yourself from head to toe -- do whatever it takes to make us feel more comfortable in our own pasty skin. Understand that our bitter comments about too much sun exposure are more rooted in envy than they are in sincere concern. Even though you may think it's funny, do not ask, "Has anyone ever mentioned you have the pallor of a corpse?" We've already heard it, several times over.

Next, do everything in your power to erase this sentence from your memory bank, "(never cooked, not once!" Yes, yes, of course you hit all the early-bird specials, night after night, and you had a heyday doing so. But we don't really want to hear about your blackened mahi-mahi or your pan-seared grouper or your conch fritters. Nor do we need details about your impromptu cocktail parties with enough appetizers to tide you over till morning. Being tethered to our hot stoves all winter long has been hard enough; we can't bear to hear you never lifted a finger in your south-of-the-border kitchen. By all means, suppress the urge to utter one more peep about the glorious weather you experienced: the brilliant sun, the silvery breezes, the luxurious warmth, the wispy clouds. Listen, you tortured us enough over the winter with your daily weather updates, your blue sky background selfies and your crowd-gathering sunsets to look for that mysterious green flash -- so we're good. We don't need any more words about your precipitation-free winter that incredibly cured all your nagging ailments. Not one.

Snowbirds, take heart: our chilly stance won't last forever! With some sun and warmth, we promise we'll thaw and be more receptive to your southern stories. Just keep them under a minute and we'll be happy as a stuffed stone crab.

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7 reasons to stay socially, physically active as you age

Today's seniors are living longer than ever. Why? Advances in medicine are making it easier for seniors to manage common chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and more. Plus, more and more, seniors over 60 are dedicating themselves to staying socially and physically active as they age.

Exploring new friendships, activities, hobbies and maintaining a regular exercise schedule is key to healthy aging. In fact, studies show that doing so can help seniors live longer, more independent lives. Here are some of the key benefits of staying active as you age:

- Improves cardio health. Regular activity can help seniors maintain a healthy body weight and improve circulation, decreasing your risk for high blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases.
- Boosts mood. Maintaining active friendships as you age, as well as regular exercise, can help ward off feelings of stress, anxiety and depression. It can also ward off feelings of isolation, particularly in seniors who live alone.
- Provides a sense of purpose. Regularly engaging in social and physical activities give seniors something to look forward to. Something as simple as challenging yourself to join a new senior-friendly exercise class, or master a new hobby can provide a sense of purpose and boost self-esteem.
- Reduces risk of potentially dangerous falls. Moderate exercises such as walking, yoga, water aerobics and more can help seniors build muscle strength, improve flexibility, promote better balance and increase overall mobility.
- May help you live longer. Studies show that seniors who are regularly active may live up to five years longer than those who are sedentary.
- Additional, staying socially as you age may also increase overall lifespan according to researchers.

Decreases risk of cognitive decline. Numerous studies have shown a link between staying active and the reduced risk of cognitive decline, as well as a decrease in the development of Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

Episcopal SeniorLife Communities offers a variety of ways for seniors to stay active, no matter where you live. Neighborhood programs offer exercise, fun and friendship to both ESSL residents and seniors living in the area. Each program is tailored to the desires of our members and helps seniors expand their social networks through book clubs, nutrition classes and more, while also providing senior-friendly exercise programs to build strength, endurance and balance.

Learn more at episcopalsensorlife.org or by calling (585) 546-8400.