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Take action rather than live in fear

Seek support from available community resources to reduce anxiety about your future

[Tom Carney](#) / North Shore News

February 16, 2014 12:00 AM

My view of surveys is that they are often more entertaining than informative.

There are some exceptions. When people are asked what scares them the most, a fear of public speaking tops the list. Indeed for decades now across all age groups in North America the fear of public speaking is cited consistently as our number 1 fear.

Coming in a distant second is the fear of death. That means, to borrow a line from comedian Jerry Seinfeld, that at a funeral, most people would rather be in the casket than standing beside it giving the eulogy.

What keeps seniors on the North Shore awake at night? In 2011, as part of an Age Friendly survey, the Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society (lionsviewseniorsplanning.com) asked 1,200 North Shore seniors aged 55 and up what worries them the most.

Health issues topped the list. By far the biggest fear of those surveyed was losing their independence. Illness or incapacitation, declining health, falling and losing one's driver's licence, in that order, rounded out the top five worries of those surveyed.

At the bottom of the worry list was growing old alone, finding transportation to get around, not being busy enough and death.

When the survey results were released, many expressed surprise that death ranked at the bottom of the worry index across all age groups. In the comment section of the survey one senior wrote that she thought about death but she didn't worry about it. That view seemed to be reflective of the group polled.

What we are afraid of changes over the years. Those aged 55 to 74 were most worried about moving into more suitable housing, financial concerns, transportation and having someone to look after them in their later years.

Seniors aged 75 and over were most concerned about falling, losing their driver's licence and having difficulty getting around.

Now, I'm not sharing these results with you to make you more anxious. My hope is that this information will spur you to take some action. We all have fears and the best way to deal with them is to be proactive. And for most of us the sooner we deal with our fears the better.

If you have a fear of falling, for example, then make some modifications in your home or your routine to reduce your risk of having a fall.

If you're worried about your ability to be safe on the road enroll in a driving refresher course offered by an accredited driver's school or enroll in a defensive driver's course.

If you're afraid that your finances are not adequate to fund your retirement then consider seeking financial advice from a trusted and knowledgeable professional.

What worries your seniors columnist? Well, from my perch I have a number of worries, as you might imagine. If I had to narrow it down to just one thing it would be that our public policy neglects the safety of our seniors, but that's a topic for another column.

Tom Carney is the former executive director of the Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. Ideas for future columns are welcome. tomcarney@telus.net (<mailto:tomcarney@telus.net>)

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