



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

June 14, 2022

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Dr. Charles Edwards, II, MD Founding Physician, Memory & Movement Charlotte

By Elly Clary

Advances in medicine, education and standard of living mean older Americans – many of whom are baby boomers – can live longer. Yet many don't take advantage.

Charlotte Dr. Chuck Edwards noticed this and decided to do something about it. He shared with Charlotte Rotarians his observations and suggestions for a longer and happier life.

Fueling the doctor's passion was his parents' deaths of Alzheimer's and his own need to reinvent himself. A highly successful cardiovascular surgeon, he developed a hand tremor after decades of practice. At 64, he faced the question of "what's next."

He returned to medical school at Johns Hopkins University and earned a fellowship in dementia care. Then he established Memory & Movement Charlotte which operates with two other doctors on Billingsley Road. For almost a decade it has treated Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other memory and movement disorders, working with thousands of patients and caregivers.

Dr. Edwards wrote a book called "Much Abides: A Survival Guide for Aging Lives." It outlines what he's learned about forging a happy and fruitful life in retirement. He stresses exercise, education, social interaction, and proper medicine. And to grab the attention of anyone who may need help, he developed a list of 10 mistakes of aging.

Often, Dr. Edwards said, people make mistakes because they don't know how to deal with retirement. "Lives that six months ago were rich and had purpose," he said, "are now blank because they don't know what the future is going to bring them."

He prescribes finding purpose and peace. Cherish being free of career demands and pursue a personal and often delayed agenda, he advises.

The alternative isn't productive.

He spoke of people with excellent education and plenty of money who "have dedicated lives to achievement." But because they wonder what to do in retirement, they can suffer anxiety, depression, and loneliness. They worry about insignificant memory glitches and don't deal with problems with relatively easy solutions, such as hearing loss, high blood pressure, and sleep apnea.

Curiosity can suffer, he said, but interest in others' lives and opinions is fulfilling. His advice: "Speak like you know you're right but listen like you might be wrong."

People he sees also tend to underestimate the amount of time they have left to live. In reality, the number of people who live past 90 is growing rapidly, as is the category of those older than 100.

"Each of us every day is writing a story," Dr. Edwards said. "We're writing our story. When we have that thought in our brain, we start to honor and value the thoughts that we have."

Dr. Edwards' book "Much Abides" is available at Park Road Books. Half of the book sales go to his non-profit that provides care, treatment, and support to patients and their families dealing with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and related disorders.

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/720394045>
The speaker presentation begins at 19:15 minutes.