



# CARING TIMES

## Neighborhood Groups

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## Downtown 2



**Union Square**

### **October**

#### **Stepping outside of your comfort zone**

Members had a lively discussion.

- One member of the group who is a superb photographer plans to submit her photographs to a greeting card company.
- Several members said they were not “joiners” and had to push themselves to join TTN and get involved in peer groups and committees, but are now very glad they did.
- One member, who has always been interested in fashion but spent her career in an unrelated field, and who describes herself as a “non-self-starter,” has an opportunity to assist someone with a very successful fashion-related business; she decided she will call her.
- All in all, everyone left the meeting feeling very positive after a very supportive and uplifting discussion.

## Downtown 3



**Union Square Green Market**

### **September**

#### **A Range of Topics**

The topic of the refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East was of great importance to the group. We pondered what we, as TTN members, could do to urge our country to get more involved in the situation. Those who wanted

to have their voices heard were urged to email/write/call their representatives in Congress and express their views on the crisis.

We also reviewed our meeting procedures:

- We agreed to continue to meet on Wednesday every six weeks.
- Have planned discussion topics for each meeting.
- Books that are of interest could be a topic of discussion for future meetings.
- Made a point to read The Caring Times. The newsletter is available online to members.
- The group discussed meeting for other activities outside our regular meetings, but decided this could be done on an informal basis between members.

## **October Book Report**

As agreed at our last meeting the group read, Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Everyone thought it was the most provocative meeting we've had. The book is a letter to the author's teenaged son, relating his experiences living as a black man in America, knowing those of his son will be different.

He discusses several points

- Fear as the driving motivation, an ever-present state in which black people in American ghettos live.
- There are also "dreamers" in our society, white and black, who identify as white. They believe erroneously in the ability to advance based solely on hard work.
- The struggle is the most important thing. He offers no solutions but stresses the importance of continuing to ask questions.
- The problem is societal, a function of policies and economic reality, not merely the misdeeds of a handful of people

Members Observations

- Coates indicates this is an institutional problem and individuals are doing what society has mandated. Therefore, we should not focus on the individual perpetrators alone; and we cannot turn away from the individual incidents that cost black lives.
- Coates' ideas should be widely circulated and discussed in both black and white communities.
- Change will happen at a glacial speed over many generations.

## Midtown East



Ed Koch Bridge

### **September**

#### **Summer Catch-up and Members' Concerns**

- Members traveled far and wide over the summer months; one woman traveled to Belgium with her father to visit old friends there who had sheltered him during the war; another flew to Houston for a mini 50th reunion with high school classmates; a third participated in the TTN Leadership Conference in Santa Fe, where they were housed in a convent.
- Others stayed in town and took a variety of day trips; destinations included FDR's house in Hyde Park; the Barnes Museum in Philadelphia; and the Vanderbilt Mansion on Long Island.
- Major concerns among members are dealing with serious health problems, changing friendships as we age; finding alternative living arrangements; coping with limited accessibility on buses, in theaters and restaurants.

### **October**

#### **Friendships**

Members discussed types of friendships and how to make friends. Here is a list of friendships, issues and how to work with them.

Toxic friendships are usually considered unequal in that one person's needs are not satisfied.

- One member wants to end a long term friendship because the friend's behavior bothers her.
- Another member has a sick neighbor who constantly calls her for help and is very demanding of her time.
- It was also suggested that as we age, many women become self-absorbed and are unable to be supportive of someone else's needs.
- To save a toxic friendship try to make the changes which would help the friendship survive. If this is not possible, "cut the ties."

Positive friendships are balanced and reciprocal, but don't always have to be a 50-50 proposition.

- One member said that a close friend only wishes to have contact about every three months but she accepts this arrangement in order to maintain the friendship.
- It becomes more difficult to make friends as we get older, and we must reach out to others.

How to meet new friends

- Locally-- attend lectures, take classes, join organizations - committees - special interest groups (tennis, cooking, etc.).
- Initiate contact - speak to neighbors, post a notice in your laundry room, start a conversation on the check-out line at the market, join an online dating site.
- Travel with strangers - Road Scholar or organized tour groups.

## **November**

### **Miss Manner's Unorthodox Views:**

- Our discussion focused on unorthodox views on aging and our perceptions of aging.
- How members feel when being offered a seat on the bus and the appropriate response: Thank you or no thank you.
- How members felt when they reached the senior discount age.

The pros and cons of looking your age.

- Dressing appropriately for our age.
- Being uncomfortable in attending some senior events populated with so many frail elderly.

## Queens



**The Unisphere**

## **October**

### **Aging Gracefully**

The group had a lively discussion on the topic and came up with a "Top 10 List."

- Exercise regularly - it keeps your heart young and improves mood and brainpower.

- Eat mostly a Mediterranean diet - lots of fruits and veggies, cook with olive oil and get your vitamins and minerals from food not pills.
- “Sin” less - don’t smoke and limit alcohol.
- Get 6 ½ or more hours of sleep - if you can’t, “power naps” are a good thing.
- Take care of your physical and mental health - get rid of emotional baggage and change things you can control.
- Keep friends & family close.
- Learn something new - challenge your brain daily, participate in group activities, volunteer.
- Wear your wrinkles with pride and embrace the signs of aging or if you’d rather not, there’s no shame in getting help from a plastic surgeon.
- See the glass as half full - don’t dwell on the negatives.
- Accept the things you can’t change and change the things you can.

## Upper East Side



Gracie mansion

## **August Summer**

The topic of our first meeting was: What books, movies, museums, plays, places have you or do you want to enjoy this summer?

- **Movies**  
Ricky and The Flash  
Wolf Pack
- **Plays**  
Hamilton
- **Books**  
The Edge of Eternity by Ken Follett  
My Brilliant Friend by Elena Ferrante; Plus three others in the series:  
The Story of a New Name

Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay

The Story of the Child

Chilean Mine Disaster - numerous books on the subject

Black Rage by William H. Grier

The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson

- **Free venues**

[SummerStage](#)

[Harlem Meer](#) Concerts

[Marcus Garvey Park](#)

[New-York Historical Society](#)

Chelsea Market/Highline

- **Museums**

Metropolitan Museum

China Through The Looking Glass - Costume Institute

John Singer Sargent - Portraits

MoMa

Jacob Lawrence - Migration Series

- **Other Free Stuff**

Download audio and e-books from the **NY Public Library** for free. You will need a library card. <http://ebooks.nypl.org/9E299CD4-AE07-4A2A-9257-61E7D9890F4B/10/50/en/Default.htm>

**IDNYC** <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/idnyc/index.page> For various discounts throughout the five boroughs

- **Transportation**

Via Ride Share <http://ridewithvia.com/> \$5 per ride Houston St. to 110 St., river to river

Go Airport Shuttle <http://goairportshuttle.com/>

La Guardia/Kennedy/Newark airport

Bus to the airports

<http://www.nycairporter.com/OurServices/JFKAirportShuttle.aspx>

## September

### How to be Your Own Best Advocate and Get What You Want

Members engaged in a spirited discussion of how to negotiate to get what they want as their own Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Here are some suggestions.

- Always start positively.
- If you receive great service, compliment the individual and ask to speak to a supervisor/manager. To support and empower women especially, go online to compliment an individual who provided good service. Most companies pay close attention to social media and only

get complaints. Companies have employee customer service incentive rewards programs.

- We discussed various service problems from Time Warner Cable to Citibank to Macy's and learned how they were successfully resolved.
- Our Town, a weekly newspaper, lists Useful Contacts for emergencies, and governmental agencies.

## **October**

### **Urgent Care Centers and Emergency Rooms**

Members discussed when to use these two providers. They each fill an important niche. Here is what we learned.

- Urgent Care is useful for minor problems when you cannot or do not want to see your Primary Care Physician.
- Emergency rooms are for serious problems.
- CityMD on East 86th Street between First and Second Avenue is the closest to our neighborhood and received good reviews from those who have been there.

## **November**

### **Resources**

Members noted resources of all kinds including merchants, whose names were too numerous to include in this report, who provide great service. This was an excellent meeting and very well attended. A bulleted list follows.

- Neighborhood restaurants
- Hairdressers
- Physical therapists and doctors
- Shops
- Car sharing services
- Computer gurus
- Pharmacies
- Travel agencies

## Upper West Side1



Fairway Market

### **August**

#### **Meaningful Retirement**

We asked ourselves how to make retirement more meaningful. A provocative discussion followed including these points:

- It is important to better understand the aging process: one member is writing a biography of feminist professor from Barnard, Mirra Komarovsky.
- Ask yourself how important is it to make a contribution to society - references to Jimmy Carter and his TED talk about violations of human (women's) rights.
- Contribute to self-promote your own wellness and well-being.
- Have a purpose; reason to get up in morning; sense of self-fulfillment.
- Question may be how do you feel most alive? For some it's writing their own memoirs; for others volunteering in the health field makes a difference, volunteering at a museum or taking courses.
- Importance of addressing issues around death and to use appropriate language in discussing it rather than euphemisms; reference to Oliver Sacks' writings.
- One member made reference to Gretchen Rubin's book, Better Than Before, in relation to feeling more vulnerable as we age. The book focuses on understanding our temperaments and why we act the way we do; it enables us to take control of our own lives
- Other references and resources discussed: Vivian Gornick's memoir, The Odd Woman in the City, and her earlier book, Fierce Attachments.

### **September**

#### **Final Photo Presentations**

We had our final photo presentations for what has been our ongoing topic of self-image: then and now.

- One member said she had a hard time coming up with photos to share and wondered if she threw them away. She enjoyed motherhood but the marriage ended in divorce. She is now estranged from her son.

Her second marriage also ended in divorce. Currently she is not satisfied with her life.

- Another member's childhood photos showed a distinctive child, the daughter of a medical doctor who spent the war serving in Italy and Egypt. She married and divorced after adopting two children. Her second marriage, to an abusive man, lasted for 20 years but it also ended in divorce.
- A third woman was married for 54 years but felt trapped for most of those years because her husband was verbally abusive and demanding. Despite being urged to leave she just couldn't do it. After the recent death of her husband, she feels totally liberated. She is happy to have had two children and an extremely fulfilling 30-year career as a high school math teacher. In her seventies she does not feel old or decrepit. Now she tutors math and enjoys working with the students

## **October**

### **The Many Facets of Purpose**

Members discussed a number of questions related to purpose. Here are some points

- Some retirees find purpose in visiting all the places they had always wanted to see.
- In retirement, purpose has to do with remaining active to maintain health; being useful, as a benefit to society and other people.
- Another member has struggled with losing all motivation to do anything at all after her retirement. She hates it and noted, metaphorically, that she "doesn't have a bucket list." "At some point as older people, perhaps we have already fulfilled our purpose"?
- Does finding such a thing exist or is it even necessary? A member said her own retirement kind of trickled in. She didn't like her work and didn't feel very useful doing it. After leaving the workforce, she has found fulfillment in volunteering and doing the everyday things which make her life work.
- Being alive presupposes a sense of purpose. Connectedness to other people gives one member a *raison d'etre*. For her, life gets more interesting because she has the time to read the newspaper, pursue friendships, and take courses in areas she has always wanted to learn more about.
- One member also challenged the existential overtones of "looking for a purpose."
- Another member emphasized how fascinating she finds daily life and how gratifying the simple beauty of the ordinary is.

- Several members felt that “mini purposes” have come to suffice in their lives, i.e. getting to the gym three times a week, doing the everyday things which make our lives work.
- As the group shared their ages, with a majority in the range of 80 years old, it was noted how sad it is that society views "old people" in such a negative light.
- Several members stated that there aren't enough hours in the day for all the things they enjoy doing.

## Upper West Side 2



**116<sup>th</sup> St. Subway Station**

### **August Forgiveness**

We discussed the kinds of issues that come up calling for forgiveness (or not), what to do if someone keeps committing the same offense, how to determine what constitutes a deal-breaker in a friendship, and what kinds of behaviors are unforgivable.

Highlights:

- One way of handling a friend’s upsetting behavior: if the friendship is important and the kinds of offenses are fairly minor, try not to put yourself in a vulnerable position and retain the friendship.
- Try talking to your friend to try to resolve the issue; if you cannot resolve it, you may have to let go of the friendship.
- Unforgivable behaviors: the Holocaust, the murder of nine churchgoers in South Carolina, rape of a child.
- Recommended books: Forgiveness: How to make peace with your past and get on with your life, by Dr. Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon, Warner Books 1990. Forgiving Our Parents, by Dwight Lee Wolter.

### **September Self-Image**

The group explored the issue of self-image. Has it changed over the years, and if so, in what way? Members made the following observations:

- Self-Image was always identified with a job. After retirement one member questioned who am now? She had no prestige, felt older.
- Most members present felt a change in self image after retirement.
- Marriage: self-image was of a wife, mother, and dominated by spouse.
- Childhood self-image was feeling very special. She thought that someday she would be famous and well known for something. Later she realized that being average and doing less spectacular things is fine and desirable.
- Appearance: Some always felt the need to be well groomed and made up. Others did so only while working and didn't bother after retirement. Another made a bigger effort after age 60.
- One member said that being part of TTN helped her self-image as a single woman instead of always being half of a couple.

## **October**

### **A Social Potluck Supper**

Members talked about movies, plays, music, and books they had recently enjoyed.

Some specific venues

- Claire Tow Theater
- Theater for a New Audience (near BAM)
- Museum of the City of NY
- Cooper Hewitt
- St. James Chapel at Columbia
- Music Mondays at Advent Lutheran Church
- Jupiter Symphony Players

Books

- The Road Not Taken, by David Orr
- 1491 New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus, by Charles C Mann
- Empire of the Summer Moon, by SC Gwynne
- Neither Wolf Nor Dog, by Kent Nerburn

## Upper West Side 3



West End Avenue

### **August**

#### **Keeping Memory Sharp**

A jump-off point was a column from David Brooks called, "Building Attention Span" (July 10, 2015 NYT). This piece deals largely with the mind and how it handles and adjusts to technology.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/10/opinion/david-brooks-building-attention-span.html>

- Many of us start feeling overwhelmed as we sort through what's of personal interest, the deluge of emails and advertising, and access to multiple information/entertainment platforms.
- We determined that direct interpersonal relationships (face-to-face, telephone conversations and assorted daily transactions) have altered dramatically. Email responses are poor, invitations can be ignored, RSVPs are almost dead and fairly meaningless, personal accountability a more fungible "construct."
- No one is crankily shouting, "Get off my lawn"—at least not yet. We just want to stay sane and maintain individual control over the constant buzz of "Ooh, a new shiny!"

So

- Prioritize what you receive to keep your brain clear.
- If possible, keep a couple of different email accounts to separate work/personal from marketing/commercial messages.
- Maintain good health practices.
- Budget tech time to allow yourself breathing space (literally) and time to re-experience natural life without beeps and images.
- Shut it all off before bedtime!

### **September**

#### **Coping with Stress**

Different definitions of what stress really is: a state of worry; a strong feeling of anxiety. Stress can be seen as a symptom, an "alert" that signals

we need to make a change. There are different reactions to stress, and therefore different coping mechanisms.

- Seek outside counsel, or therapy.
- Learn and incorporate muscle relaxation exercises, e.g. progressive muscle relaxation that allows us to be aware of the tensing, then the relaxing, of our bodies.
- Visualization techniques - create a safe and serene place and allow the mind to go there.
- An online resource is Headspace, [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com) a meditation site where content can be downloaded that will help support relaxing the mind.
- Get support from your friends. The concept of the “3AM friend” was offered – where we have a friend who we can text during the night if we feel especially anxious.
- Stress relief also includes attending to physical needs: flu shots; a pneumonia vaccine; periodic mammograms; colonoscopy; eye exams and a check- up with a gynecologist.

## **October**

### **Fear**

Members discussed several situations they are afraid of. Here are some of the most important points

- Safety on the street and when to use the VIA app for a \$5 shared cab ride.
- Bicycles are particularly threatening. If hit:
  - Take a picture.
  - Ask local establishments for video footage from a near-by building.
  - Document the incident with the police.
  - Set up your cell phone contacts with AAICE (AA to get first alphabet listing, and In Case of Emergency contacts)
  - Greatest common fear is loss of control particularly in end-of-life situations. We talked about the MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) form [https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/patients/patient\\_rights/molst/](https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/patients/patient_rights/molst/).

It is also important to tell at least two (unrelated) people about your wishes in order to help your loved ones share the burden.

## Upper West Side Afternoon



Museum of Natural History

### **August Forgiveness**

Time heals all wounds...maybe. We had a provocative conversation centering on the following questions: what helps you to forgive; what hinders it? Members made the following remarks in answer to those questions.

#### Issues

- With parents (even if they're dead, it doesn't make it easier to forgive)
- Similarly also, issues with siblings, friends, or exes
- Unresolved wounds tend to engender anger and/or brooding- a physical state of tension that can become a health issue.

Specifically, members noted points to talk about touching on forgiveness in all its ramifications:

- Actual forgiveness and what one needs, subjectively to consider, in order to forgive.
- Forgiving but not forgetting.
- Resentment and not being able to forgive (sometimes leading to a severing of a relationship).
- Ways to cope: "venting" with someone else to get validation of your own experience and also to get a different perspective on what might be your part.

### **September**

#### **Two topics: Self-forgiveness (conclusion) and Habits**

Members began the meeting by addressing self-forgiveness a point not discussed at last month's meeting. It was generally agreed that self-forgiveness is both difficult and widely felt over a number of areas including mistakes, poor choices.

Difficult Self-Forgiveness issues

- Especially mistakes made as a parent.
- Not being the perfect parent.

- Not living up to who we'd like to be, or to societal expectations, and standards we set for ourselves.
- Not standing up for ourselves or someone else.
- For hurting someone else, even unintentionally.
- For impulsive unwise actions

### **Habits**

The second part of our meeting focused on physical and emotional behaviors. This discussion led us into a further investigation of the differences between habits, rituals and addictions. Better Than Before, by Gretchen Rubin was suggested as a good book to read about habits.

### **October**

#### **Gratitude**

Members talked about what they were grateful for.

- Common responses emerged around being grateful to be alive, days without pain,
- family and friends.
- Unique responses included being grateful for the ability to speak other languages easily, enjoyment of a good book, living in a country like ours, finding joy in movement/dance.
- We also shared the ways in which we attempt to stay positive even when external circumstances are difficult.

FYI Info: Martha Stewart Center at Mt. Sinai