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Last week a 70 year old man was the topic of an article about Haiti's relief efforts.

According to the reporter, this man sat at the bottom of a hill unable to climb to the top where rations of water and food were being distributed by relief workers.

The image stuck in my mind because this gentleman's dilemma has been multiplied by the thousands among older Haitians now in need of some kind of assistance. And help will likely come from someone else--someone **able bodied and probably younger**.

So I have these observations to share— on how we acknowledge that we need help; followed by acceptance of that help, and finally the role young people will play in providing that help.

First-- in our lifetimes we will need to depend upon someone. Whether able bodied or disabled we all depend upon another human being for something. And the odds are that as we age we will accumulate various ailments & disabilities that fate force that we acknowledge that we cannot do for ourselves what we once did.

For my generation—the baby boomers-- that acknowledgement will be difficult.

We boomers are independent, autonomous and all- knowing.

We wrestled with basic questions about biology and answered them by uncovering the secrets of the human genome. After we mastered DNA technology, we miniaturized computers and digitized information. **We are invincible and we think we know everything there is to know; because we are the generation that invented cyberspace!**

However, in my own lifetime, I wonder whether my fellow baby-boomer-road-warriors, will ever be willing to acknowledge, ask for and then accept the help that we will eventually need. Will we learn to just let go?

I realize that we are here to talk about the political will of government(s) to address issues related to aging. However, during my work with older adults with new disabilities, I observed that many refused to even ask their families for help or were afraid to ask. And of course, that **acknowledgement** was the necessary first step to organizing the care plan because the next step was **accepting that help**.

Acknowledgement and Acceptance. These are private, internal struggles that my generation must wrestle. We boomers will need to put aside our inflated self-pride and realize a different kind of personal esteem that can occur from the offer of assistance from our families who are motivated by their instincts to help.

Assistance for the older Haitian gentleman that I spoke of would likely come from someone younger. So concluding remarks turn to intergenerational cooperation.

Today, I smile when I recall experts talk about cultural differences in caregiving. For example, here in the U.S., Latino families like many other cultures are known to be multi-generational. We experts speak of multi-generational families as the exception and not the rule for most cultures around the world--does it ever occur to us here in the US that we Americans are the exception and the rest of the world is the rule?

The current generation of aging experts, many of them are boomers themselves, may be complicit in a perpetuating the culture clash of aging issues. For example, we need to keep in mind that our American boomer values are shaped by a very different set of realities than families living in developing nations.

Multi-generational families may actually be the rule outside the U.S. So we boomers must take care to not over interpret our own reality and assume it plays well outside of the U.S.

In conclusion, we must avoid exporting the exaggerated boomer sense of autonomy and independence to other parts of the world where **INTER-dependency of generations** is the RULE and the instincts of **filial responsibility are strong and highly valued**.

We need our young people around us. They revitalize our points of view. Their perspectives on poverty alleviation, global warming, scientific discovery and innovation must be understood in the context of our boomer advocacy for social security, tax policy and social protection. In that advocacy, we need to take care and consider that 'What's good for boomers should also bode well for the welfare of and futures of our young people.'

Thank you.

