

‘Melanie’ Interview Transcript

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[00:00:00] **Interviewer 1:** All right. Um, so we just want to start off with a little bit of background. So if you could just start by telling us a little bit about yourself.

[00:00:07] **Older Adult:** Sure. Um, I, uh,

[00:00:14] **Older Adult:** my name is [redacted] and, um, I grew up back in Pennsylvania and, uh, I attended, uh, the University of Scranton in Penn Scranton, PA in, uh, communications with my, uh, my BA. And, uh, so I was born and raised there for much of my life. And I have a brother and a sister, but everyone else in my family, except for my sisters passed away.

[00:00:46] **Older Adult:** Um, so she's eight years older than me. My brother was 12. I kind of came along. Well, when my mom was 40. So, um, after that, I met a young man from the Middle East and, uh, We got married, I met him in college, and, um, He was from, uh, Iran. And, uh, so, I was gonna go live there. But then, the revolution started. And, uh, we, I lived in Canada for six months.

[00:01:19] **Older Adult:** Um, so, in Montreal for three, in Toronto for three, and we got married up there. And then, uh, he, uh, went into, uh, I put him through, uh, school. at OSU in Oklahoma. I didn't know he was abusive, so, um, we got a divorce after ten years of marriage. And then, after being out, I moved down here. I had my brother who was down here for a bit.

[00:01:52] **Older Adult:** And then, uh, I went to, uh, after twenty years I decided I wanted to go back to school. Because he wouldn't let me. And that was our agreement. I got, uh, accepted. I worked really hard, took my GRE and got accepted into, uh, Texas Women's down here. And, um, It just so happened we found out my brother had terminal lung cancer.

[00:02:19] **Older Adult:** And, uh, so two days later I was out biking. I used to bike all the time. And, uh, I broke my back. Laughter. And then, uh, two days later, my mother had a, a mini stroke. So, we were all in the hospital at the same time. And that's when, kind of like, it was really hard for me. Um, because I was getting over the bad marriage and the abusiveness.

[00:02:49] **Older Adult:** Um, and I lost everything. I had a go on disability, and that was a fight in itself. Mm hmm. I took three years to even get it, so I had no income

coming in, nothing, no job, and luckily I had a friend who I could stay with because I had to get out of where I was, and then it took me, I'd say a good two and a half years to even try to recuperate from breaking my back, and uh, then it's just, my life just, I felt I had lost so much.

[00:03:37] **Older Adult:** Um, I was going from place to place. Well, my mother died in 2000, so I had a little money that she left to each of us. And, um, I had to use that to live off of, um, instead of trying to save it. I didn't know anything about financials or, you know, because I wasn't, that wasn't my major. I didn't know anything.

[00:04:01] **Older Adult:** So I just had to live off of and when that ran out it was just like hard because I went from place to place to place not knowing where I was going to be. And I ended up, um, eventually in, uh, an assisted living

[00:04:19] **Older Adult:** which was kind of like a nightmare. And, uh, then I met somebody in the assisted living and, uh, that's kind of how I got where I am now. I don't know how long this will last either though, you know, that's my big concern.

[00:04:39] **Interviewer 1:** Thank you for sharing all of that. Um, just wanted to get a few different like, dates or timeline things together.

[00:04:47] **Interviewer 1:** Uh, so you said you moved down here to Texas a few days before breaking your back? Or to somewhere else around the

[00:04:53] **Older Adult:** south? No, um, after my, after my divorce, um, uh, well, my, my, uh, ex husband. Like, I took care of everything for him. I helped him get his citizenship. I helped him, uh, basically almost get his job at, at, where he got it, because it was for the Department of Defense, because his, uh, he was an engineer.

[00:05:21] **Older Adult:** And at that time, uh, in order to really get a good job, um, you had to be a citizen. And, um, so I had to write my Congress. Um, I was a congressperson where I was living in Oklahoma because the judge, he was supposed to swear in all the people, um, right, right at the time he was going to graduate, um, her husband died and she was going to take a year off, so, what do we do in a year?

[00:05:49] **Older Adult:** I mean, he's graduating and he needed a job there, and um, so the congressperson was very helpful and helped, um, get a different judge, so that everybody. He could get a good citizenship and so that he could get his job. And, um, so, so then, uh, things after 10 years, my aunt passed away and she was like a second mother to me.

[00:06:14] **Older Adult:** Mm-Hmm. . And, uh, so I got sick. Uh, I was working really hard and, and, uh, it was just too much. And my husband was not being supportive

in any way, shape or form. Mm-Hmm. . And in many cases, the emotional abuse is actually worse than the physical abuse. So, he told me to get out and don't come back until I'm better.

[00:06:40] **Older Adult:** You know, you think marriage is for better or worse in sickness and in health. Well, uh, guess not. And, uh, so I had a brother living down here and, uh, I came down here.

[00:06:57] **Older Adult:** I voluntarily put myself in a hospital. Thank you. Because, uh, I had strep throat for nine months. I couldn't get rid of it and we couldn't figure out why. And, um, my husband had smacked me in the mouth and said, Do you want to go to the doctor again? Because I said, I still think I have it. And I went to my doctor, who was a young guy, real nice, in Oklahoma.

[00:07:18] **Older Adult:** And he said, [redacted], yes, you still have it, but what happened to you? And I told him, my husband did this. And, um, so then I came down to here, to Dallas, Texas. And, uh, I stayed with my brother. Was in the hospital for about three weeks. Great, was a great program at the time. It was in with all kind of people who were going through divorces and just all, you know, bad marriages too and, uh, PTSD, anxiety, all kind of stuff.

[00:07:58] **Older Adult:** And, um, my roommate was a really nice lady around my age. And, uh, she asked me to come live with her. So, uh, I went to live with her because her husband had forced her to get an abortion. And she had two other kids and it was really, really hard on her. So, we lived together and she had a daughter at home and a son in the service.

[00:08:27] **Older Adult:** So, that's how I got here. And, um, it was good with her and found a therapist who was Iranian. For which was really good because he was a really sweet person. Um, he even called my husband at the time to try to make things better and get therapy and he wouldn't. Um, so, um, I went through the divorce process and he got everything.

[00:09:03] **Older Adult:** I just left. And, uh, so then I, I found a job down here, uh, at the university. Um, of, uh, University of Dallas. Um, and I had worked in universities prior to that. So, um, I like the university atmosphere. It was really nice. Um, although you didn't get paid much, but, um, I had thought, well, maybe I could go back to school, too.

[00:09:29] **Older Adult:** That would be a great place. So, um, I worked there, and I had my own place, and then decided, you know, I wanted to go back, degree, and worked hard, got accepted. into the program, and I would, uh, get up early in the morning around 5, go to the first class, and then come back, go to work. Then I, I got back into bike riding.

[00:09:56] **Older Adult:** I was riding like 28 miles every day after work. And,

[00:10:05] **Older Adult:** and, uh

[00:10:07] **Interviewer 1:** So how long ago was that back

[00:10:09] **Older Adult:** injury? Um, that was in 1996.

[00:10:14] **Interviewer 1:** And then, when did you move to the, uh, Dallas area? Uh, I moved to the Dallas area in, uh,

[00:10:19] **Older Adult:** I was down here at the time. I moved here in, uh,

[00:10:25] **Older Adult:** 1988.

[00:10:28] **Interviewer 1:** Um, and then what has it been like growing older in, in Dallas? What's your daily routine like now?

[00:10:35] **Older Adult:** Presently? Yeah. Um, it's changed a lot, especially since COVID. Um, I'm a, I'm a night owl type person. So, and I always have been. Yeah, growing up. So I stay up later at night and, which I don't like. I wish I was a morning person.

[00:10:56] **Older Adult:** Um, so I basically stay up during the night and it's so quiet so you can do, it's just nice for me as a, as a night owl 'cause I can go online and research and I belong to different organizations and I'm, you know, trying to write poetry again. Mm-Hmm. and also create community to connect, but. Uh, we don't have a car.

[00:11:22] **Older Adult:** Mm-Hmm. . So it's really hard I to get around. I either have to walk any place that's close or I have to, um, take a lift. And to be honest, I live at the, at the poverty level, right below it. Mm-Hmm. . And it's really hard making ends meet. Mm-Hmm. . Um, and even just to do the little extras you wanna do, like to join a, the create community I'm on, I have to pay.

[00:11:50] **Older Adult:** Some, some, you know, for months. To be involved with that and submit poetry and stuff like that. So, it's been really hard. Really hard. So, I sleep later and then I get up and I just, I eat two meals a day. I have a smoothie for brunch and then make dinner

[00:12:20] **Older Adult:** to strengthen myself. So, it's been really hard. But I get, I get, uh, I've been getting really bad chronic migraines on an every day basis. And that's something maybe later we'll get into why I can't get what I need from the insurance company. To, they won't pay for something that's on their formulary. Um,

so I like talking to people so if I can get out and go someplace, because my roommate's a real introvert.

[00:12:57] **Older Adult:** I want to go to the room, play video games, and that's it. They're, yeah, they're an IT person. And, um, they just like being by themselves. And I'm an introvert to a degree, but I'm an ambivert. I like to go out, and I like to talk, and I like to hear people's stories. Because I, you learn so much from other people's stories, you know.

[00:13:21] **Older Adult:** And, um, so when you hold presents for someone. Instead of trying to rehearse what you're going to say, um, you learn so much. And I still subscribe to what Maya Angelou said. People will forget what you say. People will forget what you do. But people will never forget how you made them feel. And I like to make people feel good.

[00:13:49] **Older Adult:** So, you know, going out and meeting people, and people who are willing to talk. It makes my day, it helps me feel better about, you know, it cheers me up an awful lot. Cause I've gone through a lot of depression and anxiety from everything I've been through in my life. And I've had two suicides, not me, but people very close to me within a year of each other.

[00:14:13] **Older Adult:** Um,

[00:14:17] **Older Adult:** go through, cause, at the time the one happened, I mean, I couldn't tell anybody, I was still working at that time. And people wouldn't understand.

[00:14:31] **Older Adult:** And the other one was a gentleman I was going to hopefully marry who took his life,

[00:14:42] **Older Adult:** you know. Yeah. Uh, yeah. I've been through a lot in my life. And the breaking of the back was the start of a lot of bad things for me because I was such an active person. Um, and then like a lot of stuff that brought me joy, you

[00:15:06] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah. I definitely want to get more into how things change after that back injury.

[00:15:10] **Interviewer 1:** But, um, before we go there, um, you mentioned that you really like talking with people and that you joined this poetry, uh, create group. Um, what are some of your other hobbies or some of the things that you're like researching online at nighttime?

[00:15:24] **Older Adult:** Oh my God, everything and everything. I join up for so many webinars.

[00:15:30] **Older Adult:** I can't even watch them all. Um, I just, I'm a very curious person. And, um, I, I never normally talk about myself, but you know, the older you get, it seems like what a waste of time. Why do I figure everything out now at the age I'm at? Because if I would have known all that when I was younger, I would be so much farther ahead today.

[00:15:59] **Older Adult:** You figure it out later in life, and, um, I, uh, yeah, all kind of stuff. Uh, uh, psychology. I like to know why people do what they do. It's always been fascinating for me. Um, so, I even get courses that, if I was, had my degree in psychology, I had a minor in that, in business administration, but, um, yeah, I could have gotten CEU credits.

[00:16:26] **Older Adult:** I listened to all kind of things like that. Um, Also, I'm in this, like, escape adulthood community, which is actually cool because the gentleman is a, uh, an artist. He's a professional speaker. And, um, he and his wife started this group, and it's about escaping adult itis, is what he says. Um, and it's a fun community, because actually, he's saying we need, as adults, we do so much adulting that we need to learn how to.

[00:17:00] **Older Adult:** Recapture the wonder of childhood and things like that. And make fun at work, have some fun, and not take everything so seriously. Um, so that, that's, that's kind of fun to join. And there's new prompts every month and stuff. Are

[00:17:18] **Interviewer 1:** these mostly online communities?

[00:17:20] **Older Adult:** Yes, yeah. Um, A lot happened to with health and wellness.

[00:17:25] **Older Adult:** I'm really interested in that. Nutrition. Yeah, I know an awful lot about nutrition. I should go for a nutrition degree. Maybe, maybe that's what I need to go for. Yeah. What were you

[00:17:36] **Interviewer 1:** getting your, uh, masters in?

[00:17:39] **Older Adult:** I was, I got, I really wanted physical therapy, but when I wanted to go, it's when my ex said we agreed on it.

[00:17:46] **Older Adult:** And then he goes, no, you can't. Just have kids and stay home and I'm like, that's not me. And, um, so I, I got into occupational therapy and I wasn't sure that's what I really wanted, but I did all the internships I had to do for the, uh, to, to get accepted. And I figured, well, if I, I don't like it, I can always change to something else.

[00:18:13] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Um, and then you mentioned you don't have a car. And it can be hard to get, to get around.

[00:18:20] **Older Adult:** It's very difficult because, um, you know, Lyft is expensive.

[00:18:27] **Interviewer 1:** Have you ever had a car in the area?

[00:18:30] **Older Adult:** Yeah. Yeah. And when I, when we moved here, right when COVID, the shutdown was, um, I was due to get my license renewed, but I needed to get, I couldn't do it online.

[00:18:41] **Older Adult:** I had to go in for an eye exam and of course, which couldn't do anything. And so I still need to get that. Hopefully they'll renew it for me. I may have to go through a driving test again. I don't know, but yeah, I want to get that back. But you know, I don't have the car. My car was stolen. So, um, and then twice in my life, everything I owned was stolen.

[00:19:07] **Older Adult:** Um, so. So your,

[00:19:10] **Interviewer 1:** your license is, needs to be renewed because during COVID you weren't able to take the vision

[00:19:16] **Older Adult:** test. Right, because they shut everything down here. You couldn't even go see an ophthalmologist or anybody. And so, when you could, everybody was saying on our next door neighbor app around here that it was taking like six months to a year or more to even get into the Department of Public Safety to get your license renewed.

[00:19:39] **Older Adult:** And so, and plus Medicare doesn't pay for eye or dental. Um, So that makes it really difficult too. Um, and if I had a card it would make it so much easier, you know, to get to doctor's appointments or anything else. Because when you have to call, I mean, you'd have to call a Medicaid, uh, access to care, I think it is.

[00:20:11] **Older Adult:** And you have to go see a doctor who is Medicaid and And they are very hard to find down here. Let me tell you, Texas never expanded Medicaid when the federal government was said they could. They were one of the states that didn't. We have some of the worst, uh, you know, healthcare. If you don't have the money, it's really difficult.

[00:20:41] **Older Adult:** And I don't know how many people who were physical therapists and doctors told me never go on a Medicare Advantage plan. Stay with traditional Medicare, because you can choose who you want to see. I think HMOs have been the worst thing that's ever happened here in America. And healthcare has really gone, gone down here.

[00:21:08] **Older Adult:** In fact, I have two bills now. They're saying I owe.

[00:21:14] **Older Adult:** But when I called, every time I went to get the test that my doctor ordered, I said, now, remember I gave you all my insurance information and you said it's zero cost to me, right? And they always said, yes. I said, you have it in my file, right? Yes. And now they want to send me a bill. I don't have the money to pay it.

[00:21:34] **Older Adult:** You know?

[00:21:40] **Interviewer 1:** Um, yeah, I definitely also want to get more into, um, Receiving Medicaid services here and how that could be different in other states based on adopting Medicare expansion, um, or not. But, um, before we do that, how old are you now?

[00:21:58] **Older Adult:** Old enough to know I don't have to answer every question somebody asks me.

[00:22:01] **Older Adult:** No, but for your purposes I will. I'm 67.

[00:22:05] **Interviewer 1:** And then, how old do you

[00:22:06] **Older Adult:** feel? Yeah, because I don't think it has to do with the numbers. I think it has to do with, uh, your spirit, um, how you keep yourself engaged, and I'd like to be more engaged, but it's, living at the poverty level, it's, it's not conducive to do the little extra things you would like to do, because they all cost something, and then not having transportation makes it even harder.

[00:22:43] **Older Adult:** To even go out to places that may be free, um,

[00:22:51] **Older Adult:** that's the real restraint.

[00:22:54] **Interviewer 1:** Are there things that you've enjoyed about getting older?

[00:22:57] **Older Adult:** Not since I broke my back. To be honest, um, you know, when Cher said, uh, getting old is not for sissies, she was sure right. Um, I was a very healthy individual before I broke my back. And then, you know, things started and

[00:23:25] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah, can you describe that incident a little bit more and how things changed with your health afterwards?

[00:23:31] **Older Adult:** Sure. I, I was engaged in a job and, like I said, I made the decision to go back to school. And, uh, I had a car. I was involved in a lot of things. I, I went to lectures and stuff. And, um, and went out and I met people, uh, but, uh, was dating again and, uh, just like, I really wanted to die because my whole life went

down the tubes and I didn't know, am I going to recover, am I going to, what was going to happen.

[00:24:18] **Older Adult:** And then the guy I was dating at the time, who was at the hospital with me for one night, well that very night he says to me, well I'm lying there not knowing. What's going to happen to me? Says, well, I'll see ya. I'm going to go marry this other woman. And I'm like, Oh, okay. Um, I mean, I may sound like I'm joking now, because I do that a lot to cover a lot of the pain, but I was like, beyond myself.

[00:24:49] **Older Adult:** Yeah, I'm sorry. Thank you. Um, but, you know, I'm sure a lot of bad things happen to a lot of people. It was hard. And then, too, you know, my parents grew up, um, I guess, was it, I don't know if it was during the depression or right after, so, um, they had their own problems. I knew that. My mother didn't have a lot of self esteem and there was a reason for that.

[00:25:19] **Older Adult:** It goes back to what happened. And my dad was a, was a very good provider and he wanted to be an engineer and would have been a great engineer. But, um, and my mother wanted to be a nurse, but they couldn't go to school because, you know, but they put all three of us through school and, um,

[00:25:43] **Older Adult:** yeah, I kind of lost, um,

[00:25:51] **Older Adult:** so, oh, so they, um, yeah, so, you know, my dad was one of those people, like, um, how's the car working, you know, all this stuff. I mean, he was, you know, that he didn't get into a lot of emotional stuff and, um, yeah, Although my mom hugged everybody who came through the door. She was a real huggy, huggy person, you know, loving that way.

[00:26:12] **Older Adult:** And my aunt was really good. Because growing up, I would always say I can't. And that, you know, I could kick myself now when I think of it. Because fear ruled a lot of my life. And that was my biggest thing I'm having to overcome. Um, I joined, well, because My parents could not give us the emotional resilience I think we needed for when the tough stuff in life would happen to you.

[00:26:46] **Older Adult:** Um, they just didn't, you know, talk too much about emotions and how to deal with them. So I don't think I was equipped, and I even think the children today. One thing I thought would be great to start for schools is, um, Have somebody create some type of curriculum to teach kids emotional resilience and how to deal with life.

[00:27:13] **Older Adult:** Because kids today don't know how to deal with it. I didn't know how to deal with it. And a lot of people don't know how to deal with it. When you go out in the world and life hits you with the hard stuff. Um, and if somebody

would create a curriculum like that, Um, I would like to go market it to the school districts and say, Hey, look!

[00:27:34] **Older Adult:** What do you think? This really needs to be taught to kids in school. Um, because I know I didn't have it. And I came up against some hard stuff and I did not know how to deal with it. And, and growing up, I had um, art talent. My parents were going to send me to an art school back in Pennsylvania. A private one.

[00:27:57] **Older Adult:** Um, but I was too scared to go. Um, I wanted to be a ballerina. When I was four years old, my mom and aunt came and they sat with me at this ballet studio and all these little kids dance around. We watched for at least about an hour and then the woman said, I think you two should leave and just let, let her there.

[00:28:19] **Older Adult:** I started crying. I, see what I'm saying? Like, I, all the opportunities I had, I regret now. Why didn't they push me to take them? Why didn't, you know? 'cause I feel I'm not a dumb person. I mean, I and I, and I don't speak about myself very much. I keep it to myself. But I graduated Magnum loud and I won the award for excellence in my field.

[00:28:46] **Older Adult:** And the university I went to was always rated in the top 10 of Northeastern universities and US News and World Report and Forbes. So I know I'm not a dumber. Mm-Hmm. and. When you have that, and I have so much curiosity and love to learn, I always said, if there was a job where you'd pay me to get a degree after degree after degree, sign me up and I'll research anything anybody wants.

[00:29:15] **Older Adult:** That would be the best thing. I would love that. That would be my dream job. But you know, um, I learned too late in life, you know, the fear is something that people really, it, it sent me back.

[00:29:32] **Interviewer 1:** And how were you able to learn that emotional resiliency, like something you taught yourself?

[00:29:40] **Older Adult:** I went to therapists.

[00:29:43] **Older Adult:** Like, the Iranian therapist was really, really good. Um, he was such a sweet person. Uh, going through a divorce. Um, although I don't think I was ready for it at the time, you know. I'd go see him after I, after work. He was right near the university and then, um, I saw some others that were really like, like, I mean, really good.

[00:30:12] **Older Adult:** One lady was asking me, one psychiatrist was asking me, well, what do you see out the window? I'm like, what do you mean? What do I see?

There's a rabbit and it's green. Are you trying to say I'm hallucinating? Cause I'm really not. And I said, goodbye. I walked out the door. I said, forget this. Um, and then, you know, they put you on antidepressants, which, Okay, I was going through a bad divorce, it was abusive, I understand that, and it, I think it helped some.

[00:30:43] **Older Adult:** But, it emotionally blunts you, where you feel no emotions in. So, you're really not dealing with your emotions. And, um, talk therapy never really helped me. It felt good when you walked out for a little bit, but then you're right back where you are. So, there's so much more now. You can do emotional freedom technique online, the tapping.

[00:31:11] **Older Adult:** Um, there's EMDR, that eye movement. There's so many other things that are so much more helpful for people to get over their anxieties, their fears, and things like that. And sometimes you just have to push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

[00:31:33] **Interviewer 1:** There are some of those different techniques, things that you use.

[00:31:37] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Yeah, I do. And these are things that you have researched yourself?

[00:31:42] **Older Adult:** Yes, I have. And when I mentioned it to a therapist, Oh, I can't do, I don't know the emotional freedom technique. I said, you don't need to know it. I have it right here. All you gotta do is do it with me. You know? Um, well, I can't do that.

[00:32:02] **Older Adult:** So I'm like, okay. Okay. Yeah, and

[00:32:06] **Interviewer 1:** it's like frustrating I have to do a lot of that kind of like research and advocacy

[00:32:10] **Older Adult:** yourself And you can't find a therapist. I you cannot find a therapist that takes a good one That takes both Medicare and Medicaid. I'm gonna just tell you right out. You cannot not down here because I looked Even my doctor who is an integrative specialist and nutrition She's an internist.

[00:32:36] **Older Adult:** She, um, She used to take Medicare. She doesn't take it anymore. I have to save my pennies to go see her. But I will never, as long as she's, she's going to be a doctor, I will stay with her. She, where doctors can you go to that will give you 45 minutes to an hour talks with you? And doesn't just say, Oh, well you got this, here's a 10 minutes.

[00:33:02] **Older Adult:** Here's a prescription for this or a pill for this. You know what I'm saying? She'll say, well, what's going on in your life? How, what are you doing? You know, um, nutrition wise, let's find out about this. She takes the test that no other doctor ever took to find out is what, what could be causing stuff. I didn't know my vitamin D level was so low when I went to see her.

[00:33:28] **Older Adult:** Twenty seven years ago, it could be over twenty seven years ago, she was the first one who took a test. And I got it up to optimal. Same thing with my iron. I mean, you know, you don't find many doctors like that, but now she doesn't take it anymore. She said because, she said I couldn't live. She said they don't pay.

[00:33:50] **Older Adult:** And then, you know, all the other administrative work too, from all the other, um, health. Uh, plans that you would see as a doctor. All that paperwork and each one for the same exact thing will pay a different rate. That gets very frustrating for a doctor, I'm sure. You know, you want to be there for your patients, you want to talk to them and get to know them, but you have all this other stuff to do, it's, it gets to be such a hassle.

[00:34:25] **Older Adult:** Mm hmm. Um, and I have tried, I have tried to find doctors, but who were on both Medicaid, and Medicare assignment and Medicaid. It's very hard to find someone who's good, down here anyway. I don't know, I can't say about other places, because I've been down here since that happened to me, but it's very hard.

[00:34:49] **Older Adult:** And then, Medicare itself, doesn't pay. Uh, for eye or, or, or teeth and I had to pay a dentist and he told me I, I should get braces again because I have an overbite and I'm, that could be, I don't know, it could be contributing to the migraines, it could be contributing to the jaw, it could, and he said, I'm, I'm biting on just my back teeth, he said, that's not healthy for you.

[00:35:23] **Older Adult:** He's urging me to see an orthodontist. I can't afford an orthodontist. And I don't even know if Medicare, and he said, it's not for cosmetic reasons, [redacted]. It's, it's for your health.

[00:35:38] **Interviewer 1:** So you're on, um, can you explain your insurance a little bit? You're on Medicare and Medicaid currently. You're on the star plus. How long have you been on the star plus program?

[00:35:51] **Older Adult:** Um, the

[00:35:57] **Older Adult:** assisted living. That was in 2013? 14? Somewhere around there.

[00:36:07] **Interviewer 1:** And how was the process of applying for STAR

[00:36:09] **Older Adult:** Plus? Oh my god. For me it was a nightmare.

[00:36:14] **Interviewer 1:** Do you have any examples of what made it difficult?

[00:36:18] **Older Adult:** Yeah, uh,

[00:36:23] **Older Adult:** they make it difficult for you. Um, and, I had a call the first company that came out and saw me, the nurse even said yes, you should have it, came out and saw me, and then they were, they were going to deny me. So I had to try to get a hold of that nurse myself.

[00:36:49] **Older Adult:** This is off the record, please. I had to call and imitate my doctor's medical assistant nurse and say, look, I'm, you know, Dr. so and so, and she wants to know what's going on with With this patient, why is she not being accepted? Blah, blah, blah. Um, I was so stressed out, it wasn't funny. No wonder I've got white hair, because no one in my family had it until they were like, way in their 70s and 80s.

[00:37:18] **Older Adult:** Um, yeah, I had to do that. And then she called, and finally she, I didn't even have a phone back then, I was borrowing it from this guy at, at the assisted living. Um, yeah. He was kind enough to let me borrow it. And finally she called him. He came over and said, [redacted], uh, your doctor's on the phone. And she said, Okay, [redacted], you've got it for at least a year.

[00:37:48] **Older Adult:** So try to de stress where you are. You have a roof over your head for a year. Imagine every year not knowing you're going to be homeless or not. You know? Do you

[00:38:01] **Interviewer 1:** know why you were, um, not eligible that first time you applied? Why your application was denied?

[00:38:07] **Older Adult:** No, because I got in the assisted living on, um, I don't know what they called it here.

[00:38:15] **Older Adult:** I

[00:38:20] **Older Adult:** met at the [redacted]. It was in the aging thing and they helped me.

[00:38:34] **Older Adult:** But, yeah, it was, it was just, and then every year they tried to knock me off of it. and I had to go through an appeals process, which is another stressful event. Mm-Hmm. and I,

[00:38:52] **Older Adult:** it was just horrible. It wasn't something, I mean, you know, and then even now, and even back then too, if you wanted to get a job and work, it's a catch 22 because you are only allow, they don't allow you to make hardly anything. And then you're knocked off of Medicaid, and then you're paying the premium, Part B, and the 20 percent that Medicare won't pay.

[00:39:22] **Older Adult:** My God, you couldn't live. So even if you want to, you can't down here. I don't know about other states, but here you can't because it is that catch 22. And then being out of work for so long because of my back and then the other things that happen. I heard it also. I tore the annulus in my back. Um, you know, who's going to hire you?

[00:39:52] **Older Adult:** With any decent wage to support yourself in an apartment, in this. And then if you try to get on Section 8, well, that's like years in the making. And then you don't even know, as a single female, where you're going to live that's safe. They're on. not very safe places. Mm-Hmm. , you know, I don't want somebody coming in and raping me.

[00:40:17] **Older Adult:** Mm-Hmm.

[00:40:20] **Interviewer 1:** So you've had to, you mentioned the appeals process for recertifying for star plus, that's something you have to do every year since 2013. Mm-Hmm. . And then do you end up getting, uh, approved at the end of the appeals

[00:40:34] **Older Adult:** process? Yeah, I did. I had somebody helping me. And that. Who was helping you? My friend at the North Central Texas Council of Governments, she knew more than I did.

[00:40:47] **Older Adult:** People don't know. People don't know the ins and outs and everything about anything. You know? And then, half the time, if you try to get the equipment you need, medical equipment, but if my doctor orders it, You don't get it 'cause you have to go to a Medicaid doctor to get it. Mm-Hmm. . And then there's other stuff that Medicare won't pay that I could surely use.

[00:41:27] **Older Adult:** It's like, forget it. Just forget it. I don't just, I don't care to, I don't, don't give it to me. I'll just have to make do with what I have. Mm-Hmm. now. It's frustrating. It's frustrating. And then you, you have no time to relax. And de stress yourself, because there's always something coming up, you know?

[00:41:51] **Interviewer 1:** Then you mentioned, um, you have to look for doctors that accept both Medicare and Medicaid. Can you explain a bit what it's like looking for the types of doctors, um, how much time you spend doing that, where you look?

[00:42:05] **Older Adult:** Yeah, well they give you a book initially, but half of the people, um, are no longer taking it because usually you're going to get somebody who just got out of medical school.

[00:42:18] **Older Adult:** You know, because they're trying to get their business started. So, once they get like a year's worth of experience, or I don't know, maybe a little bit more, they're off of it. So half of the booklet is worthless because half the time it's not even up to date. Um, you can go online, and that's only if you have a laptop or a computer to go online and do it.

[00:42:42] **Older Adult:** Um, and you also have internet, which costs, um,

[00:42:53] **Older Adult:** so it's really hard. And then finding somebody who is good. I know people who went to people and they harmed them more,

[00:43:11] **Older Adult:** or gave them medication that they didn't need. And I'm like, I don't think so, you know, I don't know. Maybe it's me, but I think our, our system is just set up first. I get, don't get me on the pharmaceutical companies because I think they like a sick America. They make money. If you're sick, if you get well, they're not going to make any money because you don't need any of the medication.

[00:43:41] **Interviewer 1:** So yeah, you've had a hard time yourself navigating these two systems. You've heard. stories from friends of getting bad care and things. Um, what types of things, like what other issues do you have with your insurance? Are there things that they don't cover that you wish they would cover? I know you mentioned the vision, um, and the orthodontist work, the dental work.

[00:44:04] **Interviewer 1:** Um, so what's covered and what's not covered by your current

[00:44:07] **Older Adult:** plan? Uh, well under Medicare, dental and vision are not covered. Medicaid. They have different plans down here, depending on what county you're in. So, if you're in Dallas County, there's like two plans to choose from. If you're in Tarrant County, there's other plans to choose from.

[00:44:28] **Older Adult:** And then you gotta figure out really which plan is really not, or, I don't even know how to do it, really.

[00:44:47] **Older Adult:** And then, the, some will pay for a little vision and dental. But, you know, And maybe I shouldn't be so picky, but I was born with a paralyzed eyelid. So, um, my mom went to two doctors first. One was going to do it in the office. She didn't feel comfortable with that. She went to another guy. He said, Yes, Mrs.

[00:45:15] **Older Adult:** So and so, I, I've done a few of these, but I suggest you go to Will's Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. Yeah. I know a father son team from Germany who will guarantee it 100%. And I was born this way because the doctor did something. Because my mother, my brother and sister didn't have it, but when I went back, my mother took me back to the doctor who delivered me.

[00:45:46] **Older Adult:** She asked the nurse, I've never seen anything like this. The nurse said, Oh, don't worry Mrs. So and so, we, Dr. So and so has a lot of cases like this. And my mother's like, Well, that's weird. So she took me down to Will's Eye Hospital. And I know that's the second best eye hospital in the United States, the first I think is in Miami.

[00:46:09] **Older Adult:** And, um, yeah, I'm so thankful to her for that. But because of that and other things Because, you know, I'm not going to go to Walmart to get my eyes checked, um, in fact my roommate went to Walmart and they gave him the wrong prescription. I'm not saying, you know, maybe that was a fluke or it doesn't, I don't know, but you know, you really like to see somebody qualified.

[00:46:39] **Older Adult:** Your eyes are really important, you know, um, especially with my back now, I don't want anything else. I try not to have anything else go bad. Not saying it couldn't, I mean, you never know. You could step off the curb tomorrow, but it's just hard to find decent doctors anymore. And that do take it, that will take the insurance.

[00:47:06] **Interviewer 1:** Um, how do you go about looking for doctors now?

[00:47:11] **Older Adult:** Basically, I just see my doctor and if I have to see somebody else, I ask her does she know anybody? And I don't know whether they take it or not. Mm-Hmm. .

[00:47:21] **Interviewer 1:** Um, you mentioned you pay for that doctor out of pocket. Now. Are there other things that you pay for out of pocket so you receive better care or, or get your needs met?

[00:47:32] **Older Adult:** Well, I, I did. My dentist, the dentist I went to,

[00:47:38] **Older Adult:** but you know, I didn't. I still, there's some things I could get, like the orthodontist, and some things I would like to get fillings that have chipped or fell out. But he told me that he didn't, if it were him, he wouldn't because I didn't have any cavities in them. So he said, why, why do it now and pay that money?

[00:48:03] **Interviewer 1:** How do you prioritize, um, paying for these, for health care? For more information visit [www. FEMA. gov](http://www.FEMA.gov) Versus things like rent, or food, or entertainment, how high a priority is healthcare compared to other

[00:48:14] **Older Adult:** things? Well, healthcare is up there. Yeah. Like, number one, but then you need food, and you need rent, and your personal items, your toiletries.

[00:48:31] **Older Adult:** Mhm. But then there's nothing left for anything else. You're like living on a survival mode from day to day. And that in itself is stressful and frustrating.

[00:48:49] **Older Adult:** I've had a lot of sleepless nights. I don't get really good sleep. And I'm not getting hooked on a sleeping pill. That's for sure.

[00:49:01] **Older Adult:** So a lot of times when I lie my head down, my mind just keeps going. About everything. It's hard to shut it off sometimes. More

[00:49:17] **Older Adult:** security. Financially. I don't sound like I want to be a billionaire, but I would like to have financial security. Yeah. So I could pay for the basics, and then have a little left over, maybe to save, and then some to do a few. Things that would bring me joy, in my life. And I think everybody's entitled to that.

[00:49:39] **Older Adult:** Mm hmm. I don't like to sit and watch. I don't watch TV. I mean, I watch a movie once in a while. But, I don't want to be sitting watching what I call the boob tube all the time. That's

[00:49:58] **Older Adult:** not helping me. It's just zoning out. Trying to escape things. You know, and there were people in the assisted living who were. They had really some bad, you know, mental problems. Things really bad, or other things that. Yeah, for them it was fine. Mm hmm.

[00:50:22] **Interviewer 1:** Um, did you have different expectations about what it would be like to get older?

[00:50:26] **Interviewer 1:** Maybe from family or from that assisted living program?

[00:50:31] **Older Adult:** Uh, well, no, my dad was basically, he helped me. He, he worked. He didn't want to retire, but it was mandatory to retire at his workplace at 65. He would have probably worked until he passed. God, he loved his job, and was good at it. Um, my mother was a housewife, so, um, yeah.

[00:51:04] **Older Adult:** She had a heart condition. You know, she went, she went all over and stuff like that. I see my sister, she had to get two knee replacements and a hip replacement. Um, And then, too, my mother talked a lot about, because she wanted to be a nurse, she could read anything about medicine and it wouldn't affect her.

[00:51:29] **Older Adult:** Forget it. Don't, I, don't get me near a hospital, because when I was four I was in one, and it was frightening to be four years old in a hospital like, what, Philly, an hour and a half from my home. And then, my mother just didn't show up one day. and never told me why. Well, I guess my dad wanted her to come home to help with the other two kids.

[00:51:55] **Older Adult:** But, I'm like, where is she? That was scary in itself. So, and I really don't like hospitals. I take a deep breath when I go in and then let my air exhale when I go out. Especially nowadays. I really don't like it. I mean, I'll take the medical tests I have to, yeah, but And I've had to go through a bunch, but, um, I don't particularly care.

[00:52:21] **Older Adult:** Yeah. That's why I'm into health and wellness. I mean, I know I'm not going to live together, live forever, and I think I have a fear of dying, but I don't like it. I'm trying to come to grips with that, because we're all going to die. I guess it's more the way you're going to die. I've had friends who died a horrible death from cancer.

[00:52:45] **Older Adult:** And I saw my brother the last six months of his life and he, he was such a totally different person.

[00:52:59] **Interviewer 1:** Um, we don't have to talk about this, but is there anything that you're doing to prepare for end of life

[00:53:04] **Older Adult:** care? No, I don't have it. I have no burial insurance. I have nothing. I don't know what they're going to do.

[00:53:09] **Older Adult:** They're just going to come in, grab my body and throw it in an incinerator. I don't know how they do it down here. I can't afford burial insurance. And I know I'll probably be the last one living, because I only have my sister and I. So, yeah, I don't know. I guess I won't want to be left alive by, uh, you know, a machine.

[00:53:35] **Older Adult:** Just, you know. And sometimes I think if I got cancer, forget it. No, I'm not taking any of that stuff. Thank you very much. Let it take its course. I don't know. What can I get? Pain pills? Marijuana? Do they give you that now for free? I don't know. Just let me go. I pray at night just to go to my sleep. Dear God, please just let me go to my sleep.

[00:54:01] **Older Adult:** Please. I don't. Because my aunt, that's how she went. I know she was probably having a heart attack the night before. Because my mom said. When she said, Oh, your aunt passed away. And then she, she called me and I was down here. And then she goes, I said, well, what, what was happening? Well, she said she was having pain in her left arm the night before, but I told her it was just indigestion from a liver wash sandwich.

[00:54:26] **Older Adult:** She had, I'm like, she was probably having a heart attack. But then I thought, no, you know what? It was probably better. She could have been on all kinds of machines and crap. And no, she got up the middle of the night. My mom said, and threw up. And, in the toilet, and my mom went to check and she just looked at her real fiercely and said just, you know, like, leave her alone and then she never got up the next day.

[00:54:52] **Older Adult:** I think it was better. My dad committed suicide. He'll figure that one out. Never would I think he would do that. No note, no nothing.

[00:55:09] **Older Adult:** And then the man I wanted to marry. A year later.

[00:55:17] **Older Adult:** Uh, asphyxiated himself in his car.

[00:55:23] **Older Adult:** And then I did go to the Suicide and Crisis Center 12 week course, which was very good. And then I waited a year, and then for three years I worked for them on their survivor hotline. And then I got to go to, um, they gave me a scholarship to go to the National Suicide Convention, which was, uh, happened to be in Dallas at the time.

[00:55:48] **Older Adult:** Hello. Hello. Good afternoon. Are

[00:55:51] **Interviewer 1:** you recording? Yes. Oh yeah, we can stop the recording for a second. Uh, you were talking about the, um, working for the suicide

[00:56:00] **Older Adult:** hotline? Oh, yes. That was very healing, uh, to a degree, but it was also hard to hear those people. And then I had to write reports and send it back to Kathy Maycock, who was the director at the time, to say, are they Um, at a point where maybe they might do it.

[00:56:23] **Older Adult:** And then when I went to the convention, that was very helpful too, because the people from all over the world came, and I got to hear their lectures and talk to them, and, yeah.

[00:56:38] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah, and you were talking a little bit about, um, some of the different mental health services you've received yourself. Um, do you think there's a connection between physical health and mental health?

[00:56:49] **Older Adult:** Oh my gosh, 100%. Yes, if you're mentally healthy, I think you'll be a heck of a lot more physically healthy. And I think that's what's happening now to the kids from the COVID thing. Mental health has just skyrocketed. And people are isolated. That's the worst thing. That's what I, you know, I like to be out and talking and be social to people.

[00:57:13] **Older Adult:** Without being scared, Oh God, COVID. You know, and people down here, well, they don't really like to take the vaccine. You know. But I can understand why, to a degree. Um, I haven't gotten a new one yet either. I'm not sure I will. I got the other ones, but I'm like, what's the point? I did have it. Um, [redacted] brought it home in August of 22, and then I got it, he got it, I got it, and then I called my doctor.

[00:57:44] **Older Adult:** Well, I went to a care now or something around here, The doctor didn't even examine me. She came in and they did take Medicare and my, but she came in with the full, a mask, full guard, like the shield. She wouldn't even let me sit on the table, you know, where the, where they have the paper you can just rip off and I had to sit on the couch.

[00:58:11] **Older Adult:** I asked her, please listen to my lungs, didn't listen to my lungs. The nurse was fine. She really had it too. She was, you know, she, she, she wore a mask, but that was it. She wasn't afraid to touch me and, you know, and then she was trying to dissuade me from taking Paxilivid. Well, I had already called my doctor right then while I was waiting for her to come back in the office.

[00:58:32] **Older Adult:** I said, Dr. G, I said, I have, I have COVID. She said, okay, I'm calling in Paxilivid right now. Um, so from there, I had to take a lift. To the pharmacy to get the Paxilivid. I passed almost passed out twice trying to get a lift to come home But yes, I took the Paxilivid the second day I got a hundred percent better And she was trying to dissuade me from it, but I'm like You're a doctor and you you don't you won't even Touch me I have to sit on the couch and you're like standing across the room.

[00:59:09] **Older Adult:** I'm like, why am I here? And then I get the bill in the mail, the claim thing from Medicare. They charged 700 some dollars for that visit and they did absolutely nothing except swab my nose, I guess, or my mouth for to say I had COVID. I was like, if that's not overcharging, what is? They didn't do anything other than that.

[00:59:36] **Older Adult:** And did you end up paying for that? No, I didn't have to pay for that bill. Care Now, I mean, they took, I made sure they took the Medicare and stuff, but I was like, Are you crazy? And he went to the same place I did. And He told them, before he came, I just want, how much is just the test, that's it. And they told him how much it would be.

[01:00:02] **Older Adult:** They overcharged him and tried to bill him. He had to call back and say, fight and say, look, I'm not paying this. I told you what

[01:00:13] **Older Adult:** they overcharge for stuff. One time in the assisted living, I wanted a pillow, like a lumbar pillow for, to put under my legs. Well, I got this little bitty thing, which wasn't what I wanted. And so I had a computer back then at the

time. And The, the company who they got it from, on their website, it was only like, I, I, I don't really remember, but something like 50, right?

[01:00:51] **Older Adult:** But they go through another company to get it, right? They charge like a hundred some, I'm like, no wonder there's no money, you're overcharging for something I could've got, you could've got. of a website for 50, but you went through this other company, which upped the price. I'm like, is this a racket or what?

[01:01:19] **Older Adult:** Yeah, why do you think

[01:01:20] **Interviewer 1:** it's, why do you think it's like that?

[01:01:23] **Older Adult:** What? Greed. Everything in this country is greed. It's just plain greed for the healthcare companies. They're just making money right and left. And that, I can tell you about. The biggest hurdle I'm having now and I'm really frustrated with it and I'm so angry and my doctor is frustrated too.

[01:01:43] **Older Adult:** So now I'm probably going to have to see a neurologist and go through more freaking tests. I'm on a drug, uh, for migraines, it's a Triptan. It was not on my, my Part D plans formulary. So I got it. them to, uh, uh, years ago. I got, I got grandfathered in to have it, and it was the brand name at the time. So they were paying 2, 000, and I was getting 18 a month.

[01:02:22] **Older Adult:** Then they put it down to 12, and for some reason, I know you can still get the brand, but the pharmacy I go to said, Oh, we can't get it. So they gave me the generic. which takes longer to work than the other one. Well, now I'm getting headaches for the past several months every day because I have to take one every day.

[01:02:43] **Older Adult:** And I believe some of it is overuse headaches, my doctor said. You're not supposed to take it every day. Plus, it can cause strokes. I don't know what it's doing to me. But yet, this year, on their formulary, they have a preventative drug My doctor put in, I don't know how many prior authorizations to get that approved.

[01:03:07] **Older Adult:** And I trialed it with my doctor, she gave me samples for a month in April of 22, I believe. And it worked, I only got, I took it, you take it every other day, and I only had to take three of the zone eggs that month. And two of them, two of the migraines were at the very beginning of it. Taking the new preventive.

[01:03:34] **Older Adult:** They will not approve it. They say I have to trial other ones. They give you a list to trial. I looked up those other drugs. I do not have, uh, asthma

or cataracts. I don't need the antidepressants that are on there, right? And they're not drugs that are just They have a lot of side effects. I'm like, if I trial that it worked for my doctor, but her giving me samples she had, and she put it on how many prioritizations, you keep denying them, why?

[01:04:17] **Older Adult:** Because you don't want to pay for the 2, 000 now? Because now, instead of 2, 000 for the tryptan, that, it's still not on their formulary, but. And I had a fight for that again this past year when I called. And I told the woman, my voice was raised, and I said, I don't want you to take this personally, but let me explain.

[01:04:43] **Older Adult:** And um, so, um, she said, well, you probably have to do another prior author or an appeal again.

[01:04:58] **Older Adult:** It gets, and I have talked to so many people who've had the same problem. They do it and I think they do it on purpose a lot of times because they want to get you so frustrated and so tired you give up. You say, forget it. I'm paying you a premium though every month out of my measly poverty salary, but yet you don't want to prove a drug that could help me.

[01:05:26] **Older Adult:** And I'm taking one I shouldn't be taking, and if they've been paying for it every, every, well, they've been paying for it every time I, I get it, because I have to take it every day now, which is unusual for me. But if they stop that, and I can only get the 12 a month, I have to pay for the medicine.

[01:05:57] **Older Adult:** And if you go on GoodRx, and they're paying 17 in some sense for the 12 that I get on the drug plan. But if I go on GoodRx, that discount thing, at the pharmacy I go to here, which is the closest, excuse me, I have to pay 133 for it.

[01:06:26] **Older Adult:** And then I was going to get the good RX Gold for 10 a month or something like that. And I asked them, how much would it be? Oh, still 133 for that one.

[01:06:39] **Older Adult:** I'm like, what do you want from me? What, what, do I just take that and hope I don't get a stroke? I mean, I don't know.

[01:06:51] **Interviewer 1:** So you, and you haven't been able to, To successfully get that medicine that has prevented the migraines. This has all been to get that medicine. You still haven't been able to get

[01:07:00] **Older Adult:** it. I, my doctor's really frustrated herself. She's like, what, what do you have to do seriously? Because it wasn't on their formulary previously, but neither was the one I'm taking now, but now it is on this 2023 and they still.

[01:07:20] **Older Adult:** I want you to try all this other stuff.

[01:07:27] **Older Adult:** What do you do? Somebody tell me, because I really don't know. And that's frustrating, and I know I'm not the only one. I talked to somebody too. My friend was going through a lot with her mother. They keep denying and denying all this stuff on her, and they gave her drugs, and now she's worse. And she said, I don't know what to do, short of getting a lawyer.

[01:07:57] **Older Adult:** I mean, I'm not a healthcare policy expert, but that's just, that's just plain wrong. Yeah. That's robbery for people.

[01:08:10] **Interviewer 1:** Yeah, is that the next step when, when you're not able to figure it out and your doctor can't figure it out? Then what do people do?

[01:08:17] **Older Adult:** I have no idea. Because I don't have money to go to a lawyer.

[01:08:24] **Older Adult:** Fight some more with them? Or, try one of the other drugs they have, or, well, don't, this is off the record, try it, and say you trialed it for two months, but you can't take it, seriously, what, I mean, you're not going to take something that's more dangerous than what you're taking now, and I'd like to work on getting rid of the migraines, like, where I wouldn't need them.

[01:08:56] **Older Adult:** And my doctor even said, maybe if you're on it for two or three months, and I get detox from being on the Zomag every day, whoops, every day, that I may not need, you know, there's a lot of natural things you can try too. When I take magnesium, I take a lot of vitamins, and that might be good for those too.

[01:09:25] **Older Adult:** But my doctor knows the companies that are really reputable, and she recommends them, and I try somehow to get them.

[01:09:38] **Interviewer 1:** Um, we've been talking for a bit over an hour now, so take a little break if you'd like. You mean I? Yeah, totally. I need to

[01:09:45] **Older Adult:** get water.

[01:09:53] **Older Adult:** How do you like living in New, do you live in New York, both of you? I live in New York. I live in Los Angeles. Oh, you live in Los Angeles? Okay. Okay.

[01:10:01] **Interviewer 1:** We, yeah, flew from the different coasts today and met, met in the middle.

[01:10:06] **Older Adult:** At least you're in more progressive states. Yeah. No, I'm serious. Living down here was scary for me.

[01:10:13] **Older Adult:** We had a governor who had no term limits for him. Zero. And everybody down here is so concerned. And I'm, um, you know, I think you know by now I'm a liberal.

[01:10:26] **Older Adult:** I don't even watch the news anymore. I get it off of, Dan Rather has this, um. Uh, he actually moved back here to retire. He's, he's from Texas. Um, uh, he started this, uh, uh, website called, uh, Steady. com. And, uh, with his, uh, executive producer, was he on NBC? Was that the, was he on NBC? I forget. Anyway, Elliot Kirshner.

[01:10:56] **Older Adult:** And Elliot's in California too. He's based out of California and then. Um, Dan will be down here, but it's very good, and um, it gives you a solid idea of what's going on, and then you comment, and everybody, and I was going to start a newsletter on there, you know, just poems, I mean, um, but I started seeing all the people who have sub stacks on there.

[01:11:24] **Older Adult:** Patti Smith, um, John Batiste's wife, Suliad, she has one. Robert Reich, the journalist. I mean, I'm like, who's going to read my stuff? That's how I feel. Like, who's going to read mine when you've got all these other people in there they could follow? But I guess you never know. That's true. You never know, right?

[01:11:47] **Older Adult:** Are we recording? Uh, yeah.

[01:11:49] **Interviewer 1:** I didn't know we were. I wasn't sure if we were yet. Um, so I don't, I don't know if this was on the recording or not, but I'm curious, like, You've spent a lot of time in Texas and you've mentioned you don't like the politics here. And I'm just wondering how that impacts your experience aging here.

[01:12:12] **Older Adult:** I don't know. It's just, if I can find people who are more have my values and stuff and ideas, it's hard. Unless I would go, cause there's not many, uh, I belong to our revolution too. Bernie Sanders thing. And, um, I like Bernie. I really do. I think he's what she was president. Um,

[01:12:43] **Older Adult:** yeah, it's, it's difficult. Cause I don't like to bring up politics too much. We took a Lyft ride one time to see his relatives who just moved to Colorado and they came back and, oh man, I mentioned, I mentioned Trump or something. And the guy in Lyft, I was like, Oh, He just was like, well, if Trump were still president, everything would be fine.

[01:13:07] **Older Adult:** And I'm like, okay. You know, I'm like, Oh yeah. Okay. Yeah. I don't want to say too much, you know? And when I first moved here, like people said to me, well, you need to go get a gun, [redacted]. Now if anybody's at your doorstep and they try to get in your house, you shoot them. And if they fall outside, make sure you put gloves on and pull them in.

[01:13:30] **Older Adult:** Because. You know, you won't, you won't, you won't be liable for anything. I'm like, what? No, I'm being serious. Somebody said that to me. I was like, where have I gone? It's, it's really doing, like I said, they, they don't, they didn't, they were not one of the States who expanded Medicaid when the federal government was going to let them.

[01:13:53] **Older Adult:** And, um, they, They just want to take away the rights. I mean, look, look what our governor's doing. Sending all the migrants to Florida, to New York. Um, I just read last night one of your uh, lawmakers was commenting on our governor for sending that. I mean, you know. And, and, and the abortion issue. No, I'm not going to say I'm pro abortion.

[01:14:24] **Older Adult:** I'm not going to say I'm pro life. But. Being the age I am, I have grown up in a patriarchal society, obviously. And, um, it, I was kind of like just getting on the cusp where the women were getting more into the workforce, and they're, they're more now, and they're more, um, taking a rightful place. And, so, Would you want someone telling you what you could do with your body as a woman?

[01:15:00] **Older Adult:** No, they wouldn't. If I told them they couldn't do this or how to go get a vasectomy or something like that, would they like that? I don't think so. I think a woman has a right, everyone has a right to make choices about their own body, their own selves. And since COVID, I think a lot of people, at least What I've seen in the places I go online, that hopefully most of them are legitimate, and um, people are taking health care in their own hands.

[01:15:37] **Older Adult:** You know, and some of that can be dangerous, cause you, you know, excuse me, unless you really know herbs and know how they interact with, If you are taking medicine, you gotta check that out and make sure that there's no interactions or you could have some really serious problems, but Would I want the drug companies to regulate the vitamins?

[01:15:59] **Older Adult:** Absolutely not. Then you would really have a problem, but yeah, people are now searching for other answers because They're just not getting them. And don't get me wrong, there's some really really good doctors out there Really good ones. Um, but a lot of them really, they don't take Medicare and Medicaid.

[01:16:26] **Older Adult:** Um, and I've had doctors tell me that. Doctors and physical therapists that I went to when I was working and I did have insurance. And they said, [redacted], you never want to go on a Medicare Advantage plan. Now, it may work for some people. But they said, as a physical therapist, because I needed a lot of physical therapy, that, um, don't do it.

[01:16:57] **Older Adult:** We don't take it, and you're not going to find somebody. Because I went to one. Um, it was Health South, down here. Because I, I pulled the, the ligament here. all the way. I don't know. It just popped. It was, I don't know, the freaky accident after I brought my back and they didn't do anything for me. They stuck me in a table like this with other women who had arthritis and all they were doing was complaining about her pains and aches and it was like holding up some putty and squeezing it.

[01:17:32] **Older Adult:** I'm like, that's not doing anything for me. Then I went back to the original physical therapist. She's retired now, but she, um, to her place, oh my gosh, they had me doing exercises with weights and all kind of stuff. And I'm like, look at the difference between the one that paid and the one where I had to pay so much.

[01:18:02] **Older Adult:** Plus, she was so good, her husband was a An orthopedic surgeon. So she worked on the back, and that's what I went to her for. And she was so good. And then she had everybody in her clinic was so nice. One worked on like the knee and this. Another one worked on a different part of your body. So there was someone specializing in everything.

[01:18:23] **Older Adult:** And she would get on Fridays this guy from Norway. She'd spend the money to get him over here. And he taught this, um, Really new method of manual therapy for physical therapists that would increase your recovery time. And it was, uh, [redacted], his name was, and he's now based out of San Diego, I believe.

[01:18:49] **Older Adult:** Um, he has, he has his own and, um, really good. And she got her doctorate and she taught for him until she retired. Um, You know, so, it's, it's really hard. Now, I found a guy online, and I don't like chiropractors because they did hurt me. Um, but there is this guy online, he is so good. He's based out of Florida, he's a young guy.

[01:19:20] **Older Adult:** Um, B. S. Parker, he's on Instagram, but he, um, and I didn't want to join Facebook, but just for his group I did. He is doing mobility training. For free, for people who want to do it. He said, yeah. And he tells you, you only need to start simple. Start at something small that you know your body can do and you keep working up every day and be consistent about it and you will see results.

[01:19:48] **Older Adult:** And he even gives you little videos how you can modify it.

[01:19:56] **Older Adult:** I mean, it's better than nothing. Yeah. Um, So, I, you know.

[01:20:08] **Interviewer 1:** Are there other, uh, burdens on the doctor provider side for, for doctors that are both Medicare and

[01:20:14] **Older Adult:** Medicaid? For burdens for them? Mm hmm. I'm sure there are. I don't really, I really never interviewed them or asked them what there are. Um, But I know a lot of them probably are younger people who just got out of school.

[01:20:34] **Older Adult:** Or, I did find one foot doctor that I went to, um, because I had, uh, fungus and, uh, an ingrown toenail. And, uh, he was an older guy. So I guess he just, he made his money. He just was going to help people. He decided just to help the people who couldn't. Mm hmm. And I was, but he passed away. He's a really nice guy, really nice guy.

[01:21:03] **Older Adult:** Now that was one good one I did find. Um, he, but he even told me, he was Jewish and he was, uh, he said, he must have inherited bad teeth, I don't know, he said, but they wanted like 33, 000 some dollars or more to fix his teeth here in America. Well, he and his wife would go to Israel once a year as a trip.

[01:21:26] **Older Adult:** And when he was over there, he said, his friend said, you know, why don't you just check out one of the dentists over here, just see what they say, and he did. And so every year when his wife and he would take a trip, he'd get some of that dental work done. And it said it only cost him 13, 000 over here, and they did a great job.

[01:21:49] **Older Adult:** And that's a doctor telling me that. I mean, you know, and he was nice enough. I was in his office and I said, I need like, what kind of shoes? I said, there's some shoes. I said, I know they're from Israel. I, I had them once before and I can't remember the name. And is that this company? He called up immediately the company and he found out the name of shoes for me.

[01:22:11] **Older Adult:** I mean, come on. That was really sweet. Um, he was a really nice guy. Yeah. Yeah, that was one good experience. Yeah.

[01:22:19] **Interviewer 1:** And you mentioned your doctor, now that you pay front of pocket, no longer accepts Medicaid because it wasn't enough money. Medicare, because it

[01:22:27] **Older Adult:** wasn't enough money. Yeah, she said they take too long to pay.

[01:22:32] **Older Adult:** She said, I wouldn't be bankrupt. Because she's in by herself. She's not like in a corporate setting. It's just her. But, She doesn't have to advertise. She gets people who come from up from Austin to see her. And there's people who've left the state who come once a year to come see her. She's won the People's Choice Award I don't know how many years in a row.

[01:22:53] **Older Adult:** She's a smart lady.

[01:22:59] **Interviewer 1:** Going back to when you said that Texas didn't adopt the Medicaid expansion, is that something that happened recently?

[01:23:07] **Older Adult:** Whenever they were going to expand it. They never, they don't, they always deny it. And then too, we're one of the states too that, I think there were 22 states I just read that are increasing the minimum wage.

[01:23:24] **Older Adult:** Not down here, no.

[01:23:28] **Interviewer 1:** Would the expansion, how would the expansion of Medicaid impacted you if they had voted yes to expand it?

[01:23:35] **Older Adult:** Well, there would have been more money available, maybe for more things for people. But they didn't. They chose not to. But then that's

[01:23:51] **Interviewer 1:** Um, I've been switching gears a little bit. I wanted to talk a bit about you and your identity. Um, I was curious if there's a way that you would describe your identity or your culture.

[01:24:09] **Older Adult:** Could you expand on that a little bit? Yeah.

[01:24:12] **Interviewer 1:** Um, I have some examples, too. Um, are there different aspects, things here that are important to you, that, um, contribute to your sense of self? Um, things that impact decisions that you make about your life?

[01:24:28] **Older Adult:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Um, um, well, my religion, for one. Um, um, And don't get me wrong, I have doubts sometimes that this God even exists.

[01:24:41] **Older Adult:** Um, I was really angry at him when I broke my back. It was like, why? Why me? I never raped, I never killed, I never did anything wrong. Why? Why? Um, I grew up Catholic. And I went to Catholic grade school, kindergarten grade school, a high school, and then a Jesuit college. But a Jesuit college was way different.

[01:25:04] **Older Adult:** I Jesuits are a different breed, and I commend them for their philosophy of social justice and giving back to society and, um, not being afraid to, um, protest. I don't know if you're familiar with the Berrigan Brothers. They were a group of Jesuit brothers who, during the Vietnam War and, you know, and other issues around that time.

[01:25:31] **Older Adult:** They would protest and they'd always get hauled off to jail, non violent protest. One time in college, I remember, um, a group of us went down to Baltimore, [redacted]land, and we non violently, peacefully protested, uh, at this plant where they were making bombs, nuclear, you know, bombs. And, uh, we wanted to know, did the people there, Um, we tried to ask them, do you know what you're doing when you go to work, do you know what you're making, why are you doing it, um, and we got spit on, and all kind of things, and they called the police, and all this stuff, we didn't go to jail, but, um, yeah, so, and we stayed at the Berrigan Brothers house that night, a group of us, and then we went back to school, we had to talk about our experiences.

[01:26:25] **Older Adult:** And it was an awakening time in my life because it was like if you feel so strongly about something and you take action on it, be aware that there will be consequences and can you accept the consequences. It's kind of like Stephen Colbert, I don't watch him all the time, but I know he's Catholic and he was talking to an actor, John Mulhaney, I think.

[01:26:53] **Older Adult:** And he was saying, my biggest fear is what was in, um, I think it was a man for all seasons. I think that was the play they were talking about. I may be incorrect, but he was saying how the one character knew he was going to be beheaded by the king. And he said, my biggest fear is if I had to make a choice on what to do, I was committed to, would I go through with that in my life?

[01:27:27] **Older Adult:** He said that, that was his biggest fear. You know, can we do that? Would, would we do that? How many people would or how many people would say, ooh, no. Uh, no, I'm with you, that's okay, you know. That's a, that's a really heavy philosophical question to ask yourself. Um, but that's what I got from that experience.

[01:27:48] **Older Adult:** It was really interesting. Other than John Hopkins, we got to go there. That's a beautiful college, Lord. Um, so, and my family, my family upbringing and, and the culture that I came from. Um, both my mom and dad were Austrian. And so I grew up, um, very European growing up. Um, the food we ate at home was very Austrian.

[01:28:18] **Older Adult:** Um, the way I was brought up with, um, Strauss waltzes and classical music and the arts, like my mom and aunt made sure we would. Go to New York City so many times and go to all the Broadway plays. I mean, I remember

seeing Rex Harrison when I was, I was young, but I knew it was Rex Harrison and My Fair Lady.

[01:28:39] **Older Adult:** And then we saw the King and I with the old Brenner. And then we'd go down for the, um, rockets, Christmas pageants and, you know, the old Empire State Building and, and the art museums. And so when I was down here working, I joined the Dallas Museum of Art and, uh, Uh, Fort Worth Museum of Art, and I love to go to the opera once in a while.

[01:29:02] **Older Adult:** And I joined the play, uh, Kalita Humphreys Theater to see the plays. I would get tickets for that. So, yeah, they gave me, uh, A lot of a sense for the arts and culture, and I, that's a big thing with me. I know, I believe like the STEM education is very important. We need, we need that. We need good scientists, researchers, and everything, but when they started defunding the arts in the schools, that really starts to sadden me because the arts bring so much to people's lives.

[01:29:39] **Older Adult:** I mean, Music, all kinds, depending on my mood, is like a bomb for my soul, you know, and um, writing, again, it's a way to get your thoughts out, your emotions, um, write about your experiences, good and bad, um, introspect on yourself, and so I don't, those to me are very important and they were important in my growing up.

[01:30:09] **Older Adult:** Dance. Things like that.

[01:30:16] **Older Adult:** And, uh, let's see. Where I live now? It wouldn't be my first choice, but this is where I ended up. Um, like I said, if I had more money, I could maybe participate in some of the cultural things that would bring some joy, you know, to my life. Um Where would you like to live if you had the choice? Oh man, I, I don't know.

[01:30:50] **Older Adult:** It would definitely be a more liberal state, for sure. For sure. For sure. Um, so, if Trump's watching, my name is not going to be on anything. Um, just, I don't know. I really, I love the beach. That was always a big thing for me. That The beach is very beautiful. I love being by the beach. Just the ocean and the tides and everything.

[01:31:19] **Older Adult:** But then, you know, um,

[01:31:24] **Older Adult:** sometimes I like the mountains, you know. We used to hike in the Appalachians. My brother used to take us hiking in the Appalachians. Um, we had the Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania. I mean, that's beautiful too. But definitely a more liberal state.

[01:31:44] **Older Adult:** You know, and so, I don't know. People here are just, maybe it's all over now because of COVID, but when I go on the Next Door Neighbor app, it's, it, people were complaining about people stealing Trump signs out of their backyard. I'm like, get a grip, you're, what's important, you're stealing Biden signs out too, but you're more worried about that, and.

[01:32:16] **Older Adult:** You don't want any, uh, homeless shelters in your neighborhood, or programs to help them get better? Like, they're the scourge of the earth? Well, they're not. I mean, there are some people who, they don't want to be in that position. They're living out of their cars, and they never did before. And, oh, yeah, some people do choose that lifestyle, but other people, you know, they're there by no choice of their own.

[01:32:44] **Older Adult:** was no choice of my own. I didn't want to go into assisted living. That's not where I wanted to be and see the things I saw. I could erase them. I would love that. I don't want to have that in my head. Um, so, yeah, just a place that was just more cultural, a lot more varied things to do. Um,

[01:33:11] **Interviewer 1:** To any of these things that you mentioned, like your faith and the way that you grew up, um, And now your interest in the arts and culture, do they impact the way that you think about getting older?

[01:33:24] **Older Adult:** Yeah, I mean, I would like to stay connected to them. Definitely. I, I wanted to try to write a book. I mean, when I, when I was working at the universities, I worked at universities most of my life and um, one professor I knew very well, and he came to visit me at the other university when My ex got a job up there.

[01:33:47] **Older Adult:** He would come once a month and take me out to lunch and we'd talk about what was going on in his life and in my life. And, um, you know, he was very talented. God, unbelievable. And, um, now I lost my train of thought again.

[01:34:10] **Older Adult:** Um,

[01:34:13] **Interviewer 1:** how those different elements of your identity impact, um, Aging, and then if they impact your health too.

[01:34:20] **Older Adult:** Yes, they do, because I wanted, he asked me, [redacted], when are you going to write the Great American Novel? And I know I wasn't joking, because the other female professor one time came in and said, [redacted], there was no one else in the office, and she said, [redacted], it pains me so to see you sitting here, just being a secretary.

[01:34:42] **Older Adult:** Right. I didn't even know she was alive. And her husband was a journalist, a TV journalist. So it's like, I have, I have the skills, I know I have the ability, but because of the fear in my life, I, and then my back, I didn't, I couldn't achieve what I wanted to, and, and that's my biggest regret, and I wonder now, am I too old to do that?

[01:35:13] **Older Adult:** I wanted to try to publish a book. Um, with poems, and um, maybe, I don't, because I'm not, I don't have any photography background, but with pictures that would kind of go with the poem, um, you know, uh, so, and, and books are really important to me, I'm, I'm, I bought a whole bunch of books, um, at Half Price Books, um, one is The Artist's Way.

[01:35:47] **Older Adult:** One is Big Magic by Elizabeth Gilbert, the one who wrote Eat, Pray, Eat, Pray, Love. Uh, some of Jason's books on a discapital hood. And, um, I bought one by David Brooks, that new one. I don't know how long, how new it is. But, um, he's a journalist and he, uh, he wrote a book on how to get to know people and to get to know them deeply.

[01:36:14] **Older Adult:** Because he said he'd been a journalist for how many years? You know, New York Times, Atlantic, Accordion. And he said when one of his friends got very ill, he realized he didn't know how to talk to him. He didn't know what to say, he didn't know. He felt like at a loss. You know? And so, I haven't read the book yet, but I want to.

[01:36:39] **Older Adult:** Because, uh. Like I said, I like getting to know people. I like to listen to their stories. I learn from that.

[01:36:51] **Interviewer 1:** Are there things that, um, like the government could offer different programs or services that would make fulfilling those different hobbies and interests

[01:37:00] **Older Adult:** easier? Yes, if they would offer some type of creative writing program for free for people on Medicare and Medicaid or offer some free tickets to go to a show or something, you know, in the state you're in or whatever.

[01:37:24] **Older Adult:** I mean, those things, it's just, they bring you to life. They get, they put a smile on your face. They make life, the life you're living a little better. You know.

[01:37:41] **Interviewer 1:** So they could help more with some of the other determinants of health. That aren't necessarily just going to the doctor and getting

[01:37:46] **Older Adult:** healthcare.

[01:37:47] **Older Adult:** Yeah, who wants to just go to the doctor, healthcare, and take pills? That's, you know, and sit in your room all day. That's like, waiting to die. I mean, there's gotta be something above the survival mode. And, and worse is, is like, um, Ugh, um, Or at least, I don't know, If you want to work, just do it. Don't take all your benefits away.

[01:38:14] **Older Adult:** You gotta have some, raise the level, so that you could even do part time something, if you could, to get some money so you could even do some of those extra things you would like to do. You know, um, not make it so hard for people, where all they do is sit and die. I mean, when I was in the assisted living, they take everything you have and you get 85 a month down here to live off of.

[01:38:42] **Older Adult:** And unless you have family who could buy you a new TV or some extra clothing, underwear, whatever you need, or extra food to eat because the food was disease producing. It was not healthy food. I have lots of pictures. I took pictures and taped stuff from the assisted living. And I could tell you stories that would raise your, well, you've probably heard them already, but they could raise your hair.

[01:39:12] **Older Adult:** And, um, you can't live off of 85 bucks a month. My God, you pay 50 for a phone. You know? And then most people don't have a computer. So, how are you going to entertain yourself other than watching the boob tube? That's what I call it. Mm hmm. You know. I mean, occasionally it's worth it. You'll find a good free movie on YouTube.

[01:39:39] **Older Adult:** But everything nowadays, you have to pay a subscription for. I want to join this, a subscription for this. Pay so much per month, this per month, this per month. Even the tapping app, if you want the tapping app from Nick Ortner, you have to pay for it.

[01:39:56] **Older Adult:** Most people in my situation, they don't have that extra income to do that. They're just trying to get by and they're worried about getting a bill. For something. Um, So, yeah, they need to do something to bring more joy to people. Because, let me tell you, not everybody just wants to play bingo. I can't stand it.

[01:40:20] **Older Adult:** It's the most boring game I think there is. You know, um, And this,

[01:40:29] **Interviewer 1:** this catch 22 you are describing, it's that, Uh, people are kind of on the edge of eligibility for Medicaid. Medicaid. And then if they get a part time job to help fill their time and have a hobby, You're

[01:40:41] **Older Adult:** off of it. Then you're off of it. Then you're paying your Part B premium, you're paying 20 percent of your drugs, of your doctors or visits or tests.

[01:40:53] **Older Adult:** Well, that would take up all the money you're making, so you'd be right back where you were. And so why even try? Yeah. What could, uh What that would be fulfilling, to be able to to do that and to work again. And I guess, like I said, for people who are extremely mentally ill, I had a roommate like that. Oh my God.

[01:41:18] **Older Adult:** It was terrible. I was cleaning feces up every day, and she gave me MRSA infection in my vaginal area. And when I told my doctor, when she found out, she goes, [redacted], I've never heard of getting it down there. She called up. I begged her, I said, I don't want this woman in my room anymore, please. I can't do it anymore.

[01:41:37] **Older Adult:** It was all over. It was all over the toilet handle, the seat, the, the, the toilet paper. I wrapped it up in a thing and I took it to the director. They didn't do anything. All they did was give me a, a little bit of disinfecting wipes and towel and I should tell her to, um, clean it up herself. Sorry, she's not going to do it.

[01:42:03] **Older Adult:** And I have a video recording of her screaming at me. She was so racist. It wasn't funny. And she kept saying, well, you know, you know what I mean about the blacks, you know, and I'm like, no [redacted], I don't know. And I said to her, and she was a pastor's kid. And, um, I know she was probably, I think, raped by her father and she was bipolar.

[01:42:25] **Older Adult:** She had a lot of issues, but anyway, she shouldn't have been my roommate. And. And then, uh, So, finally, you know, she read the Bible the other day, finally I said to her, as she's screaming at me, and plus, that brought me back to my husband and the abuse I got from him. It was really bad. I was crying. And, um, I said to her, well, what would Jesus do, [redacted]?

[01:42:52] **Older Adult:** And then she got so upset, she slammed, slammed the door shut, and I'm like, okay, I'm gonna Enough said.

[01:43:03] **Interviewer 1:** What do you think made the conditions in the assisted living so bad? Was it run poorly? Was it mismanagement of funds? Like, do you have any idea?

[01:43:13] **Older Adult:** Yes, I certainly do. Sarah? Okay. The person who was collecting, the business manager, whoever, well, she was embezzling money.

[01:43:27] **Older Adult:** And we've had several like that, at that place, and they had to get rid of them, number one. Um, and, and then, number two, the directors were terrible. You couldn't go to them for anything. All they were, all they were concerned with, with every new person they got in, they got a commission. So, just put a head in the room.

[01:43:50] **Older Adult:** Didn't matter. We had alcoholics. We had drug addicts. One, one, and they left them there. They knew what they were doing. The one girl, when they found her, they, and they went to call the, somebody called the police. And, um, she was still on the floor trying to sniff up the rest of the cocaine. I'm like, what are you, I know you need a place to live, but God, send them to a rehab first or something.

[01:44:22] **Older Adult:** You I don't know. I don't, I don't have an answer for that because I don't, I hate drugs. I mean, I'll take what I need, but I really hate them. And, you know, and then we had, uh, one guy really ugly to me. He did something really sexually in my face. And, you know, like I said, I'm a shy person. I don't speak up because I'm kind of conflict averse.

[01:44:47] **Older Adult:** But that day I stopped him outside. I said, look, I said, no man, woman or child will ever abuse me again. I said, I've been abused. And he was like taken aback. He was a really bad alcoholic. And he goes, well, I've been abused too. I just walked away. I went out and took a break. And that's why I think I started to stay up really late at night because that was the only time it was quiet in that place was at night.

[01:45:15] **Older Adult:** And I felt like, oh, it's quiet. There's no screaming. There's no this. There's no that. Um, the food was, like I said, it was disease producing. I have pictures I can show you of the food. You would, would you eat it? No. I can guarantee you, you would not eat it. You would not. And most of the people in there, a lot of them were diabetics.

[01:45:40] **Older Adult:** That's disease producing. They were giving snacks out that were cookies, cake. Get a grip! You know? Why don't you get something decent? A banana. I don't know, a granola bar. I don't know, something, peanut butter crackers. Something that wouldn't raise your glycemic level and make it worse. Um, we had one guy who, in front of the director, sliced his wrists.

[01:46:11] **Older Adult:** There was blood all over the wall. The, the one medical assistant. She had a lead. She almost threw up. Cause she saw it. She was in there. And, um, they had another guy there. Oh, there were no, the washer and dryers, they were always broken down. And for like six months, you had maybe one washer and dryer among all the people, 80 people, in a facility.

[01:46:37] **Older Adult:** I mean, I had to get my disinfecting wipes with my 85 to clean up the bathroom every time I went in it. I couldn't even sit. I wouldn't, when I had to urinate, I would not sit on the seat. I'd stoop. And when I had to do the other, I had to wipe everything down. And the maid was so kind to me. She was Spanish and didn't speak much English, so I would write everything in Spanish to [redacted].

[01:47:01] **Older Adult:** And she would sneak me. the Clorox bottles of stuff to clean myself, and the gloves. I said, Thank you, [redacted]. She knew how bad it was. She told me. I tried to find her another job at the outside laundromat, but you had to speak English. Because I said, There's an opening, [redacted]. You want to go down there? It'll probably be a lot better for you.

[01:47:28] **Older Adult:** She had to clean up all the people's crap. And this was not a nursing home. You were supposed to be able to do your activities and daily living. And, um, just, it was, it was terrible, really bad. And, um, even my roommate can tell you, when he was in another room before he came to where I was at, uh, they gave him a corn dog for breakfast.

[01:48:00] **Older Adult:** I mean,

[01:48:03] **Older Adult:** get real. Really? Yeah. That's like state fair stuff and I don't even eat it. Um,

[01:48:13] **Older Adult:** Then

[01:48:13] **Interviewer 1:** what about what makes a good

[01:48:14] **Older Adult:** healthcare experience? You mean assisted living?

[01:48:18] **Interviewer 1:** Just in general, when you're going to the doctor, you had mentioned a doctor that gives you a lot of time.

[01:48:24] **Older Adult:** A doctor that gives you the time of day. Ask about what's going on in your life. Because that impacts what's going on with you physically.

[01:48:35] **Older Adult:** Um, that takes the time to listen to you about your body. Because I'm living in it, I think I know a lot about it. I had, when I was going through perimenopause and menopause, I'd never taken a pill in my life. Never. My first experience was before I went to college, and I went to see, uh, back home, you know, a gynecologist for my first time.

[01:49:02] **Older Adult:** He gave me some iron pills on the way out, and he, he gave me this pink plastic packet with pills in it, and then he walked out. And I'm like, okay. And he said, take your time getting ready. And so I sat down and I'm like, what are these? And then I pulled out the insert that was in and I started reading it and I figured, Oh my God, this must be the pill.

[01:49:22] **Older Adult:** And cause I was pretty stupid when I grew up Catholic kid, you know, I didn't. And so blood clots, possible cancer, um, go whole bladder disease. I mean, threw it in the trash. Took the iron pills, left. Never even tried the

pill in my life. Now, I went through period menopause, and menopause, I started bleeding.

[01:49:47] **Older Adult:** And I mean, it wouldn't stop. I would take a shower, you'd think it would stop, it would stop. And then when I'd come out, my towel looked like I had a car accident or something, and it would just drip. And I don't mean to be a TMI, too much information, but. So, I went to the gynecologist I was seeing at the time down here.

[01:50:06] **Older Adult:** And she said, oh [redacted], she took a biopsy, biopsy was fine, she said the only thing I know you can do is take the pill. I was so desperate, I took the pill. It stopped it, but then I started having to go to the bathroom constantly, constantly, constantly. I'm like, what the heck? So I had two friends and they suggested their gynecologist.

[01:50:32] **Older Adult:** And I went to see both of them. They wanted to do an operation. And I'm not talking to D and C. I'm talking in operation. And I told them, and I said, No. I'm not taking an operation. I know what it is. It's gotta be the pill. That's when all this started. Because I've never taken it in my life. And they said, Well, it can't be that.

[01:50:53] **Older Adult:** So, I know this. And I still had my car then. And so I knew, there's a pharmacist in town, I know her, and I knew her dad, um, they, they are more natural. He started getting into nutrition a long time ago, and so now they sell like, all the vitamin stuff, and they have, they vet every company they put on their shelf, and they do compounding, and they have one of the highest level accreditations for compounding that you can, you can get.

[01:51:25] **Older Adult:** I mean, it takes a lot. They come in and check everything once a month. And so, I had a consultation with the father. And, uh, I was explaining this. I said, [redacted], I said, do you, do you have a list of doctors that I can go to for this? I said, I'm telling you, I don't need an operation. I'm positive. And he listened to me and said, yeah, I do.

[01:51:49] **Older Adult:** Here's the name. And, um, I went to see the guy, of course he didn't take Medicare, I pay every time I went, but I went there and I, I only saw him once, but I saw his nurse practitioner who, um, did the breastfeeding for the whole hospital, one of the major hospitals here in town. And um, she said, listen to my story, she said, you know [redacted], I believe ya.

[01:52:15] **Older Adult:** She said, why don't you stop taking the pill. I said, well I only have one left, so why don't I take that, and, okay. So do that and then let's see if you have, you got a period. So, I did. I was sitting in bed. And this was, you know, I had, after my back was broken and stuff and somewhat healed and I started

getting really bad cramps and so I called her immediately and she called in some drug, I didn't take it.

[01:52:42] **Older Adult:** And I put a heating pad on. And then a few hours later I had to use the restroom again. And this is no joke. I passed a blood clot the size of a grapefruit. And I was like And so I called her and she said, you need to come in and we'll do a test, you know, a sonogram inside. And, um, she did and then the doctor came in and, uh, he said, your lining's back to normal.

[01:53:15] **Older Adult:** It's just fine. You have two fibroids. And apparently I had three, so one must have went away on its own. She said, and they're in good position,

[01:53:28] **Older Adult:** you're fine. And she told me to get some iron pills, and I went to a Whole Foods at that time and asked them what's good. And they gave me this one, and she, she even asked me, she said, I need to know what you're taking. Because every time you come here for blood work, your, your cheeks are rosy, your irons are zooming up there.

[01:53:48] **Older Adult:** And uh. There you go. So it was my body. I knew what it had to be. At least I was pretty sure. And I found someone, although I had a pet again, who said, I believe you. Try this. And if I would have listened to the other two doctors, who knows?

[01:54:10] **Interviewer 1:** What makes you trust

[01:54:12] **Older Adult:** a doctor? I have an intuition. I have an intuition.

[01:54:18] **Older Adult:** If I meet somebody, either I'll like them or I don't like them. I know that sounds hard, maybe, but you get a feeling about somebody and

[01:54:32] **Older Adult:** If they spend time with me and listen to what I have to say, number one, and they don't just brush me off in ten minutes and give me a prescription for goodness sake. I'm not a machine. I'm a human being. So yes, if they listen, they explain to you what's going on. In terms you can understand, um, and they allow you to make a choice.

[01:54:59] **Older Adult:** They don't tell you what, and there is a website I found, and I wish I could find it again. I don't remember the name of it. You can check whatever doctor you're going to, and it will tell you if your doctor accepts money from drug companies, and how much they accept, or like say, like my sister needed a knee or hip replacement.

[01:55:16] **Older Adult:** It will say if they accept money from the company, and they're pushing that certain device. Because they're getting money from the company, and it tells, it's like a transparent thing. I don't know who set it up, but great for them. And I looked at my doctor. She accepts zero, nothing. When reps come in, and I was waiting in the waiting room, she has a receptionist or somebody say, yeah, just leave it here.

[01:55:40] **Older Adult:** Leave your card here. That's it. Do you

[01:55:45] **Interviewer 1:** trust the health care system

[01:55:47] **Older Adult:** at large? No. Not anymore. Not anymore. Not anymore. Not anymore. And I hear from my sister, too, when I call her, about all her experiences with her knee replacement and hip and stuff, the stuff she had to go through. She said the second knee replacement was so much worse than the first one she got, and she had a different doctor, and she said the whole, the whole system was completely different.

[01:56:17] **Older Adult:** Her experience was completely different. Have you ever

[01:56:20] **Interviewer 1:** been discriminated against in a healthcare

[01:56:22] **Older Adult:** setting? Yeah. And I'm white, so figure that one out. When I, when I had to go for food stamps and stuff, well, it's not exactly health, but I had to go because I, I broke my back. I lost everything. I couldn't work.

[01:56:43] **Older Adult:** I was in a brace. And, um, he told me it would take a long time to rehab from it. And, uh, I went for food stamps. I was waiting there. And, I'm not a racist person in any way, shape, or form, but the majority of people there were either black or Hispanic. And, um, and I feel for them. Because I have a lot of friends who are black.

[01:57:12] **Older Adult:** And, um, they would actually give me the shirt off their back before some of the white people I know. And, Seriously. And, because they've been through so much, and um, but I was sitting there and I had my number. They wouldn't take me. They took everybody else before me. They called out, they said, I said, no, you just sit down and wait.

[01:57:35] **Older Adult:** Then I got in there and the woman who was looking at my stuff was black. I mean, she was scrutinizing everything, like, what are you here for? I'm like, I don't want to be here. I hate being here. My dad said never take any type of welfare. You know? But I have no choice. I mean, I felt this big. You know? And then I feel, I felt ashamed to go to the grocery store and actually give them the card.

[01:58:11] **Older Adult:** I, I actually did. I mean, I felt really bad. I was like, Oh God, you're probably thinking I'm some type of I don't know. Horrible person or, it's not the word really that should come to me but, you know, looked down on and it wasn't a really good experience. And then I had to beg for three years until I got the disability.

[01:58:34] **Older Adult:** And I didn't know, I knew nothing. I was at Parkland getting physical therapy for my back. And the woman sitting next to me, I told her what I was here for, and she said, Oh honey, you need, you need, uh, a lawyer. And here, let me give you her card. I had to go through the same thing. And I went to this woman, and God must have been with me.

[01:58:59] **Older Adult:** I'm being honest, in a lot of part of my life, she was a really nice lawyer. She was pro bono until she, if we won, she got her share of, you know. And, um, really nice to me. And I didn't even have to go to the hearing. She did it all.

[01:59:21] **Interviewer 1:** Starting to wrap up a little bit. Um, the U. S. has an administration on aging that's in charge of policies and programs for older adults. If someone from the administration on aging was coming here to Dallas, what would you want to tell them about what it's like getting older here in

[01:59:38] **Older Adult:** Dallas? Well, it's hard getting older here in Dallas because, I don't know, because I can't speak for a lot of the other states, but I know some of them are so much better than ours.

[01:59:54] **Older Adult:** Just from a few things I've read online, Massachusetts has a better system, Vermont has a better system, I'm sure California is a whole lot better, um, for some reason Texas just, I'm sure they'd love to get rid of. All the Medicare, Medicaid people, or Medicaid people, mostly, sure. And their Medicaid plans, they don't really do much for you.

[02:00:20] **Older Adult:** Like, I'm here yesterday, I

[02:00:29] **Older Adult:** don't do anything. I'm like, what, you know? And then you can't get a hold of them. You get, oh, voicemail not set up yet. I'm like, you called me, I'm calling you back and your voicemail's still not set up? And it's the same number you had a year ago.

[02:00:49] **Older Adult:** Or they don't call you back. Or, you know, it is a hassle. I would just say, go to a state that's better. Go to a state that's better. Or hope to God nothing happens to you or you, or you have some good friends who can help you. Because at that assisted living, and I do want to say this, number one, They need to pay the people better who work there.

[02:01:19] **Older Adult:** 7. 29 or 8 is not enough to even make them care about you. And, make sure they do have some certification, because a lot of them didn't have any certification. They said they were MAs, but they had no qualifications for it at all. The one lady I knew from an African country, She was not afraid to speak up.

[02:01:43] **Older Adult:** She had two certifications, so she got 13 an hour. Um, and monitor stuff better because I saw the guy bringing the drugs in. I knew who he was.

[02:02:02] **Older Adult:** I, the floor was filthy in the med room. Like I said, I became friends with a lot of those people because I didn't, they didn't have to deal with me on a medication basis. I did my own. Um, and So, they spill somebody's pills, they fell all over the, all over the floor in a bottle. They just pick them up with their hands without washing them, stuck them back in the bottle, put it in the med cart.

[02:02:36] **Older Adult:** Now, that person doesn't know that they fell all over the floor, I don't know what that person has. It could make them sick. The germs on the floor. I don't know. Then I saw two of the med aids. They would put the meds in these little cups before they actually got sighted. And then they had to get these big carts and lock up the controlled medicine.

[02:03:01] **Older Adult:** But they would just stick them in these little cups. And they had them in a plastic bag and they dropped them all over the floor by the phone. And I saw these two girls, the med aids, Pick them up and stick them in the cup and hope that they had the right pills in the right cup. There were people getting the wrong meds.

[02:03:19] **Older Adult:** Some people needed an antibiotic. They didn't get them for close to three or four days. And all they had to do was fax something in to the pharmacy before 4 p. m. Or if it happened to be after 4 p. m. when they found out they needed them, it would be there the following day. Um, they abused certain residents.

[02:03:44] **Older Adult:** They withheld their medication from them, if they didn't like them. There was a medic there who didn't like me, and I never even, I never had nothing to do with the person. I don't know why they didn't like me, because I was white, because I had a brain, and I could see everything that was going on. Oh, one time, the one girl, um,

[02:04:12] **Older Adult:** They were stealing, some of the med aids were stealing the controlled substance medication. And they fired her. And then they hired her back, several months later. Now go figure. And, I was with my friend one night, the med aid, um, the one who had the certifications. She called her, and she said, [redacted], just stay here, I'm putting on speaker.

[02:04:41] **Older Adult:** She said, um, we came up short, so and so, on the controlled substance count at the end of the night, and he goes, well, just make it right, I'll fix it in the morning.

[02:05:01] **Older Adult:** Come on. And you could not go through, if you went through a regulatory agency here, like an or the state, it didn't help. It didn't correct anything. At the facility. In fact, if they found out it was you calling, you were out of there. They'd find some reason to get rid of you. And you had to look for another place to go.

[02:05:27] **Older Adult:** So people were scared. And at one time, this one person who worked there, her whole family worked there. I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Her whole family. And, well you're not going to say anything, because they're going to take it out on you. And they did. And they would cater to certain people and other people not.

[02:05:55] **Older Adult:** And, you know, I mean, a lot of the people smoke pot. I mean, you could smell it. Um, they'd do nothing. Like I said, I had roommates I had to clean up all the time. I was scared to death that I would Clorox the shower before I'd get in it. Especially after getting the MRSA. I mean, I was like, freaked out by that.

[02:06:22] **Older Adult:** I'm like, And then my doctor said, well, every time you go in, you use a tissue to turn on the faucets, wash your hands before you go, and after. I'm like, I have to do this? Come on. Everybody should have their own room. You shouldn't have to share with anybody. Seriously. It got really bad.

[02:06:54] **Older Adult:** You know, and there's probably a lot more, which I may not have removed all, but I do have pictures of everything. And they would leave the, okay, so after you got a plate for dinner, they would leave a bunch of the leftover ones out on the table, on the cafeteria. Well, I have a picture of the thermostat, 78 degrees inside, and there was meat and other stuff on the plate.

[02:07:21] **Older Adult:** You don't leave that out all night from 6 p. m. to the next day, the next morning, when the staff comes in and throws it out or whatever. I'm like, that's, do you not, I was going to get a job volunteering at the church I was going to, uh, for the, their, uh, preschool kids. I was going to do second or third grade and I had to go through this whole training and part of it was, um, The person from the Texas Health Sanitation, you had to watch the video and take a test about the temperature, how you keep the food and stuff.

[02:08:00] **Older Adult:** It's the same thing they had to go through. And the people who was the, uh, who were the, uh, what they call them, the dietary manager, they had no training. They took the same video I took. And they did have a menu. That

came from Reinhardt, supposedly drawn up by a dietician. But, I have a picture of that too.

[02:08:26] **Older Adult:** And, you never got half the stuff on that. Never. Ever. And, they had those white rolls. And I would, I wouldn't eat them. My doctor said, don't eat that stuff. And I could just, you could take them and just squish them up. Like this. You know. Uh. And like I said, on 85 a month, you can't, you buy snacks. So, there were people who had family members who could bring in food for them.

[02:08:56] **Older Adult:** I didn't. And I wasn't going to eat all that stuff. I mean, I ate some of it, but I'm sure it didn't make me any healthier.

[02:09:08] **Interviewer 1:** What about if you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about the experience of aging? What would you change?

[02:09:20] **Older Adult:** One thing? Just teach, um, Mental health is very important. I don't know if they could teach people about mental health and, and, and techniques to help themselves. Um, although I know a lot of people don't care about helping themselves. Um, and, uh, exercise is important. And your nutrition. It's your lifestyle.

[02:09:50] **Older Adult:** It's a lifestyle. You know? And, and to show how to have a, a better attitude toward it, that, that people don't look at people who are aging as, um, oh, they're old and they can't do anything and they're going to be crippled and they're just going to die, you know, um, those people are valuable. We all have experiences that people can draw from.

[02:10:23] **Older Adult:** I mean, God, we've all lived through a bunch of stuff. I know I've lived through so many traumas, I never thought I would. And, um, yeah, the whole outlook on it. And because America is so youth oriented, I mean, look at the ads on TV, it's ridiculous. You know, creams for this, creams for that. And, you know, I wanted to be a model at one time, so yes, I got into that.

[02:10:51] **Older Adult:** It's ridiculous. That is not going to keep you from getting wrinkles or lines or anything else. And wear them as a badge of courage because, man, they tell a story. Every single one of them. And rock your gray hair if you got it. If you don't want it, fine, dye it, but, you know, it

[02:11:19] **Older Adult:** just changes the view of people who are aging in this country. You know, give them a break. That youth stuff isn't, it's not helping anybody. It's making it worse. And the social media for young kids too. Really bad. There's so many suicides. Um, I follow Susan Cain. And I follow her on her, she's the one who wrote that book, *Quiet or Something*, you know, *Introverts in a World Where People Keep Talking*.

[02:11:52] **Older Adult:** And, um, she's on Dan Rather's sub stack, and I subscribe to her, and, uh, yeah, she's very insightful about things. Also, um, he's at the Wharton, he graduated from, he teaches at Wharton University of Penn. Um, Adam Grant, I follow him, he's very interesting too. Um, he did a study on Well, he's in organizational psychology, and he did a study on givers and takers, and who actually makes an organization better, a giver or a taker, and he said a lot of people fall into what he calls matches, a little bit of both, but, and he had this cartoon of it, it was so funny, it said, um, it said, narcissist, because they're takers, and he said, well, you're a narcissist, question one, think deeply about yourself.

[02:12:46] **Older Adult:** And then number two was, if you are, if you are ready at number two, then you're not a narcissist. And he said, givers are actually the people in the corporation who bet you will benefit the most from, although their problem is they, and that's, I'm a, I'm a giver. And so they, they tend to, um, help everybody else and then they can burn out because they don't get their own stuff done.

[02:13:19] **Older Adult:** Because when I lived at the assisted living, I was always trying to help other people. But I felt it got to the point where I was so stressed. I felt so useless. They weren't, they weren't doing anything that I told them that they could help them. It was like, well, why am I doing this? I'm knocking my head against a brick wall, you know?

[02:13:43] **Older Adult:** And it changed me in a way I didn't like. I became a lot more street smart. Because, like, you know, I wasn't street smart at all. I mean, being in with alcoholics, drug addicts, sex offenders, everything else. You, you better, you know. You know, and um, you know, then you try to Not conform, but try to fit in with them a little bit, so you can at least get along, and then I don't like that, because then I'm changing myself, and then I take it with me, and I don't like it.

[02:14:28] **Older Adult:** But, you know, I understand some of the people were really, had hard times, and things that happened to them too, that were really bad, but, it's just, I don't know, can't they screen the people who come in there better? I don't know. And the activities were so pointless and stupid. Like I said, bingo. Not everybody wants bingo.

[02:14:51] **Older Adult:** I understand some people love bingo, and that's great. But they had no other activities for people to stimulate your mind that who wanted a little bit more. You know?

[02:15:13] **Interviewer 1:** Is there anything else we didn't, uh, ask about that you wanted to, to talk about in terms of getting older or using different healthcare services?

[02:15:26] **Older Adult:** Just, I just wish they'd make, I don't know. I, I really don't know. Like I said, I'm not in policy but I sure wish you could find better doctors that take both Medicare assignment and Medicaid. It would just make it so much easier for people. It's just so difficult. And they don't help you. You have to do it all yourself.

[02:15:51] **Older Adult:** And then, yes, they gave me three people, and I went online and looked at them. And when all the reviews, the majority, are bad, well, they can't all be wrong. Like, don't ever go. Run. Well, then, what good was that?

[02:16:15] **Older Adult:** You know, I think people should be able to go to the doctor they want to go to, and it should be paid for. I don't know, maybe Medicare for All, I don't know how they'd do it, I think it'd be great. Because I don't know the exact how they would do it, but it's not socialism, like everybody down here thinks.

[02:16:39] **Older Adult:** I read Japan has one of the best health care systems. You do have to pay a little bit, but they said it's one of the best in the world. I don't know exactly, I haven't looked at it, but they said it's pretty good. Um, I lived in Canada, now I know you probably have to wait over there for certain operations and stuff.

[02:17:01] **Older Adult:** England more so, but when I was in Canada, I had to go to the hospital. So, three doctors looked at me. And I only paid 13. I had Blue Cross and Blue Shield. And then they told me, when you go back to America, you can, you'll get it back. The full amount. And my husband at the time had an eye infection. He had no insurance, obviously.

[02:17:26] **Older Adult:** He went, they looked at him, they gave him the medicine for free, everything.

[02:17:35] **Older Adult:** And the Canadians are some of the nicest people ever. Because I talked to him on the phone. I talked to one girl and I said, Yeah, I lived in Canada for six months. I really liked it, but that was way back in 78, 79 and She said yeah, we're nice. She said but the only thing is we apologize too much. I said I can handle that.

[02:17:57] **Older Adult:** I can handle somebody who apologizes a lot. But I have somebody who's gonna be rude And they they don't let it go like on the next her app is like back and forth back and forth back and forth It's they don't just stop I don't even want to go on there anymore. It's not being helpful. And they care more about the dogs that are lost than they do about a human being needing help.

[02:18:21] **Older Adult:** They think you're all trying to scam them.

[02:18:26] **Older Adult:** I just, healthcare really needs to be changed in America. Really. And nurses, they don't do their job. They can't do their job. Because there's so much paperwork to do for them. So they, a lot of nurses have left the field and then you have people going in and just for the money, wrong, wrong reason, just for the money.

[02:18:50] **Older Adult:** I know you need to support yourself, but please go for your passion because you'll be a lot happier, you know, and probably better at it.

[02:19:05] **Older Adult:** But since COVID it's gotten a lot worse, a lot worse.

[02:19:15] **Older Adult:** And like I said, I can't speak for other states. Wish I knew more about other states, but it's just, it's not, it's not good.