Question: *I'm running into new limits as I get older with post-polio. The physical stuff is mostly manageable. It's figuring out how to stay engaged and active that's tricky. I used to volunteer a lot and be pretty active socially, but that's gotten harder. I don't want to sit around all day, but I also can't keep up the pace I used to. Any advice for staying involved and keeping some structure in my life without overdoing it?*

Response from Rhoda Olkin, PhD:

You are asking about one of the more difficult aspects of aging with polio, which is the noticeable decrement in energy and stamina. The change can be difficult to navigate, especially for those who were quite active in their earlier years. The changes require a renegotiation of what we do. A decision to do something on Saturday might imply a decision to do very little on Sunday. Once we cut out the easy things, harder decisions must be made. Ordering food online, buying more prepared food, maybe hiring a cleaner once a month—these are things that do not change how we define ourselves.

Few will feel diminished by not going to the grocery store every week. But then there are the items that are meaningful and that provide socialization. Both meaning and socialization are vital for good mental health. So, what to do?

This writer says they "volunteer a lot." One idea is to volunteer a little, perhaps no more than one day a week, followed by a slower day at home. They were "pretty active socially"—now be a little active socially. The opposite of lots of volunteering and socializing is not "to sit around all day" but to do mindful planning. I use a physical weekly planner, so that I can open to the coming week and see what activities I have each day.

For example, I see which days I have to get up early and be active right away (hard for me), which days I am seeing friends, check if I have any deadlines coming up. Then once those are clear, I can estimate when I will need down time. This is a busy week for me, so Sunday I am not planning any activities outside the house.

But what about inside the house? I may "sit around," but it might be at my craft table where I make holiday cards or do painting. I might binge-watch a TV show I haven't had time for. I'll do the *New York Times* puzzles and a jigsaw puzzle.

The critical things are to:

(a) plan your energy expenditure over a week, not day by day;

(b) keep seeing people and socializing some each week;

(c) continue doing something that feels meaningful (like volunteering);

(d) program in some fun activities that don't require much energy.

And, here's the hard one: Accept the new reality. Don't fight it, but work within it.

Dr. Rhoda Olkin is a Distinguished Professor of Clinical Psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology in San Francisco, as well as the Executive Director of the Institute on Disability and Health Psychology. She is a polio survivor and single mother of two grown children.

Question: *Technology is supposed to make life easier, but half the time I find myself overwhelmed with online forms, telehealth portals, apps for everything. It's getting harder to keep up. Do you have any suggestions for how us older adults can manage the tech side of life without feeling like we need a full-time tech support person?*

Response from Stephanie T. Machell, PsyD:

Which would surprise you more: that there are young people who hate using technology or that there are older people who love it? Both are true, and more common than stereotypes might lead you to believe. Stereotypes influence our thinking and behavior towards ourselves and others. Internalizing negative stereotypes and assumptions about aging (and disability) can prevent us from trying new things and discovering that we like or are good at them.

Telling yourself that "older" adults find tech difficult to navigate can set you up for failure and frustration. Try changing your self-talk. Remind yourself that you have learned many difficult things over the course of your life and that while learning to use a new app may be challenging, it is far from impossible.

When you make a mistake, remind yourself that learning any new skill involves making mistakes. Remind yourself that there is very little you can do when filling out a form or using an app that will cause irreparable damage to your device or expose you to danger, especially if you have antivirus software installed that is kept up to date and avoid clicking on anything that looks suspect.

If you become frustrated, remember that everyone, regardless of age, encounters frustrating tech issues, including poorly designed forms, hard-to-navigate websites, and unsupportive support people. Take a break and try again later.

It may help to remind yourself that you don't need to know very much about how a device or an app works to use it. For example, you probably read and respond to email, browse the internet, and/or use Facetime or Zoom without knowing about or utilizing every option. However, learning more about your device or an app might help you use it more easily.

For example, if you have vision, hearing, or mobility issues that are making tech use more difficult, learning more about your device's accessibility settings can prove helpful.

Learning more about technology could increase your confidence. Many senior centers and adult education programs offer classes geared to older adults. While learning from younger people seems logical, research shows that peer learning is far more powerful.

Remember, those who are now "older" adults are the ones who were (and in some cases still are) responsible for creating our tech world. Some who once worked in the tech world have transitioned into teaching their skills. Hiring one of them for an hour or so or taking their classes could be money well spent. ∎

Dr. Stephanie T. Machell is a psychologist in independent practice in the Greater Boston (MA) area. She specializes in working with those affected by polio and other physical disabilities. Her father was a polio survivor.