

Life after gray hair

**Spoiler Alert: Don't have a gray hair on your head? Don't bother to read on.*

If you are trying to decide whether or not to let your hair go its natural color, then you have a head full of thoughts – mostly, how have I gotten to this point when I was just eighteen yesterday?

There are friends of mine that at retirement chose the path of going from years of dyeing to white, and honestly, they look lovely. Not only are their coiffures elegant, the white frames their well-lived lives. It's as if it these powerful women are saying to the world, "take me as I am."

I have a few other friends who have risked streaking with color – purple is popular – and have loved every minute of the shock effect. They are the ones who never colored within the lines anyhow, and they walk about town proudly displaying their own take on the world. Kudos to them.

Gray or white hair—sometimes colloquially called "salt and pepper" when it is 'peppered' throughout dark hair—is not caused by a true gray or white pigment, but is due to a lack of pigmentation and melanin. The clear hairs appear as gray or white because of the way light is reflected from the hairs.

Several years ago, I thought I would start the process allowing the gray through and observing what happened. There was no reason to wait, except my hairdresser informed me that it would wipe out my facial coloring and furthermore, my gray was not pure. That fit my mother exactly. She had a crown of yellowish gray hair and the rest stayed a mousy brown. I never cared for it.

Your hairdresser knows best, and in my case, I went along with her evaluation. I'd wait it out a few more years. I'm still waiting.

Men have the similar problem – mostly they have to deal with baldness – and all the jokes rise to the surface. I know them all believe

you me. A good-looking white-haired man is handsome - can you believe it is young Dr. Doug Ross's (George Clooney) turn? - if I must say so myself.

Remember back when you first saw a strain of gray coming through your hair, you weren't much over forty – if that - and way too young to face that your blooming was fading faster than you realized? It was weird how I spotted mine on the exact day of my fortieth birthday dressing to go out, and fortunately cut those strands out going into denial for the time being.

Then on the other hand, I have many acquaintances who will keep coloring their hair. There are probably more reasons that I can sort out for their decisions without having a degree in psychology, and I will leave it at that.

My takeaway advice is to be proud of your looks, accept aging gracefully and keep a healthy control of yourself both inside and out.