

# ARE 'DON'T DO'S'

# HOLDING YOU BACK?

BY LYNN JACKSON

**R**ecently, I've noticed that many people I've talked with are suffering from what I call the "don't do's." These are usually things the individuals used to do when they were more agile, flexible, versatile, athletic, or just plain younger. And sometimes they're things they've always been afraid to do, like ski or surf or, in my case, drive on

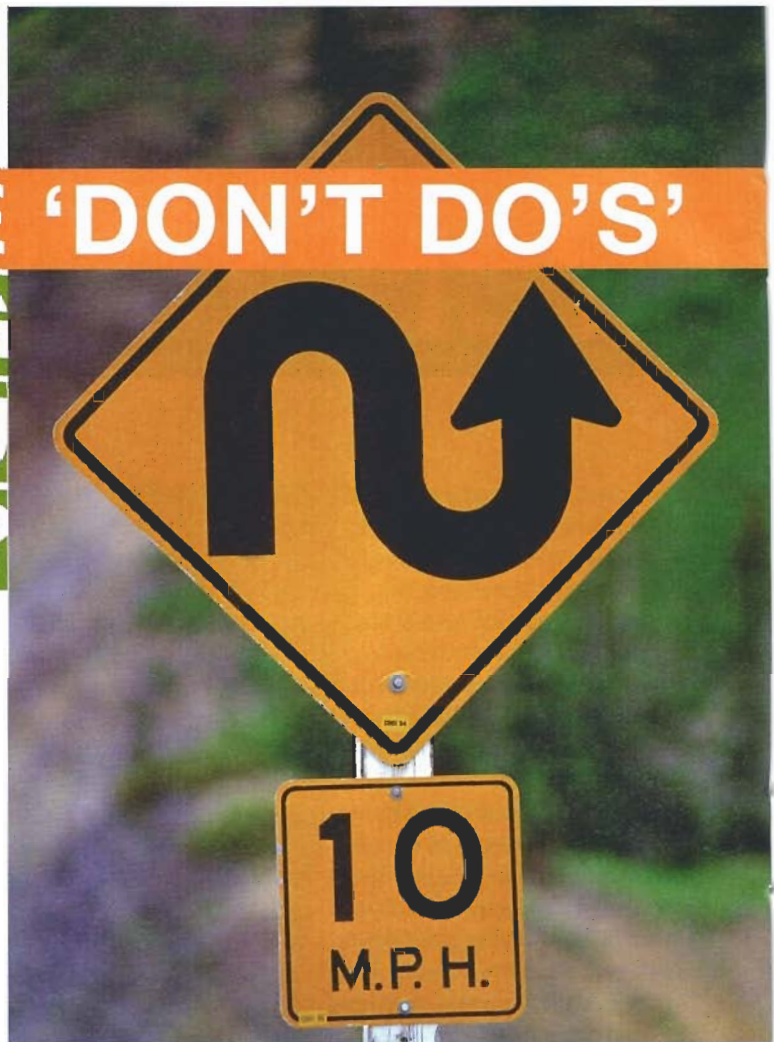
extreme mountain roads.

It may look as if we all share a similar prospect: birth, growth, maturity—occasioned by various fears—and an inevitable wearing on of years and out of energy. But at times we find people who just don't buy into that scenario. Maybe you know someone like that—a parent, friend, or neighbor. They haven't given in to the "don't do's." They haven't stopped doing what they've always loved to do, in some way or another. And they don't let fear keep them from doing new things. In many cases they seek out new and exciting opportunities to interact and learn more. Who *wouldn't* want this perpetual vivacity and love of life? But is it possible for all of us?

The answer is yes! Agility, flexibility, fearlessness, and youth are qualities of thought that are an irresistible part of our spiritual nature—the only nature we possess. And it's possible to experience them right now, in fact.

Several years ago I had to overcome my own "don't do." Since childhood I'd had a fear of driving on sharp, narrow mountain roads, especially ones without a guardrail. One year my family and I took a vacation and drove from Durango to Ouray, Colorado.

But this time was different. I wasn't a child anymore; in fact, my own children were in the backseat, and this road was



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the narrowest and sharpest I'd ever been on. There were huge drop-offs, hairpin "S" turns, and few guardrails. We were on the Million Dollar Highway, famous for its steep curves, and as soon as we arrived at our destination, I penned a note to my mother-in-law stating, "I will never drive on that road again!"

Writing out those words woke me up, though. I suddenly realized that I'd let myself be controlled by this intense fear. And I realized, of course, that this fear needed to be addressed once and for all. So, I did what I always do when I feel fearful—I began to pray. I acknowledged the presence of God under all circumstances and in all places. And I prayed to be open to His comforting ideas.

Then I got in the car and spent the rest of the day alone, driving the Million Dollar Highway back and forth for hours—all the while praying to overcome my fears. This wasn't just a self-willed activity. It was clear to me that I needed to spend some time alone with God, praying about this activity. Perhaps surprisingly, I wanted to feel His presence, right in the midst of doing it. I prayed to feel His protection and to appreciate His beautiful creation all around me—the grandeur, the color, the forms. And I prayed to open my heart to His tender care and watchfulness.

Eventually, I began to notice the beautiful scenery, the

dramatic cliffs, the mountain passes, and the shining rocks. I was feeling God's presence, not fear. I was actually having fun! And I knew I was healed of being afraid of driving on narrow mountain roads. This "don't do" became a loved "will do" that vacation, and I've never feared any road since.

By understanding more about God as Life, I got a clearer idea of what animated me as His child. I learned that God's infinite capacities are also my infinite capacities. Courage, joy, perpetuity, uninterrupted goodness belong to God, so they're a natural, normal part of us all. They aren't things we have to humanly muster. We simply have to yield our thought to God's illimitable nature, and we'll begin to see our own. It's not that we're becoming someone different. Instead, we're recognizing who we already are. And the best part is that God's standard of living doesn't waver. It's here to stay. So we can rest assured that we're able to continue doing all things and adding new things to our repertoire.

Mary Baker Eddy constantly put off limitations in her own experience. She once wrote, "Limitations are put off in proportion as the fleshly nature disappears and man is found in the reflection of Spirit" (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 73). Believing that life is nothing more than matter is self-limiting, because matter itself is finite, temporal, variable.

But we can throw off these limitations as we begin to reason from the basis that God is infinite Spirit. Then we start to see that we're more than mortal beings with built-in fears, anxiety, and an ability to age. Rather, we're immortals, or God's children, with built-in fearlessness, trust, agility, flexibility, and continual vitality and vim. As our thought awakens to this truth, the fleshly—or material—limiting nature loses its importance, and

we find ourselves truly reflecting God, Spirit. We find ourselves expressing a love of life that cannot be hindered or taken away.

There never needs to be a time that we anticipate less activity, when we collect "don't do's": don't drive anymore, don't balance our own checkbook, don't go to work, or don't do whatever. Rather, there should be a constant moment-by-moment expectation of spiritual growth, newness, freshness, fairness. Why? Because, in actuality, these qualities are always present, always available to man from God—always reflected in our conscious existence of Him, and the performance of normal, right activity. **css**

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