

Only the Best for the Rest of Your Life!

Getting Beyond the Limits of Aging

I had just turned 50 and recently moved into my new home with my new husband. George and I were still settling in when I got the phone call from my gynecologist. I was officially in menopause. Besides experiencing off-the-wall menopausal symptoms of memory loss, night sweats and the whole range of maladies that only women can appreciate, I was also feeling a sense of loss about the first half of my life, assuming of course, that I'll live to be at least a hundred.

In search of support, I began reading books by Angeles Arrien and many others on *The Second Half of Life*, poetry by Mary Oliver and exploring my father's Native American roots. I also started asking a lot of questions: *What will I do with the "rest of my life?" What more is there, now that I'm this age? What kind of legacy will I leave the world? Etc."* You know, those core, veiled questions that bring up a ton of feelings!

Mary Oliver's question stays with me, even now as I'm through my 60's and into my 70's. In fact, this question seems more important than ever. *"What is it you plan to do with your one, wild and precious life?"*

This question makes me more aware that whether we are 5 days old or 50 plus years old – none of us have an unlimited amount of time remaining. In fact, if we compare our lives to the life of this planet or to that of the solar system, our lives are little more than blinks in the Divine Eye of evolutionary history.

Most of us who are over 50 tend to be more aware of these limits since we have watched time speed up and the years move past with what appears to be an accelerated momentum. We are all hearing people say: *"Where has the year gone?"* or *"Wow, time is going so fast!"* or *"Is it really possible that I am already 40, 50, 60 or 70?"*

Of course, all of this critical awareness demands the willingness to look deeper, to move past our culture's great seduction; its obsession with youth and an immense array of distractions and instant gratification. Yes, our contemporary life pulls us compellingly and we are seasoned for busyness. In the process, however, we may be losing our way just as surely as our health and well-being, as we chase after our beauty and the illusion of youth, especially as we age.

The result can be compromised health, greater stress and anxiety with less satisfaction in many of the crucial areas of our lives. We can lose our ability

to focus effectively on our work, to relate positively to our loved ones and to give ourselves the kind of attention we need and deserve. Our Best gets confused with outside demands and expectations and eventually shows on our face as a lack of love for ourselves. Our passion for life and the connection with our '*one, wild and precious life*' with all of its meaning and purpose is often overshadowed or left behind.

Be True to You!

In taking a deeper look into my Native American heritage, I was relieved to discover that indigenous people celebrate the second half of life as one of the best times in life, full of meaning and purpose and deeper, greater peace. A time when elders are respected and revered for their wisdom and knowledge.

Indigenous people believe that each of us has the potential to become an elder with a legacy to share, based on our life experience and wisdom. I agree and also I believe an important part of our legacy can include dreams that we may have put aside, perhaps for the sake of collective goals that are measured too exclusively by the amount of our economic accumulation and the number of our material possessions.

Our treasured, overlooked dreams can be re-discovered if we are willing to put on new glasses, like the old-time 'spectacles;' to see in a new way; to re-spect, to re-look, and uncover those things that taught us to be loving, to recall those people who made us smile and feel just right, and who influenced us in positive ways.

For me one of those people was my immigrant, great grandmother, Leah Waterman, who taught me to explore the Great Mystery and believe in myself. Can you call to mind one of those role models in your life?

How Do We Rediscover What Is Important?

I find that journaling helps me to access feelings that I am holding inside and to address them head on. When I write with no objective but to listen to myself, I discover what is really going on underneath the day to day interactions, and as a result, I am faithfully directed to what is best for me.

So, I invite you to take a few minutes to grab a journal or piece of paper and make a list of some things that are important to you. Ask yourself what you need to make the best of the rest of your life. What are the.....?

- Dreams, schemes and plans you'd like to complete in the years ahead.
- Values, habits and practices you'd like to adopt, change or drop.
- Practical things that you need to put in order.
- Places you still want to visit.
- Talents and skills you still want to develop and share with others.
- Experiences you want to have, including those on the inner planes.
- Legacies you want to create.
- Healings with friends and loved ones that you want to initiate.
- Ways of feeling loved, joyful and fulfilled.

Through journaling I have discovered that my life has become more immediate, fragile and more meaningful than it was during the first half of life. I am also inspired by all the possibilities. When I pay attention to some of these things that are important to me, I come closer to honoring my *'one, wild and precious life.'* Like that beauty commercial says: *"And I'm worth it!"*

You are worth it. You are one of a kind, incomparable and deserving of all good things and poised to live your dreams. The world is waiting for you to share your best for the rest of your life!

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