

Good Morning,

(take a deep breath and make eye contact)

So what are the first few images that come to your mind when someone says they are retired? (wait a while) What images do you have of ageing propagated by our culture? (wait)

When I began my certification to become a retirement coach in 2013, I became conscious and aware of these images, of the images in my own head. Just like when our attention and intention is drawn to something we are interested in, these things start showing up in our lives. As I was preparing this talk this week I saw an ad in the paper for a retirement sale on sewing machines. These out of date machines were still working and were being sold at a much lower price than the new ones. They were not used, they were older models, never used. A Retirement Sale.

In 2013 as a retirement gift, the Minnesota Twins gave a star player Mariano Rivera a rocking chair made of broken bats. They even named it “The Chair of Broken Dreams”. A Rocking Chair

Also at the 2013 Emmy Awards actor Jeff Daniels was shocked to win the Emmy for his portrayal of a news anchor on HBO’s *The Newsroom*.

During his acceptance speech, Daniel made mention of a Golden Barcalounger Award – one of the few awards he’s gotten over his career – that he received from AARP. A Barcalounger.

These are common images of retirement.

A new force is silently sweeping our culture; a force that has already started to change the very fabric of how we organize our lives, how we relate to one another, how we use our money, our time and our talents. This new force is the dramatic shift in how we retire.

An entirely new definition of retirement has surfaced that has never before been seen so clearly by so many. It's an entirely new human potential movement destined to transform every facet of the gemstone of human endeavor. This new definition encourages us to sparkle as never before, with a new freedom of action and a deepening of the human spirit.

I don't want to spend a lot of time discussing 15 factors of a successful retirement according to research by a man named Dr. Richard Johnson, a nationally recognized spokesperson in the field of retirement and adult development. But out of these factors he describes in his book "The New Retirement", I want to mention a few of the factors that stood out for me, when I took the Retirement Success Profile. I became certified to administer and interpret this test to others.

The first factor that was noted as a "focus factor" (which means I scored low on this) for me was called **Work Reorientation**: which is defined as the degree to which you have emotionally distanced yourself from taking your personal identity from your work. As an educator for 40 years now, I always saw my work as a calling not a job. So, did that mean I had to redefine myself...who I was? Was my self-definition built almost entirely on my work? How do I disengage from work and keep my unique sense of self? I did need to focus on it. I realized that I gained a sense of internal power by letting go of defining my self based on what I did. Could I just "be" and from my being would come my "doing"?

I had about 5 focus factors to work on according to this analysis of my responses. Two others were the usual "Health Perception" and "Financial Security". I am not going to spend any time on these today. You can find tons of books, blogs, videos and readings on these.

As I studied “retirement” – a word I don’t even want to use because it doesn’t fit anymore – I came across what the research says is the most important success factor in this time of life. It is Life Meaning. This one is defined as: The degree to which you have found a life direction for retirement which offers you a driving purpose, and a deep sense of personal fulfillment. I like this quote from “The New Retirement”:

“To discover your retirement dream you need to take off your worldly glasses and put on the same glasses you wore as a five year old child, when the world was simply and absolutely wondrous, and unfolding adventure every day, a place for playfulness and awe.”

Where will I find meaning in my life? This is the question.

In Eric Maisel’s book with the unfortunate title of “Rethinking Depression” he suggests that we investigate meaning. Nothing is more important than meaning, and nothing is so little investigated. Why is this? He says it is because people find it painful to realize that meaning is private, personal, individual and subjective. What we value, how we construe our life purpose, what we make of the facts of existence is a completely subjective affair. What holds meaning for you may not have meaning for me.

We have sold our house here that we lived in for 12 years. This house has deep meaning for us. Our son built it. Our grandchildren have played in it. Everything in it was chosen by us. The new owners are excited about living in it and they love it but they will most likely place their own meaning on it. It’s a thing, a building but we have placed great meaning on this thing.

On Sept. 4th, the New York Times published an important opinion piece titled, “You’ll Never Be Famous---And That’s O.K.” This is the closing sentence of the article:

You don't have to change the world to find your purpose to lead a meaningful life. A good life is a life full of goodness---and that's something anyone can aspire to, no matter their dreams or circumstances.

The author cites much scientific research in her article that meaning is found not in success and fame and glamour, but in the mundane and the ordinary. "The most meaningful lives," she writes, "are often not the extraordinary ones. There the ordinary ones lived with dignity."

As you investigate meaning for yourself, you begin to think about what matters to you, but more important, that *you* matter. You decide to matter.

Each individual life can have meaning. You can accept your obligation to make meaning. You can turn the meaning that was waiting to be made into the meaning of your life. You and you alone, are the sole arbiter of the meaning in your life

I have my retirement coaching clients develop their personal retirement mission statement and purpose for this third chapter of their lives.

One of my favorite books is "Let Your Life Speak" by Parker Palmer. The title is a time-honored Quaker admonition, usually taken to mean "Let the highest truths and values guide everything you do." Parker reinterprets these words as we search for selfhood. "Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you." Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent." To do this you must listen to your deepest true self.

I want to read a poem by William Stafford called "ASK ME"

Some time when the river is ice ask me
mistakes I have made. Ask me whether
what I have done is my life. Others
have come in their slow way into
my thought, and some have tried to help
or to hurt: ask me what difference
their strongest love or hate has made.

I will listen to what you say.
You and I can turn and look
At the silent river and wait. We know
the current is there, hidden; and there
are comings and goings from miles away
that hold the stillness exactly before us.
What the river says, that is what I say.

This poem to me is about “being” rather than “doing” and about learning from our mistakes in life. Like the river running beneath the ice there is a sense that there is a deeper and truer life waiting to be acknowledged. That fact alone may help us “listen to our life.”

My last point of this lesson today is for us to consider our perception of age. This focus factor for me is defined as the degree to which you see your own maturation process as a time of emotional and psychological

vitality and vibrancy full of potential for dynamic and ongoing personal growth...And (let me add) learning.

I just spent a week in Boulder Colorado attending a foundation course in ontological coaching. Ontology is the study of being. I have been coaching for over 15 years and have trained school administrators in leadership coaching. What I realized last week is that at 69 years old, I am a beginner. I am beginning an 8 month coaching training that will deepen and enhance my coaching experience with my clients. I claim my beginner status with pride.

We can call this time in our lives aging. In the book "From Age-ing to Sage-ing. The authors describe a revolutionary approach to ageing called *spiritual eldering*. They present a model of the sage or "elder of the tribe" who benefits from extended longevity by developing extended consciousness. Elders practice contemplative disciplines from our spiritual traditions and come to terms with their mortality. They harvest life experiences, pass on their wisdom to younger people, and safeguard the health of our ailing planet. Out of their late-life explorations in consciousness, elders bestow upon the world the life-giving wisdom it desperately needs and crown their lives with respect and honor.

I believe those of us who want to take on this challenge to become an elder, start with this, the Elder Creed:

An elder is a person who is still growing, still a learner, still with potential and whose life continues to have within it promise for, and connection to, the future. And elder is still in pursuit of happiness, joy and pleasure, and her or his birthright to these remains intact. Moreover, an elder is a person who deserves respect and honor and whose work it is to synthesize wisdom from long life experience and formulate this into a legacy for future generations.

The world desperately needs elders at this time. Let's do it together.

One more poem:

Enough by Simran Sethi

I am a human being.

I am only a human being.

I am not superman/woman,

I am not perfect.

Perfection is only a game good for suffering.

I am not perfect and it's okay because human beings are not perfect.

I accept my humanity,

I accept I am finite.

I can't know everything,

I can't do everything,

I don't have forever,

And I cannot please everyone.

That's life. That's being human.

Being human has great gifts,

I can make requests, I can make promises,

I can create new possibilities and make them happen.

I can create the future with others.

I have a history.

It has limits, but also my capabilities and possibilities,

It gives me what I care about,

It gives me my meaning.

I accept my history, and look to take care of what I care about.

I have vices and I have virtues,
I accept my vices and my virtues.
I recognize that the voice in my ear that whispers “you are not enough”
Is an echo from the past, a ghost that does not speak the truth,
It is time to stop listening to the voice as though it tells the truth,
And find my own voice.

I now live from interpretations I choose, not from unexamined old habits.
I now take care of what I care about,
With dignity and acceptance of the Self that I am.
I ground myself in the assertions of what I have accomplished,
In the fact of my commitment,
And accept my humanity.

When people have assessments, as they always do
They are not revealing the truth but simply offering me a future
Which I can accept or I can decline.

I am committed to my dignity
And acceptance of my and others humanity.
I will stay true to that.

I'll be open to certain assessments,
And I'll decline others.
And in some communities
I will show up as a leader
And in others I won't.
People can accept and decline my offers
My standards

My commitments.

I'll find people who want to play with me,
And accept my humanity as well.

I declare that "I am enough!"
Because I am a human being, and that is enough.

I am enough.

Thanks to life.

Thank you for allowing me to share these thoughts.

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