



Curriculum Resource Guide

Second Edition

Based upon the work of Zalman Schachter-Shalomi



Sage-ing® International

Wisdom and Spirit in Action



Sage-ing® International

Wisdom and Spirit in Action

Sage-ing® International
Curriculum Resource Guide
Second Edition

**Based Upon the Work of
Zalman Schachter-Shalomi**

**Compiled By
Richard Stone**

Published by Sage-ing® International

© 2014 Sage-ing® International

All of the material in this Second Edition of the Sage-ing International Curriculum Resource Guide is copyrighted and may not be used, copied, duplicated, etc., without the expressed written permission of Sage-ing International.

The term “sage-ing” is a registered trademark and may not be used without the expressed written permission of Sage-ing International.

For contact information refer to
www.sage-ing.org

Dedicated to

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-
Shalomi

Your unwavering vision and wisdom
have been an inspiration and a guide
for the work of Sage-ing International and
for all those who have set out on the
path of sage-ing.

Contents

Dedication
Acknowledgments
Sage-ing International Mission and Vision
Sage-ing International—A Brief History
Introduction

Sections & Modules

Overview

Module 1 A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work

Expanding Our Consciousness

Module 2 Elder Consciousness
Module 3 Tools for Expanding Consciousness
Module 4 Incorporating Creativity into Elder Life

Reviewing Our Lives

Module 5 Life Review & Life Harvest
Module 6 Recontextualizing the Past

Repairing Our Relationships

Module 7 The Gift of Forgiveness
Module 8 Elders as Healers of the World

Embracing Our Mortality

Module 9 Mortality
Module 10 The Philosophical Work of the Sage

Creating Our Legacy

Module 11 Leaving a Legacy
Module 12 Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue

Gifts of the Emerging Elder

Module 13 The Emerging Elder
Module 14 Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations
Module 15 Integrating Sage-ing into Daily Life

Handouts

- Handout 1 Definition of an Elder
- Handout 2 The Essence of Sage-ing
- Handout 3 The Essence of Sage-ing (*8 points*)
- Handout 4 The Cycles of My Life
- Handout 5 The Cycles of My Life (*illustration*)
- Handout 6 Who Are Elders
- Handout 7 Journal Writing
- Handout 8 Why Keep a Journal? A Dozen Answers

Exercises

- Exercise 1 Approaching Elderhood
- Exercise 2 Journey to Meet My Inner Elder
- Exercise 3 Deepening: Harvesting a Post Dyad Exercise
- Exercise 4 The Cycles of My Life
- Exercise 5 Meditation on My Physical Body
- Exercise 6 Exploring My Psycho-Spiritual World
- Exercise 7 Lifetime Map of the Significant Actions in My Life
- Exercise 8 Relationship Maps – Significant People in My Life
- Exercise 9 Harvesting Wisdom
- Exercise 10 My Philosophical Homework
- Exercise 11 Testimonial Dinner for My Severe Teacher
- Exercise 12 The Gift of Forgiveness: A Gift to Myself
- Exercise 13 Healing a Painful Memory
- Exercise 14 Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness
- Exercise 15 Forgiveness Breath
- Exercise 16 Scripting My Last Moments on Earth
- Exercise 17 Check List for Creating Peace of Mind
- Exercise 18 Living Will
- Exercise 19 Acting as an Elder of the Tribe
- Exercise 20 The Experience of Mentoring and Intergenerational Work
- Exercise 21 Creating a Vision for My Future
- Exercise 22 The Gift of Counsel
- Exercise 23 Writing Ethical Letters
- Exercise 24 Self-Forgiveness

Appendices

Appendix 1	The Practice of Sage-ing
Appendix 2	Focused Meditation for Elders
Appendix 3	Spiritual Intimacy
Appendix 4	Socialized Meditation
Appendix 5	Housekeeping Check List
Appendix 6	Creating a Safe Environment
Appendix 7	A Primer on Adult Learning Theory
Appendix 8	Program Design Hints
Appendix 9	Sample 2.5 Hour Sage-ing Workshop
Appendix 10	Sample of One Day Sage-ing Workshop
Appendix 11	Sample: Four-Session Sage-ing Workshop
Appendix 12	Definition of Significant Words and Concepts
Appendix 13	Songs
Appendix 14	JERFS
Appendix 15	Energy Work
Appendix 16	Guidelines for Energy Breaks Involving Movement
Appendix 17	Start a Sage-ing Discussion Group
Appendix 18	Bibliography

Acknowledgements

Sage-ing International Coordinating Circle wishes to acknowledge the seminal work of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, D.H.L., in establishing the Spiritual Eldering Institute (SEI) from which the Sage-ing Leader's training program developed and the Sage-ing Guild concept later emerged. We wish to also gratefully acknowledge the support of ALEPH in the development of *The Spiritual Eldering Workbook™ (1996)* from which many of the activities are drawn. Early contributors to the evolving trans-denominational curriculum were Lynne Iser, M.P.H., the first Executive Director, and Bahira Sugarman, D.C.S.W., and Rabbi Shaya Isenberg, Ph.D., the founding faculty.

In 1994, Betty Anne Sullivan, Ed.D., a curriculum developer from Rutgers University and one of the eight original Sage-ing Leaders, developed the first formal curriculum for presenters. The modules were created from the unpublished manuscript of *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Old*, Betty Anne's seminar notes, and sample lessons created by the other seven original Sage-ing Leaders. We wish to recognize the contributions of Steffi Shapiro, Elizabeth David, Mindy Turin, Carol Jacobs, Rev. Donna O'Keefe, Fred Stugatz and Joyce Quinlan who were in the vanguard of this educational effort. During the summer of 1994, under the leadership of Bahira and Shaya, the first modules were field tested.

In November of 1994, Betty Anne presented the completed curriculum to the Board of Directors. Erwin Krasnow, Board President, funded the reproduction and distribution of the curriculum to the Sage-ing Leaders. Additional support from Michael Ross, Nancy Klavans and Erwin Krasnow provided the enhancement of the curriculum.

In the years between 1994 and 1998, many new Sage-ing Leaders also contributed new ideas to the curriculum. Their contributions are also recognized and appreciated. In 1998, the Board of Directors established a committee to revise and expand the curriculum to meet the growing need for information about the sage-ing process. Steffi Shapiro chaired the committee that included Betty Anne Sullivan, Carol Lerner, Judith Helburn and Mark Boyer. After a year of teleconferences, the committee met in Fort Lauderdale in January of 1999, as guests of Board Member Florence Ross. This two-day meeting produced the framework for the expanded curriculum. We also recognize the key role that Steffi Shapiro played, in keeping the momentum going, during the organization's move from Philadelphia, PA to Boulder, CO.

In August, 1999, the Curriculum Development Team was convened. Members included Judith Helburn, Carol Lerner, Lori Miller, Rick Stone, Betty Anne Sullivan, and faculty members Marian Eisner and Shaya Isenberg. In addition, invaluable input was received from Tom Northcott and Lyn MacBeath.

Then in October, 2004, the Sage-ing Guild was formed which soon replaced the Institute. Founding Sage-ing Leaders included Gary Carlson, Rosemary Cox, Judith Helburn, Pat Hoertdoerfer, Pat Lewis, Rosalie Muschal-Reinhart, and Chuck Warren. In 2007 the Coordinating Circle revised the Curriculum Resource Guide. In 2010, the name of the organization changed to Sage-ing® International.

Sage-ing[®] International

Vision:

Sage-ing International is dedicated to helping elders reclaim their role as leaders, sharing wisdom and spirit essential to creating a better world for current and future generations.

Mission:

Sage-ing International is a non-profit organization committed to transforming the current paradigm of aging to sage-ing through **learning, service** and **community**.

Learning:

We train a network of Sage-ing Leaders through certification programs. We share the Sage-ing philosophy worldwide by providing workshops, conferences, webinars and publications.

Service:

We encourage and support elders in serving their families, communities, and others around the world.

Community:

We provide opportunities for individuals on their sage-ing journeys to share and connect with others through an array of interactive opportunities that include but are not limited to chapter programs and wisdom circles. We collaborate with the Conscious Aging Alliance member groups and others who share our vision.

Definition of Sage-ing:

Sage-ing is the process of becoming an elder; of reviewing one's life; of coming to terms with mortality; of effecting intergenerational healing; of transmitting one's wisdom learned through life experience; of creating one's legacy; and, of being a mentor to others.

Sage-ing® International—A Brief History

The visionary work of sage-ing is the result of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's encounter with his own aging which he shares in the introduction to his book, *From Age-ing to Sage-ing—A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*:

“I was approaching my 60th birthday, and a feeling of futility had invaded my soul, plunging me into a state of depression that no amount of busyness or diversion could dispel. Yet while my public life was bustling with activity, beneath the surface, away from my teaching and pastoral work, something unknown was stirring in my depths...”

The creative and deeply spiritual mind of Zalman Schachter led him to retreat and to then explore, contemplate, and wrestle with his images of aging as well as his knowledge of humanistic psychology. His personal struggle and quest resulted in the development of the theory of sage-ing that acknowledges the great significance and importance of the elder years for individuals and society.

A group of supporters, gerontologists, elders and organizers joined forces in 1989 to first create the Spiritual Eldering Institute. The initial project was designed to research and develop the theories and practices of sage-ing; to provide seminars and presentations; and, to write journal articles. With the organizing support of ALEPH, Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and with generous funding from the Nathan Cummings Foundation and individual contributors these goals were accomplished and surpassed.

The Spiritual Eldering Institute had become known for its pioneering work in the field of conscious/spiritual eldering. Although this work was developed by a rabbi, the theory and practices of sage-ing are drawn from many traditional and non-traditional sources of wisdom, literature, psychology, gerontology and other disciplines.

In October, 2004 The Sage-ing Guild was formed, and soon this professional organization replaced the Institute. The material continues to be facilitated by people across the continent and in other countries.

Introduction

Welcome to the *Sage-ing® International Curriculum Resource Guide*. This work reflects the important shift in the current paradigm of aging in America that the Spiritual Eldering Institute began in 1990. As you know, the philosophical underpinnings of sage-ing evolved as Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi embarked on his own eldering journey searching for direction and models that are positive with an emphasis on spirituality, personal development, and a commitment to future generations and planet earth. Drawing from his own research and experience, this new direction began to take shape, developing into a unique approach to aging that synthesizes the wisdom of many spiritual traditions and cultures as well as incorporating cutting edge thinking from the fields of psychology and gerontology. For all those who embark on this same journey, the curriculum offers unique processes and tools for psycho-spiritual growth and fulfillment that will be life changing.

The following modules represent an overview of the *From Age-ing to Sage-ing Curriculum*. They are designed to assist you in the development of presentations for a variety of audiences and to help you tailor your programs to meet the learning needs of your participants. Many of these concepts will be pivotal to your success as a sage-ing leader.

The flow of lecture topics and exercises in these modules are based on the experience of seasoned sage-ing leaders who have been presenting the *From Age-ing to Sage-ing Curriculum*. In each module there are core concepts that make up the essence of sage-ing. While we believe it is important that you include these ideas and maintain their integrity regardless of the audience, ultimately you will need to find your own unique way to put flesh on the bones of the program, tailoring each module to fit your personal presentation style and the particular needs of your audience.

While the full curriculum is best delivered over a series of days or weeks, you no doubt will find yourself designing programs to meet a variety of time slots. Choosing what to include and exclude will become part of the creative challenge and joy of presenting. At the beginning of each module you will find an outline of core concepts, along with suggested activities and topics. These recommendations reflect what has worked well for others. But don't be afraid to experiment. If an exercise or topic seems to be consistently missing the mark, drop it or craft a new one that better focuses the group's energy and learning. As you find other approaches that work for you, please send them to a Sage-ing International Coordinating Circle member so we can share them with other sage-ing leaders.

The recommended topics and exercises in the Curriculum are intended to give you a wide array of choices when crafting your sessions. Your time frame will also determine in large part the breadth of material that you can cover. Always read your audience and let them guide you regarding areas of interest. Come prepared with an agenda, but be equally prepared to move in different directions depending on the sophistication and needs of

participants. While this curriculum is set up as progressive modules, there is nothing sacrosanct about this division of material, and it may in fact be best to introduce an exercise or topic from a later module given the issues that participants present to you. Be flexible!

In addition to the subject matter, how you facilitate transitions will play a significant role in your success. When participants return from breaks, pay close attention to the energy of the room. While this is serious work, introducing fun at crucial junctures of the program can keep participants engaged and attentive. See the Appendices for activities that other sage-ing leaders have found to be effective and tips on group facilitation, setting up the space, and balancing the energy in the room.

Finally, this curriculum is a template for a spiritual journey that can profoundly change the course of a participant's life. As a sage-ing leader, you are entering into a covenant between you and your participants. Where you are in your own journey may be more important than anything else. While you are not expected to have all of the answers, you can't be an effective guide unless you have also done the inner work of sage-ing. Remember you are expected to uphold a level of professionalism that ensures that the trust that participants place in your hands is earned each time they gather to share, learn, heal old wounds, and harvest their wisdom. This is sacred work. Treat it as such and the rewards for you and those you guide will be immeasurable.

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

- Power of Language
- Aging in North America – A Paradigm Shift
- Statistics Regarding Aging in America
- Role of the Elder through History
- *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* Model
 - Definition of an Elder
 - Distinction between Spirituality and Religion
 - Essence of Sage-ing
- Expanded Life Cycle
- Value and Tools of Expanded Consciousness
- Inner Elder

Exercises and Activities

- Approaching Elderhood
- The Inner Elder

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

This module provides the framework for introducing a general audience to the core concepts of sage-ing. Based on time constraints and audience needs,

- fashion a presentation to include a blend of lecture and discussion coupled with experiential exercises and activities.
- facilitate the growth of participants through the four dimensions of life – spirit, mind, emotions, and body, remembering that people learn differently.

Appendix 7 *A Primer on Adult Learning Theory*

The Power of Language

One of the first paradigm shifts that we want to introduce to participants is the way in which we think and talk about our age.

*To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of
intelligent people and the
affection of children; to
earn the appreciation of
honest criticism and endure
the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty and
find the best in others; to
leave the world a bit better
whether by a healthy child,
a garden patch, a redeemed
social condition; to know
even one life has breathed
easier because you have
lived – this is to have
succeeded.*

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



- In your introduction you have the opportunity to model this new approach that de-emphasizes age and highlights our years of life experience.
- At the beginning of your session introduce yourself in the following manner and then invite participants to share in the same way. “I have ___ years of life experience, and I have come here today because. . .”
By changing how we speak, we can shift consciousness and attitudes in a powerful way.

Aging in America – A Paradigm Shift

Elicit from participants their experiences and views of what some experts in literature call “gerontophobia.” What barriers do they experience in their daily lives that are a result of ageism? You may find it helpful to list these on a white board or on newsprint to enhance the discussion. The following are some sample questions that can facilitate discussion.

- ◇ What are the stereotypes of older people that are perpetuated by the media?
- ◇ What are your fears regarding growing older?
- ◇ How do we define elders in our society?
- ◇ What does it mean to be an elder?
- ◇ What earns respect for an elder?
- ◇ What barriers do you experience as you search for meaning in your own life?
- ◇ What are the things you relish most about growing older?
- ◇ How did you feel about leaving the mainstream of work, whether it was a job or raising and caring for a family?

Approaching Elderhood

- ◇ The above discussion could be approached as a socialized meditation depending on group composition and size.
- ◇ For small groups this could also be approached as a journal

*This is the true joy in life,
the being used for a
purpose recognized by our
self as a mighty one; the
being thoroughly worn out
before you are thrown on
the scrap heap; the being a
force of Nature instead of a
feverish selfish clod of
ailments and grievances
complaining that the world
will not devote itself to
making you happy.*

-- George Bernard Shaw

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



writing exercise followed by didactic sharing and group harvesting. Guidelines and suggestions are also covered in Module 2.

Exercise 1	<i>Approaching Elderhood</i>
Appendix 4	<i>Socialized Meditation</i>
Handout 7	<i>Journal Writing</i>
Handout 8	<i>Why Keep a Journal</i>

Other topics or areas you may want to explore with participants follow.

Statistics Regarding Aging in America

There are many important events impacting aging in America today. The aging “baby boomer” generation born between 1947 and 1967 is changing the future of our society. Birth rates have decreased; whereas, life expectancy has increased over the past fifty years, an increase that is more than what had occurred in the previous five thousand years! People 85 and older are projected to grow six fold over the next fifty years while the number of people ages 65 to 84 are projected to triple. Couple this with the fact that people are growing older and staying healthier. Other related issues will begin to impinge on society. There will be an increasing need for caregivers; as many as one third of the boomer generation will face old age poverty; and, even now there is a breakdown of intergenerational connections.

Author Ken Dychtwald suggests that these changes in demographics pose ten important questions for society.

- Can we afford millions of 80-100 year olds?
- Can we spend more years caring for our old than for our children?
- At what age should people be eligible for retirement benefits?
- Can entitlements and their funding last?

Elderhood is a time to discover inner richness for self-development and spiritual growth. It is also a time of transition and preparation for dying which is at least as important as preparation for a career or family. Out of this time of inner growth come our sages, healers, prophets, and models for the generations to follow.

— Gay Luce
Longer Life, More Joy

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



- Can healthcare systems handle the increased demand for services?
- Will we be prepared to re-engineer products and services to meet the needs of the old?
- Can we resolve “right to death” issues?
- Can politicians distribute government resources fairly among the generations?
- How can the world be economically productive with fewer workers and more “oldsters”?
- Can our system restrain elder “boomer” demands on our socioeconomic structure?

Reference Reference

Age Wave, Ken Dychtwald
Politics and Sociology of Aging

Reb Zalman’s Journey

Reb Zalman’s personal story explains the models he explored for growing older more meaningfully.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 1-8

Role of the Elder through History

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, elders played a special role in society as teachers, spiritual leaders, and political advisors. With the Industrial Revolution this esteemed role was minimized and in many cases lost entirely. Currently there is emerging a new model of the elder that is both a synthesis of that once revered status of the elder with new paradigms of spirituality, psychology, consciousness development, ecological awareness, and social responsibility.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 57-77

Elders are the jewels of humanity that have been mined from the Earth, cut in the rough, then buffed and polished by the stonecutter’s art into precious gems that we recognize for their enduring value and beauty. We sense their radiance in our youth, but we cannot contain it. It requires a lifetime’s effort to carve out the multifaceted structure that can display our hidden splendor in all its glory.

-- Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



From Age-ing to Sage-ing Model

Here is your opportunity to begin fashioning an expanded perspective for participants that moves from the old concept of aging to the new paradigm of sage-ing. There are a variety of topics that you will want to cover in this section of the program, such as the *Definition of an Elder*, the distinction between religion and spirituality, the *Essence of Sage-ing*, and the *Expanded Life Cycle*.

- We suggest that you do not present this material in a lecture format. Instead, share each concept, and then elicit reactions and thoughts from participants.
- You may also want to present a few other basic concepts, especially those that are radical departures from the old model.
- Then break the larger group into smaller groups, asking them to address these ideas and answer specific questions, such as “If this is true, then what does this mean for your own life?”

Below are other topics (♥) that you may want to explore in this discussion.

♥ **Definition of an Elder**

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.

An 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 Live Oak Project
El Sobrante, CA

In modern gerontology, successful aging basically boils down to achievement and activity which are the hallmarks of Western culture. The contemplative traditions can help us re-vision retirement in terms other than the “productive aging” so characteristic of our time. From this perspective, we can think of aging as a kind of “natural monastery” in which earlier roles, attachments, and pleasures are naturally stripped away from us.

-- Harry Moody

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



This definition of elderhood was developed by a leading gerontologist, Barry Barkan.

- Invite participants to engage with this definition and consider what they would add and what has special meaning for them. How does it reflect their own elder journey?
- You could even turn this into a creative exercise, first asking them to work in small groups to build their own definition before introducing the definition from the Live Oak Project.
- Have each group share what they have crafted with the larger group.

Handout 1 *The Definition of an Elder*

♥ Florence Ross's Story

Florence Ross earned a PhD while in her eighties. Her life experiences exemplify how one can embrace the principles of sage-ing.

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 28-29*

♥ A New Old Video

You may want to show the trailer or entire video of *A New Old* by David Carey found at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/creatinganewold>

You can rent or purchase the film. Information can be found on the link above.

♥ Distinction between Spirituality and Religion

There are many terms used within the *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* curriculum that will have multiple connotations for participants. It is often helpful to elicit these meanings from the group. One of the most important of these is the distinction between spirituality and religion. As these terms are used in this program, they are defined quite differently, but the general public does not necessarily make a distinction between the two. Reb Zalman defines sage-ing: “(It) implies an inner search for God, a self-directed flowering of the spirit that unites all people

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



in a common quest, no matter what their affiliation.”
Ultimately, participants must arrive at a definition that works best for them.

- Challenge them to identify these distinctions for themselves.

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 39-42*

♥ Essence of Sage-ing

In many respects, this document lays out the fundamentals of sage-ing and sets the stage for all future sessions. Each item is important to the whole.

- Rather than turning this into a rote recitation, use anecdotal and story material throughout the explanation of these ten points to bring them to life.
- Engage participants in a discussion of each, eliciting feelings, thoughts, and concerns.
- Reference when each of these areas will be coming up in the overall program if this is just the first meeting in an ongoing program.
- For example, point #2 refers to coming to terms with our mortality. Discuss how you will approach this topic in future sessions.

I believe that the next phase of evolution will unfold our intuitive capacities, making us more permeable to the sacred in daily life.

-- Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Handout 2 *The Essence of Sage-ing*
Handout 3 *The Essence of Sage-ing (8 points)*
Appendix 1 *The Practice of Sage-ing*

Expanded Life Cycle

One of the important perspectives of sage-ing is to see individual lives within the context of the months and seasons of a year. The cycles of life are made up of significant moments, influences and people. We can look at life in seven year cycles with each cycle representing one month of the calendar year. Each seven years marks the beginning of a new

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



phase of our development. One of the main reasons for looking at life in this way is to better understand the developmental tasks of each cycle. Until recently, it was not understood that there are developmental tasks in the autumn of life that are as important as those in the winter, spring and summer.

Life review and life repair are crucial for the sage-ing process. The autumn cycle is the time for harvesting the wisdom of our lives. Yet as we age, we often curtail the depth and breadth of our experience into what Reb Zalman calls “the box of unlived life.” Looking ahead through our anxiety, we often see only the decline and death that we fear. Looking behind us, we sometimes see only our painful memories, filled with remorse and regrets, and so we turn away from our future and our past. We limit our awareness to a present devoid of the wisdom of a well harvested past and without hope for the future. We create for ourselves an artificially shrunken box that keeps us imprisoned.

Through life review we open ourselves to our past. We can remember and re-collect ourselves. Life review allows us to come to an understanding of what our life has been about by perceiving the larger patterns that can emerge only when we take a long view. Dividing our lives into the Biblical seven-year cycles helps us to grasp the details of our lives more fully as well as to expose those larger patterns. Here we discover through imaginal exercises the surprising elasticity of time. We are able to appreciate the life we’ve enjoyed while we affirm our learning and growth through life’s inevitable suffering. From there we can move into life repair and forgiveness, healing the splits caused by repression and denial.

Through the years, Reb Zalman has been an admirer of computer technology and has created powerful metaphors for life in the terminology and ways in which these systems function. For example, he sees our culture to be “unformatted” to support the development of life in the October, November, and December phases. There just is no template or cultural practice to inform the developmental needs in this period.

... (we) can not live in the afternoon of life according to the programming of life’s morning, for what was great in the morning will be little in the evening, and what in the morning was true will at evening become a lie.

-- Carl Jung

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



There is an interesting parallel between the unformatted nature of culture and the unformatted portion of the brain that can support higher development, implying that the “work” needs to take place both intra-personally and culturally.

In the first seven years we are *homo luden* or people who play at things. In the next phases of our life we move on to become *homo faber*, the human who produces things, and we learn to control the environment around us. Through our lifetime, though, we often alternate between *homo luden* and *homo faber*, depending on circumstances. At retirement there is a culture expectation that we return to becoming *homo luden* once again. This cultural paradigm prevents us from having a chance to become *homo sapiens*, the wise human.

- Engage your participants in a discussion of what it would mean to be a *homo sapiens*.

Reference

William Irwin Thompson’s work

One of the leaders in examining the issue of ongoing human development was Erik Erikson. Through his professional work as a child analyst, his own experience of old age caused him to make several revisions about the last, eighth stage of life that he wrote about in *The Life Cycle Completed* in 1982 when he had 80 years of life experience. After his death at 92, his wife, Joan Erikson, revised his work and spoke of the final stage associated with old age as “integrity vs. despair,” calling for the development of wisdom. Erikson described this crisis as “a kind of informed and detached concern with life itself in the face of death itself.” He pointed out that he formulated this theory in his middle years at a time when there were only a few wise “elders” who knew how to die with dignity. In his 1982 book he noted the rising number of well-preserved “elderlies” and began questioning the effects of “a historical change like the lengthening of the average lifespan” on his scheme. Joan Erikson’s version of the *Life Cycle Completed* included new chapters on the ninth stage of development, and she introduced the concept of “gerotranscendence” along with new insights about aging. Lora Tornstam speaks of “gerotranscendence” as

The neocortex area of the brain holds the wisdom of the millennia, the dreams of tomorrow, and the capacity for communion with the cosmos. However, while our brains are gloriously over-endowed, we are educated to use only a small fraction of our capacities, making us crippled, limited visions of what we could truly be. In this exciting era of mind-brain breakthrough, we can take our neurological potentials off the shelf and extend our sensory, creative, and problem-solving abilities by developing our latent intuitive potentials.

-- Jean Houston

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



a “shift in meta perspective, from a materialistic and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendent one, normally followed by an increase in life satisfaction. . . the final stage in a natural process towards maturation and wisdom. The gerotranscendent individual experiences a **new** feeling of cosmic communion and with the spirit of the universe, a redefinition of time, space, life and death, and a redefinition of the self. There is a decrease in interest in material things and a greater need for solitary meditation. The ninth stage (clarifies) the challenges . . . of old age in one’s 80’s and 90’s. . . with its new demands, reevaluations, and daily difficulties.”

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 2-57 271-273 70-71</i>
Reference	<i>Life Cycle Completed, Erik Erikson</i>
Handout 4	<i>The Cycles of My Life</i>
Handout 5	<i>The Cycles of My Life Illustration</i>

For further reading on the Biblical seven-year cycle, the organic rhythms of time inherent in all of nature and relating to the unfolding of all organisms, including human beings, and other developmental models, see the work of Piaget, Erikson, Gilligan, Kohlberg, and Wilber.

Value and Tools of Expanded Consciousness

If we consider personal evolution and growth to be ongoing, regardless of our age, then we must look at the manner in which our brain works in order to optimize its functioning and to ensure that its functioning mirrors our physical development. For further discussion of this issue and the value and tools for expanding consciousness, facets of the human brain (reptilian, limbic, and neo-cortex) and their relevance to personal growth, and the paradox of physical decline and spiritual growth, refer to

Aging is not just something that happens to us. It is something we can choose to do well.

-- author unknown

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 45-51</i>
-------------	--

Inner Elder

As elders-in-training, we also need to contact our inner source of wisdom to receive guidance. We call this our “inner elder,” the part of us that is our spiritual self. Many perplexing questions confront us as we make our way through the unexplored terrain of our lives. In our external world we find answers from many reliable and knowledgeable resources. Within ourselves, there is a source of wisdom and light that is

Module 1: A History and Introduction to Sage-ing Work



often hidden from view but available to us if we seek it out. Some might also refer to this as our “Source,” “Higher Power,” or even “God within.” This inner elder resides beyond time and space, in the future as well as in the past, and has the ability to reassure us of what it knows from our source of wisdom.

In meditation we can make an appointment to visit this inner elder who is already enlightened, who can inspire us with compassionate wisdom to carry on our struggles for self-knowledge, and who has intimate knowledge of our true self.

Text		<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 128-129 274-275</i>
Exercise	2	<i>Journey to Meet My Inner Elder</i>

Additional Resources

Appendix	8	<i>Program Design Hints</i>
Appendix	9	<i>Sample 2.5 Hours Presentation</i>
Appendix	10	<i>Sample One-Day Workshop</i>
Appendix	11	<i>Sample Four-Session Workshop</i>
Appendix	6	<i>Creating a Safe Environment</i>
Appendix	5	<i>Housekeeping Check List</i>

Module 2: Elder Consciousness



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

- Expanded Life Span
- Homo Luden, Homo Faber, and Homo Sapiens
- Quaternity of Being
- Unformatted Disc Space
- Development of Advanced Intuition
 - Triune Brain
- Beginning Instinct/Completion Instinct
- Elder Archetypes

Exercises & Activities

- Inner Elder Meditation

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

This module embodies many of the core concepts of sage-ing and answers the question: How is it that as we grow older and it appears that we are deteriorating, we can, in fact, be growing and developing spiritually, emotionally, and mentally?

Expanded Life Span

One of the important perspectives of sage-ing is to see our lives in terms of the cycle of one year. We begin by looking at the significant moments, influences, and people through the lens of an evolving set of seven year cycles. Each seven years can be seen as the beginning of a new phase of our development. Each stage can also be seen to correspond to a month of the yearly calendar. Using different schemata, we may also have each cycle relate to a different season or religious cycle.

For a young person it is almost a sin, or at least a danger, to be too preoccupied with himself; but for the aging person it is a duty and a necessity to devote serious attention to himself.

--Carl Jung

Life review and life repair are crucial for the sage-ing process and can be seen as an integral task in the autumn of our lives. This is the time for harvesting wisdom. Yet as we age, we often curtail the depth and breadth of our experience into what Reb Zalman calls the *Box of Unlived Life*. Looking ahead we often see only decline and ultimately our death, an experience that can lead to fear and a pervasive sense of anxiety and avoidance. Looking behind us we see only our painful memories, remorse, and regrets, and so we turn away from the

Module 2: Elder Consciousness



past with equal dread. All that is left is our awareness of the present, but it is devoid of the wisdom of a well-harvested past and without hope for the future. The result is that our existence becomes artificially shrunken.

Through life review we open ourselves to our past. We can remember and re-collect ourselves, healing the splits caused by repression and denial. Life review also allows us to come to an understanding of what our life has been about by perceiving the larger patterns that can emerge only when we take a long view of our experience. From there we can move into life repair and forgiveness as we discover, through imaginal exercises, the surprising elasticity of time.

By dividing our lives into the Biblical seven-year cycles, we are able to grasp the details of our lives more fully as well as to expose larger patterns that have created the unique weave that is the fabric of our story. Even life's inevitable suffering can be affirmed for the learning and growth it afforded us.

Homo Luden, Homo Faber, and Homo Sapiens

In the first seven years of our lives we are *homo luden* or people who play at things. In the next phases of our life we move on to become *homo faber*, people who produce things. Learning to control the environment is the hallmark of this phase of life. Through our lifetime, though, we often alternate between *homo luden* and *homo faber* depending on circumstances. At retirement there is a cultural expectation that we return to becoming *homo luden* once again. This cultural paradigm, however, prevents us from embracing the opportunity to become *homo sapiens*, the wise human.

We suggest that you engage your participants in a discussion of these three distinctions, and what it would mean to become *homo sapiens*.

Reference

Work of William Irwin Thompson

Quaternity of Being

Another important concept in this discussion is what Reb Zalman refers to as the Quaternity of Being. Specifically, these are the four worlds of experience—body, emotions,

By converting the energy involved in repressing death into greater awareness and vitality for living. By contemplating your death style, you automatically enhance your lifestyle—not in a material sense, of course, but in the richness and joy with which you experience each passing moment, each relationship, each situation and circumstance, day by day.

--John White

*A Practical Guide to Death
& Dying*

Module 2: Elder Consciousness



intellect/mind, and spirit. These four levels of being can also be wonderful portals into self-understanding and for examining the rich complexity of our stories and our current endeavors as elders. It may also be the case that we can only achieve whole learning when we engage all four levels of our being.

Throughout the sage-ing curriculum we attempt to provide experiences and exercises that assist participants in integrating the four worlds.

By formatting more of the brain, we also can counter-act the ravages of brain cell disintegration associated with aging.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Unformatted Disc Space

Of particular importance to this work, our culture seems to be “unformatted” to support the development of life in the September, October, and November phases. There just is no template or cultural practices to inform the developmental needs in this phase. There is an interesting parallel between the unformatted nature of the culture and the unformatted portion of the brain that can support higher development, implying that the “work” needs to take place both intra-personally and culturally. How do we re-format? -- through expanded consciousness, nurturing intuition, listening to our inner voices, and paying attention to our dreams.

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing,</i> 22-57 70-71 271-271
-------------	--

Reference Reference	<i>Childhood and Society,</i> Erikson Developmental Models – Piaget, Gilligan, Kohlberg, Wilber
----------------------------	---

Development of Advanced Intuition

Triune Brain

If we consider personal evolution and growth to be ongoing regardless of our age, then we must look at the manner in which our brain is organized in order to optimize its functioning and to ensure that its functioning mirrors our physical development. The brain is actually not a single organ, but rather three distinct layers. The *reptilian* brain is the center that controls essential survival functions from reproduction to territorial protection. It is the center for the familiar “fight or flight” reaction we experience in the face of a threat or stress. The *limbic* brain is the source for our emotional and social

Death is not a cosmic mistake. Woven into the warp and woof of existence, the presence of death deepens our appreciation of life. It also regenerates our psyches in preparation for harvesting.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 2: Elder Consciousness



response to the world. It plays an essential role in our life as communal beings. The *neocortex* is the most recent evolutionary development and is responsible for certain hallmarks of the modern mind—analytic thinking, problem solving, and language skills.

It is widely recognized in scientific circles that we have not begun to tap the amazing capacity of the neocortex. In fact, recent research strongly suggests that, contrary to beliefs that the brain ceases development in early childhood, it appears that even into our elder years the brain continues cell growth and laying down new neural pathways. It is this untapped reservoir that the sage-ing program addresses, leading to expanded mental functioning.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 45-51

Beginning Instinct/ Completion Instinct

The sage-ing program borrows from Freud's original discussion of libido and thanatos, recontextualizing these Freudian concepts as the Beginning Instinct and the Completing Instinct. During the Spring and Summer of our lives, the Beginning Instinct is most evident in the pursuit of careers, creating families, and establishing our identities as mature adults. During midlife the Completing Instinct begins to manifest itself, often expressing itself distinctly in the lives of women and men. In women, menopause is the first signal that life's energies are shifting away from reproduction and rearing children to a place of greater depth and self-containment that is often expressed through personal and spiritual quests that would have seemed selfish at an earlier phase of life. Men begin discovering that conquering the world is not all there is to life and that there is a rich inner life beckoning them if they listen and respond. As we approach our elder years these forces become even more dominant in our experience.

Part of the completion process is to heal old emotional wounds, re-contextualize the past, and heal old relationships through the process of forgiveness. A key concept here is that time is *stretchable* or *elastic*; the past does not exist as something stuck in time, but rather is always open to re-interpretation. This is because experience and memory are primarily the stuff

God made mud. God got lonesome. So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!" "See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars."

And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around. Lucky me, lucky mud. I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done. "Nice going, God!" "Nobody but You could have done it, God!"

I certainly couldn't have. I feel very unimportant compared to You. The only way I can feel the least bit important is to think of all the mud that didn't even get to sit up and look around. I got so much, and most mud got so little. "Thank you for the honor!"

Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep. What memories for mud to have! What interesting other kinds of sitting-up mud I met! I loved everything I saw!

"Good night." I will go to heaven now. I can hardly wait to find out for certain what my wampeter was. . . And who was in my karass. . . And all the good things our karass did for you. Amen.

*--Kurt Vonnegut
Cat's Cradle*

Module 2: Elder Consciousness



of interpretation, not perception. And the myriad bad judgments of youth can actually be the source of great learning, understanding, and wisdom.

There is an old story which beautifully illustrates this point. A young woman went to a sage and inquired how she might find wisdom in this life. The sage responded, “For wisdom, you need good judgment.” Being persistent, she then asked, “What do I need to do to develop good judgment?” “That’s quite simple,” responded the sage. “For good judgment, you need experience.” “Well then,” asked the young woman, “to get experience, what do I need?” “There’s the rub,” said the sage. “To get experience, you need bad judgment.”

Inner Elder Archetype

The Completion Instinct also leads us to an entirely different way of framing life. Carl Jung was one of the first psychologists who used the term “archetype,” meaning a form of universal psychic energy within the unconscious, psychological life of people everywhere. Reb Zalman suggests that the archetype of the Inner Elder is at play here, informing our consciousness with a new way of seeing, feeling, and behaving in the world. Whereas the tasks of youth often call for making a mark in the world, the tasks of elderhood are much more personal, focused on the development of self-knowledge, connecting with the inner spiritual life, and leaving a legacy for younger generations.

I like to think of archetypes like the Ancient of Days as masks of God, interfaces between the infinite invisible and embodied life . . . My interface with God serves as a modem, creating the possibility of communication between the timeless and time.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing,</i> 81-106 135-158
Exercise 2	<i>Journey to Meet My Inner Elder</i>

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

- Meditation
- Socialized Meditation
- Meditation – Exploring My Psycho-Spiritual World
- Meditation on My Physical Body
- Spiritual Intimacy
- Journaling
- Inner Elder – Interior Vision Quest
- Creating Sacred Space

Exercises & Activities

- Socialized Meditation
- Meditation – Exploring My Psycho-Spiritual World
- Meditation on My Physical Body
- Spiritual Intimacy
- Journaling
- Inner Elder – Interior Vision Quest

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

There are a number of essential tools to assist elders on their spiritual journey. This module provides resources, tools, exercises and direction for weaving these into your presentations.

Meditation

Cultivating the inner life is a core principle of Sage-ing. Meditation is one time-honored technique for expanding consciousness. A wide assortment of meditation techniques has evolved through the ages in most of the world's spiritual traditions. This program does not endorse any one technique. All have value. We respect that each individual who participates in our programs may have already found a technique that best suits his or her temperament and spiritual beliefs. The techniques that we teach are a distillation of many of these practices and have been found to be very useful for the diverse populations attending our programs - even for those who have no prior experience with reflective or meditative practices.

The diminishments of old age school us in the art of humility and self acceptance. Because we can't rely on our former attainments and on our physical strength, we must search more deeply within ourselves for a fund of inner strength and wisdom. Increased reflection and contemplation in elderhood, as taught by the world's traditions, are invaluable in helping us befriend our hidden depths.

-- Sister Ann

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



Appendix 2 *Focused Meditation for Elders*

Socialized Meditation

Usually we consider meditation to be a solo endeavor; however, there are many forms of group meditation in which the support of a community enhances our practice. In the *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* program we recommend *socialized meditation* as a specialized form of a meditative practice. In this practice, two or more participate in the same meditative experience, making it easier to move beyond individual ego states. Practicing socialized meditation, especially in a setting of spiritual intimacy, enables us to begin to shed our defenses and denials. Any contemplative exercise in the curriculum can be turned into socialized meditation by sharing the experience with a partner.

Elderhood is a time to discover inner richness for self-development and spiritual growth. It is also a time of transition and preparation for dying which is at least as important as preparation for a career or family. Out of this time of inner growth come our sages, healers, prophets and models for the generations to follow.

-- Gay Luce

Longer Life, More Joy

Appendix 4 *Socialized Meditation* Exercise 3 *Deepening a Post Dyad Exercise*

Meditation – Exploring our Psycho-Spiritual World

Understanding the basic underpinnings of this world helps to direct and focus the way in which we live consciously and, many times, unconsciously. The point of meditation is to explore our inner consciousness – where we get to know how to explore ourselves. In our lives, we think nothing of examining myriad subjects that draw our interest. If we feel at home researching, studying, and exploring those topics, why should we not do the same with our own minds? Our “knowing” minds – the part of our self that is rational, that collects knowledge, discourses and writes – is not the totality of our consciousness. Through meditation we can explore our psycho-spiritual world where our emotions and our connections to the wholeness of the human and universal experience reside. In a contemplative manner, we can allow these worlds to meet, intertwine and respond to our inquiries.

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 125-133* Exercise 6 *Exploring My Psycho-Spiritual World*

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



Meditation on My Physical Body

Knowing our own bodies allows us to modify our expectations, and develop our strengths. Someone who has difficulty walking, for example, may be a gifted listener who is really present with others, or shares some other unique gifts. Many of us who live with physical challenges (whether imposed by age, illness or accident) have discovered that attitude trumps bodily limitations

Each of our limitations is an opportunity to develop strengths in other areas. Our personal challenge is to find where our strengths lie and then to develop them.

Our bodies are our vehicles – our “spacesuits.” They support us, sustain our breath of life, and allow us to do our work in this world. Each is unique and permits us to experience the world in our own way. This meditation helps us to identify our strengths and weaknesses as well as to explore how we can develop a kinder, more loving relationship with ourselves.

Text
Exercise 5

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 109-112
Meditation on My Physical Body

*Increased longevity
unleashes the evolutionary
imperative for growth.
Envision old age as the
culminating stage of
spiritual development. With
an increased life span and
the psycho-technologies to
expand the mind’s frontiers,
the spiritual elder heralds
the next phase of human
and global development.*

-- Rabbi Zalman
Schachter-Shalomi

Spiritual Intimacy -- Spiritual not Religious

The stirrings that come from the depths of the heart and the soul may not come packaged in the established forms of our dominant religions. While our many religious traditions provide social order and bonding, they do not always create a safe sanctuary for the individual to be in the presence of the One – the Spirit.

Spiritual thus means entering a dimension of awareness that is filled with a sense of the presence of the divinity, the sacred, being protected and blessed – that has the whiff of eternity about it.

Intimacy encompasses those moments in which people share with special others what they do not commonly display, what they value most, and what they prize beyond price. This points to a vulnerable sharing. Spiritual intimacy arises out of the

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



need to know and be known on the “being” level. It is the need to speak with such freedom that the one who speaks can open

to the most tentative mind stirrings without having to be on the defensive and weigh each word. It is the possibility of being in the presence of an “other.” It is what Martin Buber called the “I-Thou” relationship. One does not offer it thoughtlessly. For most people there is a time of testing when they tell some things and then wait to see how it is received. Understand that an open heart opens one’s awareness of what needs to be shared. One offers the other deep blessing with silence and remains open for the sharing.

Appendix 3 *Spiritual Intimacy*

Journaling

There are many reasons for encouraging participants to keep a journal. Here are a few that you can share with your group.

- To become better acquainted with the many parts of your self – to listen to the multitude of voices within – Who is speaking? Who makes the decisions?
- To hear the inner audience – Who is your critic? Who is your unconditional supporter?
- To learn to be a witness to your own experience.
- To keep a record of how your life unfolds for yourself and for others – to keep track of developments, patterns, cycles, and trends of your life – to refer to later in life as a reminder of who you were and what you were.
- To improve your health – Several studies have found that people who journal daily exhibit fewer symptoms of stress than those who do not.
- To provide a social and historical record for future generations of your family and for others.
- To access information from your subconscious, unconscious and archetypal minds.

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up.

-- Rainer Maria Rilke

Reminiscence is no mere escapist desire to live in the past as some claim; rather it should be regarded as a major development task for the elderly, resulting in the integration that will allow them to age well and die well.

-- Robert Butler

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



- To encourage the sometimes unnoticed parts of your mind to emerge.
- To explore your dreams and develop your intuition.
- To allow these parts of your self to become more evident and present.
- To uncover your creativity.
- To nurture and develop your writing as an art without having to encounter other people as “the critic.”
- To get in touch with your deepest feelings.
- To explore your feelings, reactions, and relationships within the safety and privacy of your own writing at your own pace and in your own time.
- To heal your relationships.
- To write letters that you may or may not send, expressing your hurt, anger, desires, and forgiveness.

Finally, a journal can be a person’s best friend when no one else is available.

- Explore with participants their reasons for keeping a journal.

When a Great Adventure is offered, you don't refuse it.
-- Amelia Earhart

Handout 7 *Journal Writing*

Inner Elder – an Interior Vision Quest

As elders-in-training, we also need to contact our inner source of wisdom to receive guidance. We call this our *inner elder* or *inner sage*, the part of us that is our spiritual self.

Many perplexing questions confront us as we make our way through the unexplored terrain of our lives. In our external world we find answers from many reliable and knowledgeable resources. Within ourselves, there is a source of wisdom and

Module 3: Tools for Expanding Consciousness



light that is often hidden from view but available to us if we seek it out. Some might refer to this as our “source,” our “higher power,” or even “God within.” This inner elder is the archetype of the “Ancient of Days” who resides beyond time

and space, in the future as well as in the past, and has the ability to reassure us of what it knows from our future.

In meditation we can make an appointment to visit this inner elder who is already enlightened, who can inspire us with compassionate wisdom to carry on our struggles for self knowledge and has intimate knowledge of our true self.

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 128-129
274-275*

Exercise 2 *Journey to Meet My Inner Elder*

Creating Sacred Space

There are so many ways to create sacredness in our physical world. Some choose to express the sacred in the way they cultivate their garden. Others choose to surround themselves with ritual objects in a room dedicated to meditation while others prefer a space that is spartan and simple. What is important is that elders recognize the value of creating a sacred space and finding unique ways to explore sacredness in their lives.

Reference *Spiritual Elders: Women of Worth in
the Third Millennium*
Betty Anne Sullivan, 94-97

Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all because once you are Real, you can't be ugly except to people who don't understand.

--Margery Williams
Velveteen Rabbit

Module 4: Incorporating Creativity



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Understanding the Creative Process
Enhancing the Creative Ability of Elders

Exercises & Activities

Tips for Enhancing Creativity

Concepts & Subject Matter

Understanding the Creative Process

There are so many misconceptions and erroneous cultural beliefs about leading a creative life and creativity in general. Many consider creativity to be restricted to rare and special individuals who have received a God-given talent to create new forms in the visual, literary, and performing arts. Others believe that creativity is the province of the young and that with age our creative potential diminishes. While we are surrounded by examples of the prodigious works of masters such as Shakespeare and Van Gogh, and we are all familiar with the genius of precocious artists such as Mozart and Picasso, research bears out that the same spark of creativity that inspired these artists is imbued in each of us. As the French would say, it is “un etat d’ame”—a state of being that is available to everyone, regardless of age. In fact, there are many historical examples of individuals such as Grandma Moses who did not come into the fullness of their creative abilities until they had reached their elder years.

What is creativity? When we think of creative people, we often characterize them by words such as expressive, original, imaginative, innovative, inventive, and productive. While there are many aspects to creative expression, creativity seems to best be defined as the ability to take existing objects and combine them in different ways for new purposes. But one needn’t be focused on the arts to be creative. In fact, creativity can show up in all phases of our lives. A case could be made that fiddling with an old recipe to improve it, is in itself, a creative act. An important distinction is that there is creativity with a big “C” as manifested in the lives of artists, but more important to all of us is creativity with a little “c.” This latter

Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not, and a sense of humor was provided to console him for what he is.

--Oscar Wilde

The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human population, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am.

--Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Module 4: Incorporating Creativity



form of creativity is available to all of us.

Therefore, the premise of the sage-ing program is that each and every one of us is a creative person, and that each of us is capable of becoming even more creative. While creativity can be enhanced by practice and certain techniques, the development of this aspect of our lives has some important internal antecedents that fit naturally with the sage-ing work that elders do in our program.

First and foremost, our ability to connect with our innate creative potential has more to do with a point of view, our beliefs about our capabilities, and deeply held myths and assumptions about personal potential. Once these core assumptions are examined and held in suspension as perhaps erroneous, the real work of joyfully discovering our innate creative talent can begin.

Enhancing the Creative Ability of Elders

The first way in which you can facilitate the creative expression of elders is to create a safe, supportive, loving, and encouraging environment free of criticism. Many elders may need to feel that they have permission to try new things and to try again when initial efforts fall short of their preconceived notions of what creativity should look like.

The sage-ing program is filled with outstanding tools for helping elders remove the personal blocks to their creative expression. Journaling, socialized meditation coupled with more contemplative forms of meditation, life review, and life harvest can all assist in freeing an individual's energy to try new ideas without embarrassment or harsh self-judgment. As people meditate on their own worthiness, they will feel greater empowerment in all areas of their lives, and their natural creativity will be given wider expression.

Many of the activities in the program that focus on invigorating our physical selves can also enhance creative output. Stress is one of the major inhibitors of creativity, so physical activity of all kinds can lead to unexpected breakthroughs in thinking.

Our current obsession with creativity is the result of our continued striving for immortality in an era when most people no longer believe in an after-life.

--Arianna Stassinopoulos

Creativity is seeing what others see and thinking what no one else has thought.

--Albert Einstein

Have the courage to take your own thoughts seriously, for they shape you.

--Albert Einstein

If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, I will answer you: I am here to live out loud.

—Emile Zola

Module 4: Incorporating Creativity



Activities & Exercises

Tips for Enhancing Creativity

There are a number of practical ways in which you can support people in expanding their abilities. Here are a few:

- There are many self-help books filled with ideas regarding creative thinking techniques and how to put them into practice.
- Many colleges offer courses and classes on creative thinking.
- Suggest that participants keep a daily journal in which they can record their ideas, thoughts, drawings, etc. Reviewing the journal on a regular basis can lead to new insights and possibilities.
- Encourage participants to experiment with drawing, writing, singing, and even making music with spoons if they don't know how to play an instrument.
- Build in time for relaxation and other physical activities. Even seemingly mindless activities, such as knitting, can be fertile time for the mind to work.
- Encourage participants to read everything they can in their areas of interest.
- A corollary to this idea is to develop an interest in a variety of different things. Suggest that they read publications and books that they might normally never pick up. Creative people often have a wide array of interests, and it is the unexpected combination of ideas from different spheres of their lives that leads to breakthroughs.
- When participants discover something new or have a creative breakthrough, encourage them to celebrate it.
- Invite participants to see their creativity as a small child needing nurturing and care. Attention given to that small,

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

--Lao-Tsu

The harder you chase something, the faster you go and the less you're able to let life meet life. If you're having difficulty coming up with new ideas, then slow down. . . Creativity exists in the present moment. You can't find it anywhere else.

--Natalie Goldberg

It is as if the Milky Way entered upon some cosmic dance. Swiftly the brain becomes an enchanted loom, where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern though never an abiding one; a shifting harmony of sub-patterns.

--Sir Charles Scott Sherrington

Module 4: Incorporating Creativity



still voice can lead to greater spiritual evolution as well as to the development of big ideas in the world.

- Pay attention to that self-critical voice that can deflate any attempt to try something new. Recognize it for what it is and refuse to give it importance.
- Suggest that they try doing something that is the opposite of what they might normally do. For example, have dinner for breakfast and vice versa.
- Travel may be one of the best ways to get people out of the environmental rut that has kept them stuck, helping them to see the world through a new set of lens.
- Associate with other creative people. Take an art or cooking class. Go to a drama workshop. Creativity is infectious.
- Hang out with children. They have not yet learned prohibitions about creative expression and can be wonderful teachers. Mentoring can have more benefits than we imagined.
- Play imagination games. Ask the question, “What if?” and fill in whatever comes to mind.
- Games and puzzles can exercise our thinking in new ways, keeping it flexible and supple.
- There is no better inspiration for creativity than reading books about people who have been extraordinarily creative in their lives.
- Develop rituals to create a sacred environment for creative work.
- Many people find that music can enhance creative work, especially music without lyrics such as classical, light jazz, electronic and instrumental music.
- 1 Use affirmations each morning to support one’s changing self-concept regarding creativity.

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
--Albert Einstein

Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen.
--Robert Bresson

If nature has made any one thing less susceptible than all others of exclusive property, it is the action of the thinking power called an idea.. No one possesses the less, because every other possess the whole of it. He who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me.
--Thomas Jefferson

Module 4: Incorporating Creativity



- Never fail to lose the lesson when an idea doesn't succeed. Remind them that it took Thomas Edison nearly 10,000 tries before he invented the light bulb, and he never once saw one of these aborted attempts as a "failure."
- Develop a practice at a regular time of day, e.g., following dinner, of putting two or more unrelated ideas together.
- Try cooking with ingredients you have never used before. Simple tasks of self-care can be turned into creative adventures.

Module 5: Life Review and Life Harvest



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Discovering and Harvesting Inner Wisdom
Methods for Eliciting and Preserving Memories

Exercises & Activities

The Cycles of My Life
Significant Moments of My Life
Significant Actions in My Life
Relationship Maps
Harvesting Wisdom

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

This module focuses on the importance of gathering the fruits of a lifetime by helping participants review significant experiences and relationships in their personal histories. Life harvesting is an expression of an instinct for fulfillment, the longing to complete what feels like unfinished business. Developmentally, it plays as crucial a role in the elder's evolution as going from crawling to walking does for children. Unfortunately, our youth-oriented society makes it difficult for elders to even recognize this need, much less do this vital work. The result is that most elders maintain the consciousness of a 45-year-old, still measuring their worth in terms of the productive activity of people in their middle years, and, as a result, frustrating this urge for completion. When this instinct to harvest one's life is denied, we often become depressed, melancholy, and sad. Freud identified this as "thanatos," commonly referred to as the death instinct, but more appropriately viewed as the pull from beyond to complete our lives.

Human beings are learning animals and whenever we stop learning, we defeat evolution's master plan for us.

--George Leonard
Mastery

Discovering and Harvesting Inner Wisdom

There are many ways to facilitate life review and the harvesting of wisdom. Journaling is one useful tool. For others, the act of simply telling our stories to another can be a powerful tool for learning. Interestingly, the word "narration" comes from the Latin *narrere* (pronounced na-rah-r-a), one

Module 5: Life Review and Life Harvest



meaning of which is “to pass on knowledge.” This is also related to the Latin *gnoscere* (pronounced no-sahr-a), meaning “to acquire knowledge.” To create narratives about our lives or tell stories is a way of seeking and passing on knowledge and understanding. Life review thus becomes the first stage of work necessary for elders to prepare themselves to become mentors and guides for younger generations.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing
Chapters 4&5

Methods for Eliciting and Preserving Memories

There are many valuable tools available in the sage-ing curriculum to capture and preserve memories, and they are described in detail in the Exercises & Activities section of this module. Those elders who wish to preserve these memories for loved ones or future generations are faced with a number of interesting challenges and choices. Writing them down in a journal or organizing them into a non-literary autobiography may work for some, but this direction can be intimidating for many. Most of us are not writers, and the act of writing can overwhelm us with literary concerns thereby hindering rather than facilitating the process. Some resources simplify the process by providing a workbook-like environment in which the person is asked to fill in short answers to specific questions. Unfortunately, what is captured often can lead more toward information about the facts of one’s life and miss the richer story and meaning that is in the background.

As an alternative, many turn to recording their stories. This is often most effective when the teller has a committed listener. Giving someone a tape recorder and asking them to sit alone and record memories often is met with procrastination or shallow recall. There is something very powerful about the presence of another individual to facilitate the re-collection process. This is further enhanced when that person asks specific questions that help the teller to expand and fill out that story. One downside of recording is that the record that is preserved is continuous with no index or table of contents. Unedited hours of tape, regardless of whether it is audio or

Rabbi Zusya of Hanipol once said: In the coming world, they will not ask me, ‘Why were you not like Moses?’ They will ask me, ‘Why were you not what you, Zusya, could have been?’

--Hasidic Tale

In harvesting, we need to focus not only on etiology, the causes or origins of our problems, but on teleology, the overall purpose or design of our lives.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 5: Life Review and Life Harvest



video, is daunting to sit through. Unfortunately, in many families these tapes become archival and are rarely, if ever, listened to or viewed.

There are some new technologies available that combine the best of audio, photo albums, and video on a CD-ROM disc that is catalogued and indexed, allowing for selective listening and viewing. Future generations can listen to the ancestor in his or her own words and see related photos and video. It's a wonderful solution to the above mentioned problems, but also more costly.

There is a wide array of other effective tools to assist participants in the life review and harvesting process. They can include the drawing of the floor plan of earlier homes from childhood through adult years, exploring memory through the five senses, using archetypal words as keys to memory, etc. These tools may be equally if not more effective than the journaling exercises described below.

Reference	<i>The Mythic Journey</i> , Sam Keen
Reference	<i>The Healing Art of Storytelling</i> , Richard Stone

Exercises & Activities

Significant Moments of My Life

This exercise is a wonderful first step in the life review process, relying on the notion of dividing our life into seven-year cycles to help organize our memories. It can be approached strictly as a journaling activity, or, as an alternative, have people complete the journaling portion of the work, and then have them share in dyads one significant moment or event, one person who guided or influenced them, and one of the significant contributions that a particular phase of their life contributed to the continuum of their lives.

Handout 4	<i>The Cycles of My Life</i>
Exercise 4	<i>The Cycles of My Life</i>

Reminiscence is no mere escapist desire to live in the past, as some claim: rather it should be regarded as a major development task for the elderly, resulting in the integration that will allow them to age well and die well.

—Robert Butler

Module 5: Life Review and Life Harvest



Significant Actions in My Life

This is a corollary to the above exercise, but focused more on the choices we have made and actions we have taken.

Exercise 7

*Lifetime Map of the Significant
Actions in My Life*

Relationship Maps

There are many lenses through which to see our past. In this exercise, you will ask participants to map their relationships as a means of harvesting the rich heritage of their experience.

Exercise 8

*Relationship Map - Significant
People in My Life*

The purpose of this journaling exercise is to help participants look at those people who have been significant in their lives. Relationships are a clue to learning about who we are and how we have lived. They can also help us determine our personal philosophy and unique life perspective.

Harvesting Wisdom

Give everyone a copy of this exercise. Ask them to number the squares randomly—not by importance or preference—but randomly. Once the squares are numbered, have them pair off in twos and face one another. Person A picks a number, [e.g. “20”] and person B finds “20” on his/her sheet, reads the question out loud, and then responds to it. Have them trade off in this way 3 to 6 times for 10 to 20 minutes. Naturally, as in all dyadic work, the listener is encouraged to listen with full attention and not comment on what is shared, simply saying at the end, “Thank you.”

Exercise 9

Harvesting Wisdom

*A disciple once complained,
“You tell us stories, but you
never reveal their meaning
to us.” Said the master,
“How would you like it if
someone offered you fruit
and chewed it up before
giving it to you?” No one
can find your meaning for
you. Not even the master.*

*--William White
Speaking in Stories*

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Elastic Nature of Time
Recontextualizing Life Experience
Healing Painful Memories

Exercises & Activities

Healing a Painful Memory
Testimonial Dinner for Severe Teachers
Unsent Letter
Visit from Your Wise Elder

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

This module examines the importance of re-examining the past with an eye toward those events, relationships, or experiences that we have labeled as failures. The module builds on the work done in Module 5 in which participants began the process of life review. By reframing or recontextualizing our interpretation of these events, we can free ourselves from painful burdens we have carried and recognize the powerful ways that the things we saw as negative have actually been the foundation for many positive things that have occurred in our lives. Using the metaphor of computer files, it's as though we are opening the failure files in our memory and rewriting the conclusions we have drawn about those events. By finding pearls of wisdom, learning, and growth in the anxieties and hurts of the past, participants can discover the healing power of reframing experiences, thereby repairing painful relationships, and ultimately developing a deeper and more universal self-love. This is pivotal to the work of sage-ing.

Elastic Nature of Time

To understand the malleable nature of time and what we call the past, we must first understand the present and how our experience of it is generated. We often make the mistake of believing that experience is a perceptual affair. It is not unusual for us to see, hear, smell, taste, or feel, and then conclude that our experience is a direct result of these perceptual events. In truth, perceptions are only the building blocks of experience,

When you are young and vulnerable, you see the world as being either for or against you, and this view is reinforced when people do hurtful things or betray you. When you approach old age and climb the platform of broader understanding, you can reexamine and contemplate your foundational views of the world and recontextualize what happened to you from a more objective, less impulse-driven philosophical position. In this way you do not have to remain imprisoned in your earlier conclusions about life.

--Rabbi Zalman
Schachter-Shalomi

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



not the experience itself. Perceptual data must filter through

our belief structures and be interpreted regarding its relevance and meaning for us. For this reason seeing is one thing, but how we choose to interpret what we see will determine the story we tell and the life we lead. That's how two people can witness the same event but tell two entirely different stories about what each saw.

Once we become conscious of this interpretative mechanism, the meaning of any event will itself become malleable and tentative. What we experienced is only one of many potential experiences given the same perceptual data. By changing interpretative filters, we can “see” things in a very different light.

If the present is open to multiple interpretations, then certainly the past is open to reinterpretation at any moment.

Unfortunately, most of us hold the past as something fixed in space and time. In fact, the past is merely a mental construct, a story we create about a set of facts and circumstances that we chose to hold onto as the “way things were,” unchangeable and immutable. By choosing to see those facts through a new interpretative lens, the facts can reconfigure themselves, realigning to fit the newer interpretation. In this sense, the past becomes much more a function of our current concerns, issues, perspectives, beliefs, and intentions.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 93

Recontextualizing Life Experience

It is often helpful to begin a discussion of this issue by revisiting with participants the *Box of Unlived Life*. This perspective creates a powerful context for understanding the paramount importance of this work. Life completion is not something that occurs from the present into the future. We must also be freed from the bondage of the stories about our past that keep us imprisoned in the present. Understanding the notion that subjective time is *malleable* can offer great solace. Knowing that we can change the story can help us

When we grasp the overarching pattern of our lives—the remarkable coincidences referred to as divine providence, the interweaving of people and events that contributed to our destiny, the difficult passages that matured us in the crucible of life experience—we lament that the wisdom gained from this rich harvest will be lost when the physical body disintegrates.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

You will not grow if you sit in a beautiful garden and somebody brings you a gorgeous food on a silver platter. But you will grow if you are sick, if you are in pain, if you experience losses, if you do not put your head in the sand, but take the pain and learn to accept it, not as a curse or a punishment, but as a gift to you with a very, very specific purpose.

--Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



create a more expansive sense of our present and future, empowering a person in unforeseen ways.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 89-91

Healing Painful Memories

Life review involves reaching back into the past to repair events and relationships that caused us pain or disappointment. Through contemplative techniques that “stretch” and “reshape” time, we can mend our personal history. Remembering our past is not always enough. We must also heal the wounds around which memories collect. Each painful memory affects how we behave in the present as we strive to avoid the situation from happening again.

Yet, we are drawn to similar situations. Why? One explanation is that there is something that draws us back to heal the pattern, to learn what we need to learn. We find ourselves creating situations similar to those in which we suffered. Freud called this a “repetition compulsion.”

All sorrows can be borne if you put them in a story or tell a story about them.

--Isak Dinesen

To heal the part of ourselves that may still be imprisoned by the past, we return to the scene of a questionable decision or a bruised relationship and apply the balm of our more mature consciousness. We learn to forgive and heal with our present, more enlightened awareness.

Life Review is only one of many ways in which to heal our past wounds. You might also want to try extended meditation and prayer, in which, over months and years, the projections arise until they have been healed and pacified.

There are also techniques to focus on specific memories with the direct intention to heal. *Healing A Painful Memory* below in the Activities & Exercises section directs the imagination and teaches a powerful means to heal ourselves.

If you believe you can hurt another person, then also believe you can heal another.

—Rabbi Nachman
of Bratslav

Exercises & Activities

All of the following exercises are intended to create an opening for the release of negativity and the burdens of anger and resentment.

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



Healing a Painful Memory

- This can be facilitated as either a socialized meditation, a guided meditation, or as a journaling exercise.
- After the meditation or individual journaling, invite participants to share in dyads.
- Then harvest the learning in the wider group.

Exercise 13	<i>Healing a Painful Memory</i>
Appendix 4	<i>Socialized Meditation</i>
Handout 7	<i>Journal Writing</i>
Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 276-277</i>

Whoever survives a test, whatever it may be, must tell the story. That is his duty.

--Elie Wiesel

Testimonial Dinner for My Severe Teachers

This is an exercise in which participants can utilize the broad perspective of time to “re-frame” a hurtful situation. It is an opportunity to experience the negative and to see the pearl that has developed from the hurtful situation.

In this exercise participants do not have to forget what the other person did. Rather, the exercise gives participants the chance to re-frame the situation and give up the burden of anger, resentment, and hurt that kept them in the role of the victim.

As we review our lives, it is not uncommon that certain people will seem to stand out as troublemakers. We often believe that they have been responsible for a great deal of our pain, and we still hold them responsible. Our anger and resentment tie us to them. How can we break those bonds of pain, anger and resentment?

The name of this exercise, *A Testimonial Dinner for My Severe Teachers* is an allusion to Psalm 23 which reads, “Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies.” The author of this psalm feels such divine protection that he is able to eat and enjoy a delicious, leisurely banquet in the presence of his enemies.

When we courageously confront the past, we discover how much we have gained from apparent losses. Once we get past our anxiety, we glory in the hidden benefits that accrue from what we took to be painful failures. In this way, spiritual eldering provides the skills to do reconstructive inner surgery on ourselves.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Reb Zalman teaches us that contemplative life review provides us with a framework for creating divine protection. He asks:

Module 6

© 2014 Sage-ing® International All Rights Reserved.

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



“What if you were to invite your enemies, those that inhabit your memories, your consciousness, to a banquet dinner? What if you were to look at the events that made you see and feel them as enemies, but now from a wider perspective?”

Sometimes, pain-filled experiences turn out to be our greatest teachers as they take us unexpectedly to where we need to grow. Often what was a harmful act, in the moment, turns out to have had good consequences for us in spite of how hurtful it was in the past. The hurtful situation might have forced us to deal with a difficult part of our personality, make a change in our life that we did not want to make, or honestly face an aspect of our life that we have been avoiding. Perhaps we lost an opportunity and because of that our lives changed, yet the end result was very good for us. But who could have foreseen that? We might lose our job and as a result move to another part of the country where we find what we really want to do. We all have stories like that. We derive wisdom from these experiences. That’s the real spiritual alchemy—weaving wisdom from the threads of our experience.

- This can be facilitated as either a socialized meditation or as a journaling exercise.
- Refer participants to either the handout or workbook if you are doing it as a journaling exercise.
- After the meditation or individual journaling, invite participants to share in dyads, and then harvest the learning in the wider group.

Exercise 11	<i>Testimonial Dinner for My Severe Teachers</i>
Appendix 4	<i>Socialized Meditation</i>
Handout 7	<i>Journal Writing</i>
Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 118 270-280</i>

Life repair doesn't eliminate our pain; it helps us come to terms with it. Entering and owning our pain eventually frees us of it.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Unsent Letter

This exercise gives us an opportunity to discharge negative and burdensome feelings without harming the other person or ourselves. Ask participants to identify a person with whom they are still angry or harboring feelings of resentment.

Module 6: Recontextualizing the Past



- Give them permission to write a letter to this person and say everything that has never been formally expressed with the understanding that the letter will not be sent.
- A suggested opening is *My heart wants to tell you. . .*

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 120-121*

A Visit from Your Wise Elder

In this exercise we create the space for filling the heart with self-love and care.

Exercise 2 *Journey to Meet My Inner Elder*

Module 7: The Gift of Forgiveness



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Giving Others the Gift of Forgiveness

Self-forgiveness

Asking Forgiveness

The Importance of Self-Love

Exercises & Activities

The Gift of Forgiveness: A Gift to Our Selves

Testimonial Dinner for My Severe Teachers

Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness

Self-Forgiveness Exercise

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

This module looks at the many dimensions of forgiveness – what it is and what it is not, how to nurture self love and acceptance, how forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves, how to forgive others.

Forgiving Others, Forgiving Ourselves, Asking Forgiveness

Reb Zalman teaches that when we cannot forgive someone, we keep them jailed in our hearts, and then the jail keeper has to stay in jail along with the prisoner. We need to forgive others in order to free ourselves! Unchaining both our self and the other person allows us to move forward in our lives while holding onto anger and resentment drains us of our vitality and closes us off from our ability to love and to receive love.

To free ourselves we do not have to wait for the other person to ask for our forgiveness or for them to admit that we were “right” in the situation. To forgive is not to condone the act. To forgive is to free ourselves to move forward in our lives.

Forgiveness takes practice and effort, for we often hang onto anger and resentment as a habit, as a comfort that may give us a sense of superiority: “If I have been wronged, certainly I am better than the one who wronged me.” But, as Reb Zalman often explains, most of our resentments are the result of others not living up to our expectations.

But I say to you, listen. Love your enemy. Do good for those that hate you. Bless those that curse you. Pray for those that abuse you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to others who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same.

--Sermon on the Mount

Module 7: The Gift of Forgiveness



The other side of forgiveness is learning to ask for forgiveness. Unfortunately, the burden of guilt can be as debilitating as the burden of anger and resentment, keeping us contained in the *box of unlived life*. In the Sage-ing curricula we encourage participants to do the necessary work on both fronts while recognizing that each of us must begin with what we believe is possible, then stretch just beyond to what may appear to be unobtainable.

Another facet of healing past hurts is recognizing that we may have played an unwitting role in creating the wounding situation. It is always easier to see ourselves as victims rather than accomplices in our own undoing. Exploring our unconscious motivations and agendas that may have been, in fact, running the show is an act of courageous responsibility. So, we must also learn to forgive ourselves for our part while forgiving the other.

The Importance of Self-Love

As we allow ourselves to look back and see our lives in all of their imperfections, we need to take steps toward healing and mending our past. There is a time in midlife when our need for survival and self-aggrandizement relents, and we are better able to look within and find our own Self and nourish that Self with love. This love is more than a feeling which is only one aspect of love. This complete love requires being to the Other. It is our healing, our route to becoming whole. And only in experiencing the feeling of being loved can one reach out and extend that love to others.

Harvard psychologist David C. McClelland probed the physiology of love. He had a group of subjects view a short film of Mother Teresa in her daily work. The film displayed a profound outpouring of love. As the audience watched the film, McClelland discovered that a marker in their immune systems increased—salivary immunoglobulin antigen. And one did not even have to have high opinions of Mother Teresa. After a few hours, the positive effects declined and disappeared. Deepak Chopra suggests that we think about love, talk about love, seek out love, and encourage love. And then, and only then, can we proceed to true forgiveness.

Man can love himself in terms of self-acceptance if he is certain that he is accepted. Otherwise his self-acceptance is self-complacency and arbitrariness. Only in the light and in the power of 'love from above' can he love himself.

--Paul Tillich

You are me. And I am you. Isn't it obvious that we inter-are? You cultivate the flower of yourself so that I will be beautiful. I transform the garbage in myself so that you will not have to suffer. I support you. You support me. I am in this world to offer you peace. You are in this world to bring me joy.

--Thich Nhat Hahn

Module 7: The Gift of Forgiveness



Reference

Ageless Body, Timeless Mind, 330-331
Deepak Chopra

Exercises & Activities

The Forgiveness Prayer

The work of forgiveness strips away the residues of resentments which constrict how we connect with our own hearts as well as how our heart connects with others.

This process works best with daily attention. Angers and resentments rarely release completely, but rather peel off in layer by layer. Sometimes we need to return again and again to our memories as we continue to release. It may take several sessions before you become aware of increased energy and a sense of lightness and joy.

In our daily lives we inevitably rub up against each other—creating many opportunities to practice forgiveness and release. As we end our day, we are accustomed to clean our bodies and brush our teeth, preparing for the night's rest. It makes good sense to take another few moments to clean our psyches and our souls from the residue of our day's experiences. As we unburden ourselves from anger and regrets, we can live more fully and joyfully and sleep more restfully.

This *Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness* is adapted from the Jewish daily prayers which include a bedtime period of self-examination.

- You and/or your participants may wish to change the wording of this prayer/ meditation to reflect your own beliefs and tradition.
- Discuss the importance of creating a daily practice of forgiving and releasing anger and resentment for the actions of others as well as toward ourselves. This is crucial to the development of self-love and appreciation.

Exercise 14

Bedtime Prayer of Forgiveness

The end of the search for love is beyond behavior, because in time the mind decides to look inward, and when it does, the search changes into a search for the essential self, the me that knows 'I am love.'

--Deepak Chopra

Module 7: The Gift of Forgiveness



The Gift of Forgiveness: A Gift to Ourselves

In this exercise we guide participants through a process of forgiving others in order to free ourselves as well as acknowledging the ways we unconsciously colluded in the interaction that created so much pain and hurt.

- It can be facilitated as either a socialized meditation or as a journaling exercise.
- After the meditation or individual journaling, invite participants to share in dyads, then harvest the learning in the wider group.

Exercise 12 *The Gift of Forgiveness: A Gift to Myself*
Appendix 4 *Socialized Meditation*
Handout 7 *Journal Writing*

Couple this deep process of forgiveness with a breathing exercise.

Exercise 15 *Forgiveness Breath*

Cultivating Self-Forgiveness

We do forgiveness work to untie our tangles so that we feel the freedom to live life fully, to be more present to the beauty and joy in our lives. To forgive oneself **may be the hardest practice of all**. Invite participants to look at themselves in all four worlds – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual – and as we review our lives, **become aware of where we need to practice self-forgiveness**.

Exercise 24 *Self - Forgiveness Exercise*

Module 8: Elders as Healers



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

The Elder as an Agent of Change
Elders' Community Roles
Elders as Futurists

Activities & Exercises

Acting as an Elder of the Tribe
Journaling
Social Meditation

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction -- The Elder as an Agent of Change

For many, it was transformative to see that first photo transmitted back from the moon showing our planet floating in a sea of darkness. There were no borders, no national divides. It was a simple vision that helped us understand our shared humanity as earthlings, and that we each inhabit the same home, regardless of our perceived differences. Few images have done more to create a sense of commonality, and its power has infused the work of sage-ing.

Elders are in a unique position to hold this vision of our world. As they do their own inner work, elders will find it increasingly easy to provide leadership in the external arenas that are begging for a new way of seeing, a new way of working that supports the world in its wholeness. One of the first initiatives must be in the realm of community. In this country many communities are in disarray as a result of rampant growth, problems of violence, drug addiction, environmental degradation, and moral and spiritual decay. Elders can bring to these pressing and overwhelming problems a broader vision that embraces a higher perspective guided by concerns for ecological health and social justice. The spiritual elder, as he or she grows in consciousness, is able to see religious, cultural, and ethnic differences in a new light, transcending these distinctions in service of a larger identity that sees us first as citizens of the planet.

This shift in perspective has been aided by a growing understanding of our planet as a living, breathing organism. An

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

When elders model voluntary simplicity to their peers, family members, and younger friends, they help break our addiction to the glamorous temptations of consumer culture. In this way, they demonstrate their commitment to the health and survival of life on Earth.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 8: Elders as Healers



expanded consciousness of Gaia, Mother Earth, can profoundly affect how each of us participates in our communities and the larger body politic. Simply by stewarding the earth's resources and practicing a life-style that puts the well-being of the earth first, elders can serve as role models for all of society, acting in a sense as eco-wardens for this fragile world.

There are also many ways in which elders can exert active leadership in this arena. By acting together, elders can profoundly influence economic and social realities for all of us. As a result of having the lion's share of the country's wealth, their spending habits are noticed on Madison Avenue and by major manufacturers. For example, by eating less meat and purchasing organic produce, they can influence farming practices. With their wealth elders can also shape the future of the stock market by investing in companies and funds that are both financially and ecologically sound.

Because elders are more active in participating in elections than any other age segment, their support of candidates whose legislation puts the well-being of the earth first can have a profound effect on public policy. Even in simple ways elders can have an important influence on community life, such as reducing fuel consumption by driving less and using energy efficient vehicles. They can speak out on environmental concerns as well as organize intergenerational groups to address issues such as recycling, planting trees, protecting local water supplies, and combating world hunger. In the process of helping our planet, elders are mentoring younger generations to ensure that these values live on for years to come, thereby laying the groundwork for positive social change and the reinvigoration of our national and international institutions.

In addition, elders can be citizen diplomats by providing models for resolving conflict at all levels of society. From international leaders working to bring together nations and groups who have serious differences to those who work at the local level to mediate disputes, spiritual elders will bring to these problems a unique and profound perspective that has been missing at all levels of the judiciary as well as international affairs.

A cadre of elders rediscovering their rootedness in the cosmos and in the Western mystical tradition can become a formidable force for an ecological revolution. For this to happen, elders should be reading, studying, and applying the teachings of the mystics. These profoundly visionary yet practical people provide us with the contemplative tools and inspiration to bring about a renaissance in Western culture.

--Matthew Fox

Module 8: Elders as Healers



Text

*From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 232 - 238;
250 - 261*

Elders' Community Roles

Many leaders in the field have begun exploring new models for community that take into account elders' continuing need for development of all aspects of their lives. Creating communities of learning that are vibrant, stimulating, and meaningful will become the standard in the years to come. In many respects, the lessons that many baby boomers learned through their experimentation with communal living in the sixties and seventies have set the stage for new models of living that are life giving and enhancing.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 250-253

Elders as Futurists

In many respects, spiritual elders are futurists. Their stance is for an alternative world where community is valued and where a simpler way of living is embraced. This view is in contradiction to the prevalent worldview that holds science and technology in highest esteem, adhering to the belief that it is our role to control the environment in which we live. Without regard to holistic considerations, this model of domination has put our very existence in peril. The acquired wisdom of sages can teach the world how to make choices in harmony with and not contrary to Nature's laws. Elders can provide an important, moderating influence on the trend to control not just nature but to engineer all facets of our life as well, from communities to genetics. They can be the pathfinders for a new future that guides science with a deeper wisdom, not materialism and false expectations of unlimited growth.

Elders can also be the "holders" of the long-term perspective that has been sorely lacking in our planning and governance of the last century. In Native American culture no decisions are ever made without consideration for the seventh generation from today. Certainly we would think differently about our economy and the implications of our environmental policies if we were to take this long view. Elders are in a unique position to hold us to this higher standard.

As we continue, perhaps by transcending all national boundaries, we'll begin to function as a single human species with the awareness of being one humanity on the planet. To do this, we must develop a new form of consciousness that balances self-interest with altruism. Thus the paradox is that self-interested self-consciousness is no longer in our long-term self-interest. What truly serves us in the long term is holistic awareness, which allows us to feel as one with everyone else. What the mystics have taught us has become an evolutionary imperative.

--Peter Russell

Module 8: Elders as Healers



Activities & Exercises

Acting as an Elder of the Tribe

This exercise will help participants get in touch with the sage within—the one who longs to make a contribution of enduring value. As elders, they can serve as leaders in rebuilding our sense of community and restoring health and balance to our planet Earth.

Exercise 19 *Acting as an Elder of the Tribe*

Journaling and social meditation can also be useful tools to help elders begin the process of envisioning how they would like to make a difference in the world and what bridges they would like to build for future generations.

Handout 7 *Journal Writing*
Appendix 4 *Socialized Meditation*

An old man going a lone highway came at the evening, cold and gray, to a chasm, vast and wide and steep, with waters rolling cold and deep. The old man crossed in the twilight dim, that sullen stream had no fears for him; but he turned when safe on the other side, and built a bridge to span the tide. "Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near, "You are wasting your strength with building here. Your journey will end with the ending day, you never again will pass this way. You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide, why build you this bridge at eventide?" The builder lifted his old gray head. "Good friend, in the path I have come," he said, "There followeth after me today a youth whose feet must pass this way. This chasm that has been naught to me to the fair-haired youth may a pitfall be. He, too, must cross in the twilight dim— good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

--Will Allen Dromgoole
The Bridge Builder

Module 9: Mortality



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Midwifing Death

Philosophical, Physical, Psychological, and Social Aspects
of Death and Dying

Accepting Mortality

Hospice

Rituals, Ceremonial, and Funeral Practices

Exercises & Activities

Philosophical Homework

Remembrances of First Encounter with Death

- Living Wills and Advance Directives

The Five Wishes

Scripting Your Death – Final Rite of Passage

Writing Your Obituary and Your Epitaph

Checklist for Creating Peace of Mind

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction -- Midwifing Death

At first blush, participants in your program may think that it is a strange notion to midwife death. But just as we need help in the birthing process, we often need assistance to make this final transition. All of the world's religions have rituals that are designed to serve this purpose and, to varying degrees, serve the needs of the dying and their families.

From the sage-ing perspective, we can enhance the rituals from our faith traditions by consciously engaging with our own dying and the dying of others. This requires physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation. It also calls on us to imaginatively explore this last frontier by talking to family members about their own eventual death, considering whom we would like to be present at the time of our deaths and even how we would like to design our environment. Would we like music playing and which selections? How would we want the visual appearance of the space, from the arrangement of the objects or furniture to the color of the walls and what's hanging on them if it is inside? If scent is important to us, what aroma would we choose to fill the room?

Death is not a cosmic mistake. Woven into the warp and woof of existence, the presence of death deepens our appreciation of life. It also regenerates our psyches in preparation for harvesting. The more we embrace our mortality not as an aberration of God and nature, but as an agent urging us on to life completion, the more our anxiety transforms into feelings of awe, thanksgiving, and appreciation.

--Rabbi Zalman
Schachter-Shalomi

Module 9: Mortality



Midwifing death also has a practical side. While we often associate this term with the actual event of dying, it can also mean that we do all that we can to make the necessary arrangements for our funeral, ensuring that the transition for our family is as smooth as possible and preparing all of the important documents to ensure that our estate and personal wishes are in order. In this module we will address these practical concerns along with others such as wills, trusts, hospice care, and pre-need planning. We will also consider lofty philosophical issues and the emotional concerns associated with death and dying.

Philosophical, Physical, Psychological, and Social Aspects of Death and Dying

The Big Philosophical Questions

Death is a question for all of us, and this question operates at many different levels of our lives. At the philosophical level, death is a topic that we all have contemplated at one time or another. What happens when our bodily existence ends? Is there an afterlife? Do we have a soul? Are there tangible places resembling our notions about heaven and hell? Does our soul continue to evolve after death? Is there reincarnation?

These questions and concerns become more pressing as we move into our elder years. One of the wonderful strengths of the sage-ing program is that we provide opportunities for elders to grapple with these issues and determine a personal philosophy that can have practical implications for how they meet the challenges of sage-ing and confronting their mortality. See the Activities & Exercises section of this module for suggestions on how to facilitate this discussion with your participants.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 124-127

Physical and Psychological Aspects of Dying

Many of our fears about the death process are a result of ignorance, prevalent misconceptions perpetuated by cultural myths, and the fact that few of us have lived to tell about the event. But in recent years there has been a great deal written about the dying process from the scientific point of view. In addition, individuals who have had Near Death Experiences

*We are not victims of dying;
death does not victimize us.
But we are victims of
shallow, distorted attitudes
toward dying, which we
conceive as tragic.*

—Stanley Keleman

Module 9: Mortality



(NDEs) have provided us with a rich body of literature written from this unique point of view.

First, what do we know about the experience of dying? Contrary to common fears, dying may not be physically painful. People frequently report that their lower limbs begin to feel heavy. At times they feel cold, and at times they feel hot. Breathing becomes shallower, and often they have a sensation of sinking or floating, even a sense of peacefulness.

*Death is absolutely safe.
Nobody ever fails at it.*
—Ram Dass

On the other hand, psychologically and emotionally, the dimensions of time and space can become confused, and people often report hearing a cacophony of sounds and seeing bizarre visions of natural cataclysms as well as myriad colors. Yet, following what appears to be death as modern medicine would define it, those who have had NDEs report feeling ecstatic, no sense of pain or fear, and frequently joy. There are a series of approaches to facilitate the death experience. Each is designed to decrease the confusion and disorientation that people may experience during this transition.

The Social Aspects of Dying

Those of us who have had a loved one die who has inadequately dealt with the social “stuff” of death know the huge impact that this can have on family and friends. While the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of death and dying are crucial to the sage-ing process, we also encourage people to handle the more practical aspects of death and dying. This comes under the heading of “getting your affairs in order.” There is a wide array of important issues that need to be addressed and documents that need to be prepared—pre-planning your funeral and/or purchasing a burial plot, drawing up a will and doing appropriate estate planning, creating a living will to ensure that your wishes are known regarding heroic measures to prolong your life, and signing a durable power of attorney in the event that you are incapacitated and someone must make important decisions regarding your medical and financial affairs. Reb Zalman likes to keep these important documents in what he calls his *God-Forbid Book* which can be kept in a secure place, yet where your family can quickly find it in the event of your untimely death or an unexpected illness that is debilitating. As our life

Module 9: Mortality



circumstances change, it is important that we revisit these plans and documents to ensure that they reflect our current circumstances and wishes.

Accepting Mortality

In a profound sense, a large part of the sage-ing curricula revolves around the core issue of mortality. If we knew that we could live forever, it is likely that we would postpone dealing with *impermanence* which is essential to the sage-ing process. Accepting our mortality is the doorway to this journey of self-discovery, but we must first walk through that door.

One way to begin this journey is to contemplate the actual moment of our death, even writing our own obituary. Some will find the avenue to acceptance through an exploration of their early experiences with relatives and pets who died by meditating on the why and the wherefore of our attitudes and beliefs. The very act of facing death robs it of its potency to cripple us with fear and anxiety. Freeing ourselves opens the way for doing the emotional and spiritual work during this stage of life.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 113-115

Hospice

The traditional medical model in which death is deemed a failure has helped to reinforce many of the practices and beliefs regarding dying that are prevalent in our culture. During the 1960's, Dr. Cicely Saunders, a British physician, began questioning whether people who are suffering with an incurable disease should be submitted to this "life at all costs" mentality. It was clear that at the end of life we need an alternative that ensures our comfort as well as the opportunity to die in dignity. So she began the modern hospice movement by establishing St. Christopher's Hospice near London. This was the first time that an organized team of professional caregivers used modern pain management techniques to compassionately care for the dying. The first hospice in the United States was established in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974.

[By contemplating your death style] you automatically enhance your lifestyle—not in a material sense, of course, but in the richness and joy with which you experience each passing moment, each relationship, each situation and circumstance, day by day.

—John White

A Practical Guide

. . . the aging self is summoned to grapple with the approaching darkness. Only through such nocturnal wrestling, as with Jacob and the angel, can the self experience the fullest blessing of the end-time. It is by facing the terrors of our old age, by launching out on the final sea-journey, that a person finds the courage and insight to be profoundly wise for others in elderhood.

--Eugene Bianchi

Module 9: Mortality



Philosophically, hospice care neither prolongs life nor hastens death. Instead, the goal is to improve the quality of a patient's last days by offering comfort and support physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In this sense, hospice treats the person, not the disease, emphasizing quality, rather than length of life and affirming that dying is a normal part of living. "Hospice" has its roots in the Latin word "hospitium," — meaning guesthouse. In ancient times a "hospitium," was used to describe a place of shelter for weary and sick travelers returning from religious pilgrimages.

Whereas the prevalent model for hospice in Great Britain relied on stand-alone facilities, in this country eighty percent of hospice care is provided in the home and in nursing homes. Hospice also offers a variety of bereavement and counseling services to families before and after a patient's death.

Ritual, Ceremonial, and Funeral Practices

Each of the great religions has recognized the importance of ritual to help those who are dying, as well as to comfort the living who are left to cope with the death of friends and family members. The Catholic Church performs last rites to help the dying make the transition to the next world. In most Jewish communities there is a Chevrah Kaddisha, a group of volunteers who lovingly prepare one's body for burial. There is also a wide array of funeral practices by various faiths, from burial to cremation. Each practice has an important history and place in the life of each of these faiths.

Our role is to encourage participants to explore their faith traditions and their beliefs and values regarding these practices. Just as facing our mortality is an important step in the sage-ing process, deciding on the rituals and means of the disposal of our body following death can be liberating.

On a paper in one pocket is written "For me the world was created." On a paper in the other, "I am but dust and ashes."

--Jewish mystical teaching

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 159-162

Module 9: Mortality



Exercises & Activities

Philosophical Homework

In its simplest form, philosophical inquiry is about asking questions to obtain answers that help us to live our life with a greater sense of wholeness and understanding. This exercise is designed to provide participants with an opportunity to ask questions of themselves in a quiet, reflective environment. Many of us have asked these eternal questions at earlier times in our lives, particularly as we became young adults seeking to become uniquely ourselves. Now, it again becomes a passionate inquiry for elders who wish to share their perspective and create a legacy from their life as they encounter their mortality.

Exercise 10 *My Philosophical Homework*

Remembrances of First Encounters with Death

Asking participants to contemplate death through the perspective of their earliest memories and encounters can be powerful and liberating.

- We suggest that this can be done as either a socialized meditation or as a journaling exercise.

Appendix 4 *Socialized Meditation*
Handout 7 *Journal Writing*

Living Wills and Advance Directives

An advance directive is a statement written in advance of a possible event, directing people what to do when we die (e.g. a Will) or if we are incapable of making decisions for ourselves while we are living (e.g. Power of Attorney or a Living Will). As you are aware, a Will gives directions about property and possessions. A Power of Attorney is for all decisions such as housing, finances, and so on. A Living Will is specifically about healthcare and personal care. Frequently Living Wills and Advance Directives are terms that are used interchangeably.

There are three components of a Living Will. First, Instruction Directives are known as the “what” directive, leaving clear instruction about medical treatment.

In scripting a beautiful death, we nurture the expectation that we, too, will be transfigured in our final moments.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 9: Mortality



Second, Proxy Directives, sometimes known as Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, is known as the “who” directive, designating someone to represent you. It is important to select a representative carefully because this person acts not only as a legal decision maker but also as your spokesperson, interpreter, and advocate. Since Instruction Directives usually need interpretation, your proxy can play an important role in making sure that your wishes are carried out. It is best to choose a proxy who knows you well and is comfortable with your values.

Lastly, there is the Values Directive, an expression of your values and beliefs to guide decisions. This is an option, and it is not binding like a Will. Attaching a Values Directive to your Advance Directive allows your proxy to know your values more intimately so they can respond as you would wish to variables and circumstances that your Instruction Directive may not have anticipated. It is also helpful if family members cannot agree.

Preparing an Advance Directive can help us to encounter our mortality emotionally and psychologically. There are many forms to choose from, one of which is described in the next section.

Exercise 18 *Living Will*

The Five Wishes

Five Wishes is a document that helps participants express how they want to be treated in the event they are unable to speak for themselves because of a serious illness. It is like a living will but far more comprehensive in scope in that it addresses all of a person’s needs: medical, personal, emotional and spiritual. *Five Wishes* also is different from living wills in that it encourages the sharing of this vital information with the family and physicians. The following information is elicited in the document:

1. person responsible for making health decisions when you are unable to do so,
2. kinds of medical treatment you would want, and the procedures you would not want,

*For a moment of night we
have a glimpse of ourselves
and of our world islanded
in its stream of stars—
pilgrims of mortality,
voyaging between horizons
across the eternal seas of
space and time.*

--Henry Beston

Module 9: Mortality



3. measures you would like to be taken to ensure your physical and emotional comfort,
4. expectations and desires regarding how you want to be treated, and
5. information you want your loved ones and family to know.

Scripting Your Death—Final Rite of Passage

By increasing our familiarity with the reality of physical death, exercises like this one will allow participants to reduce the mystique surrounding death and lessen their own fear of this event. It can also facilitate the process of life harvesting.

Exercise 16 *Scripting My Last Moments on Earth*

Writing Your Obituary and Epitaph

While this exercise is at first blush disarmingly simple, its impact is profound. Participants will discover a great deal about what has been meaningful and important in their life, and they will come closer to understanding what they would like their legacy to be.

*All men think all men are
mortal but themselves.*
--Edward Young

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 113-115*

Check List for Creating Peace of Mind

As we described above, ensuring that the practical side of death is attended to is as important as dealing with the more abstract and esoteric issues of dying.

Exercise 17 *Check List for Creating Peace of Mind*

Module 10: Philosophical Homework



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Values Clarification
Formulating a Personal Philosophy—The Essence
of Sage-ing
The Afterlife & Reincarnation
Gaia Consciousness

Exercises & Activities

Discursive Meditation
Harvesting Wisdom

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

Unlike an academic endeavor that is filled with discourse about the greatest philosophers' answers to many of the age-old questions about the meaning of life and death, the sage-ing program challenges participants to ask and answer these questions for themselves. This is not intended to be an interesting intellectual conversation, but rather is seen as pivotal to formulating a living philosophy that informs all aspects of the elder's experience. This process can not only deepen elders' spiritual quests, it can also have a dramatic impact on their physical and emotional well-being, as well as leading to greater understanding and acceptance of life's many mysteries.

The contemplation of an individual life against the background of time brings inevitably deeper insights into the nature of being and becoming.

--Robert de Ropp

Values Clarification

The philosophical work of the elder is a matter of values clarification. Knowing what we stand for in life can help us frame our responses to all of the challenges that beset us as we grow older. Ultimately, knowing and understanding the reasons and beliefs for why we have made the important decisions that have given our life its unique form can help us forge a philosophy that gives greater purpose and meaning not only to the past, but to the future as well.

Far more than answers, we need questions to open the floodgates of our own creative intelligence. They enable us to breathe fresh life into the perennial issues humanity has wrestled with since time immemorial.

--Rabbi Zalman
Schachter-Shalomi

This work is first and foremost an introspective process. Much must be learned alone, but much can be learned from hearing the views and stories of others who have journeyed on the

Module 10: Philosophical Homework



same path and from having others listen to us. The methodology for developing a personal philosophy is as old as humankind, and seems to be the hallmark of both the young and old. It starts often with the simplest question of all: “Why?” Perhaps this is what bonds children with elders. At the beginning of life we are obsessed with the “why?” of things and our physical environment. Children are gifted at asking questions about why it is dark outside, or why the toaster beeps the way it does, etc. One answer inevitably leads to another question.

As death nears, we once again return to pondering, but in this stage of life we search for answers that can help us grasp the meaning of our lives and understand better our thoughts, feelings, and reactions to our world. Sometimes we can see our philosophy emanating from a critical moment in our lives when we made a crucial choice. Others find their deepest yearnings reflected in the lives of others whom they admire.

But this process of clarifying our life values means nothing unless it’s put into action. A living philosophy requires commitment and honesty. We must look squarely in the face of our lives and ask ourselves what is left unaccomplished, what still needs to be done before we die, and how do we want to be remembered. To clarify our values and philosophy sometimes can require an act of courage.

Formulating a Personal Philosophy

The Essence of Sage-ing

One of the things that distinguishes the autumn of our lives from earlier phases is that we have more time for reflection and contemplation. We also have sufficient years behind us to give us distance from the many things that have been difficult and even painful. As the prospect of death looms nearer, it is inevitable that we look back and ask the question, “What has it all meant?”

Harvesting the lessons of this life and formulating a guiding philosophy can play a crucial role in the way we choose to meet death. Such a philosophy can also be the basis for the development of a unique, teachable point of view. As elders

When the time comes to release our consciousness to the greater planetary pool, our death seems less ‘terminal’ when viewed from the perspective of Gaia’s transpersonal organism. . . By contributing our small but important increment of consciousness for the growth and evolution of Gaia, we, too, can exclaim, “Lucky me, lucky mud.”

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 10: Philosophical Homework



begin the process of sharing their acquired wisdom with younger generations, such a philosophy is central to succeeding as a mentor. Without it, the elder is left with no guidepost for what is important to share from the vast library of his or her life experience. How else can we meaningfully impact a younger person who is grappling with surviving in a world fraught with perplexing enigmas and painful, unexplainable contradictions if we ourselves have not developed a perspective that helps us live within these mysteries with some modicum of equanimity and purpose.

Text *From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 187-199*

- Here is a sampling of questions that you may want to raise with your participants.
- Ask them to work with these through either journaling, socialized meditation, discursive meditation described below, or group discussion:

- ◇ Why are you here?
- ◇ What is your purpose in life?
- ◇ What is your place in the universe?
- ◇ Why do bad things happen to good people?
- ◇ What is your belief about God?
- ◇ What is your belief about the afterlife?
- ◇ Do you have a soul and will it survive your death?
- ◇ Whatever your answer to the previous question, what are the implications for how you live your life today?

When we open-endedly investigate the issue of postmortem survival as part of our philosophic homework, we sense that we are multi-leveled organisms having physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Each time we investigate the contours of our being, they prove much larger than our senses might indicate. As we move beyond the physical body, we expand into larger fields of knowledge and being.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Exercise 10 *My Philosophical Homework*

Module 10: Philosophical Homework



The Afterlife & Reincarnation

If our impending death is what gives our life on this plane of existence the possibility of meaning, we must wonder if death

is the final chapter or just a transition to something else. All of the world's faith traditions present a perspective on this subject. More than just a philosophy, confronting and embracing our views about the afterlife can bring us into a more conscious relationship with the essence of our spirituality.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 170-179

Gaia Consciousness

In recent years as we have become more sensitized to the fundamental role and impact of the environment on our well-being, many scientific thinkers have begun reformulating their view of our world. Rather than seeing the Earth as an inert rock spinning in space, they have postulated that the Earth itself is a living organism that breathes, thinks, and feels. All of the living beings (including humans) in the Earth's biosphere are like cells, all functioning to preserve the health and integrity of the larger organism. This new perspective has been referred to as the Gaia Principle. From this perspective, our consciousness is not something separate and unique, but rather an extension of Gaia consciousness. We are not thinking and feeling on our own. Instead, the Earth is thinking and feeling through us.

In this context, even those who reject the notion of an afterlife or that something ephemeral lives on after our death, might be attracted to the notion that they have been part of something greater, more expansive than their individual selves, that their consciousness has been part of a planetary consciousness.

When we die, whatever individuality we possessed merges with something greater to be recycled again and again. As Reb Zalman is fond of pointing out, the greater consciousness is like the planet's hard drive. In this context, the question, "Have you been saved?" takes on a new meaning. Has your learning been saved to the hard drive of the planet? This view of death can also have implications for how we frame our life, even if we don't have a belief in the ever after.

To know how to grow old is the masterwork of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living.

--Henri-Frederic Amiel

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 182-183

Module 10: Philosophical Homework



Exercises & Activities

Discursive Meditation

Discursive meditation can be a useful tool in assisting elders as they grapple with the major philosophical questions. Unlike other forms of meditation that aim to achieve a state of quiet and an empty mind, this form of meditation is quite directive in that it encourages us to stay focused on a specific idea even when our mind is inclined to wander. When the mind does wander, we gently pull our attention back to the question before us, exploring its relevance for our lives. This is a disciplined process, but it can lead to deeper thinking and understanding.

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 125-127</i>
Reference	Robert Assagioli

Harvesting Wisdom

This is a fun exercise that is engaging and allows participants to discover their views about many issues that they may not have previously considered.

Exercise 9	<i>Harvesting Wisdom</i>
-------------------	--------------------------

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Life Stories, Memoirs, and Spiritual Autobiography

Getting Started

Spirituality, Money, and Estate Planning

Exercises & Activities

Ethical Wills/Legacy Letters

The Gift of Counsel

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

Our legacy can be so much more than our money and our property. Yet if you were to watch advertisements by the major brokerage houses and insurance companies, legacy is reduced always to a financial formula. Unfortunately, this belief has permeated the wider culture.

I look back on my life like a good day's work; it was done, and I am satisfied with it.

--Grandma Moses

In the sage-ing program, we have an opportunity to help our participants begin the work of identifying their unique legacy and creating a wider and more meaningful context for their material bequests.

Life Stories, Memoirs, and Spiritual Autobiography

Thomas Moore suggests that there are four pathways to the soul—song, dance, silence, and storytelling. Helping participants recall and share their stories is one of the ways in which you can help them to do the deeper soul work of this program.

But what kinds of storytelling should you encourage?

Interestingly, research on reminiscence has found that there are different ways in which we look back, each having a unique purpose. *Simple reminiscence* is just that—inconsequential recollections of days bygone that are just satisfying memories. When good friends gather and someone starts the conversation with, “I remember when,” the stories that follow will have little redeeming value except for shared entertainment.

Integrative reminiscence involves an entirely different kind of reflection and sharing. Much of the harvesting, life review, and forgiveness work that is integral to the sage-ing program falls

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



under this heading. People look back in order to integrate difficult circumstances or experiences into the overall fabric of their life story.

Instrumental reminiscence helps people cope with current difficulties by drawing upon the fact that they have faced similar challenges in the past. Telling these kinds of stories can have a remarkable impact. In a study with hospital patients who were preparing for heart surgery the next day, Bellg and Rybaczyk trained volunteers to interview these patients to elicit their life stories. The volunteers directed the forty-five minute interviews toward two types of stories: a recounting of positive experiences and stories that could best be characterized as instrumental reminiscence. The results were profound—the patients' stress levels were significantly reduced, and their surgical outcomes were considerably better than those in the control groups.

A fourth kind of reminiscence is called *transmissive reminiscence*. As you might expect, this form of reminiscence is focused on transmitting something of value to another. When we say that elders have a developmental need to become mentors, this form of story that encapsulates our life lessons can be an important tool for helping younger generations as they struggle with life's challenges. Just the telling of family stories to grandchildren can be a powerful way for elders to transmit important values and perspectives.

Getting Started

For those who have journaled throughout their entire lives, reconnecting to personal stories is an easy task. For many this may be perceived as a daunting task. Their reflective skills may be underdeveloped or just rusty. How can you help them begin?

We have found that specific questions do more than anything else to help people journey back in their memories to forgotten gems. Ironically, many of the most rewarding stories stem from the problems and challenges we have confronted. Whether it was going the extra mile, a heroic deed, or just plain persistence, these stories can enable others to learn from our past successes and failures. Here is a series of questions that may prompt participants to remember events and anecdotes

Not to transmit an experience is to betray it.

--Elie Wiesel

I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying.

--Woody Allen

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



from their history that can be turned into meaningful stories. They can be used as part of a journaling exercise or as a socialized meditation.

Handout 7

Journal Writing

Appendix 4

Socialized Meditation

- ◇ Who was the person in your early life who taught you the most? What was the most important lesson you learned?
- ◇ Looking back, what was your most outstanding accomplishment?
- ◇ What has been your biggest setback, and how did you overcome or solve the problem?
- ◇ Who is the one person that you admire the most? Why?
- ◇ Which of your friends has impressed you the most? Why? What has this person done to win your admiration and respect?
- ◇ What stories have you heard during your work experiences that made the biggest impression?
- ◇ What is the most outstanding story of integrity and honesty that you have ever heard?
- ◇ What has been the biggest challenge you have faced in your life? How did you meet that challenge physically and emotionally? What did you learn?
- ◇ Who was your favorite school teacher? The teacher you disliked the most? What was your favorite subject? What subject did you like the least? What do you think was your most important lesson in school?
- ◇ What kinds of jobs did you have as a child? Which one did you like the most? Did you learn any important lessons early on? What were your bosses like?
- ◇ Who was your best friend? What did you like and admire most about this person? Do you remember any stories about

Whoever survives a test, whatever it may be, must tell the story. That is his duty.

--Ellie Wiesel

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



the things that you did together? Do you know where this person is now?

- ◇ Who was the most influential person in your life? What did this person do? What lessons did they teach you?
- ◇ Did you have any goals or dreams as a young person? Did your family have any strong ideas about what you should do with your life?
- ◇ If you went to college, what did you study? Who were your best friends then? Did you belong to a fraternity or sorority? Did you participate in sports or other activities? What are your fondest memories? Were there any professors who made an impression on you?
- ◇ How did you get your first job? Do you recall your job interview? How did that job lead to the type of work you do or did? What did you like the most about the different jobs you've had? The least?
- ◇ What have been the major accomplishments of your life? How did these affect the course of your life? What have been the major disappointments in your life? How did these affect the course of your life?

As you can imagine, the questions are nearly endless. In the bibliography there are a number of excellent resources on oral autobiography and life review to assist you and your participants.

Memoirs

Whereas reminiscence produces a series of disconnected yet important stories, organizing these stories into a coherent memoir requires more discipline and skill. There are numerous ways to approach this task. One easy approach is to arrange memories along chronological stages. These can be as simple as “My Childhood Years,” “Leaving Home,” “Making My Way in the World,” etc. Within each of these there are many subsidiary questions and issues that can be addressed, such as

“My Best Friends” during my childhood years. Another

Reminiscence is no mere escapist desire to live in the past, as some claim: rather it should be regarded as a major development task for the elderly, resulting in the integration that will allow them to age well and die well.

--Robert Butler

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



approach is to identify core themes that seem to have reoccurred throughout your life, such as “Gratitude,” “My Biggest Challenges,” “Enduring Friendships,” “My Favorite Travel Destinations,” “My Biggest Learning Experiences,” etc. Some of your participants may find that adding visuals to their text can help them express many things that words alone could not do. Visuals can also help people approach a difficult subject that might have been inaccessible otherwise. Stress with your participants that they need not be an artist to be effective. Other examples of items that can be included in a visually enhanced journal are photos that illustrate a mood or show what a place looks like, such as the house one grew up in. You can even encourage them to decorate their memoir with borders, collage, rubber stamps, clip-art, or other artwork such as sketches and drawings.

The Spiritual Autobiography

Spiritual Autobiographies are a special class of memoirs that chronicle the significant events in our life as they directly relate to our spiritual beliefs and our relationship with God. Through the ages people of all faiths have written about the trials and challenges of their spiritual life. To look back in time through the lens of our spiritual experiences and the times when we were disconnected from Spirit can be both a testament of great value for another, but can also provide us a deep sense of meaning and context for our spiritual journey. It can also help us to better understand the deep faith questions that have informed much of our life.

There are many ways for your participants to begin. They may want to start by describing the religious environment they grew up in, including their earliest memories of religious and spiritual practices. If they had any remarkable spiritual experiences during these early years, these can be pivotal pieces in the Spiritual Autobiography. Recollections can also include the impact of religious beliefs on their lives, e.g. “If you aren’t good, you will be punished by God.” Other events in one’s life that had an impact on religious or spiritual development are also relevant, e.g. illness in the family. Such circumstances can often lead us at a young age to the profound philosophical questions that have become the cornerstone of

If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worthy reading, or do things worth the writing.

--Benjamin Franklin

We cannot tear out a single page of our life.

--George Sand

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



the *Philosophical Homework* in this program. People who were influential in one's spiritual journey can also be worth including.

The end point is to better define our beliefs, as well as to bring focus to the important questions that are still unanswered. For more ideas on how to write a Spiritual Autobiography, see the bibliography.

Spirituality, Money, and Estate Planning

Despite the best efforts of the legal and financial services industries, 70% of all Americans have not done any estate planning. Of the 30% who have, 70% of those have estate plans that are out of date or otherwise ineffective. That leaves only 9% of the population that have effective plans.

As we know from the *Box of Unlived Life*, many people are simply in denial about their mortality. Interestingly, in a recent survey, respondents 65 and older were twice as likely to deny their need for estate planning as those who are under 65. When asked why, most replied, "I don't need estate planning because I'm in good health." Many, though, have found the planning process inadequate to meet their need to leave a meaningful legacy. When people are searching to express something deeper about who they are, they are confronted instead with technicians who circumscribe their lives in a morass of financial issues and use fear as a motivational stick.

There is another approach being practiced increasingly by estate planners and financial planners that is more holistic. Practitioners using this method actually begin their work with their clients by initially disregarding the client's financial situation and instead eliciting stories regarding the client's past to better understand the meaning of money in the client's life. The lens is then widened to include the clients' heritage, values, and stories of their culture, ancestors, and traditions along with their family relationships, beliefs, sources of personal meaning and fulfillment, their community relationships, sense of service and mission, volunteerism, and current philanthropy.

[Our mortality has] never prevented the majority of human beings from behaving as though death were no more than unfounded rumor.

--Aldous Huxley

Understanding others is knowledge; understanding oneself is enlightenment; conquering others is power; conquering oneself is strength; contentment is wealth; forceful conduct is willfulness; not losing one's rightful place is to endure; to die but not be forgotten is longevity.

--Tao Te Ching

Module 11: Leaving a Legacy



Exercises & Activities

Ethical Wills

An ethical will has become a popular tool for bequeathing the intangibles of life that cannot be reflected in a traditional will that disposes of our money and property. It speaks of the things that are in our hearts that we would not want to go unsaid to our family and dearest friends.

Within the Jewish tradition there has been a long history of using ethical wills to convey beliefs, blessings, hopes, forgiveness and the plea for forgiveness, life's lessons, ideas, spiritual and personal values, feelings, and even burial instructions to the surviving generations. It can be included as part of the documents that are read following one's death, but many people prefer to share their ethical wills to loved ones while they are still living. Such a document can be a wonderful affirmation of your life and a source of great healing. It can also help us come to terms with the finiteness of our existence on this plane.

Exercise 23

Writing Ethical Letters/Legacy Letters

The Gift of Counsel

This exercise is a specialized version of an ethical will. It allows us to speak to different aspects of another person and to exhort, welcome, advise, suggest, or invite the person to see his/her world from a perspective seasoned by the sage-ing process. While it should never be considered an attempt to manipulate the lives of loved ones from the grave, it can be a gift of our wisdom regarding a perplexing difficulty faced by that person. This document can be created by using the journaling process and can also be used in conjunction with the *Inner Elder* exercise.

Old people like to give good advice as solace for no longer being able to provide bad examples.

--Francois,
Duc de la Rochefoucauld

Handout 7

Journal Writing

Exercise 2

Journey to Meet My Inner Elder

Exercise 22

The Gift of Counsel

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

- Tips for Keeping the Relationship Dynamic
- Helping Your Mentee Focus on Strengths
- Mentoring Resources
- Power of Storytelling
- Intergenerational Dialogue
- Community Benefits of Intergenerational Programs
- Making Intergenerational Dialogue work

Activities & Exercises

- Elders of the Tribe
- Angels & Heroes

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

In ancient Greece, there was a king of Ithaca who led the Greeks to victory in the Trojan War. His name was Odysseus. While away on his conquest, he entrusted Mentor with the education of his son, Telemachus. Since that time, mentors have always exhibited the essential quality for which their namesake is remembered—trustworthy guides, counselors, tutors, and coaches.

The word “mentoring” is also related to the Greek word meaning “enduring.” Traditionally, it has referred to a sustained relationship between a youth and an adult in which the younger person who is facing important challenges or difficulties receives guidance and support.

Today, more than ever, young people are in desperate need of mentors who can guide them. The statistics are frightening in this regard. Each day in the United States 3,600 students drop out of high school, and 2,700 unwed teenage girls get pregnant. Single parent homes have become almost the norm in the last 30 years, and in many families both parents are working, leaving a huge void in the lives of children.

Those who seek mentoring will rule the great expanse under heaven. Those who boast that they are greater than others will fall short. Those who are willing to learn from others become greater. Those who are ego involved will be humbled and made small.

--Shu Ching

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



For a sage, mentoring offers the individual a unique opportunity to create a lasting legacy. Reb Zalman likens this

process to “transmitting our seed in a non-biological way.” By passing on wisdom to a younger person, elders have the opportunity to leave behind the important lessons gleaned from a long life, to have their wisdom saved and reused by the next generation.

In addition to instilling trust, successful mentors must possess identifiable skills. Some people develop these abilities naturally through their lifetimes. For those who lack the mastery or experience to be effective mentors, the good news is that the requisite skills can be learned.

While there are no rules for mentoring, and mentoring can take place under the guise of a variety of kinds of relationships in myriad settings, we have learned that there are some essential guidelines that seem to support the process. While they don't insure that the relationship will take root and flourish, the relationship will likely wither without these important “nutrients.”

- Listening is the key, especially in the beginning of the relationship. Mentors must open their hearts and minds to the mentee's genuine concerns. If you are the mentor, let the mentee do the lion's share of the talking. This will help you to create a sacred trust -- a necessity before you ever consider sharing your own experiences and insights regarding a particular problem.
- Mentees usually know more than they realize. Your job is to evoke their innate wisdom, rather than fill them with your own. If anything, your own wisdom and counsel should serve more as a spark to ignite the mentee's own thinking and creativity. Don't impose your solution, but rather evoke the solution by helping mentees think well about the challenges before them.
- Leave your ego at the door. Your job isn't to impress the

All good mentors (giving, teaching) are continually open to being mentored (receiving, learning). To be a good teacher, one must be a good student. To be a good student, one must learn well what he or she will teach.

--The Tao of Mentoring

A Story: An arrogant professor of religion and the arts seeks out a Zen master to learn all there is to know about Zen Buddhism. The Zen master, sensing his patronizing attitude, invites him in for tea. He then begins pouring the tea but does not stop once the tea has reached the top of the cup. He continues to pour until it is overflowing, running over the table and onto the floor. The professor is aghast at this behavior and finally protests. The Zen master replies: “Just as the tea is overflowing the cup, your knowledge is already spilling over, so how can I offer you any more?”

--Ancient Zen Story

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



mentee with all of the good decisions you have made in your life. Rather, the stories about your failures and foibles probably will help him or her the most. You don't need to be perfect. Let the mentee get to know all aspects of yourself

as a human being who is also searching and struggling with life's challenges.

- While it may seem to go without saying that each of us is a unique human being, your job is to see this relationship as a sacred trust. Assume that there is something very special about this person and that your job is to discover it.
- Recognize that this relationship will grow and change, and it will have its own life cycle. The best of mentor/mentee relationships evolve into lifelong friendships that are mutually supportive. Some run their course, and the time will then come for each of you to move on. While you may experience some loss during these changes, your job is to speak about the changes you see happening and respect them.

The following are some additional guidelines that can facilitate the relationship:

- Respect your differences.
- Create a nonjudgmental environment.
- Help your mentee to think big.
- Validate and affirm your mentee, even when he/she fails.
- The quickest way to elicit trust is through disclosing something that is personal about yourself.
- Be an ally through thick and thin.
- Be accessible to your mentee. This does not mean that you are necessarily buddies.
- Be certain that your space and time are free of interruptions.

Elders have a greater capacity than young people to see all of life and how it's connected. The wisdom that accompanies this wider vision cannot be acquired by reading books, listening to tapes, or attending seminars. Many young people seek it by studying with Eastern gurus, while their grandparents sit at the kitchen table at home like Zen masters, dispensing wisdom that usually goes unnoticed. If we restored elders to positions of respect within the family, we could profit from their wise council and receive valuable lessons in living by more enduring values.

--Gay Luce

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



Turn off the phones.

- Remember, you are a facilitator and guide, and it is not your place to control the mentee in any way.

In *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, Reb Zalman identifies five stages in the mentor/mentee relationship. In the first stage, especially in relationships that evolve naturally, an older person's friendship and attempts to be helpful to a younger person develop into what Reb Zalman calls "a covenant of mentoring." In this early phase, the expectations of each party along with the rules of conduct are, most often, tacit and unspoken.

This leads to the second stage in the relationship, referred to by Reb Zalman as the "shakeout," in which the relationship is formalized. In this phase expectations are explored and limitations are laid out. When attempting to foster mentoring in an open, conscious manner, the mentor should explicitly address these issues so that both parties know where each stands. In stage three, it is important to create goals, establish a workable structure and time frame for meetings, and clarify rules for contact. In addition, issues of confidentiality must be explored and ways to resolve potential problems.

With these structures in place, in stage four the mentor and mentee can begin the process of the deep work that is characteristic. As we mentioned above, the most important ingredient in the mentor/mentee relationship is trust. Trust must be earned, and sometimes it takes months and years to establish.

And in stage five, there comes a time for graduation and the recognition that the relationship has run its course and must change shape or even dissolve.

A point arrives in which the mentee passes from being exclusively under the mentor's wing to a state of reciprocity in which both harbor each other under their wings. The mentor recognizes the mentee as a friend and equal, not just a young hawk.

--Sam Keen

Advice is seldom welcome, and those who want it the most always like it the least.

--Philip Dormer Stanhope
Earl of Chesterfield

Text
Exercise 20

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 187-208
The Experience of Mentoring & Intergenerational Work

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



Tips for Keeping the Relationship Dynamic

- One of the most difficult challenges for a mentee is in the area of decision making. The big decisions such as career moves, choosing a college, etc. can be daunting. One strategy to help your mentee is to suggest that he or she interview a number of people that they or you know who have also grappled with a similar decision at some time in their lives. This will help the mentee see the decision from a number of different perspectives. Most importantly, it will help the mentee see that there are many avenues to the same goal and that every choice, whether or not it turns out perfect, leads to important lessons that can help the mentee the next time he or she faces a difficult choice.
- One way of affirming the uniqueness of your mentee is to recognize that he or she knows things from which you could benefit. No doubt, if you have an interest in becoming more proficient on a computer, it is likely that a young person today can teach you a lot. This will enrich the relationship and affirm the mentee's worth. Or, if you are working on something, ask the mentee to give you his or her opinion regarding the quality of the work.
- Other ways to affirm your mentee is to send them an email or hand-written note with your reflections on the relationship, talking about the positive things you see in the mentee and appreciating the mentee for his or her progress on an issue.
- With the wisdom of hindsight, many elders report that they wish they had taken more risks when they were younger. They often feel that they played life a little too safely. Help your mentee identify some intelligent risks that he or she could take, and explore the potential upsides and downsides of acting on these opportunities.

The joy of passing on wisdom to younger people not only seeds the future, but crowns an elder's life with worth and nobility.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Many receive advice, few profit by it.

--Pubilius Syrus

Helping Your Mentee Focus on Strengths

We now know that when people act from a posture of strength, they are more likely to succeed. Unfortunately, we easily focus

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



on our weaknesses and shortcomings, but think of your mentee in terms of his or her strengths. Ask first: “What strengths do you have that I can relate to?” Keeping in mind the strengths of the other person will empower that person. Not being everything is smart; not working on everything but rather emphasizing selected strengths is the route to excellence. For

many people this understanding requires a redirection of the attitude that they must *do all* and *be all* to *become more* by focusing strictly on those things that they do well.

There are five characteristics of a strength that you can help your mentee to identify:

1. Yearnings are part of the wisdom of the body. They can be characterized as the pull or attraction to one activity or another. Yearnings are most often triggered when you see a performance or someone performing an activity, and you say to yourself, “I’d like to do that; I’d like to try that.” While a yearning is not necessarily indicative of a strength, it can be a powerful clue. By helping your mentee identify his or her yearnings, you can help this individual identify potential strengths.
2. Strengths also show up as the things that bring us great satisfaction in life. The pleasure sensation that is created each time we perform a particular task forms the internal or psychological motivation to repeat an activity time and again. If it doesn’t feel good, your mentee is likely not practicing a strength.
3. Watch for rapid learning. When your mentee takes to a new activity like a “duck takes to water,” it probably indicates a strength.
4. When your mentee finds himself or herself performing some way that is outstanding, it’s probably an indication that activity is a strength.
5. In all circumstances in which your mentee performs in an outstanding manner, this is no doubt a strength.

Those who know they know not, become wise. Those who presume they know much, stay ignorant.

--Ancient Chinese Proverb

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



Mentoring Resources

Sometimes mentoring relationships naturally evolve, but there are many programs available that can match mentors with children who can benefit from such a relationship. For example, *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America* is based on the

concept of a one-to-one relationship between an adult volunteer and an at-risk child usually from a one-parent family. There are over 300 agencies located across the country. Also, contact your local community colleges as many offer mentoring programs for their students.

Power of Storytelling

Helping mentees unearth their core values and beliefs can be one of the most important aspects of the mentor's task. One way to facilitate this process of discovery is to ask mentees to share stories about the life events and people that helped to shape them. Asking mentees to relate stories about the people they admire and implicitly the things they admire about them can also uncover unexamined values.

Sharing stories from one's own experience to illustrate an idea or lesson you have learned can also be one of the most powerful ways of sharing wisdom without directly giving advice. Such stories can act as a tiny fuse in the mentees' imagination, giving them the space to find the answer for themselves.

Introduction to Intergenerational Dialogue

In earlier times, many activities were part of the fabric of society and family life that brought different generations together. Frequently, elders fulfilled the role of childcare and passed on the family's cultural heritage while parents worked in the field. Children had opportunities to care for their frail elders, teaching them important lessons about compassion and responsibility.

In contrast, today we look to paid professionals and private and governmental institutions to accomplish these important tasks. Nursing homes have replaced the compassionate care that

We can trigger the mentoring impulse by responding to the question, "What would I grieve for if I failed to transmit it?"

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

A natural unfoldment takes place in the psyche, which signals at a certain time when the accumulated wisdom of a lifetime reaches a state of overflow. Awakened to elderhood, we pour the distillate of our lives into other vessels, an act that not only seeds the future, but crowns our lives with worth and nobility.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



elders once expected would build children's character and give them a sense of their heritage. And when people get in trouble in a community, they no longer look to their neighbors, but rather to government-funded service providers.

To exacerbate this problem, children spend their days with other children, even isolated from other age groups, and rarely see adults other than their teachers. Adults are equally segregated in their work places, and we know that elders have also been isolated with people of their own age.

To reverse this trend, communities around the country are rediscovering the importance of intergenerational ties, and that, by fostering programs that bring the generations together, everyone can benefit psychologically, socially, and even economically. Elders can be positive adult role models for young people as well as a source of knowledge and experience about life. Work by the Search Institute, an organization devoted to studying youth at-risk in our country (see the bibliography for further details.), has shown that children need forty assets in their lives to avoid the pitfalls of drugs, teenage pregnancy, and school violence. One of the most important of these is to have a meaningful relationship with at least three adults other than their parents. In many communities, elders can fulfill this important function. In the process, youth are able to gain a better appreciation for the process of aging and sage-ing. Similarly, elders benefit by feeling useful and developing a sense of purpose and greater self-esteem, which combats feelings of depression and isolation that often plague older adults.

There are many opportunities for intergenerational programming that can have an added benefit of saving money in the community that would otherwise have to be devoted to professional services. Placing childcare centers in nursing homes, as exemplified by the Eden Alternative, has had remarkable benefits for young and old alike. Supporting kids who need extra guidance by matching them with older mentors has been extremely beneficial for these children. Some communities have found that having high school students visit

If the institutions of our society continue to remove parents, other adults and older youth from active participation in the lives of children, and if the resulting vacuum is filled by the age-segregated peer group, we can anticipate increased alienation, indifference, antagonism and violence on the part of the younger generation in all segments of our society.

--Urie Bronfenbrenner
Two Worlds of Childhood

Module 12: Mentoring & Intergenerational Dialogue



isolated older adults has profoundly enhanced both parties and has provided a respite for family members. In some programs, elders tutor children, and children teach elders computer skills. In other cases, elders and youth have teamed up to tackle tough community issues such as crime and pollution.

Making Intergenerational Dialogue Work

In his work with intergenerational dialogue, James Gambone has found that every generation has a unique perspective. Whether it is in politics, economics, society, religion, or broad cultural issues, each generation can grow and learn by listening to the views of others. Interestingly, younger children and older people have a great deal more in common than they realize. Neither generation feels that their opinions are taken into account by the wider society.

To create an effective intergenerational dialogue, Gambone suggests bringing together at least five generations. While the major thrust of his work has been within faith communities, other community settings can lend themselves to intergenerational dialogue as well. Within the context of a faith community, he suggests identifying a real congregational issue to start the dialogue. A key to the process is to ensure that each generation's participation and perspective are respected and valued. If there are to be next steps, it is imperative that all of the generations feel included in the recommendations.

Reference

All Are Welcome: A Primer for Intentional Intergenerational Ministry and Dialogue
James V. Gambone, PhD

Without children and older people mixing in daily life, a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present.

--John Gatto
New York City
Teacher of the Year

Activities & Exercises

Elders of the Tribe

Like tribal elders of the past, today's spiritual elders are wisdom-keepers entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the well-being of our families and communities. Elders bear witness to the enduring views that secure our future generations. In this exercise you will be able to help

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

The Evolution of the Elder
Leaving Behind Old Models and Creating New Ones
On the Path to Sage-ing

Exercises & Activities

Approaching Elderhood
Visiting My Inner Elder

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction -- The Evolution of the Elder

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, elders were integral to all facets of society in many traditional cultures. They served in the most prestigious roles. Some of the greatest political leaders did not ascend to the pinnacle of their careers until they reached the mature years of their fifties, sixties, seventies, and even eighties. While this trend has been reversed in large part in the last century with a predilection for youthful leaders, there are still ample examples of elders such as Nelson Mandela and Golda Meir who did not reach power until the autumn of their lives. Elders also served as judges, sages, and seers, settling disputes as members of elder councils. The Torah and other books of the Old Testament are filled with stories about these wise counselors and advisors.

The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning.

--Carl Jung

Another important role for elders was to guard cultural traditions and rituals that were essential to the fabric of their societies. They also played a crucial role in teaching the younger generations, often using the age-old art of storytelling. In this role they were able to transmit the great myths that gave context and meaning to people's lives and helped them understand their place in the cosmos as well as the local ecology. This knowledge was crucial to the culture's survival from generation to generation. Traditionally, elders also played an integral role in helping the dying make the transition to the next world, as well as helping newborns enter this one. In this way they were truly bridge builders from the past to the future. In earlier times, being old was not something to be ashamed of, or to be avoided. People looked forward to these expanded and valued roles. This respect for elderhood was even deeply

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



embedded in the language of the time. For example, the Hebrew word for old man—*zaken*—was considered an honor. The Greek word *senate* comes from the Latin *senex*, meaning “old man.”

Beginning with the Renaissance, the role of the elder in the West began to shift in dramatic ways. Religious authority, represented by strong patriarchal figures such as the Pope, was on the decline, and science was emerging as the most trusted source for knowledge. The old paradigm that relied on the authority of tradition and the elder was eroding in favor of data and rigorous examination of the physical world. This new paradigm for acquiring knowledge through experimental, scientific, mathematical inquiry created many splits in all aspects of life—mind and spirit from body; this life from the afterlife; objectivity from subjectivity; the individual from the body of society; the human being from his or her ecology. This fracturing of life left the elder and his or her accrued wisdom with no audience. The deep learning of a lifetime was becoming irrelevant in light of new ways for knowing the world.

What the Renaissance began the Industrial Age completed. Agricultural societies in which the oldest person exerted control over captive younger generations via ownership of the farm became obsolete as younger people fled the country for the cities and factory jobs. Nearly overnight, elders lost their honored place as heads of families. Their role as wisdom keepers and transmitters was superceded by younger people who no longer needed to rely on their parents and grandparents for knowledge essential to survival. In fact, this knowledge became worthless and, in many cases, disdained by younger generations who were taking their futures into their own hands. This was especially true for children born second, third, or fourth who stood to inherit little or nothing. To exacerbate this drift away from reliance on elders, education was opening up new avenues for personal development, and, in most cases, young people were better educated than their parents, knowing more about the wider world than their parents could have ever imagined.

Elders function like old cobblers and dressmakers, sewing us back into the fabric of creation.

--Joan Halifax

As role models [new elder women] can give younger women confidence to look forward to a life in which physical appearance is not the measure of their worth and in which aging can be an asset.

--Sara Arber and Jay Ginn

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



Apprenticeship, the traditional method for education within the

trades also fell by the wayside. Knowledge was growing at such a rapid pace that any professional knowledge acquired in one's youth would likely become obsolete in the person's lifetime.

Whereas elders in an agricultural society could still play many useful roles, there was little room for them in urban, industrialized societies. Relegated to a peripheral role because of their lack of productivity, elders began to be treated in many of the stereotypical ways that we know all too well in this society.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 58-60

Leaving Behind Old Models and Creating New Ones

Today, we are part of an evolving model of elderhood that draws upon many of the valued and positive images associated with the wise elder in pre-industrial society but without the limiting patriarchal baggage associated with that era. To help in this task, many are looking to older spiritual traditions for models that can help us craft a new vision of elderhood. In *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, Reb Zalman suggests that the fourfold path of the Hindu tradition can offer a useful template. In this model, there are four ashrams, or stages, during a lifetime of development.

In the first ashram, we are students of life, focusing on acquiring the intellectual, spiritual, and moral tools that we will need to be successful in adulthood. In the second ashram, we become householders, raising a family, acquiring wealth, and attending to the outward demands of society. We become what the Hindus refer to as forest-dwellers in the third ashram, beginning the process of detaching from the demands of society and beginning the process of orienting our lives toward the spiritual. This stage reaches its fruition in the fourth ashram when we become *Sannyasi*, transcending our connections to our family and following a life of service to the world. The *Sannyasi* also takes on the task of spiritual instruction of

Modern gerontology treats aging as a problem of social engineering to be solved through technological means. The one-sided drive to alter, reverse, or somehow control the biological process of aging turn out to be disguised efforts to restore youth, rather than attempts to appreciate growing old as a fundamental part of human existence.

--Thomas Cole

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



younger generations. While there are aspects of this tradition that are obviously inapplicable to our circumstances today, it can serve as a useful model for the evolutionary development of the elder as represented in the sage-ing program.

The emerging elder represents a shift both spiritually and culturally. The signs are all around us. While the media have played a significant role in fostering the adverse stereotypes that have created a society insensitive to the needs of elders and to its own need for the wisdom that elders have to offer, there are small signs that the role of the elder is being reconceptualized in the media. Movies are being released that represent the wise elder mentoring younger people whose lives are enriched as a result. Elders such as Jimmy Carter are playing significant roles in building a more cooperative politic in which traditional adversaries are discovering new ways to resolve conflict.

We are witnessing a new ecological awareness, and at the forefront of this movement are many elder leaders from both developed countries and indigenous peoples. While there seems to be an increasing trend towards mindless consumerism, there are new elder voices stressing that materialism is not the answer to our problems, but rather part of the problem. And many elders are taking leadership roles in movements to preserve our ecology and the many endangered species.

Elder theologians such as Matthew Fox are leading the way in developing a new perspective that emphasizes a celebratory spirituality that heals the centuries old split between spirit and matter. There is a complementary evolution in the sciences whereby we are recognizing that the universe is less logical than we ever imagined. Physicists are speaking of the mysteries of life in tones that make them sound like mystics, concluding that our consciousness may in fact determine events in the world, reuniting the Cartesian split between mind and body. Physicians such as Larry Dossey are pointing to the scientific evidence that prayer does have a remarkable effect on the healing. Other human sciences, such as transpersonal psychology, are looking inward to discover that there is a realm

By making activity paramount in later life, we are popularizing a new cultural image that I playfully call the “aerobic grandparent.” Instead of feeling rested and whole in old age, aerobic grandparents feel compelled to be as busy, active, and involved as in middle age. Those elders who want to sit quietly, plant a garden, meditate, or walk on the beach can easily feel like failures if they aren’t exhausting themselves in a frenzy of activity. The alternative is not to renounce activity, but to experience life in praise of age by mining the riches of old age and learning what it has to teach.

--Connie Goldman

Current elders are laying the groundwork for a more communal old age, and of course the baby boomers are likely to be the elder community-builders par excellence.

--Jerry Gerber, et. al.
Lifetrends

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



of human potential extending far beyond what we ever conceived to be possible.

In many respects, sage-ing is an expression of these cultural changes and is a force that is even hastening the changes. Those who are doing this work are discovering the value of

increased reflection and contemplation, even though the wider society does not yet place a great deal of emphasis on the inner life. Lifelong learning is becoming more of the norm rather than the exception, witnessed by the meteoric growth of the Elder Hostel movement. Elders are discovering that while their physical capacities are changing, they are afforded a wonderful opportunity to develop aspects of their mental and emotional life that have been neglected during earlier phases of their lives. And elders are discovering that volunteerism and serving others may be a vital link to maintaining physical and mental health. Research on volunteerism bears this out.

The exploration of these facets of human experience is opening up to elders increasing levels of wisdom, providing a rich resource for society as it struggles with the dilemmas of post-industrialization. This bodes well for our culture and religious institutions, bringing a level of renewal that may be unprecedented as witnessed in the budding interest in the Jewish Kabbalah and Christian mystical writings.

In this shift toward a new spirituality, science, and ecological consciousness, Maggie Kuhn suggests that elders must take on five roles to help propel and support the changes that are now percolating. First, elders must be prepared to take responsibility for mentoring and teaching younger generations. Many authors are suggesting that this is especially true for women who must courageously set examples for younger generations of women in order to create new models that value the changes involved in the aging process.

Secondly, the world needs elders to serve as mediators who resolve civil, racial, and intergenerational conflict. The work of Jimmy Carter mentioned above is a shining example.

If we join together and train ourselves in the theory and practice of spiritual eldering, we will create the possibilities for unprecedented growth in our later years. We will ensure that when we are ready for old age, old age will be ready for us.

--Barry Barkin

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



Thirdly, elders can also be the watchdogs of our society, monitoring public bodies that set policy that affects the quality of life at local, national, and international levels. Movements such as AARP have been in the vanguard of this level of social responsibility.

Fourthly, elders are in a unique position to mobilize social change, advocating for new ways to ensure that sound values

and principles are guiding decisions that affect all of our lives. Elders such as Florence Ross who had served on the sage-ing board of directors is a wonderful example of an elder leading the way by working with august bodies such as the United Nations.

Finally, elders must model what it means to move away from self-centered concerns toward those that take into account the public good. If the younger generations are to have a hope of surviving, this may be essential to the perpetuation of our species on this planet.

Handout 6

Who Are Elders

On the Path to Sage-ing

Obviously, people don't reach the age of fifty-five or sixty and suddenly find themselves to be fully realized elders as described above. Barry Barkin has suggested that what we need is an entity called an elder guild that can facilitate the growth and development of elders as they emerge from their middle years. The guild would rely on the contributions of mature elders to initiate elders into training in all of the incumbent social responsibilities. People would literally move from the stage of novice to master in a variety of disciplines, such as health, the arts, sage-ing, retirement, life cycle completion, legacy, financial management, and social change.

Text

From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 257–259

Earlier in life, we consider education to be integral to a person's life, not a luxury. In the same way, we need to think of education for elderhood not as a luxury, but as a necessity for the health and well-being of our long-lived society.

--Carol Segrave

Module 13: The Emerging Elder



Exercises & Activities

Approaching Elderhood

Many times we unthinkingly accept the images of aging that are propagated by our culture. In this exercise we explore the source of these images within our own minds and seek to develop positive images of who we want to be.

Exercise 1 *Approaching Elderhood*

Visiting Your Inner Elder

As elders-in-training, we also need to contact our inner source of wisdom and receive guidance. We call this our inner elder, the part of us that is our spiritual self.

Many perplexing questions confront us as we make our way through the unexplored terrain of our lives. In our external world, we find answers from many reliable and knowledgeable resources. Within ourselves this inner elder is the archetype of the “Ancient of Days” who resides beyond time and space in the future as well as in the past. This part of our self then has the ability to reassure us of what it knows from our future.

In meditation we can make an appointment to visit this inner elder who is already enlightened and who can inspire us with compassionate wisdom to carry on our struggles for self-knowledge. We believe that this inner elder has intimate knowledge of our true self and can provide us with guidance for all aspects of daily life.

Just as there is a preparation for life's earlier stages, there needs to be an initiation into and education for elderhood.

--Barry Barkin

For details on facilitating this exploration with your participants, see

Exercise 2 *Journey to Meet My Inner Elder*

Module 14: Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations



At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Ritual and Rites of Passage
Guidelines for Creating Rituals
Croning
Council of Elders

Activities & Exercises

Blessing Dyad
Blessing Circle
Closing Rituals

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction -- Ritual & Rites of Passage

Since the beginning of human culture, rituals have helped us to connect with the great mysteries of the universe, forces in nature that seem unexplainable, God, a Higher Power, the realm of spirit, the rhythms of life, and the changes we experience as we grow and age. Rituals tend to have many commonalities regardless of their origin. In *Rituals for Our Times*, Imber-Black and Roberts identify five:

1. Relating -- shaping, expressing and maintaining relationships,
2. Changing -- making and marking transitions for ourselves and others,
3. Healing -- recovering from relationship betrayal, trauma, or loss -- also in times of change when one identity is passing away and a new one is emerging,
4. Believing -- voicing beliefs and making meaning, and
5. Celebrating -- affirming deep joy.

There are many ways that the many traditions have enhanced rituals and made them more memorable and meaningful such as using songs, chants, testimonies, and meaningful readings. Food also plays an important role. We are all familiar with the

We shouldn't disown our own ability to create meaningful rituals, believing that religions have an exclusive monopoly on this function. Each of us has a direct connection to the Great Spirit. That means that each of us can create beautiful ceremonies to make elders feel special, loved, and valuable.

--Brooke Medicine Eagle

Module 14: Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations



sacraments in Christianity and the symbolic role foods play in Jewish holidays such as Passover. In addition to food other items are also important. In Islam, for example, rites include water, dust, dry sand and henna, a reddish-brown dye. Ancient Egyptian religions use oil, incense, balm, and natron, a salt. The Shinto religion also uses salt. Bread, sugar, spices, and animal blood were used in ancient Greek and Scandinavian religions, whereas ashes are important among the Brahmans.

To help individuals develop and use their spiritual gifts, nearly all of these traditions offer some form of purification rites usually involving some forms of sound, water, fire, and light. The objects for such rites are equally diverse—water vessels and bowls used for ablutions, jugs containing ale or wine, terracotta or glass containers used for balms and perfumes, incense burners, cauldrons, and censers for fumigation. Among Native Americans it is a custom to make an offering of food to the Spirit when they eat. In many religions it is a custom to wear new clothes that have not yet been washed. In Japan, traditionally elders have donned red garments to denote their sixtieth birthday. In medieval Christianity it was common for many to seek purification through mortification and penance, such as the wearing of hair shirts or sackcloth, and belts bristling with spikes next to the skin for the purpose of self flagellation.

While most ethnic groups have elaborate rituals to mark life's stages, traditional rites of passage have been cast aside because of cultural assimilation, intermarriage, modernization, and a national ethos that devalue tradition and the past. Other factors are industrialization, separation, and the compartmentalization of our lives. While most traditional rituals grew up in cultures that were stable, agricultural, tied to seasonal changes, and linked together by strong families and community, most or all of those dynamic forces have changed with our current culture. In our modern times rituals and rites of passage have become almost like commodities handled by professionals, but there is a growing trend for people in American culture to rediscover ancient rituals and invent new ones to reintroduce the sacred into the secular realms of our lives.

*I celebrate myself, and sing
myself, and what I assume
you should assume, For
every atom belonging to me
as good belongs to you, I
loafe and invite my soul, I
lean and loafe at my ease
observing a spear of
summer grass.*

--Walt Whitman

Module 14: Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations



In the retrieval of ritual, many are reintroducing it into other arenas of life like in women gatherings and men gatherings. Another phenomenon as manifested in the work of sage-ing is the creation of trans-denominational rituals that are not tied to specific religious contexts.

Suggested Guidelines for Creating Ritual

Regardless of our chronological age, we can experience internal and external shifts in our physiology, psychology, emotional life, and our sexuality. Such may be the case of the transition from our middle years to elderhood when we leave behind the goals and drives that shaped our lives for a freer form of consciousness and wider concerns. By participating in a rite of passage, whether it is a ceremony or other form of ritual, we can celebrate and honor this important phase of our growth and also open a space for the next phase of our lives to emerge. In this way rites of passage provide what some consider to be an “energetic boost” to move us on in our development.

While there are few such rituals still practiced by the major religions, the good news is that your participants can create rituals for almost any need. Here are some suggested guidelines.

To start, it’s important to create some form of sacred space. Even a mundane room can be transformed by invoking a higher spirit, calling upon the presence of one’s ancestors, or simply rearranging the space to create a distinction between the secular and the special or spiritual nature of the way the space is now being used.

It is likely that most ancient rituals that were distilled through the ages had their roots in events in outdoor settings, and that somewhere deeply embedded in our genetic memory there is a connection between natural spaces and ritual, giving them special power to evoke strong emotion. Finding a special place outdoors to mark this important transition can deepen the experience.

Through breath, words, and song, public ceremonies remind members of our community to support us in our commitment to elderhood. So often we just stagger along from one stage of life to another, without assessing our gains, grieving our losses, and integrating both into a new structure. Public ceremonies help us express and release our sadness as we grow beyond a certain identity that we once found precious and meaningful. Ceremonies also acknowledge that we have “graduated” from one level and are ready for the rights and responsibilities of the next one.

--Brooke Medicine Eagle

Module 14: Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations



Music, dance, painting, and poetry can also be useful tools to evoke our inner elder. But creating a rite of passage needn't be something elaborate. It can be as simple as a celebratory meal.

Text Reference *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, 152-158
Bibliography

Croning

Perhaps more so for women than men, our modern society has turned growing old into something of which to be ashamed. Wrinkled faces are not seen as beautiful, and the diminishment of our physical frames is feared. Older women frequently become invisible and are pushed aside in our culture.

In contrast, past societies honored women for their knowledge and wisdom, recognizing that the childbearing years did not herald the end of a woman's usefulness. The Crone or Elder was the one who passed on family and folk traditions that helped to preserve the very fabric of society. There was also a recognition that an inward process occurred as a woman entered her elder years in which her thoughts and energies turned away from taking care of the needs of others toward the inward need of spiritual development.

Gradually, though, the recognition of crones was lost, and by the Middle Ages, crones were often burned as witches. Stemming from this practice, we have now denigrated the meaning of the word "crone," associating it with witches and haggard women who are despised and feared.

However many today are reclaiming the strength and beauty of being a crone by reintroducing and inventing ceremonies to celebrate this transition and invoke spiritual reflection, dignity and wisdom. There is even a quarterly journal, the *Crone Chronicles* with a circulation of 10,000 that is dedicated to "re-activating the archetype of the crone within contemporary Western culture."

The return of the wise woman archetype might help infuse our institutions with more compassion, so that we treat people humanely while operating in the long-term interest of the Earth and the next generation of children.

--Jean Bolen

In these settings, elders don't have the last word, but the deep word. Given back the power to impart wisdom, they exert their influence, not through legislative or economic power, but through the force of moral and spiritual persuasion.

--Jean Houston

Module 14: Elder Blessing, Rites, Rituals and Celebrations



For suggestions on Crone rituals, see

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 152-157</i>
Reference	Bibliography

Council of Elders

Reb Zalman has suggested that in addition to a venerated role for elders in our society, they should take on the responsibility of providing leadership in the social and political arenas. He envisions elders serving in advisory capacities to governmental bodies, providing “moral, spiritual, and visionary leadership for planetary survival,” organizing themselves for grass roots activism, and even serving as mediators or arbitrators in community disputes.

Text	<i>From Age-ing to Sage-ing, 226-229</i>
-------------	--

Activities & Exercises

Closing Rituals

Appendix 14	<i>Jerfs</i>
Appendix 15	<i>Energy Work</i>
Appendix 16	<i>Guidelines for Energy Breaks Involving Movement</i>
Appendix 13	<i>Songs</i>

The Blessing Circle

At the conclusion of your meeting, ask participants to sit in a circle by order of the years of life experience that they have, from the fewest to the most. Then starting with the person who has the fewest, invite this person to circle around to the person with the most years of life experience and bless him or her. Others follow in turn. At the conclusion, ask the eldest to go around the circle and return the blessing to each of the participants.

*“God bless us every one!”
said Tiny Tim, the last of
all.*

--Charles Dickens

At a Glance

Concepts & Subject Matter

Integrating Sage-ing into Daily Life

Activities & Exercises

Creating a Sage-ing Council

Creating a Vision for Your Future

Concepts & Subject Matter

Introduction

Integrating Sage-ing into Daily Life

There are many avenues to anchoring the lessons and experiences of sage-ing in daily life. One of the most important steps is to build contemplative practices into one's daily routine, but these need not be confined to quiet times sitting with eyes closed. The Buddhist practice of walking meditation affords one the opportunity to concentrate on spiritual issues at any time during the day regardless of surroundings. A state of higher consciousness can be accessed wherever you are, lending a quiet resolve to any activity. Such "mindfulness" practices allow us to attend to whatever we are feeling or sensing, leading to a deeper awareness of our world that is less reactive and at the same time more conscious and connected.

Journaling and other reflective practices can help elders assess the quality of any activity with regard to its alignment with their sense of the higher good. In fact, all work, from tending a garden to spending quality time with a younger member of the family to leading efforts to create significant changes in the world can all be understood within the context of sage-ing. Elders can fulfill their higher purpose by simply being mindful in all that they do and by modeling this valuable behavior for all of those within the circle of their influence.

Activities & Exercises

Creating a Sage-ing Council

Some sage-ing leaders have structured a sage-ing council to guide and direct efforts in the community. While there are no steadfast guidelines for these groups, here are some

The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.

--Eleanor Roosevelt

*Just to be is a blessing.
Just to live is holy.*

--Abraham Joshua
Heschel

suggestions on how you might initiate such a council to support sage-ing work as well as any other endeavor which could benefit from the wisdom of those who have done the deep work of spiritual eldering.

Here are a few ideas that you may find helpful in preparation for the creation of a sage-ing council.

- Choose people who are not afraid to take a stand and are willing to challenge establishment ideas and institutions.
- Find people who have a vision of the future and are willing to fight for their ideas.
- Include people who are playful and who like to sing, eat, and tell stories.
- Include people from all walks of life, including those who have a track record of success in the world, including business.
- It would be helpful if people have experienced the spiritual eldering curriculum in some fashion, but don't exclude anyone simply on this basis.
- Meetings should be fun and playful as well as focused on the tasks at hand.
- Celebrate your work together.

Elders are the jewels of humanity that have been mined from the earth cut in the rough, then buffed and polished by the stonecutter's art into precious gems that we recognize for their enduring value and beauty. Shaped with patience and love over the decades of refinement, each facet of the jewel reflects light that awakens our soul to intimations of its own splendor. We sense such radiance in our youth but we cannot contain it. It requires a lifetime's effort to carve out the multifaceted structure that can display our hidden splendor in all its glory.

--Rabbi Zalman Schachter- Shalomi

Appendix 17 *Starting a Sage-ing Discussion Group*

Creating a Vision for Your Future

In this exercise participants are asked to imagine that they are approaching their 95th birthday celebration and are invited to take stock of their accomplishments since they attended their first sage-ing workshop.

Don't give yourself a spiritual hernia. Start small.

--Rabbi Shaya Isenberg

Exercise 21 *Creating a Vision for My Future*