

News for Life after 55

The Joy of Mature Work Expression

& Transcendent Teachings w/ Joseph Campbell and Mary Oliver

Hello. We have two articles this Winter. The first one talks about Mature Work Expression and the second allows us to experience transcendent moments with Joseph Campbell and Mary Oliver.

Creating our retirement lives

Our mainstream media mistakenly teaches us that when we retire, we have earned the right not to *try* any more, but just to sit back and enjoy our new retirement life that will somehow appear. However, in truth, our retirement is just like any other life transition such as going from grade school to high school or going from high school to college or from school to working full-time. We are called at each transition to create a new life for ourselves. If we sit back and wait for it to appear on its own, nothing will happen and sedentary living sets in. So that is the first pitfall of retirement that we need to overcome.

Popular endeavors

In working with retirees in my classes through Capitola Recreation, the endeavors that I see many discover and engage with include learning new things though in-person or on-line classes, taking care of their grandchildren, and traveling to visit family or explore far off lands. Also popular are fitness activities such as hiking, swimming, and yoga and recreational activities such as going to concerts/events and out to eat with friends. Volunteering at local community organizations is also valued as is gardening and it is common among my students in the early part of their retirement to homestead and spend time clearing clutter and creating their new retirement homes.

Something forgotten

Something that I don't see many considering or experiencing is the joy of Mature Work Expression. In other words, it feels really good to do something you are good at doing and have maturity with in a new envisioned and refreshed way. I am not suggesting that you return to work as you have known it in the past—you have crossed that threshold and it is complete. But I am suggesting that you consider the skills you have



developed over your lifetime. What do you know a lot about from your work experiences and from your hobbies and interests that you can share? Again, I'm not asking you to return to work as you have known it. As a retired adjunct instructor at Santa Clara University for ten years, the last thing I wanted to do was continue commuting and I loved my students, but I felt complete with my work with them. Working with older women and returning to my workshop material about *Finding Your Life's Work* were calling to me.

I encourage you to throw out what no longer fits, but throwing out all your work skills, maturity, and experience is like, as one student said, *throwing the baby out with the bath*. It is particularly challenging not to do this since our mainstream culture tells us this time of life is all about *leisure*. This is the second pitfall to overcome in retirement, especially if we are going to live another twenty years or so. Too much of anything can get boring and stultifying and breed resentment in others.

Rediscovering your building blocks

Think of your work skills, hobbies, and interests as building blocks that you can rearrange in a matter that suit you perfectly for this time of life.

One of my students a former high school art teacher works in her art studio three mornings a week.

Another who enjoys home repairs is teaching residents in her mobile home park how to use power tools on their home projects.

A third who taught fifth grade for many years is now working part-time through Capitola library teaching young students how to read.

Another who came up through the ranks in banking now has a small business offering reverse mortgages to retirees.

A retired computer executive now loves

refurbishing computers at Grey Bears.

A therapist and poetry enthusiast joined with a friend and is offering a monthly poetry class through Capitola library.

A former SJSU educator is offering a photograph interest group through OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning for those 50+) and a former techie who loves cooking is offering an international cooking group.

*I teach through Capitola Recreation—a 10-minute drive away. I take older women on favorite hikes in the Redwoods walking among trees that are over 2000 years old and along spectacular stretches of our coast at Wilder Ranch full of sea lions and sea birds. I have reaffirmed my thirty-year journaling practice with the Artist's Way and teach from Julia Cameron's trilogy of work. I have also researched what *Finding Your Life's Work* means for those in retirement and now teach a workshop helping retirees *Crafting Their Lives after 55*.*

An undiscovered joy amidst change

One thing about getting older is the increased rate of change physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually. Some of us often wake up to changes on one or all of these levels. From my own experiences, my once thick wavy hair is now thinning and straighter. My sensitive left ankle has become a more acute problem. I often find myself watching different periods of my life in my mind's eye like a movie on a screen and coming to terms with decisions I made. And the presence of death is closer. So I find bringing mature work expression into my life reaffirms who I know and have known myself to be.

In conclusion, to engage with our skills, maturity, and knowledge skillfully and creatively amidst life's changes is a refreshing joy. And we discover, according to creativity professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who researched what makes life worth living, *the way to happiness lies not in mindless hedonism, but in mindful challenge*. I would modify this and say the way to happiness in retirement lies in a balance between pleasure, leisure, and meaningful challenge.

So what MWE would you enjoy doing?



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According to Joseph Campbell, the illumination is the recognition of the radiance of one eternity through all things.

Events & Services

Start or continue the Artist's Way Journey with the third book in Julia Cameron's trilogy called *Walking in This World*. Robin Everest is teaching this nine-week class for women 55+ (\$195) on Fri. Feb. 27th to Apr. 24th 10:00 am to 12 noon at Capitola Recreation, call (831) 475-6475 to register.

The Crafting Your Life After 55 Workshop — Come explore creative ways to recognize and align with your life's direction after retirement. One participant said: *Outstanding! Amazing! Inspiring!* Saturday, Feb. 28th and Mar 7th, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm, Capitola Recreation \$73 Resident/\$93 Non-resident. Call (831) 475-5935 to register.

The Crafting Your Life After 55 Workbook Release 4.0 Is Available With Release 4.0, the workbook contains a number of stories about people living fulfilling retirement lives. One participant said: *This was one of the best things I've done for myself since retiring. So valuable.* \$19.95 plus 6.74 tax and shipping. (Unbound budget version \$8.95 plus \$5.95 t/s) Pay using PayPal or send a check to Robin Everest 1555 Merrill St. #72, Santa Cruz, CA 55062. Please include your shipping address.

Here are some transcendent teachings from Joseph Campbell with Mary Oliver's poetry and Ansel Adams' B/W photos.

According to Joseph Campbell, the whole living world is informed by consciousness.

*At The River Clarion
 I don't know who God is exactly.
 But I'll tell you this.
 I was sitting in the river named Clarion, on a
 water splashed stone
 all afternoon I listened to the voices
 of the river talking.
 Whenever the water struck the stone it had
 something to say,
 and the water itself, and even the mosses
 trailing under the water.
 And slowly, very slowly, it become clear to me
 what they were saying.
 Said the river: I am part of holiness.
 And I too, said the stone. And I too, whispered
 the moss beneath the water.*



The Hindus don't believe in special revelation, says Joseph Campbell. They speak of a state in which the ears have opened to the story of the universe.

*I Happened To Be Standing
 I don't know where prayers go,
 Or what they do.*

*Do cats pray, while they sleep
 half-asleep in the sun?
 Does the opossum pray as it
 crosses the street?
 The sunflowers? The old black oak
 growing older every year?
 I know I can walk through the world,
 along the shore or under the trees,
 with my mind filled with things
 of little importance, in full
 self-attendance. A condition I can't really
 call being alive.
 Is prayer a gift, or a petition,
 or does it matter?
 The sunflowers blaze, maybe that's their way.
 Maybe the cats are sound asleep. Maybe not.*

*While I was thinking this I happened to be
 standing
 just outside my door, with my notebook open,
 which is the way I begin every morning.
 Then a wren in the privet began to sing.*

*He was positively drenched in enthusiasm,
 I don't know why. And yet, why not.
 I wouldn't persuade you from whatever you
 believe or whatever you don't. That's your
 business.
 But I thought, of the wren's singing, what
 could this be if it isn't a prayer?
 So I just listened, my pen in the air.*



Joseph Campbell teaches that when you see that the Mystery is manifest in all creation, and that you are a creature, you realize that the Divine presence is within you and in the man or woman with whom you are talking as well. So there is the realization of two aspects of the one divinity.



Anyone creating something, says Campbell, knows that you open, you yield yourself, and your creation talks to you and builds itself. To a certain extent, you become the carrier of something that is given to you from what have been called the Muses—or in biblical language "God".



In closing, wherever you are—if you are following your bliss, teaches Joseph Campbell, you are enjoying that refreshment, that eternal life within you, all the time.

*The Poetry Teacher
 The University gave me a new, elegant classroom to teach in. Only one thing, they said. You can't bring your dog. It's in my contract, I said. (I had made sure of that.)*

We bargained and I moved to an old classroom in an old building. Propped the door open. Kept a bowl of water in the room. I could hear Ben among other voices barking, howling in the distance. Then they would all arrive—Ben, his pals, all of them thirsty and happy. They drank, they flung themselves down among the students. The students loved it. They all wrote thirsty, happy poems.

