

News for Life after 55

Moments of Coming Home w/ Joseph Campbell and Mary Oliver

Hello. I find retirement often brings moments of coming home to ourselves. Here are teachings from Joseph Campbell and poetry from Mary Oliver.

Slowing down, paying attention

Joseph Campbell teaches if mystery is manifest through all things, the universe becomes, as it were, a holy picture. As a result, we are always addressing the transcendent mystery through the conditions of our actual world.

Upstream

Sometimes the desire to be lost again, as long ago, comes over me like a vapor. With growth into adulthood, responsibilities claimed me, so many heavy coats. I didn't choose them, I don't fault them, but it took time to reject them. Now in the spring I kneel, I put my face into the packets of violets, the dampness, the freshness, the sense of ever-ness. Something is wrong, if I don't keep my attention on eternity. May I be the tiniest nail in the house of the universe, tiny but useful. May I stay forever in the stream. May I look down upon the windflower and the bull thistle and the coreopsis with the greatest respect.

Teach the children. Show them daisies and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen. The lives of the blue sailors, mallow, sunbursts, the moccasin flowers. And the frisky ones—inkberry, lamb's-quarters, blueberries. And the aromatic ones—rosemary, oregano. Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them upstream, rejoice as they learn to love this green space they live in, in its sticks and leaves and then the silent, beautiful blossoms.

Attention is the beginning of devotion.

Finding the divine presence

According to Joseph Campbell if we seek to find the divine presence, we don't have to die physically. All we have to do is die spiritually and be reborn to a larger way of life.

Staying Alive

Adults can change their circumstances; children cannot. Children are powerless, and in difficult situations they are the victims of every sorrow and mischance and rage around them, for children feel all these things but without any of the ability that adults have to change them. Whatever can



take a child beyond such circumstances, therefore, is an alleviation and a blessing.

I quickly found for myself two such blessings—the natural world, and the world of writing; literature. These were the gates through which I vanished from a difficult place.

In the first of these—the natural world—I felt at ease; nature was full of beauty and interest and mystery, also good and bad luck, but never misuse. The second world—the world of literature—offered me, besides the pleasures of form, the sustenance of empathy (the first step of what Keats called negative capability) and I ran for it. I relaxed in it. I stood willingly and gladly in the characters of everything—other people, trees, clouds. And this is what I learned: the world's *otherness* is antidote to confusion, the standing *within* this otherness—the beauty and the mystery of the world, out in the fields or deep inside books—can re-dignify the worst-stung heart.

Entering the unseen world

Joseph teaches us that poetry takes us to the unseen reality.

Franz Marc's Blue Horses

I step into the painting of the blue horses. I am not even surprised that I can do this.

One of the horses walks toward me. His blue nose noses me lightly. I put my arm over his blue mane, not holding on, just commingling. He allows me my pleasure. Franz Marc died a young man, shrapnel in his brain.

I would rather die than try to explain to the blue horses what war is.

They would either faint in horror, or simply find it impossible to believe. I do not know how to thank you, Franz Marc. Maybe our world will grow kinder eventually. Maybe the desire to make something beautiful is the piece of God that is inside each of us.

Now all four horses have come closer, are bending their faces toward me as if they have secrets to tell. I don't expect them to speak, and they don't. If being so beautiful isn't enough, what could they possibly say?

Opening ourselves

According to Joseph Campbell, there are dimensions of your being and a potential for realization and consciousness that are not included in your concept of yourself. Your life is much deeper and broader than you conceive it to be, but you can live in terms of that depth.

Angels

You might see an angel anytime and anywhere. Of course you have to open your eyes to a kind of second level, but it's not really hard. The whole business of what's reality and what isn't has never been solved and probably never will be. So I don't care to be too definite about anything. I have a lot of edges called Perhaps and almost nothing you can call Certainty. For myself, but not for other people. That's a place you just can't get into, not entirely anyway, other people's heads.

I'll just leave you with this. I don't care how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. It's enough to know that for some people they exist, and that they dance.

Being where you are

Joseph shares that wherever we are, we are related to the cosmic order.

Varanasi

Early in the morning we crossed the ghat, where fires were still smoldering, and gazed, with our Western minds, into the Ganges. A woman was standing in the river up to her waist; she was lifting handfuls of water and spilling it over her body, slowly and many times, as if until there came some moment of inner satisfaction between her own life and the river's. Then she dipped a vessel she had brought with her and carried it filled with water back across the ghat, no doubt to refresh some shrine near where she lives, for this is the holy city of Shiva, maker of the world, and this is his river. I can't say much more, except that it all happened in silence and peaceful simplicity, and something that felt like the bliss of a certainty and a life lived in accordance with that certainty.



www.CraftingYourLifeAfter55.com
 reverestassociates@gmail.com
 (831) 475-6475

September

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.

I must remember this, I thought, as we fly
 back to America.
 Pray God I remember this.

Being heroic in your life

According to Joseph Campbell, the hero's
 sphere of action is not the transcendent
 but here, now in the field of time.

The Mockingbird

All summer
 the mockingbird
 in his pearl-grey coat
 and his white-windowed wings

flies
 from the hedge to the top of the pine
 and begins to sing, but it's neither
 lilting nor lovely,

for he is the thief of other sounds—
 whistles and truck brakes and dry hinges
 plus all the songs
 of other birds in his neighborhood;

mimicking and elaborating,
 he sings with humor and bravado,
 so I have to wait a long time
 for the softer voice of his own life

to come through. He begins
 by giving up all his usual flutter

and settling down on the pine's forelock
 then looking around

as though to make sure he's alone;
 then he slaps each wing against his breast,
 where his heart is,
 and copying nothing, begins

easing into it
 as though it was not half so easy
 as rollicking,
 as though his subject now

was his true self,
 which of course was as dark and secret
 as anyone else's,
 and it was too hard—

perhaps you understand—
 to speak or to sing it
 to anything or anyone
 but the sky.

Rediscovering our unity

Joseph Campbell teaches that you and
 the other are one. You are two aspects of
 the one life and that your apparent separateness
 is but an effect of the way we
 experience forms under the conditions of
 space and time. Our true identity is in our
 identity and unity of all life.

I walk through a grove of pines and startle the
 nighthawk from the limb where it has been
 lying, resting or sleeping. The bird is similar in
 color to the gray limb, and lies *along*, not
 across it, so is almost invisible. On its hawk-like
 wings it rises into the sky, and vanishes.

The nighthawk doesn't nest here but only stops
 a few days on its long travels. I know this one
 must be tired of flight, and I am sorry to have
 disturbed it.

The next day, walking the same woods, I ap-
 proach with care. The bird is again resting on
 the limb, its eyes shut. I back away and do not
 disturb it.

The following year, almost to the day, I enter
 the pinewoods and remember the nighthawk
 just in time—in time to be cautious and silent.
 And the bird is there, in the same tree, on the
 same limb, in the pinewoods that is so pretty
 and so restful, apparently, to both of us.

Cultivating bliss

Joseph Campbell teaches that we must
 have a room or a certain hour of the day
 where we can simply experience and bring
 forth what we are and what we might be.
 He shares that in this place, we experience
 the *thou* feeling of life.

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good,
 You do not have to walk on your knees
 for a hundred miles through the desert,
 repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your
 body love what it loves.
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you
 mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.
 Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the
 rain are moving across the landscapes,
 over the prairies and the deep trees,
 the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean air,
 are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
 the world offers itself to your imagination,
 calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and excit-
 ing—over and over announcing your place
 in the family of things.