

News for Life after 55

Empowering Yourself Through Healthy Risk Taking

Hello Everyone. This newsletter is about learning how to take healthy risks that empower us and help us to grow. This material is based on New York Times bestsellers called "The Confidence Code" and "The Confidence Code for Girls" by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman and "The Artist's Way" by Julia Cameron.

Risk Taking in Our Retirement

As we settle into our retirement lives, it is helpful to take a look at our relationship with risk and see if there are adjustments we'd like to make.

In your retirement life, do you like to try new things that you are interested in exploring or do you find that you like to stay with what's comfortable and familiar? Or, do you like to do some of both?

Imagine risk taking on a continuum:

Too little risk
(inertia)

Too much risk
(fear & instability)

Too little risk leads to immobility and inertia. As Sir Isaac Newton discovered, inactivity tends to lead to more inactivity. On the other hand, too much risk can lead to excessive fear and instability. The key as we go forward in retirement is to find the right balance of comfort and risk.

For those of us who find it hard to take risks, to try something new—what is stopping us? Kay and Shipman have found that most of the time it is fear, fear of the unknown. We are afraid even though many of us know deep inside that the new activities we wish to do allow us to be more of who we are and increase the fun and adventure in our lives.

So what are we afraid of? Kay and Shipman have found that most of the time we are afraid of three things:

- (1) *The possibility of something bad or unpleasant happening*
- (2) *A chance of getting hurt or losing something*
- (3) *Peril*

If we believe these fears are real, no wonder many of us are afraid to leave our comfort zone and step out.



The Role of Confidence

Kay and Shipman have found that the magic elixir that allows us to try new things, to step into the unknown is *confidence*. In their words, *confidence* gives us "the power, the lift, the oomph" to do what we want to do even when it is scary. They have found that it is a powerful energy source that we can *build up and call upon* to live bolder, braver lives.

Unfortunately, aging can adversely affect our *level of confidence*. As we get older, we are often overlooked and underestimated by our mainstream culture. It is hard to find images of active seniors embarking on healthy, adventurous activities like the iStock image above. We are often pictured doing safe leisure activities like golf and bridge.

Older women in particular are largely absent in our mainstream media, which can have adverse affects. One student of mine recounted that she is often not included in various mixed-aged discussion groups or overlooked when she is waiting with others to check out at the store. And for both women and men alike, as we physically or psychologically age, we may find that we are less sure of ourselves.

So what can we do? How can we overcome adversity and any lack of encouragement and build our confidence to step out more in retirement?

Building More Confidence

Kay and Shipman have *cracked the code* for creating more confidence and happiness in our lives. They have discovered a three-step process or practice that we can do which teaches us to:

- (1) ***Do more of what we love***
- (2) ***Manage distracting thoughts***
- (3) ***Become more authentic***

So let's look at this three-step practice more closely.

(1) ***Do more of what we love***

Trying new things and doing more of what we enjoy is how we keep learning, growing, and invigorating our retirement.

Try these three exercises from Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* to reconnect to some of the things you love to do.

For the first exercise, write down five things you enjoy doing like hiking, riding a bike, baking a pie, traveling, reading poetry, going camping, antiquing, taking photos, and so on.

From the list above, mark your two favorites. Now look for small windows of time where you can explore these interests. If you wrote hiking and antiquing, maybe we can take a hike on a favorite trail or check out an antique store in town.

A second exercise is to go to an art store or hobby store or sporting goods store and spend \$15-25 on something that interests you.

A third exercise is to imagine that you have five other lives to live—what would you do? For example, Julia would be a pilot, a cowhand, a physicist, a psychic, a monk. You might be a scuba diver, a writer, a dancer, an actor, a history teacher, a coach, a race car driver, an opera singer, a rock and roll drummer. Whatever occurs to you, write it down.

Now look over your list and do one of these this week. For example, if you put down folk singer, can you pick up a guitar and play? Or if you picked race car driver maybe you can take a fun, challenging drive this week. What would you do? Write it down.

The idea is to break down your activities of interest into small steps that you can do each week. One step will naturally lead to the next and before you know it, you are doing more.



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Events & Services

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workshop — Come explore creative ways to recognize and align with your life purpose after retirement. A recent participant said: *A great class...one of the best I've taken.* Capitola Recreation, Saturday, July 22nd and 29th 10 am to 12 noon, 4400 Jade St., Capitola CA \$73 Resident/\$81 Non-resident. Call (831) 475-5935 to register.

The *Crafting Your Life After 55* Workbook Release 2.2 is Available

With Release 2.2, the workbook now contains all the information covered in the workshop with even more exercises. It is an excellent self-paced workshop that you can do anywhere or anytime you wish. A recent participant said: *The course presents a process, a set of activities, for participants to follow in discovering and realizing their new path in retirement. These activities provide a "safe" way to discover one's true orientation and how to achieve it.*

\$27.95 plus \$2.51 tax. Pay using PayPal or send a check to Robin Everest 1555 Merrill St., Santa Cruz CA 95062. Please include your shipping address.

Robin Everest has taught successful *Finding Your Life's Work* workshops throughout the San Francisco bay area and led *Artist's Way* groups as well. She retired in 2018 from teaching professional writing at Santa Clara University.

Another thing you can do is get a journal. Kay and Shipman have found that writing our ideas down makes us 42% more likely to do them.

If you like these exercises and would like more ongoing support, try Julia Cameron's 12-week program in any of her three books, *The Artist's Way*, *Walking in this World*, and *Finding Water*. She provides the guidance and exercises. All you have to do is be willing to explore.

As we step out on our behalf, as we **do more of what we love**, we experience the thrill of discovery and learn that we can do it!

I've taken to hiking *solo* in the Santa Cruz mountains and along the seashore so I often visualize my route first. As I start my hike and continue moving forward, I find myself getting caught up in all the sights and sounds around me and inadvertently sail over the abyss of my earlier fears. Afterwards, having a cool drink of water, I feel stronger and more capable and am eager to plan my next adventure.

(2) *Manage distracting thoughts*

As we start stepping out, our inner critic often gets activated. Julia calls it our *Inner Censor* and says that this inner critic will say anything to stop us. It will say all kinds of nasty, rotten things like... *Who do you think you are...You're just kidding yourself...What a waste of time.* Don't pay any attention. Ignore these nasty comments and threats. Keep going. Buying into them keeps us stuck and victimized.

I have found it helpful to turn these nasty statements into positive affirmations...*My efforts lead me to the highest good.* Or, I may do a program interrupt and say: *Maybe that's not true*, then take time to feel the space that opens up inside.

Another way our Inner Censor can waylay us is by demanding perfection. This allows us no room to be a beginner, to learn, and to grow. The best defense against these demands is to keep going. And you can always have the final word by writing down your heart's desires in a journal and taking the next steps.

(3) *Become more authentic*

Some of us may have spent years doing aspects of our work that we weren't really cut out for. Retirement lets us rediscover how to be more true to ourselves.

We are off to a good start by *doing what we love* and *managing distracting thoughts*. It is also helpful to reaffirm our temperament. John Holland Ph.D. discovered that activities, vocations, and people tend to group into 6 main categories—which 3 do you resonate with the most?

Realistic: *Like to work with tools, plants, and animals. Often outdoorsy, well-coordinated*

Investigative: *Like to study complex problems*

Artistic: *Like to innovate/imagine with the arts*

Social: *Like to inform, teach, and help others*

Enterprising: *Like to influence, persuade, lead*

Conventional: *Like to work with numbers/data*

These areas of resonance are often where our greatest gifts and talents lie. Use this as an *inner compass* to point yourself toward increasing authenticity and joy.

Another way we can point ourselves towards our natural gifts, and talents is to answer questions such as:

What activities cause you to lose track of time?
What gives you energy?

What comes easily and naturally to you?

Kay and Shipman have found that when we find overlap between what we love and our natural gifts and talents *our confidence and actions flow more easily*. We are getting a boost from the universe. In addition, we are often more resilient and willing to falter and get up and try again—in other words, we have more *grit*.

In conclusion, Kay and Shipman's 3-step practice allows us to become women and men of action despite our culture's bias. It enables us to build our confidence, sail over our fears, and energizes us to live fuller, more authentic lives. So let's go!