

LAUREATE GROUP

*Helping older adults and their families
manage the challenges of aging*

Conscious Eldering (Aging)

There is a hunger among many older adults to find purpose, passion and commitment in today's society. With 10,000 baby boomers retiring each day, there is an increasing number actively pursuing "life after retirement." Some are embarking on a second career, others community service, and others are resuming activism of their youth. However, all are seeking a way to remain relevant. This concept has been referred to as: Conscious Eldering or Conscious Aging.

To receive my Master's Degree in Public Service, I wrote my Thesis on "The Role of the Elder in the 21st Century." It addressed the deterioration of societal values due to the absence of elders as role models — or sages — in our society. It discussed how younger generations discount the experience, judgement, and wisdom that elders contribute. In 2001, my paper was published as part of a collection of articles on Aging and Spirituality. Since then, this topic continued to be part of my personal ongoing education.

Fast forward 18 years. After attending a weekend Conscious Eldering retreat earlier in 2019 and having experienced my own passage into the third age of life, I have a renewed enthusiasm to enlighten others about why conscious aging is so important:

- 1) Conscious aging helps elders feel a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives;
- 2) and perhaps more importantly, younger generations need a sense of identity, continuity, and a spiritual core that can only be provided by caring, involved, conscious elders.

The reality is that we live in a youth-oriented culture. The western world – especially since the industrial revolution – worships youth and sees very little, if

anything of value in the third age of life. If you contrast that with ancient times in most cultures, elders were honored and valued for the knowledge and wisdom they gained over a long life span.

I believe that many of the problems in our modern society are directly or indirectly related to the lack of elder role models — substance abuse among young people and violence in school would be lessened if the voice of elders was part of the conversation.

Older adults can and need to be encouraged and enabled to reclaim their role in modern society. Volunteering time on a community service project can be particularly rewarding and there are so many different causes and opportunities for just about any interest...and organizations are eager for the help. There are plenty of books on the subject available on-line – try googling conscious aging or third age of life to learn more.

At minimum, I hope you use this article as a springboard for discussions at home, in your church, in schools and in the community. Let's work towards overcoming ageism and recognizing that older adults have significant contributions to make to society – just like the contributions that they have made their entire life. The world will be a better place to live for people of all ages when elders' unique attributes and insights are valued and utilized in our society.

Older People Can Teach Us about Love, Faith, Forgiveness, and Acceptance — If Only We Would Listen.

*This article is a reprint of a blog
posted by Robert Best, NHA
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For 50 years, Laureate Group, a local, family owned business has been helping older adults and their families manage the challenges of aging. Laureate Group operates eight senior communities throughout the Greater Milwaukee area. Additional resources can be found at:

*www.laureategroup.com/blog • www.laureategroup.com • Laureate Cares: 262-832-7113
Careers for Caring People: www.laureategroup.com/careers*