Life Coaching with the Elderly

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I dedicate this workshop to my friend Mary, age 84, with whom I have shared a friendship of 30 years. Mary has taught me many life lessons through her example, her humor, her faith and her perseverance.

Acknowledgements
• Aging Well magazine, www.agingwellmag.com
• Blogs on aging (see list of sites on last two slides)
At the end of this presentation you will be able to ...

1. Describe five ways that life coaching can benefit elderly clients
2. Articulate the six major life tasks of adult development
3. Predict healthy aging in yourself
4. Discover resources: blogs on aging
“I enjoy talking with very old people. They have gone before us on a road by which we, too, may have to travel, and I think we do well to learn from them what it is like.”

Socrates, in Plato’s The Republic

What is Life Coaching?

Coaching is a mutually responsible relationship between coaches and clients designed to help clients determine their own destiny. Coaching is a form of change facilitation – it helps close the gap between where a person is in their life and where they would like to be.
Life Coaching – Are we ever too old for it?

What does “old” mean to you?

• Decay – ex, after age 20 we lose brain cells
• Seasonal change – young woman’s blonde hair becomes gray and then white
• Continued development up to the moment of death
• All of the above
Life Coaching – Are we ever too old for it?

How old is old?

• Young Old - ages 55- 70
• Middle-Old – ages 70-80
• Old-Old – ages 80 +

“In the U.S. by 2015 there will be more old people over the age of 60 than under the age of 15.”
TED talk, Laura Carstenson, Director, Stanford Center on Longevity
Six Major Life Tasks of Adult Development

• Identity - in adolescence
• Intimacy – in early adulthood
• Career Consolidation – in adulthood
• Generativity – midlife adulthood +
• Keeper of the Meaning – in old age
• Integrity – in old age

Source: Harvard Study of Adult Development
Studies Show Older People are Happier

• Live in the moment
• Know what’s important
• Deepen relationships
• Live with gratitude
• Savor life

“When we recognize that we don’t have all the time in the world, we see our priorities most clearly.”
Laura Carstenson, Director Stanford Center on Longevity, in recent TED talk
Life Coaching Can Help with...

Managing Transitions

• Change happens when circumstances are altered, while transition is the psychological process we go through when facing change.

• Like grief, there are stages: Endings, the Neutral Zone and New Beginnings

• Older people take less notice of trivial things and focus on what’s important
Forgiving Yourself and Others

• Forgiveness is one of the most important words in our modern vocabulary. What does it take to develop a forgiving heart?

• Older people engage with sadness more comfortably than younger ones

• Older people view injustice with compassion, not despair
Celebrating Life as a ‘Thank You’

• Gratitude and appreciation are life-giving emotions and part of adult development.
• Seeing the world through the lens of gratitude brings happiness, compassion and generosity of spirit.
• Older people savor life and live in the moment
Supporting Daily Life Satisfaction

• What makes the human heart sing is the perennial pursuit of happiness that continues into old age and contributes to the quality of life.

• Older people enjoy daily life with less stress, worry, and anger than younger ones
Life Coaching helps answer a key question of seniors, ‘What’s next?’

• What are issues and opportunities in your current life?
• How will setting clear goals bring meaningful change to your life?
• Any external resources you will need to help achieve goals?
• If others are involved, what competency or skills do they need to help you?
• Is the time frame you’ve established reasonable for your lifestyle?
• What are your fallback plans in case your goal pursuit does not proceed exactly as planned?
What’s Next?

“We have barely considered the possibilities in age for new kinds of loving intimacy, purposeful work and activity, learning and knowing, community and care ... For to see age as continued human development involves a revolutionary shift.”

Betty Friedan, in her seventies, writing in *The Fountain of Age*
Self-assessment:
Predict Your Own Healthy Aging by Age 50

1. Not being a smoker, or stopping young
2. An adaptive coping style
3. Absence of alcohol abuse
4. Healthy weight
5. Stable marriage
6. Regular exercise
7. Years of education
**Old age is full of enjoyment if you know how to use it.**  
Seneca, 4 B.C.

GOAL: To live the later years with joy and increased life satisfaction by...

- Being old without feeling “sick”
- Being rich in love, even if poor in dollars
- Being creative and having a capacity to play
- Sharing wisdom
- Nurturing a sense of humor
- Cultivating spirituality
Aging Well Blogs

Road Scholar – Formerly called Elderhostel, the Road Scholar site presents “adventures in lifelong learning” to those thirsty for travel in the golden years.

CaringBridge – An invaluable resource for families experiencing a major health challenge with a loved one (i.e. hospitalization), Allows you to create a website (no charge) to keep everyone informed with updates on health status, test results, etc.

New Old Age Blog – The New York Times covers intergenerational issues with a range and relevance of article topics and the writing is splendid.

The Elders - an independent group of global leaders who work together for peace and human rights.
**Aging Well Blogs**

**Pruneville** – Described as a place “where laughter doesn’t require teeth,” Pruneville visitors are sure to leave the site with a smile on their face, teeth or not.

**Beauty of Wisdom** – Photojournalist Robbie Kaye travels to beauty salons across the country, take photographs of stunning women in their 70s, 80s and 90s engaged in their most trusted beauty ritual, to encourage people of all ages to cherish the beauty of wisdom.

**Retired Brains** – Founded by senior Art Koff, visitors can post a job, find a job, get resume writing advice, and so much more on this practical, easy-to-navigate site.

**Twilight Wish** – You’ve probably heard of the Make-A-Wish foundation for children. Well, there’s one for seniors too.
We are here to do,
and through doing to learn;
and through learning to know;
and through knowing to experience wonder;
and through wonder to attain wisdom;
and through wisdom to find simplicity;
and through simplicity to give attention;
and through attention
to see what needs to be done.

Rabbi Ben Hei Hei