



AgeSong
senior communities

Beyond Dementia Toward Forgetfulness Care

In Praise of Craziness, of a Certain Kind

*On cold evenings
my grandmother,
with ownership of half her mind -
the other half having flown back to Bohemia -*

*spread newspapers over the porch floor
so, she said, the garden ants could crawl beneath,
as under a blanket, and keep warm,*

*and what shall I wish for, for myself,
but, being so struck by the lightening of years,
to be like her with what is left, that loving.*

~Mary Oliver

Creating Therapeutic Environments

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Need for Elders

Elders have always initiated the young. Hillman phrases it in an interview where he is being asked the following question: "Do you think that we stifle our societal growth and repeatedly make the same mistakes because we limit our contact with the most experienced group of the population?" He answers: "Yes, I do. It does not mean



that all old people are wise, or any old people are wise. It only means that they have a stronger character. And that strength is like a keel, or an anchor, or a strong root for the group."

Michael Meade, being asked about the qualities of an elder and the role they could play in society states the following: "One of the characteristics I see of an elder is found in the Latin word *gravitas*, which means to have gravity. . .

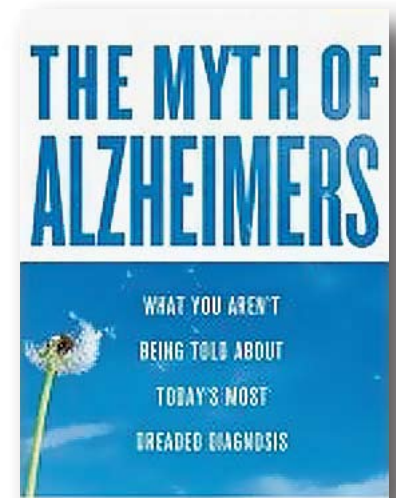
grounded would be the contemporary word — grounded in one's own life as well as being able to walk in the other world. . . I think all the structures in our society will change if there is real change, if there is

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The Art of Mindful Resistance

"We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world." And indeed, the dominant metaphors of the Alzheimer's framework pervade the thought processes of millions upon millions of human beings, profoundly influencing their self-image as they age. Those of us unlucky enough to be given an AD diagnosis are transformed into diseased individuals, while the rest of us simply wait in fear of acquiring the disease, or dread the possibility of loved ones being labeled, with the hope that science can somehow win the battle.

It's clear that we must change our thought process about brain aging. Reflect on the words and images that come to mind when you think of Alzheimer's disease. And then think about them in the larger context of the knowledge you now have about the biology of AD. Questioning the foundations of your current thoughts about AD can help you shape a new framework for brain aging.



While millions of "AD victims" are created by the label each year, substantial amounts of public and private resources are devoted to winning the war on the disease. Consequently, our war chest is expended on the fight for a cure instead of on diplomacy -- preventive medicine that could be aimed at keeping brains cognitively fit for a lifetime, and caregiving infrastructure that could help families and communities better adapt to the inevitable changes that accompany brain aging.

Whitehouse, P. J., & George, D. (2008). *The Myth of Alzheimers*, (p. 102). NY: St. Martin's Press.

(Need for Elders cont. from page 1)

a real regard to understanding what the last stage of life is about. The imagination of the elder is a radical change in attitude. An elder has resources that include the material but are not limited by the material. An elder I am involved with practice but not the practical. The whole imagination of the elder is against the rational, productive, conceptual style of modern culture. He or she (as an elder) is living his or her own radical nature and then, when the opportunity is there, supporting the radical spirit of a younger person."

"...they have a stronger character...an anchor, or a strong root for the group."

Elders need to help people with liberating the meaning already within them but also of the community's obligation to bring out the unique gifts of each new person welcomed into the world.



Creating Therapeutic Environments

AgeSong communities offer a beautiful environment with character and warmth that make you feel as though you are home. Sun-filled interiors, high ceilings, skylights, sweeping rotundas, outdoor garden patios, roof decks, park proximity and city views are just some of the highlights of our beautiful buildings. AgeSong supports the communities and people of the neighborhoods in which we work and live. In San Francisco, an onsite restaurant serves the neighborhood while offering residents, families and staff the convenience of find San Francisco dining and shopping areas.



Hayes Valley Care and Laguna Grove Care are located in vibrant Hayes Valley, close to the San Francisco Symphony and one block from locally owned shops, cafes and restaurants.



Our Lakeside Park residence is located on beautiful Lake Merritt in Oakland, across from inviting Lakeside Park and Fairyland. The quaint neighborhood is home to local restaurants and cafés, independent bookstores and boutiques and the historic Grand Lake Theatre.

Bayside Park in Emeryville, currently under construction, is located close to lively Park Street and Bay Street.

Deeper into the Soul:

How do we do that anymore in today's busy, fast-paced world?



We may enter into the richness of this question by asking: What is the meaning of our lives? Why are we here? For what do we live, do we struggle, do we mature? Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are a source of fear for

many of us. We are afraid that we could lose the minds of our parents, relatives, and partners while their bodies are still with us. Moreover, we are jolted by the same fears every time we can't find our keys or remember the name of a friend. We seem to take it for granted that a meaningful life is possible only when one is blessed with excellent memory and cognitive abilities. From this point of view, life makes little sense for the millions of Americans and countless others around the world afflicted with forgetfulness.

Please join us as we take a basic attitudinal shift: Dementia is our teacher. Rather than simply a disease, dementia has purpose and meaning. Rather than being people simply in need of our care, people who forget can

Deeper into the Soul

teach us about life and living. Rather than a burden, people with dementia offer us an opportunity to deepen ourselves, to go deeper into our souls.

Deeper into the Soul by Nader Shabahangi, P.h. D., & Bogna Symkiewicz. 1st Ed. published 2008 by Elders Academy Press.



Hayes Valley Care - Lagune Grove Care - Lakeside Park
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Pacific Institute

AgeSong is proud of its partnership with Pacific Institute, an organization dedicated to gerontology and elder wellness.

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