

As many of you already know, we are gearing up to feature another “round” of our Longevity Series. And in doing so, I thought it would be fun to start out with a little background on the 8 Stages of Life from Eric Erickson, a renowned Psychologist. This chart illustrates age determination, virtues learned and the radius of significant relations according each stage/phase of life. It will help to have this knowledge as we work toward a long, healthy life and to further explain how are precious elders have come to acquire their final virtue, Wisdom. So, here’s goes:

Stages Age(s)	Virtue	Radius of Significant Relations
1. Infancy until age 2	Hope	Maternal Person
2. Early Childhood 2-3	Will	Parental Persons
3. Play Age 3-5	Purpose	Basic Family
4. School Age 6-12	Competence	Neighborhood, School
5. Adolescence 12-18	Fidelity	Peer groups, Models of Leadership
6. Young Adulthood 19-35	Love	Partners in Friendship, Sex, Competition
7. Adulthood 35-65	Care	Divided Labor and Shared Household
8. Old Age 65	Wisdom	Humankind, My Kind

As we look towards Stage 8, or as Erickson labels it, Old Age, we can clearly see that the Virtue to be mastered is Wisdom and the significant relations involve reacting on a global level. Based on the foundation of this chart, we will discuss in detail the process of acquiring this precious virtue and the components of this stage. I call this portion Wisdom of Age.

As we discuss more of the Wisdom of Age, you will find this series dedicated to Longevity and stories of lives well lived. Last week we shared Erickson’s Eight Stages of Life which chart all the theoretic stages of one’s life. We will now chat more specifically on the 8th and final stage of Life.

To begin, I would like to share a quote, “Life is a trust, given into our hands, to hold carefully, to use well, and to give back when the time comes.” I haven’t found the author of that quote, but it is listed with Elizabeth Gray Vining’s, “Being Seventy” which is a diary of sorts regarding her 70th year. You may like to borrow it for an amazing read. And, if any of you know the author of the quote, please do share.

Now we delve into “Old Age” according to Erickson. It is his theory that in Old Age, we reconcile the Age of Integrity or the Age of Wisdom versus despair. When healthy, we look at how much “experience” has taught us and how all of our life has benefitted us. The polarity is looking back and feeling in despair.

This might take a little time to digest but in this state, we begin to look at what we would like to accomplish before we die. I am not trying to be morbid here, let’s keep it all in context, but what if you knew that you only had until Christmas to live? What would you do differently? Prioritize more? Let the little things go? Resolve feuds? What would it be? How would it change the way you currently live? The theory here is the faster/earlier we take the attitude of “what do I want to do before I cease”; the faster our lives take on a much deeper meaning...And, hence; the more gifted our remaining days become.

Sooner or later we all come to the conclusion (maybe somewhat of an identity crisis) that we are what survives us.

In this regard, there is a story of an elderly lady who wanted to literally share her life (and its contents) with her friends. In her will she left what she wanted for her family and then went through her home with post its notes and taped the names of her friends on her various treasures.

At her funeral, tables were set up so friends could claim their gift in remembrance of her. Not sure how many friends she had or if she was a hoarder, but nonetheless she is a prime example of Erickson's theory. She became what survived her and that brought her happiness. I bet the estate attorneys had a ball with that request. Maybe she left them a pen set.

The point is that growing into the Age of Wisdom requires a certain mindset and the ability to look at positive memories. In health, we look at positive memories for all stages of life and this one is no different. We need positive memories of seeing others growing old and leaving a good life. Why? So we learn how to process this age as we begin that stage in our lives. In essence, we need a model to follow.

In our own experience, we may ask ourselves, "Who are the most alive elderly persons I have known?" Just being with or recalling those blessed souls who have truly embraced life to its last breath removes the fear of growing old ourselves. Get the theory?

So, this is the real point of this series on Longevity; featuring information and creating good/positive memories of those who have done it well. I want to showcase those in our community who have gracefully transitioned this Age of Integrity and share their Wisdom as they allow. We already have some great interviews on the schedule and have a few more folks to contact.

SO, again, for your part, I would like your suggestions on folks who may qualify to be part of this segment. Our goal is to feature a few stories on these blessed beings who reside in God's Country (Northern Illinois, Southern Wisconsin and Eastern, Iowa) and get their perspective on a life well lived.

We ask that the person be at least 85 years of age, still living at home or functioning in the home of a relative/friend/caring facility and be willing to spend some time chatting with me about their successful longevity. I would like to also include a photo if possible. If you know someone who would be a great candidate, please email me your suggestion and their contact info to skscham@aol.com. If you do not have email, but would like to nominate a candidate (or yourself) please call the store at 815 990 8732 and ask to speak to the Longevity Hostess. We await your contact.

From the Natural Healing Express Family to you and yours, we wish you a wonderful holiday!

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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