

HINDSIGHT, HUMOR, AND HOPE:

WHO, ME, AN ELDER?

An Adult Tapestry of Faith Program



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Table of Contents

Workshop 1: Elderhood – A Work In Progress.....	12
Workshop 2: Solitude and Connection – The Stuff of Life.....	23
Workshop 3: Diving Through the Layers – The Fabric of My Life	33
Workshop 4: Creating New Visions – Building on Experience	42
Workshop 5: Making Friends with Mortality.....	49
Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope.....	58

Note: If you add or delete text in this program, you may change the accuracy of the Table of Contents. The table of contents is an auto-generated list; if you change content and want an accurate representation of the page numbers listed in the TOC, click the table and click “Update field.” Then, click “Update page numbers only.” Click OK.

About the Author

Karin Peterson, a Unitarian Universalist minister, is a spiritual director who has served as a college chaplain, parish minister, Unitarian Universalist Association Massachusetts Bay District Administrator, and affiliated community minister with First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church in Framingham, MA. She has created and led adult workshops on aging and spirituality for several UU congregations. Now retired and living on the Massachusetts coast, she appreciates a relaxed schedule that allows her to write, paint, explore the natural world, and connect with family and others. Karin holds a B.S. in Art Education, an M.A. in Counseling Psychology, and completed the training in spiritual direction group leadership at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation.

Preface

A decade ago, when a parishioner asked if I had any good books on aging, I replied with confidence, “Yes, I’ll bring some from home.” When I searched for resources, I was surprised to find that I had purchased many good resources on aging at least ten years earlier. I had bought them when it felt safe to buy them—meaning: “Oh, these are interesting writings on aging. I am glad to have them for reference, but personally I don’t need them now—I won’t be an older person for a *long* time.” Well, that *long* time happened while I wasn’t paying attention! It was a jolting epiphany to reread them and reflect on being age sixty-seven. I had a fresh and unexpected understanding about my human lifespan.

Until then, I hadn’t paid much attention to my age as I moved into higher decades. I was busy doing other things. Then, for the first time, I had to honestly acknowledge my personal accumulation of years lived on this planet, and I didn’t particularly like it. I didn’t feel old, but maybe my calendar age was. The status of being an elder was not appealing because our society has a negative outlook on being older. Folks in their senior years are not considered important resources despite their earned treasure of wisdom. So, of course I didn’t want to think about my growing older. I had thought of myself as middle-aged, living a very busy, multitasking life. I began to realize that somewhere, sometime along the way I had morphed into that next developmental stage called “older person.” For the first time, up close and personal, I realized that I am living at the further end of my lifespan.

Whatever your life circumstances, be aware that elder years are spiritually creative and wait for you as a gift. In talking with other elders I’ve learned to keep the door open to life’s possibilities. Even one’s limitations invite exploration and invention. So, forgive the old hurts and let go of grudges and feelings of guilt after you have done what you can to make amends. They are too heavy to carry. Elder years can be an enriched time of personal reflection and perhaps an opportunity to mentor someone younger.

If you are retired, stay tuned for your further development. I invite you to walk with me for a while and use your own personal hindsight, humor, and hope.

With thanks

Almost a decade ago I found that personally taking hold of my life experience was a creative challenge. It led to the development of the Hindsight, Humor, and Hope program. With deep appreciation I acknowledge the congregations that graciously welcomed me to lead workshops: First Parish Unitarian Universalist in Framingham, MA (two times); the UU Congregational Society of Westborough, MA; the Unitarian Church of Marlborough and Hudson, MA; First Parish in Dedham, MA; and First Parish Church in Beverly, MA. As proof of the expanding average lifespan of humans, the lowest age for the workshop has now moved from 50 to 55. I have always had someone representing the ninth decade of life in the workshops as well. What warm and caring interactions transpire when a multiage group comes together to grow!

I am grateful to Gail Forsyth-Vail, my editor at the Unitarian Universalist Association Faith Development Office, for her interest and thoughtful critiques, and to my colleague, the Reverend Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson, for his encouragement to give this workshop its wings. To my family, now three generations of adults, thank you for being you and for your love and interaction.

—Karin Peterson

June 2015

Facilitator Feedback Form

We welcome your critique of this program, as well as your suggestions. Thank you for your feedback! Your input improves programs for all of our congregations. Please forward your feedback to:

Faith Development Office
Ministries and Faith Development
Unitarian Universalist Association
24 Farnsworth Street
Boston, MA 02210-1409
religiouseducation@uaa.org

Name of Program or Curriculum:

Congregation:

Number of Participants:

Age range:

Did you work with (a) co-facilitator(s)?

Your name:

Overall, what was your experience with this program?

What specifically did you find most helpful or useful about this program?

In what ways could this program be changed or improved (please be specific)?

Did you enrich the program with any resources that you would recommend to others?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your life going forward?

What impact, if any, do you think this program will have on your congregation going forward?

Participant Feedback Form

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The Program

Imagine ... that you are having your portrait made, your face carved in beautiful wood.

Not all of us would feel comfortable, especially as we grow older, with someone noticing our wrinkles and spots. At times we fear that our faces will betray us, showing our soft spots and weak places ...

But if we trust in the force that created us—the force that knows us at our core and cherishes us the way an artist cherishes her creations—we may feel less afraid. If you've ever made anything, you know that mistakes can lead to new discoveries and unintended beauty. If you've ever carved, you know that the grain, the natural material you work with, is as fascinating as anything you could imagine. — Eliza Blanchard, in

[The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older](#)

Unitarian Universalist congregations are actively intergenerational. We value and encourage interaction between the age groups. But, sometime after the age of sixty, adults begin to sense having moved over a threshold into older folk territory. That can be startling to the soul and the ego! They may be contemplating retirement from paid employment and find it a difficult adjustment. They may be assessing the volunteer or paid commitments they want to continue, which ones they want to renegotiate or change, and what new experiences they are eager to embrace. If they are healthy, they certainly don't feel old. They may wonder, "How did I get here? ... I can't be that old!"

For some people, retirement from the workforce means that their adult identity and day-to-day life appear to vanish as familiar habits and connections are no longer there. For some, a lessening of family or work commitments opens time and energy for trying new roles and experiences. Hindsight, Humor, and Hope journeys with people as they begin to redesign their later years into a time of reflection, discernment, soul stretching, and new life possibilities. This gift of extended years finds many people becoming elders with deep personal questions such as, Who am I now? and What will I do that is meaningful? In six two-hour workshops, this program invites participants to develop deeper understanding and appreciation of their elder stage of life and the path they traveled to reach it.

Demographers say there will be a large increase in the number of people reaching elderhood in the years ahead. Older people have an opportunity to redesign their personal time from *doing* 24/7 to *being* 24/7. They may still be employed, often part time, but for many the senior years present a gift of reclaimed time to read; experiment with personal expression like painting, photography, and music; connect with family and friends; engage in a hobby; and/or discover new ways to reach out to others.

People hold attributes in their senior years that young folks have yet to develop. There is no fast track for obtaining wisdom; it comes via life experience and discernment. Elders may not move as fast as young folks or have the stamina to stay up late socializing as they do, but they are rightfully valued in roles that draw on their wisdom, experience, and skills. Those reaching this life stage need tools to help them better understand their rightful place in the community and accept it

for the gift that it is. There are ways to live this stage of life with meaning and intention. Each of us is much more than a physical body. Each of us also is a spiritual being holding faith, hope, and love within. It takes thought and reflection to discern what to bring forth from the deeper, spiritual self to deal with what is happening in the community, the family, and the world.

The elder treasure of wisdom and insight is grounded in experience and a deepened understanding. As elders become aware of and bring forth inner gifts, as they commit to caring for themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually, they can proudly wear the tee shirt that says, "Aging Is the Ultimate Extreme Sport."

Goals

This program will:

- Encourage participants to support one another and not be alone
- Identify and explore the positives about being an elder
- Use journaling as well as color and line as expressions of spirituality and creativity
- Lead participants to claim inner wisdom
- Help participants come to understand being an elder as a time of spiritual richness
- Invite participants to remain adventurous in thinking about the future
- Challenge participants to find ways to mentor others.

Leaders

A team of two or more adults should facilitate these workshops. It is recommended that one of the leaders be a minister or another leader or staff

member with a counseling background, because some of the activities may bring back memories of a past sorrow, a grudge, or another out-of-control part of their life and a participant may seek pastoral support. It is also recommended that at least one leader be an elder themselves.

Leaders must also nurture community in the participant group. With others "walking with them" in a supportive group, participants have the opportunity to become stronger by putting a painful part of their past to rest or identifying the wisdom and experience they have gained over time.

In addition, seek leaders who are:

- Knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism
- Committed to the Unitarian Universalist Principles, to the congregation, and to the faith development components of this program
- Willing and able to thoroughly prepare for each workshop
- Effective at speaking, teaching, and facilitating group process
- Flexible and willing to modify workshop plans to support the full inclusion of all participants
- Able to listen deeply and to encourage participation of all individuals
- Able to demonstrate respect for individuals, regardless of age, race, social class, gender identity, ability, and sexual orientation
- Able to honor the life experiences each participant will bring to the program.

Leaders need to be part of the group as well as its facilitators. Create your own Life Map or Lifescape

before the program begins (see Workshop 2), so that you deeply understand this interesting and challenging process. Fill in your Five Wishes booklet before participants do (Workshop 5). Do the take-home journaling exercises, and *briefly* share your thoughts as appropriate to keep the group process moving along, without dominating the conversation.

A shared lunchtime is part of the program. Leaders should eat before the group arrives in order to be able to begin with the opening reading while the group finishes eating. During the workshop, keep your beverage cup nearby to visually be part of the group.

Participants

This program is intended for anyone over the age of fifty-five and is equally suitable for first-time visitors and longtime members of the congregation. Members should be encouraged to bring a friend.

Leaders need to keep in mind the differences in knowledge and life experience participants bring to the group, particularly if the group includes a wide age span. Ideally, the program should have between eight and twenty participants; you will need to adjust small group activities or number of leaders for a group smaller or larger.

Ahead of time, be aware of participants with accessibility issues: Use a microphone if needed, provide large print copies of handouts and songs, and allow space for wheelchairs at the table.

Review [Accessibility Guidelines for Adult Workshop Presenters](#) before each workshop and implement as appropriate for your group and space.

Program Structure

The program has six workshops. The two-hour time frame for each workshop includes 20 minutes for lunch, either brown bag or a lunch you have arranged. It is recommended that the program be offered midday, because some potential participants may not drive at night or may avoid evening activities.

Each workshop has at-home activities that follow. Each workshop builds on the previous one and integrates at-home projects and journaling activities.

Participants are asked to assemble their own simple art kit as homework between the first and second workshops. Experience has shown that assembling their own kit encourages deeper participation in the art activities in the program and encourages people to continue creative spiritual practices after the program has ended.

Materials

A number of materials require advance preparation or purchase, as follows:

- Order copies of [Five Wishes](#) (include one for yourself) well in advance of the program and be familiar with the document before Workshop 5. Ordering information can be found at www.agingwithdignity.org. There is a modest cost for the booklets.
- For Workshop 1, purchase 8 1/2x11-inch spiral composition books, one for each participant, and assorted stickers or decorations.
- For Workshop 1, prepare the large Blessing Cards, using Leader Resource 2, Blessing Cards. Download the file, print on 8 1/2x11-

inch cover stock, and cut along the lines.

Cards are used in each workshop, so plan to store them where they will not be damaged or bent.

- For Workshop 4, assemble and prepare materials for tactile mandalas if you have visually impaired participants. On a piece of cover stock, draw a 10-inch circle. Glue a length of thick cotton cord or twine along the perimeter of the circle. Cut out shapes (triangles, circles, and rectangles) no larger than the circle from materials such as wide wale corduroy, satin, mesh, sandpaper, or velvet. Provide buttons with flat undersides and lengths of twine, rickrack, and other textured materials. Provide white glue or strong glue sticks and scissors so a participant (with assistance, if needed) can make their desired modifications to the materials and use them to create a tactile mandala.
- For Workshop 6, purchase polished, light-colored river stones and black, medium-point permanent markers. (Note: flat stones offer more writing space.) These supplies are available in craft stores.
- For Workshop 6, create portable mandala sketch books. For each participant, purchase a 4x6-inch, spiral-bound drawing pad (24 sheets) and a 4x5-inch envelope from a local or online art store. Obtain or make a stiff, 3-inch circle for each participant to use as a tracing template (a plastic lid works well). Store the template in the envelope. On a table, lay the open envelope to the left of the drawing pad to

verify that they match in size. Attach envelope to book by taping the flap with its inside facing the front cover's backside. Close envelope over outside of the front cover.

Consult with your minister or religious educator about how to cover the cost of materials and supplies.

Implementation

Preregister participants for the program, making sure they understand that each workshop builds on the one before, and there is some preparation for participants to do for each workshop. If you charge a small materials fee, make sure that there are scholarships available.

Make it as welcoming as possible for elders to be part of the group. Encourage ride sharing so anyone in this age range can attend. Invite people to ask a friend to do the program with them. Your personal invitation may make a difference for someone who is hesitant. (Tip: Quietly allow registration up to the workshop's beginning. Prepare extra materials.)

Decide how you will handle lunch. It is recommended that you ask participants to bring a brown bag lunch for the first five workshops. Provide coffee, tea, and water to supplement what they bring for themselves. For Workshop 6, arrange for a potluck or catered lunch. Ask the congregation's Caring Committee or other appropriate group to manage the food items as they come in, set up the buffet table, and clean up after lunch as a gift to the elders in your program.

Workshop 1: Elderhood – A

Work In Progress

Introduction

This workshop introduces the idea of elderhood as a creative and important time of life, a time to search inside, integrate experiences, and cultivate wisdom. Rituals and activities for the program, such as journaling, sharing blessings, and allowing for silence between speakers, will be established.

Participants will begin to get to know one another and to create a community of elders learning together.

Experience has shown that this program works best when each workshop begins with the opportunity for participants to eat lunch together. Shared lunch, whether individual brown bag or something more elaborate, allows time for community building and sets a tone for what follows. A few days before the first workshop, acknowledge and welcome participants via email or phone. Remind them to bring their bag lunch and a mug for coffee, tea, or water or explain lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to form a supportive community
- Explore positives about being an elder as well as negatives
- Introduce the process of spiritual journaling.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Get to know one another as participants in the elderhood work in process
- Name and share good aspects and bad aspects of being an older person
- Be introduced to rituals and practices for the program
- Identify and share stories of influential people from the past.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Welcoming and Entering	10
Lunch	20
Opening	10
Activity 1: Valuing Elderhood	10
Activity 2: The Good and Bad of Being Older	20
Activity 3: Spiritual Journaling	35
For Next Time	5
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth and decorations for worship table: flowers, leaves, plant, small sculpture, or other decorative items
- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Newsprint, markers, tape, and easel
- Bold markers
- Large name tags
- Lined paper
- Pens, pencils, markers, and color pencils

- 8 1/2x11-inch spiral notebooks, one for each participant
- Assorted stickers
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- Handout 1, Over Sixty: The Good Life Comes with Old Age
- Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 2
- Leader Resource 1, Valuing Elderhood
- Leader Resource 2, Blessing Cards
- Cover stock
- Scissors
- Set out name tags, connections sheet and pen or pencil, spiral notebooks, markers, and assorted stickers.
- Copy Handout 1, Over Sixty: The Good Life Comes with Old Age.
- Customize and copy Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 2.
- Print Leader Resource 1, Valuing Elderhood and prepare to present its contents.
- Write workshop agenda on newsprint, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Write and post Group Rules of Respect:
 - When a person is speaking we will give that person our respectful attention and only listen.
 - After each person speaks, we will observe a moment of silence before another speaks.
 - What is shared in the group is only for this group. Personal stories and reflections (other than your own) are not to be shared outside the group.

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.
- Arrange for furniture set-up:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the head table, chairs around outside of tables).
 - For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place and arrange decorations.
- Create a connections sheet with columns for contact information: name, address, phone, and email. Note at the top of the paper that the information will be distributed to all participants.
- Title two different sheets of newsprint:
 - Bad Things about Being Older
 - Good Things about Being Older
- Write journaling questions on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:
 - What did I learn from interactions with a positive person in my life?
 - What did I learn from interactions with a negative person in my life?
- Write on newsprint, and set aside:

We close our time by extinguishing the chalice and carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.

- Download and print Leader Resource 2, Blessing Cards, on cover stock. Cut along the lines to make Blessing Cards. If there are more than 11 people in your group (including leaders), make duplicate cards so that you have enough cards for everyone.

Welcoming and Entering (10 minutes)

Greet participants as they arrive. Invite them to make a name tag with first name only, written in large, bold letters so that it can be easily read. Invite them to take a spiral notebook, which will serve as their Hindsight, Humor, and Hope journal, and to personalize the cover with stickers and markers.

Lunch (20 minutes)

Encourage participants to chat over lunch. As lunch draws to a close, distribute Handout 1, Over Sixty: The Good Life Comes with Old Age. With your co-leader or a volunteer, read the column aloud. Pace the reading; allow time for laughter.

Opening (10 minutes)

Model personal introductions for the group by sharing your name and age. Invite participants to introduce themselves. You might say:

As we go around the group, please say your name clearly and your years of life experience—also known as your age.

This sets the tone for talking about a person's lifespan and life experience.

Call attention to the Group Rules of Respect. Ask participants to indicate agreement.

Invite a participant to light the chalice, while you say:

Lighting a flame can symbolize witness, sacrifice, testing, courage, hope, and illumination. We bring these together as an opening symbol, and I share these words of Richard Gilbert: "Come into the circle of caring. Come into the community of gentleness, of justice, and love. Come, and may you be comforted. Let hope infuse you. Let peace be the law of your heart. In this human circle, caring is a calling."

Lead your group in singing "Come Sing a Song with Me," Hymn 146 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Valuing Elderhood (10 minutes)

Share the contents of Leader Resource 1, Valuing Elderhood. Invite comments.

Activity 2: The Good and Bad of Being Older (20 minutes)

Say:

What comes to mind when you think of aging? Most likely there are some negative things.

Invite the group to brainstorm a list of negative aspects of aging. Pace the brainstorm slowly so there is time for agreement, laughter, sadness, wistfulness, and other responses. Record the list on the titled newsprint and post.

Then ask:

What comes to mind when you think of the positive images of aging?

Use the second titled newsprint to record their responses, again allowing for responses along the way, and post it beside the first. Ask for comments. Are they surprised by all the good things?

Share aloud "Definition of an Elder" by Debby and Barry Barkan. Tell participants that they will receive a printed copy at the end of the session:

An Elder is a person who is still growing, still a learner, still with potential and whose life continues to have within it promise for, and connections to the future.

An Elder is still in pursuit of happiness, joy and pleasure, and her or his birthright to these remains intact.

Moreover, an Elder is a person who deserves respect and honor and whose work it is to synthesize wisdom from long life experience and to formulate this into a legacy for future generations.

— Debby and Barry Barkan, Live Oak Institute, Berkeley, CA. This definition is copyrighted and used with permission.

Activity 3: Spiritual Journaling (35 minutes)

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

Today and every day, we are still evolving, still developing our inner self, which we call our spiritual self, our soul, the essence of our being. Think about our developmental process as parallel to

the life cycle of an apple tree. Beginning with a small, sprouting seed, it develops into a young sapling tree, then a mature tree. With good moisture, sunshine, and nourishment it develops and grows. At the same time, it is withstanding storms, disease, and drought. Each spring the tree grows new leaves and flower buds that open into flowers. After a while the petals fall off and in the flower center a tiny bump begins developing into a luscious apple. The fruit has become wholesome food for someone and also holds within it more seeds that, when planted, continue the cycle of life. Likewise, we too were nourished and grew, withstood storms and drought, and hold wisdom that can nourish others both now and in future generations. Part of our time together will be spent writing in our journals. You will be invited to look back at your years of life experience and to write in the journal you received today. You can write notes and reflections about meaningful times in your life, both the happy and the sad ones. Be open to surprises! Writing can also take the sting out of a bad memory.

Post the two journaling questions you have written on newsprint and read them aloud slowly so that participants can write them in their journals, each on a separate page. Tell participants that you will take ten minutes for each answer and will ring the chime when it is time to move to the next question.

After their journaling, invite participants to choose a partner with whom to share their writing, taking turns as speaker and listener. Ask them to refrain from comments and queries when they are the listener, and simply to give the speaker their undivided attention. Partners may begin with the first question and take two minutes each, before moving on to the second question. Ring the bell or chime when it is time to change speakers and time to change questions.

Then regather the group. Ask for comments about the process:

How was this for you? Was anyone surprised by what they wrote?

For Next Time (5 minutes)

Distribute Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 2. Go over its contents, and answer any questions.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them.

Spread out Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one. Then take a card and read your blessing aloud. Invite participants in turn to share their blessings aloud. Allow a pause between each blessing. Then invite participants to read the closing words in unison. Note: You may wish to save the closing words on newsprint for the workshops that follow.

Extinguish the chalice. Collect Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Over Sixty: The Good Life Comes with Old Age

By Donald M. Murray. Copyright 1996 in *The Boston Globe*. Reprinted by permission of the Rosenberg Group on behalf of the Author's estate.

I'm doing a class project on aging America. What's it like to be a golden ager?

Old.

Excuse me?

Not elderly, not senior citizen, never golden ager.

I'm proud to be old.

You are?

Darn right. See that white hair, these wrinkles, listen to how my knee squeaks.

You like that?

Sure, anyone can be young, have elastic skin, bounce, innocence, naiveté. You have to be old to have wrinkles, a white beard, joints that talk, wisdom.

Why are you proud of your, well, uh, ailments?

Are you proud of that tattoo of a bug on your shoulder, that ring in your nose?

Sure.

Why?

Well, I belong. I mean all my friends...

All my friends creak, have white hair, flapping skin folds, walk funny.

Kinda like a shuffle?

It's a dance, sorta.

Is it hard to learn?

No, it comes with wisdom.

How come?

Well, you step right along as if you know the sidewalk will always be there. We know better.

What do you mean?

When you've lived a long time you know about land mines, pot-holes, loss, uncertainty. We feel our way along.

What's so great about being old?

Being old.

That's it?

A large part of it. Morning is always a surprise.

You mean you might've died in your bed? That's weird.

Very weird. We survived. That's what we did. We stayed around.

What did you survive?

Being young's one thing. I wouldn't want to be young.

You wouldn't?

Who are you going to date Saturday night?

Date?

Hang with? Enter into a meaningful relationship with?

I dunno. Maybe Hugo, Ernest, Howard, Who knows?

I know. Minnie Mae. I don't have to hang out in singles bars, sit by the phone. Worry about safe sex.

Sex?

Yep. Very safe sex. Dignified.

Well, I mean, let's talk about other things. What do you do, being old?

Go to the bank, the Post Office, supermarket.

How often?

Five or six times a week,

What about the other days? Do you ever have fun?

Great fun. Yesterday Minnie Mae, our friend Barbara and I went to see *The Truth About Cats & Dogs*—good film and the 2:20 matinee was cheap. Then we went to BG's Boathouse Restaurant down by the water in Portsmouth, just opened for the season. Beautiful spot. I had swordfish; Minnie Mae, Maine crab; Barbara, clams. We were home at 6.

That's all?

No, on the way home we drove around two real estate developments, saw the new houses being built.

You call that a life?

If you're lucky, you'll survive youth and middle age, then you'll find out what good living really is.

Well, thanks, I think.

Don't worry, you'll be lucky, get white hair, wrinkles, flesh sag; shuffle, become wise, happy in your time.

What about my nose ring?

It'll go.

Handout 2: Looking Ahead to Workshop 2

*There are years that ask questions and
years that answer. — Zora Neale
Hurston*

For Next Time

1. Write in Your Journal

Consider the most influential people in your life. Divide pages into thirds and title each third of a page with a decade; for example, birth to age 10, age 11-20, and so on. Then, in the space for each decade, write about the most influential person in your life at that time.

2. Assemble an Art Toolkit

In a small box or plastic zip bag, assemble a Hindsight, Humor, and Hope toolkit: pen, pencil, eraser, and color pencils or multicolor washable (not permanent) fine-line markers.

Future Workshops

*[Date] Workshop 2: Solitude and
Connection – The Stuff of Life*

*[Date] Workshop 3: Diving through the
Layers – The Fabric of My Life*

*[Date] Workshop 4: Creating New
Visions – Building on Experience*

*[Date] Workshop 5: Making Friends
with Mortality*

*[Date] Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor,
and Hope*

Group Rules of Respect

- When a person is speaking we will give that person our respectful attention and only listen.
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Definition of an Elder

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An Elder is still in pursuit of happiness, joy and pleasure, and her or his birthright to these remains intact.

Moreover, an Elder is a person who deserves respect and honor and whose work it is to synthesize wisdom from long life experience and to formulate this into a legacy for future generations.

— Debby and Barry Barkan, Live Oak Institute, Berkeley, CA. This definition is copyrighted and used with permission.

Find Out More

Here are some books for further reading and reflection:

- Andrew, Elizabeth J. *Writing the Sacred Journey: The Art and Practice of Spiritual Memoir* (Skinner House Books, 2005)

- Blanchard, Eliza. *The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older* (Skinner, 2012)
- Montgomery, Kay, ed. *Landscapes of Aging and Spirituality: Essays* (Skinner, 2015)
- Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman. *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older* (Warner Books, 1995)

Leader Resource 1: Valuing Elderhood

Attitudes toward older people have varied—and continue to vary—across time and cultures. In some times and places, elders have enjoyed positive acceptance and embrace; in others, the reception has been negative. Traditional Near Eastern and Asian cultures revered their elders. The ancient Greeks valued youth most highly, but the Romans valued their elders' wisdom. The philosopher and orator Cicero lived to an old age of sixty-three and counseled his people, "To your total self, give wholesome nourishment, exercise to the body, and to the brain give reflection of your life choices."

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries our nation absolutely valued its elders. We still honor those founding fathers and mothers. The development of the Industrial Age in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought with it a more negative national view of elderhood. Young people left the family farms to work in cities and didn't want the agrarian life of their parents and grandparents. Our modern technical age, with its love of speed and connection, smart phones, videoconferencing, email, texting, social media and so on, has made long-distance relationships and connections possible. But technologically assisted connections now frequently replace being together in person. Email and texts have largely replaced letter writing. All this can sometimes stunt the slow, heart-centered process of relationship building. Although being together electronically with family and friends is a marvel, the lack of in-person time can weaken

family connections and deprive younger family members of the well-earned wisdom of their elders.

But, heads up, elders! It is time to consider the richness of elderhood! Focus on how to age well, making the best of your wisdom, spirit, and connections. Elderhood brings a gift of time for thinking and reflecting, for integrating what we bring from our deep self and our lived experience. Embracing our own wisdom will help us stay focused and connected to the preciousness of life *and* help us deal with the "fast forward" life around us. To be more than a physical body is our birthright. Each of us is also a spiritual being who deep within holds *faith, hope, and love*. Using our spiritual energy and compassionate awareness as tools, we can proudly embrace the tee shirt slogan that says, "Aging Is the Ultimate Extreme Sport."

Life brings difficult losses and challenges. These are painful, but somehow we get through and, in time, can heal from those experiences. We can grow stronger. Our rewards are deepening inner wisdom and strength and understanding of our spiritual underpinnings and the interconnectedness of life. We seekers are part of an interconnected universe. While much about the process of living and dying is unknown, and may always remain a mystery, we can know ourselves, our journey, and the wisdom we have to offer.

Leader Resource 2: Blessing Cards

Printing This Handout

Download a [high-resolution copy of this Handout \(PDF\)](#) for printing.

Workshop 2: Solitude and Connection – The Stuff of Life

Introduction

In this workshop, participants will bring thoughts and journaling from their home reflections. Home journaling, done in solitude, allows easier connection to all memories. Remembering the influential people who were part of their lives may bring up difficult experiences that they have not thought about in a long time. This workshop encourages participants not to stay distant from painful memories and/or grudges but rather to begin to see them with fresh eyes and learn from them. Confronting difficult memories in the present with the wisdom and insight of the present helps individuals become spiritually stronger. Instead of dwelling in the past, we can use the past as a text of lived experience and learn from it. In so doing, we meaningfully weave the fabric of our lifetime.

This workshop offers a variety of practices and activities that support the spiritual work to be done, including stretching exercises, guided meditation, small group discussion, and creating a visual life map or landscape.

It is possible that participants will contact you after the workshop to tell you that creating their Life Map or Lifescape was painful, because it has brought back sad or difficult memories. They may re-experience a past sorrow or hurt while remembering an out-of-control part of their life. Offer to meet with them to talk about it or suggest that they be in touch with their minister (if that is not you). If meeting with them in person is not possible, meet with (listen to) them on the phone. You (or

their minister) may want to assure them that the Hindsight, Humor, and Hope workshops, where others are making the same journey, can help them feel stronger and let a painful part of their past be at rest.

Experience has shown that this program works best when each workshop begins with the opportunity for participants to eat lunch together. Shared lunch, whether individual brown bag or something more elaborate, allows time for community building and sets the tone for what follows. A few days before the workshop, remind participants by email or phone to bring their journal reflections and their bag lunch and a mug or tell them about lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to continue to grow a supportive community
- Invite participants to consider past negative and positive happenings as meaningful parts of lived experience
- Offer meditation and stretching exercises as spiritual tools
- Offer a process for using journaling, color, and line as expressions of spirituality and creativity.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Continue to grow a supportive community
- Consider past negative and positive happenings as meaningful parts of lived experience

- Take part in and learn simple stretching exercises
- Experience guided meditation as a centering technique
- Use journaling, color, and line as expressions of spirituality and creativity.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Lunch	20
Opening	5
Activity 1: Stretching	10
Activity 2: My Most Influential Person	15
Activity 3: Spiritual Journaling	10
Activity 4: Guided Meditation	20
Activity 5: Life Maps and Lifescapes	20
For Next Time	10
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth and decorations for worship table: flowers, leaves, plant, small sculpture, or other decorative items
- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Name badges from Workshop 1
- Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1
- Pens, pencils, markers, and color pencils
- 8 1/2x11-inch white cover stock
- White copier paper

- Two rolls of transparent tape
- 8 1/2x11-inch spiral notebooks for any who are new to the group, stickers and markers for decorating
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- Handout 1, Five Minute Practice of Presence
- Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 3
- Blessing Cards (from Workshop 1)

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.
- Arrange for furniture setup:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the head table, chairs around the outside of tables).
 - For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place and arrange decorations.
- Copy Handout 1, Five Minute Practice of Presence.
- Customize and copy Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 3.
- Write workshop agenda on newsprint, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Post Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1.

- Write journaling questions on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:
 - What was it like for you to think back on the influential people in your life?
 - What people or situations came to mind that were unpleasant in your life? What did you learn from the difficulties?
 - What were you able to do later because of going through the difficult experiences?
- Write on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:

We close our time by extinguishing the chalice and carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.
- Shuffle the Blessing Cards.

Lunch (20 minutes)

Welcome participants as they arrive and ask them to put on their name tags. Encourage them to chat over lunch. If anyone is new to the group, invite them to make a name badge and to take and decorate a journal. As lunch draws to a close, read aloud these words of Kathleen Fisher from *Autumn Gospel*:

The part of living that is opposite of connecting with others is solitude.

It isn't the same thing as loneliness. Instead it is the opportunity we give ourselves when we both become more aware of our inner depths and yet retain our sense of unity with others. As we live we try to honor these alternating moments of solitude and community, to be fully present to others and yet not

alienated from our own thoughts and feelings.

One woman describes this in terms of the spaces within her that are filled with the needs and desires and requests of others. For her, "Solitude is the interval in which she waits and watches for a return of her own self in those spaces." In this sense, solitude is a kind of boundary or limit which enables us to disconnect enough from our immediate surroundings to discover what we ourselves believe, know and value. We unify and deepen the self. It is an experience of freedom, the well spring of new and stronger directions... It is the basis of original contributions to the world.

Opening (5 minutes)

Light the chalice and offer these words:

Come into this circle of caring. We light this chalice as a beacon of hope, a sign of our listening, and a quest for clearer understandings of ourselves and others. We honor our shared moments in life.

Lead the group in singing "I've Got Peace Like a River," Hymn 100 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Stretching (10 minutes)

Introduce the activity using these or similar words:

In 1954, a young research physician, Denham Harman, developed the "free radical theory of aging." After decades of additional research, his work was

accepted by the medical establishment. Now his findings support research into cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and Alzheimer's disease. The theory holds that one byproduct of oxygen utilization is adverse chemical reactions in cells. He advised slowing the aging process by reducing the production of free radicals. This is done by maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and vitamins as needed. Dr. Harman also advocated not smoking and limiting use of alcohol. He inspired thousands of young medical research scientists, worked into his mid-nineties, and passed on from this life at ninety-eight after a brief illness.

Today an increasing number of people live into their eighties, nineties, and past the century mark. The Today Show's special birthday greetings are now given only to people over one hundred years of age, because living into one's nineties is no longer as rare as it once was.

In the spirit of Dr. Harman's advice, we begin our workshop with some oxygenating exercises. Please take into account any physical limitations you may have and adapt the exercises to what you are able to do. Now, if you are able to do so, please stand up.

Then, lead the group in these exercises, adapted from the book *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé, demonstrating as you lead:

Exercise 1: Begin by stretching your face. Gently rub small circles all over your face with both hands. (1 min.) Softly pat your face all over. (1 min.) Feel the color come to your cheeks as the muscles and blood vessels respond. Now relive your childhood and make some funny faces: Here's one to try: Scrunch up your forehead and try to wiggle your nose. What other funny faces are in your repertoire? Then open your mouth wide and say, "ooh-eee-ooh-eee-ooh-eee"! a few times (1 min.) And finally, with both hands, caress every part of your face. (1 min.)

Exercise 2: Take a deep, slow breath. Stretch wide your arms out to the side, being careful not to whack your neighbor! Feel your chest expand and stretch. Now, gently tap your chest and sides using a soft fist. (1 min.) It is said that this exercise helps your immune system.

Activity 2: My Most Influential Person (15 minutes)

Remind participants of the home journaling assignment from last week:

Consider the most influential people in your life. Divide pages into thirds and title each third of a page with a decade; for example, birth to age 10, age 11-20, and so on. Then, in the space for each decade, write about the most influential person in your life at that time.

Invite participants to choose one influential person in their lives. Ask them to move into groups of three

and to share their remembrances of that person. Tell them that they will have four minutes each, and that you will ring a chime or bell after each four minutes to signal time to change speakers.

Activity 3: Spiritual Journaling (10 minutes)

Post the journaling questions you have written on newsprint and read them aloud. Invite participants to write their responses to the questions in their journals.

Activity 4: Guided Meditation (20 minutes)

Introduce the activity, saying:

Following our middle-age years, the next life stage deserves a respectful label, like elderhood instead of old people. Elderhood years present a gift of time when a person can grow spiritually as they acknowledge and connect with their deeper self. These years allow us to reflect on past experiences with understanding and earned wisdom. When we meditate we connect with our inner self. I invite you now to join me in a guided meditation.

Lead a guided meditation using these or similar words:

Begin by sitting comfortably in your chair with both feet on the floor and uncrossed. Your eyes can be open or closed.

Breathe. Simply breathe. In and out, in and out. Notice the movement of the air as you breathe. Breathe in enough oxygen to feel movement in your body and allow your belly and then your chest to expand.

Exhale. Let go of everything that does not seem vital to your life at this moment.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Allow each inhale to be deeper, every exhale to fully release the breath. Feel energy move and shift in your body as your cells oxygenate. Continue with this breathing.

At the same time, waken your senses and be present to yourself and your surroundings. Notice what attracts your attention and stay with that for a moment and then let it go. Let it go.

As you continue with the relaxed breathing, imagine you are moving along the pathway to one of your favorite outdoor places with its awe-inspiring view. Stop and take in what is around you. Notice that sitting on a bench is a young person. That person turns out to be you, the you of many years ago. Say hello and sit down next to your younger self. It is good to be there together. You, the older and wiser person, tell them that you remember a difficult time they endured. (Pause.) Acknowledge the courage they had at the time. Realize that your younger self

did as well as possible at the time for someone their age. (Pause.) Give them a warm, reassuring hug and let them know that things will be all right. (Pause.) Stay with them a moment longer while you experience the warmth of being with your younger self. (Pause.) Tell them you are always there for them and will reconnect. (Pause.) Then turn and head back along the pathway. When you are ready, come back into this place and time.

Ask “How was that for you?” and invite responses.

Activity 5: Life Maps and Lifescapes (20 minutes)

Introduce the activity, saying:

When we review our succession of life experiences, we see that observed together they develop a lived pathway. We can make a visual representation of this by connecting our meaningful people, times, and places to create a Life Map or Lifescape. Each person’s creation is unique and theirs to develop as a representation of their lived experiences. Imagine that you are viewing your life as if you are looking down from an airplane at eighteen thousand feet. From the air, we get a wide view of streets and places in the landscape below. On paper, you will create this airplane view of your life using words, places, and symbols, for

example, stick figures or other simple drawings.

Distribute two sheets of blank paper to each person and two sheets of cover stock. Set out transparent tape. Invite participants to use their journal entries and list of influential people by decades as a guide and to begin planning their Life Map or Lifescape. Give these instructions:

- Sketch your ideas in pencil on computer paper. Begin your life path at the top left of the page—with your birth.
- Allow your experience pathway to wind from one happening/place to the next, meandering around the page toward the bottom right, the present time. Most likely your pathway has many curves.
- Move to the second page when you need more paper.
- Allow space for the future.
- Once you figure out your overall idea, tape the two sheets of cover stock together (on the back side) to make the page shape you prefer, taping on either the long side or the shorter one. Feel free to create a different page arrangement or to use an additional piece of paper. Remember to leave plenty of room in your Life Map or Lifescape for your life to unfold along the way.
- Finish it at home and bring it with you to our next workshop. You can always add more.

For Next Time (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 1, Five-Minute Practice of Presence, and Handout 2, Looking Ahead to Workshop 3. Respond to any questions. Invite

participants to pack up their incomplete Life Map or Lifescape projects for completion at home.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them.

Shuffle and set out Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one. Then take a card and read your blessing aloud. Invite participants in turn to share their blessings aloud; provide a pause between blessings. Then invite participants to read the closing words in unison.

Extinguish the chalice. Collect the Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Five Minute Practice of Presence

Printing This Handout

Download a [high-resolution copy of this Handout \(PDF\)](#) for printing.

Handout 2: Looking Ahead to Workshop 3

The part of living that is opposite of connecting with others is solitude.

It isn't the same thing as loneliness. Instead it is the opportunity we give ourselves when we both become more aware of our inner depths and yet retain our sense of unity with others. As we live we try to honor these alternating moments of solitude and community, to be fully present to others and yet not alienated from our own thoughts and feelings.

One woman describes this in terms of the spaces within her that are filled with the needs and desires and requests of others. For her, "Solitude is the interval in which she waits and watches for a return of her own self in those spaces." In this sense, solitude is a kind of boundary or limit which enables us to disconnect enough from our immediate surroundings to discover what we ourselves believe, know and value. We unify and deepen the self. It is an experience of freedom, the well spring of new and stronger directions... It is the basis of original contributions to the world.

— Kathleen Fischer in *Autumn Gospel*

For Next Time

1. Find a quiet place to sit. Try using the Five Minute Practice of Presence regularly.
2. Using your Art Toolkit and journal writings, develop your Life Map or Lifescape and bring it with you next week. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call me or email me [add leader contact information].
3. Bring your Life Map or Lifescape next time. Continue to add life happenings as you think of them.
4. Remember to bring your lunch, your mug, your Journal, and your Art Toolkit to the next workshop.

Future Workshops

[Date] Workshop 3: Diving through the Layers – The Fabric of My Life

[Date] Workshop 4: Creating New Visions – Building on Experience

[Date] Workshop 5: Making Friends with Mortality

[Date] Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope

Find Out More

Further reading on aging and spirituality:

- Fisher, Kathleen, *Autumn Gospel* (Paulist Press, 1995)

For more exercises for good health:

- [Breathing Exercises](#), Center on Aging Studies without Walls, University of Missouri: Kansas City, MO.

Information in this workshop about Denham Harman and free radical theory was adapted from an Associated Press obituary by Josh Funk,

published 12/02/2014 and copyright 2014 Boston
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Workshop 3: Diving Through the Layers – The Fabric of My Life

Introduction

This workshop will focus on gaining an understanding of the fabric of one’s personal life up to the present. While one’s life to date is whole cloth, it is still being woven on the life loom in one’s own design with layers or stripes of personal events. Participants will come to the workshop with their lives laid out on paper in symbolic color and design. Each one has devoted time at home to creating a personal Life Map or Lifescape.

As recommended in the program Introduction, it is important and rewarding for the leader to create a personal Life Map or Lifescape before the workshop. Creating your own project allows you to deeply understand this interesting and challenging process. It is hard work! Participants’ creative solutions to the challenge of creating a Life Map or Lifescape may hold surprises. Most likely they will not consider their work is finished. A large part of this session is for participants who wish to do so to share parts of their work. Keep the box of tissues nearby. Sharing may bring up meaningful, forgotten events.

Experience has shown that this program works best when each workshop begins with the opportunity for participants to eat lunch together. Shared lunch, whether individual brown bag or something more elaborate, allows time for community building and sets a tone for what follows. A few days before the workshop, remind participants by email or phone to bring their Lifescape or Life Map, their bag lunch,

and a mug or tell them about lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to continue to grow a supportive community
- Invite participants to consider past negative and positive happenings as meaningful parts of lived experience
- Offer meditation and stretching exercises as spiritual tools
- Offer a process for understanding one’s Life Map or Landscape
- Offer a process for claiming inner wisdom.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Continue to grow a supportive community
- Consider past negative and positive happenings as meaningful parts of lived experience
- Take part in and learn simple stretching exercises
- Share Life Maps or Lifescapes and claim wisdom from life experience
- Experience guided meditation as a centering technique
- Reflect on past hurts and offer forgiveness.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Lunch	20
Opening	5
Activity 1: Stretching	5

Activity 2: Sharing Life Maps and Lifescapes	25
Activity 3: Guided Meditation	15
Activity 4: Spiritual Journaling	15
Activity 5: Small Group Sharing	15
For Next Time	10
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth and decorations for worship table: flowers, leaves, plant, small sculpture, or other decorative items
- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Name badges from Workshop 1
- Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- "[The Layers](#)" by Stanley Kunitz
- Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 4
- Handout 2, UUA Pamphlet - All Our Losses
- Blessing Cards (from Workshop 1)

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.
- Arrange for furniture setup:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the head table, chairs around outside of tables).

- For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place and arrange decorations.
- Copy "[The Layers](#)" and Handout 2, UUA Pamphlet - All Our Losses.
- Customize and copy Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 4.
- Write workshop agenda on newsprint, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Post Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1.
- Write journaling questions on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:
 - Giving forgiveness is not easy but it is not impossible. How was it for you to do the guided imagery?
 - How did it affect your view of past troublemakers?
- Write on a newsprint sheet, and set aside: *We close our time by extinguishing the chalice and carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.*
- Shuffle the Blessing Cards.

Lunch (20 minutes)

Welcome participants as they arrive and ask them to put on their name tags. Help them post their Life Maps or Lifescapes on the wall. Encourage them to chat over lunch. As lunchtime draws to a close, read aloud the poem "[The Layers](#)" by Stanley

Kunitz, the late poet laureate, an elder, longtime gardener, and summer resident of Provincetown, MA. Tell participants they will receive a copy to take home.

Opening (5 minutes)

Light the chalice and offer these words by Marilyn Sewell in *Breaking Free: Women of Spirit at Midlife and Beyond*:

We look at ourselves as we are, and life as it is, and we come to some reconciliation of the two. As we age, our aliveness shines forth from the depths of spirit, if we dare to go there. Maturity can bring a sweet kind of joy, as we come to know how deeply connected we are with all that is, as we understand and accept how much we have to give.

Lead the group in singing "Gathered Here," Hymn 389 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Stretching (5 minutes)

Lead the group in stretching exercises, demonstrating as you lead. These are the same exercises used in Workshop 2, adapted from the book *Five-Minute Massage* by Robert Thé:

Exercise 1: Begin by stretching your face. Gently rub small circles all over your face with both hands. (1 min.) Softly pat your face all over. (1 min.) Feel the color come to your cheeks as the muscles and blood vessels respond. Now relive your childhood and make some funny faces: Here's one to try: Scrunch up your forehead and try to wiggle your nose. What other funny faces

are in your repertoire? Then open your mouth wide and say, "ooh-eee-ooh-eee-ooh-eee"! a few times (1 min.) And finally, with both hands, caress every part of your face. (1 min.)

Exercise 2: Take a deep, slow breath. Stretch wide your arms out to the side, being careful not to whack your neighbor! Feel your chest expand and stretch. Now, gently tap your chest and sides using a soft fist. (1 min.) It is said that this exercise helps your immune system.

Activity 2: Sharing Life Maps and Lifescapes (25 minutes)

Acknowledge everyone's hard work and creativity as participants look at their collective work posted on the wall. Ask:

What was it like to bring together the high peaks and low valleys in your past life experience?

This is the time for participants to briefly share feelings about the experience if they wish. Then ask:

Who would like to share their work, or parts of it?

As participants share, there may be some tears. Say:

We love our happy times and people, but past hurts and losses can still be felt. Writing about those sad or challenging happenings in Your Journal can help put them to rest. Remember, tears are cleansing. Expressing grief

through writing and with the use of color and symbols can strengthen our sense of well-being and purpose. It allows us to move on and sense our hidden strengths. As Maya Angelou said, "You will face many defeats in your life, but never let yourself be defeated."

Share this quote from a 1988 UUA pamphlet, "All Our Losses", by John Nichols:

The feelings that sweep over us in grieving, however uncomfortable and strange, are essential to rebuilding our personal worlds so that we may become more accepting of a life that contains joy and sorrow. We want our churches and fellowships to be communities that will be with us at times of loss, to comfort and to wait with us in the confidence that we will emerge from our grief with greater strength and perspective.

Activity 3: Guided Meditation (15 minutes)

Invite participants to join you in a guided meditation. Say these or similar words:

Begin by sitting comfortably in your chair with both feet on the floor and uncrossed. Your eyes can be open or closed.

Breathe. Simply breathe. In and out, in and out. Notice the movement of the air as you breathe. Breathe in enough oxygen to feel movement in your body and allow your belly and then your chest to expand.

Exhale. Let go of everything that does not seem vital to your life at this moment.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Allow each in breath to be deeper, every exhale to fully release the breath. Feel energy move and shift in your body as your cells oxygenate. Continue this breathing.

As you continue your relaxed breathing, imagine that today is your unbirthday, six months after your actual birthdate. At your favorite outdoor place, you are hosting a gathering for those people who gave you a difficult time in the past. If the weather is cold, don't worry. You are in a temporary heated shelter and you can still enjoy the view! Those past troubling people of yours are seated in chairs around a table. You are at the head of the table.

(Pause.) Tell them they have been invited because you want them know that while they were hurtful to you at one time, you healed—and gained in wisdom from the event. Now you are wiser and able to forgive them for their action, because no longer do they have a hold on you. From that negative experience, you learned and grew in wholeness. (Pause.) Meeting with these negative people takes great courage on your part, and you realize that your younger self did as much as possible at the time, in that situation. (Pause.) Look

at them a moment longer. Then as you toast them with a glass of wine or sparkling grape juice, tell them good-bye and ask them to leave. They will! (Pause.) Remember, you can always reconnect with your younger self, the one who was hurt but now is safe within you. (Pause.)

Look again at the beautiful view that means so much to you. Beauty restores the soul. Know that you can visit it again. Then turn and come back along the pathway. (Pause.) When you are ready, open your eyes and be in this place and time.

Ask: "How was that for you?" and invite responses.

Activity 4: Spiritual Journaling (15 minutes)

Share this quote from Yogi Bhajan:

If you are willing to look at another person's behavior toward you as a reflection of the state of their relationship with themselves rather than a statement about your value as a person, then you will, over a period of time, cease to react at all.

Post the journaling questions you have written on newsprint and read them aloud. Invite participants to write their responses to the questions in their journals.

Activity 5: Small Group Sharing (15 minutes)

Invite participants to move into groups of three to share, to the degree they are comfortable, their reflections from their journaling. Use the bell or chime at five-minute intervals to signal time to change speakers.

For Next Time (10 minutes)

Distribute Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 4, and Handout 2, UUA Pamphlet - All Our Losses, and a copy of the poem "The Layers." Respond to any questions.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them.

Shuffle and set out the Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one. Then take a card and read your blessing aloud. Invite participants in turn to share their blessing aloud. Provide a pause between the blessings. Then invite participants to read the closing words in unison.

Extinguish the chalice. Collect Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Looking Ahead to Workshop 4

Stretching Exercises

Adapted from *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé (Sterling, 1995)

Exercise 1: Begin by stretching your face. Gently rub small circles all over your face with both hands. (1 min.) Softly pat your face all over. (1 min.) Feel the color come to your cheeks as the muscles and blood vessels respond. Now relive your childhood and make some funny faces: Here's one to try: Scrunch up your forehead and try to wiggle your nose. What other funny faces are in your repertoire? Then open your mouth wide and say, "ooh-eee-ooh-eee-ooh-eee"! a few times (1 min.) And finally, with both hands, caress every part of your face. (1 min.)

Exercise 2: Take a deep, slow breath. Stretch wide your arms out to the side, being careful not to whack your neighbor! Feel your chest expand and stretch. Now , gently tap your chest and sides using a soft fist. (1 min.) It is said that this exercise helps your immune system.

For Next Time

1. Bring a special object that is meaningful in relation to your inner strength.
2. Read Handout 2, UUA Pamphlet - All Our Losses.
3. Take your Life Map or Lifescape home with you and add happenings as you come to remember

them. Bring the Life Map or Lifescape back for the last workshop, Workshop 6.

4. Remember to bring your lunch, your mug, your Journal, and your Art Toolkit.

Future Workshops

[Date] *Workshop 4: Creating New Visions – Building on Experience*

[Date] *Workshop 5: Making Friends with Mortality*

[Date] *Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope*

Find Out More

Consider the following books for further reading about coming to terms with events in our lives:

- Kushner, Harold H. *Overcoming Life's Disappointments* (Anchor Books, 2007)
- Sewall, Marilyn, ed. *Breaking Free: Women of Spirit at Midlife and Beyond* (Beacon Press, 2001)
- Sheehy, Gail. *Understanding Men's Passages: Discovering the New Map of Men's Lives* (Random House, 1998)

Handout 2: UUA Pamphlet – All Our Losses

This is the text of a 1988 UUA pamphlet written by John H. Nichols. Used with permission.

Turning points

When our parents left us at summer camp the first time, when our first pet died, when our best friend moved to another community, we grieved. We suffered what seemed, then, a very serious loss. The road to maturity is paved with losses and griefs.

Our smaller losses condition the ways we respond to life's major losses, for which no one is ever fully prepared. These could include the loss of a parent, the loss of a spouse through death or divorce, the loss of a job, a favorite home, or a stage of life that seemed promising. Times like these are turning points for everyone. Our personal universes are shattered by these events, and we seek wisdom and strength to carry on while we adjust to living with the change that has happened. In these moments Unitarian Universalists want the support of their religious faith.

When we suffer a serious setback it is tempting for most people to ask, "Why me?" [People] have always wondered if there is some cosmic connection between what they have done or thought and a loss that seems like God's punishment. Responding to this feeling, some religious traditions have taught that God is indeed the author of losses, that God causes losses to happen in order to teach us a lesson or to test our faith. Believing this, some people have smothered their anger or grief for years so that they do not

appear weak or faithless. Angry at God, but unable to express it, they turn their anger, instead, upon those they love most.

Strength and perspective

Unitarian Universalists do not believe in a God who uses losses and tragedies either to punish or teach. The feelings that sweep over us in grieving, however uncomfortable and strange, are essential to rebuilding our personal worlds so that we may become more accepting of a life that contains joy and sorrow. We want our churches and fellowships to be communities that will be with us at times of loss, to comfort and to wait with us in the confidence that we will emerge from our grief with greater strength and perspective.

Each person's journey to maturity is necessarily singular, but in our approach to loss there are remarkable similarities in what has been helpful to us. Often we differ only in the words we choose to describe the turning points in our lives.

When they anticipate or experience a serious setback, many people look for a religious belief that will ease their panic and take away their pain. Unitarian Universalists believe that each person's religious ideas evolve not as much out of a faith that is given to us or inherited as from the life experiences that leave us with a feeling of confidence in the goodness of life and in our ability to enjoy it. To achieve a better perspective on the Unitarian Universalist response to loss, we asked six religious liberals to speak about difficult life experiences and the lessons they learned.

Affection and compassion

"Coping," Barbara Kirkpatrick asks, "What is coping? Often it is breathing in and breathing out while struggling to keep one's essential affairs in order despite emotional desolation. Sleep brings respite, but at every awakening a devastating numbness, a feeling of unreality, returns.

"Time and a sense of responsibility for oneself and others bring a new level of coping. The isolation of sorrow is breached by the touch of another's love and need and pain, and the numbness yields a little. The presence of affection and compassion in dear ones remaining around me becomes a tangible warmth, now, and I am able to allow it to flow into my experience. Time is part of coping. Experiencing the beautiful new sweetness of the loves who are left to me is part of coping. The pain ever so gradually becomes an underlying given in my life—always there even when not in conscious awareness. I find it shedding a subtle glow on day-to-day living, highlighting the preciousness of love, of contact with others, of keeping lines of communication open.

"Coping is also paying attention to what is yet within my power to effect, to change, to move, to teach, to become. So loss, ironically, by the sharpness of its contrast, brings appreciation of gain, and even, in time, celebration."

To grieve and to heal

No one welcomes serious loss. It disrupts our lives and our equilibrium. Few people, at the moment of loss or even for a long time afterward, can say, "Maybe I'll grow from this." Many religious liberals testify that growth occurs when we can allow grieving time for its expression. One person remarked that after an intimate encounter with

disappointment she found that she had become a more effective and loving person.

Katrina Finley writes, "I have learned the value of getting angry rather than staying depressed. I have learned to take more risks and not worry so much about perfection. I have learned to say yes more often to my legitimate needs and wants without guilt or apologies. I have learned that in order to face down my fear of lacking my own authority to act I must exercise my energies and love, for these define me. I have learned to give myself more to others in order that by being myself in their presence they can feel it is all right to be themselves. I have experienced sharing love with my children, other members of my family, and friends, and when I love someone, I tell them and show them how much. In all the laughter and beauty around me I've experienced what it means to have self-love and to take the time I need to grieve and to heal and to take care of myself."

To affirm life

In the wake of each loss we are inclined to curse the existence that deals out so many hardships, but many Unitarian Universalists emerge from their grieving with a sense of renewed faith in life, which offered them strength and hope when they most needed it. Life gives us more than it takes from us and we express this feeling in several ways—some choose traditional religious language and others their own.

Kathryn Polhemus speaks of "an innate sense of optimism I've found during hard times. Because I've been able to grow in my life and become more and more who I need and want to be, I feel a

confidence that whatever happens I'll be able to get through it and learn from it."

Frances M. Bancroft explains, "I handle my losses by having a faith in an expanded reality out there that encompasses those I've lost and other mysteries. And in my family's tradition, where the job of those who survive a crisis is to go on with life, I go on, and by so doing, affirm life."

You are not alone.

In a sermon, "The Faith That Sustains Us," one of our ministers, George K. Beach, describes the sacred: "The understanding that is not so much achieved as stumbled into, as a kind of insight; the strength to endure, which is not so much a result of trying harder, like Avis, as of owning my own sense of weakness, fearfulness and alienation, because I have felt that kingdom in me and among us which runs deeper still; the sense of inner strength, a being self possessed and rooted in oneself, which is no result of self assertion or being ever and always 'the master of my fate and the captain of my soul,' but is found precisely in the letting go of control, the letting be of my life, the self-acceptance which I call 'being given to myself.'"

Carl Scovel, a Unitarian Universalist minister serving one of our Christian congregations, uses these words, "If there is one message that has given Christians hope, courage, and joy in the face of history and personal pain, it has been the promise, 'You are not alone. In your sickness you are not alone. In your anxiety you are not alone. In your prosperity you are not alone. In your privation you are not alone. In your waking, in your working, in your sleeping, in your dying you are not alone.' That promise, I believe, beyond every creed and

dogma (necessary as they are) has been the lifeblood of the Christian church and the breath of life in Christian [adults and children] ... for almost twenty centuries of the church's existence."

Life gives more than it takes.

Since our experiences, perspectives, and theological orientations differ, giving advice is a hazardous matter for anyone. But there is more commonality in our approach to loss and grieving than it might seem. One of the essentials of coping with loss is taking ourselves very seriously. Feelings of sorrow or confusion, even anger, are real and must be expressed in order for healing to occur. When we cease trying to push our pain away we discover, little by little, that we can bear it. Having freed ourselves of the fear that we cannot bear the pain, we discover that others are genuinely reaching out to us. They are not frightened by our grief as perhaps we thought they would be. Suddenly, the larger world begins to open up again and feels more secure than it felt at the moment of our loss.

Far down the road of grieving, we recognize that in the context of a larger reality, which some Unitarian Universalists call God, we still have that which was lost, and much more. This life always gives us far more than it takes away. With this conviction we turn again to the task of living and to those near at hand who need us to live well.

Workshop 4: Creating New Visions – Building on Experience

Introduction

Elderhood in the twenty-first century brings a golden gift of time that earlier generations may not have received. It offers moments to rethink and revalue one’s expertise and interests. Increased self-understanding makes it possible to expand one’s ability to create something new or build a new way of being, even while dealing with physical and mental challenges, losses, and financial concerns that sometimes come with aging.

The focus for this workshop is deepening participants’ understanding of the grounding of their lives. They have worked hard to create a Lifescape or Life Map, dealing with old hurts, angers, and grudges and leaving themselves freer to make gains in personal spiritual growth. For this workshop, each participant brings with them a cherished object that connects to their deepest sense of being, their soul. Participants will spend time journaling before sharing their object with others and relating it to their own story.

Note: This workshop includes mandala making. A tactile collage mandala is an alternative for visually impaired persons. Complete instructions and a materials list can be found in the materials section of the Introduction.

Experience has shown that this program works best when each workshop begins with the opportunity for participants to eat lunch together. Shared lunch, whether individual brown bag or something more

elaborate, allows time for community building and sets a tone for what follows. A few days before the workshop, remind participants by email or phone to bring their special objects, their bag lunch, and a mug or tell them about lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to continue to grow a supportive community
- Invite participants to value elderhood as a time of spiritual richness despite personal challenges of aging
- Offer mandala making as a spiritual tool.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Continue to grow a supportive community
- Come to value elderhood as a time of spiritual richness despite personal challenges of aging
- Take part in and learn simple stretching exercises
- Share reflections on objects representing their deepest sense of being
- Create mandalas to further explore inner wisdom and strength.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Lunch	20
Opening	5
Activity 1: Stretching	10
Activity 2: Spiritual	15

Journaling	
Activity 3: Sharing of Meaningful Objects	30
Activity 4: Creating Object Mandalas	15
Activity 5: Sharing in Pairs	10
For Next Time	5
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth
- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Name badges from Workshop 1
- Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- White cover stock
- Lid or salad plate, approximately 5 inches in diameter, for tracing
- Pencil
- Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 5
- Your own special object
- Blessing Cards
- Optional: For tactile collage mandalas (an adaptation for visually impaired persons), see the Materials section of the program Introduction

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.

- Arrange for furniture setup:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the head table, chairs around outside of tables).
 - For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place.
- Customize and make copies of Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 5.
- Write workshop agenda on a newsprint sheet, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Post Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1.
- Write journaling questions on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:
 - When in my life did I come upon this special object and how did it come to me?
 - What meaning does this object have for me?
 - How is this object connected to what grounds me? How does it represent my wisdom and insight?
- Make a circle for each participant by tracing the lid or salad plate on cover stock, two per piece. Cut the pages in half, with one circle per half.
- Write on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:

*We close our time by extinguishing
the chalice and carry its light and our
blessings with us into the world.*

- Shuffle the Blessing Cards.
- Optional: For preparing tactile collage mandalas (an adaptation for visually impaired persons), see the Materials section of the program Introduction.

Lunch (20 minutes)

Welcome participants as they arrive and ask them to put on their name tags. Invite them to put their special objects on the cloth around the chalice. Encourage them to chat over lunch. As lunchtime draws to a close, share these words of Caroline Joy Adams, used with permission:

*Life is a continual process of letting
go...and moving forward...and letting
go... and moving forward.*

*For there are times when our souls are
set on fire, and deeply cherished
dreams must die...and we are forced
once again to create new visions...to
weave new tapestries from the
fragments of the old...*

*Yet these new visions born from the fire
of wisdom at the deepest level of our
soul, may well become far more
powerful, more expansive, than what
once was...*

*And as we weave and mend,
rearranging the pieces of our lives into
patterns that reflect our newly won
strength-gained-through-struggle...we
shall survive, go on, and*

*ultimately...thrive...not despite our
immense challenges, but truly, by living
through and with them...*

Opening (5 minutes)

Light the chalice and offer these words from Sophia Lyon Fahs:

*We pause in reverence before all
intangible things*

*that eyes see not, nor ears detect
that hands can never touch
that space can not hold
and time can not measure.*

*There is never an end to our yearning to
know the unknown*

after all our labor at learning.

*There is never an end to our trying the
untried*

Fling wide the windows, O my soul!

The bright beams of morning are warm.

Lead the group in singing "Voice Still and Small," Hymn 391 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Stretching (10 minutes)

Lead the group in these exercises, adapted from the book *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé. Demonstrating as you lead, begin with the exercise from previous workshops and add another. Remind participants to do them only if they are physically able:

Exercise 1: Take a gentle, slow breath.
Stretch your arms wide out to the side,

being careful not to whack your neighbor! This expands and stretches your chest. Now using loose fists, gently tap your chest and sides. (1 min.)

Exercise 2: Take a deep breath and slowly raise up your shoulders as high as your ears. Then, as you slowly breathe out, release your shoulders to fall back to their original position. Do this three times, releasing any tension you might be holding in your shoulders.

Next, circle with your right shoulder backward and around, keeping the circle small at first and then slowly expanding the motion until the whole area moves freely. Try changing direction, circling the shoulder forward. Repeat with your left shoulder.

Now, try moving your shoulders together in the same direction, making different sized circles. Move your shoulders gently up and down to finish.

Activity 2: Spiritual Journaling (15 minutes)

Invite participants to look at the array of meaningful objects around the chalice and then to focus on their own object. Post the journaling questions and invite participants to journal about their object, using the posted questions to help them get started.

Activity 3: Sharing of Meaningful Objects (30 minutes)

Ask: “Was it easy or difficult to decide which object to bring with you?” Allow time for responses.

Tell participants that you will ask them one at a time to stand or sit near the chalice and share their object with other participants. Ask them to hold their meaningful object while they tell its story, how it speaks to them and how it relates to their thinking about life. Tell them that a short period of silence will follow each person’s story and reflection. Model the sharing using your own object, and then ask for a volunteer to begin.

Activity 4: Creating Object Mandalas (15 minutes)

Give each person a half sheet of cover stock with a circle drawn on it. Invite them to honor their object and what it symbolizes by using their own art supplies to create a mandala. Explain that they will reflect what their object means to them by using color, line, and shapes within the circle on their paper. Say:

The symbolic use of a circle is found in many of the world’s cultures. Some examples are rose windows in cathedrals, creative works of indigenous peoples, the city layouts of Paris and Washington, DC, Buddhist prayer mandalas, and labyrinths. While it is relatively easy to find pictures of mandalas in books and online, we are not going to refer to examples so that our mandalas will be our own expressions. They do not need to look any certain way to be “right.” The mandala you create is a visual representation of an aspect of your

spirit. Like your meaningful object, it can serve to ground you during difficult situations.

Suggest that participants note the day's date on the page. At some future point they might find it interesting to recall when they created their mandala.

Activity 5: Sharing in Pairs (10 minutes)

Invite participants to move into pairs to share their mandalas, to the degree they are comfortable. Use the bell or chime at five minutes to signal time to change speakers.

For Next Time (5 minutes)

Distribute Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 5. Respond to any questions.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them.

Shuffle and set out Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one. Then take a card and read your blessing aloud. Invite participants in turn to share their blessing aloud. Allow a pause between each blessing. Then invite participants to read the closing words in unison.

Extinguish the chalice. Collect Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Looking Ahead to Workshop 5

My future starts when I wake up every morning. — Miles Davis

Life is a continual process of letting go ... and moving forward ... and letting go ... and moving forward.

For there are times when our souls are set on fire, and deeply cherished dreams must die ... and we are forced once again to create new visions ... to weave new tapestries from the fragments of the old ...

Yet these new visions born from the fire of wisdom at the deepest level of our soul, may well become far more powerful, more expansive, than what once was ...

And as we weave and mend, rearranging the pieces of our lives into patterns that reflect our newly won strength-gained-through-struggle ... we shall survive, go on, and ultimately ... thrive ... not despite our immense challenges, but truly, by living through and with them ... — [Caroline Joy Adams](#)

Used with permission.

Stretching Exercise

Adapted from *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé, (Sterling, 1995)

Take a deep breath and slowly raise up your shoulders as high as your ears. Then, as you slowly breathe out, release

your shoulders to fall back to their original position. Do this three times, releasing any tension you might be holding in your shoulders.

Next, circle with your right shoulder backward and around, keeping the circle small at first and then slowly expanding the motion until the whole area moves freely. Try changing direction, circling the shoulder forward. Repeat with your left shoulder.

Now, try moving your shoulders together in the same direction, making different sized circles. Move your shoulders gently up and down to finish.

For Next Time

In Your Journal, respond to these questions:

1. What would I like my obituary to say about me?
2. Do I remember when I became aware that one day I would die?
3. How do I see myself in connection with the universe?

Remember to bring your lunch, your mug, your Journal, and your Art Toolkit.

Future Workshops

[Date] Workshop 5: *Making Friends with Mortality*

[Date] Workshop 6: *Hindsight, Humor, and Hope*

Find Out More

For further reading about mandalas:

- Jaffé, Aniela, ed., *C. G. Jung: Word and Image* (Princeton University Press, 1979)

For an inspirational story about forgiveness:

- Kraybill, Donald B., Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (Jossey-Bass, 2007)

For more inspirational words from Caroline Joy Adams, who is a speaker, writer, and writing coach, visit her website: www.carolinejoyadams.com.

Workshop 5: Making Friends with Mortality

Introduction

Today’s consumer-driven society wants adults to forget that aging is a natural process that can be navigated gracefully without plastic surgery and hair dye—and overmedication. When individuals realize they can do nothing to keep from growing old, except of course to die young, they may develop a deep fear of aging. It is the fear of aging and dying that brings frustration and sadness to people. Some fear possible suffering; no one wants their demise to be painful.

It best to make friends with one’s mortality. It is not going to go away. It is possible to trust that the passing or release from earthly life, although its particulars are unknown, is not to be feared. One can think about it as a process that parallels our soul’s beginning and birth. This workshop focuses on being with participants as they make friends with aging and the inevitability of death.

In this workshop, participants are invited to complete a [Five Wishes booklet](#) from Aging with Dignity. Obtain booklets well in advance of the workshop (see Materials section of program Introduction).

Experience has shown that this program works best when each workshop begins with the opportunity for participants to eat lunch together. Shared lunch, whether individual brown bag or something more elaborate, allows time for community building and sets a tone for what follows. A few days before the workshop, remind participants by email or phone to

bring their bag lunch and a mug, or tell them about lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to continue to grow a supportive community
- Invite participants to value elderhood as a time of spiritual richness despite personal challenges of aging
- Invite participants to become comfortable with personal mortality.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Continue to grow a supportive community
- Come to value elderhood as a time of spiritual richness despite personal challenges of aging
- Share personal obituaries and reflections on mortality
- Contemplate experiences of true beauty and create a mandala
- Begin to articulate end-of-life wishes.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Lunch	20
Opening	5
Activity 1: Stretching	10
Activity 2: Sharing Journal Reflections	25
Activity 3: Beauty and a Mandala	20

Activity 4: Five Wishes	25
For Next Time	5
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth and decorations for worship table: flowers, leaves, plant, small sculpture, or other decorative items
- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Name badges from Workshop 1
- Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- White cover stock
- Lid or salad plate, approximately 5 inches in diameter, for tracing
- Pencil
- Copy of Five Wishes for each participant
- Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 6
- Blessing Cards
- Optional: For tactile collage mandalas (an adaptation for visually impaired persons), see the Materials section of the program Introduction

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.
- Arrange for furniture setup:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the

head table, chairs around outside of tables).

- For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place and arrange decorations.
- Customize and make copies of Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 6.
- Write workshop agenda on a newsprint sheet, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Post Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1.
- Draw a circle for each participant on cover stock by tracing a lid or salad plate, two circles per piece. Cut the pages in half, with one circle per half.
- Order [Five Wishes booklets](#) online well in advance. Review Five Wishes materials and complete your own copy.
- Write on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:

We close our time by extinguishing the chalice and carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.
- Shuffle the Blessing Cards.
- Make plans for a celebration during Workshop 6.
- Optional: For preparing tactile collage mandalas (an adaptation for visually impaired persons), see the Materials section of the program Introduction.

Lunch (20 minutes)

Welcome participants as they arrive. Invite them to wear their name tags and to place their special objects on the cloth around the chalice. Encourage them to chat over lunch. As lunchtime draws to a close, share the poem "On Aging" from AND STILL I RISE by Maya Angelou, copyright 1978 by Maya Angelou. Used by permission of Random House, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

When you see me sitting quietly, like a sack upon a shelf,

Don't think I need your chattering. I'm listening to myself.

Hold! Stop! Don't pity me! Hold! Stop your sympathy!

Understanding if you got it, otherwise I'll do without it!

When my bones are stiff and aching and my feet won't climb the stair,

I will only ask one favor: Don't bring me no rocking chair.

When you see me walking, stumbling, don't study and get it wrong.

'Cause tired don't mean lazy and every goodbye ain't gone.

I'm the same person I was back then, a little less hair, a little less chin,

A lot less lungs and much less wind.

But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.

Opening (5 minutes)

Light the chalice and offer these words adapted from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry:

*In a house which becomes a home,
one hands down and another takes up
the heritage of mind and heart,
laughter and tears, musings and deeds.
Love like a carefully loaded ship,
crosses the gulf between the
generations.*

We light this chalice for the children who come after us.

Lead the group in singing "This Little Light of Mine," Hymn 118 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Stretching (10 minutes)

Lead the group in these exercises, adapted from the book *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé, demonstrating as you lead. Begin with a new exercise for the arms and then add one from Workshop 4. Remind participants to do them only if they are physically able to do so.

Exercise 1: Interlock the fingers of both of your hands. Turn them palm out and stretch your arms in front of you. With your body facing forward, slowly move your interlocked hands, palm out to the right. Take two slow deep breaths. Then, repeat, moving your hands and arms to the left. Now, slowly bring your arms back to the center and relax them. Gently squeeze the muscles along each arm with your opposite hand. Move from shoulder to wrist on the inside of your

arm, remembering to breathe. Then turn your hand facing up and massage the back of your upper and lower arm. Take a deep breath and give each arm a gentle rub as you finish.

Exercise 2: Take a deep breath and slowly raise up your shoulders as high as your ears. Then, as you slowly breathe out, release your shoulders to fall back to their original position. Do this three times, releasing any tension you might be holding in your shoulders.

Next, circle with your right shoulder backward and around, keeping the circle small at first and then slowly expanding the motion until the whole area moves freely. Try changing direction, circling the shoulder forward. Repeat with your left shoulder.

Now, try moving your shoulders together in the same direction, making different sized circles. Move your shoulders gently up and down to finish.

Activity 2: Sharing Journal Reflections (25 minutes)

Invite participants to turn to their journal reflections, which they completed before the workshop, and respond to the question, “What would I like my obituary to say about me?” Ask them to turn to another person and to share to the degree they are comfortable. Allow six minutes for this part of the activity, signaling at three minutes with chime or bell to change speakers.

Regather the large group, then say:

This is the golden time in your life to think about what you want included in your obituary. What is most meaningful that you want people to know? Your thoughtful input now may keep your future published obit from being a boring, factual chronology! With whom in your life do you want to share what you have written—a family member or minister or special friend? (Pause.) How was it to write your obituary?

Invite comments and reflections. Commend participants for their bravery in contemplating and writing their own obituary.

Remind participants of the other two journaling questions they were given at the last workshop:

- After you understood that all life has a beginning and an ending, do you remember when you became aware that one day you would die?
- How do you see yourself in relation to the universe?

Invite them to return to their pairs and to share, to the degree they are comfortable, from their reflections in their journal writing. Allow ten minutes for this part of the activity, signaling at five minutes with the chime or bell to change speakers.

Activity 3: Beauty and a Mandala (20 minutes)

Introduce the activity with these or similar words:

Buckminster Fuller, the inventor of the geodesic dome and other imaginative designs, was called the last

Transcendentalist philosopher of the twentieth century because he saw human beings as a part of life and nature and not the master of it. His roots were in Unitarianism, and for a spiritual exercise he would rewrite the Lord's Prayer each year. In his later years, "Bucky" (as he was known) was asked about his future. He answered, "I came to pass, not to stay." He continued to live his life creatively. When we let go of the fear of death, we regain our positive energy and all the time taken up by fearful thinking.

This is not to discount the reality of emerging physical problems. Everything wears out with time. Not just us, but vegetation, birds, animals, and the things that are created and manufactured, such as cars, toasters, socks, lightbulbs, buildings, and the pyramids. No cellular thing exists forever; therefore a vital part of one's coping skills is to maintain inner strength. [You might remind the group of the slogan mentioned in Workshop 1, "Aging Is the Ultimate Extreme Sport."]

We better understand now the need for daily exercise and healthy food. But another essential is to nurture the soul with beauty. Where do we find real beauty, the kind that often catches us by surprise and is felt in our depths? Go walking in a park or by the shore of a lake, a wooded stream, a river, or an ocean. Get outside into the darkness of

night to experience a starry sky and the night sounds around you. Visit an art museum. Be transported by beautiful music. Experience the freshness and color of plants in a greenhouse or conservatory in midwinter. Create and tend an outside or window garden or a terrarium or aquarium. Or find it in connection, one person to another, through activities such as tutoring, volunteering with those who are confined to home due to illness, weather, or limited mobility, or children or animals at a shelter, or helping at a nonprofit. Beauty that nourishes the soul is found everywhere. It is found when we realize we are being touched by the mysterious, by the spirit of life connection, and we respond with awe.

Elders carry a treasure trove of wisdom that can help connect them to others. Offering bits of wisdom when asked is prudent, instead of imposing ourselves on folks as they figure out life for themselves. It can be the difference between being appreciated and being turned off. Being an elder is somewhat like being an omnibus that travels along carrying its load of passengers (experiences and understanding), stopping to let them debark and help where needed—all the while gathering more passengers (more understanding) along the way. The holy cargo was earned by dealing with positive and negative experiences and then reflecting

on them, discerning their significance. This is why self-nurturing is vital for human life. It balances the difficult things. We move along, carrying our wisdom load of experience, creativity, love, appreciation, reverence, forgiveness, compassion—and our sense of humor. The reward is to discover new ways to use this treasure.

Distribute the blank circle pages and ask participants to take out their art tools. Invite them to use color and design in a mandala to express one of their experiences with deep beauty. Allow 15 minutes for mandala creation. Suggest that participants date their mandalas and finish them at home, including them with their journals.

Activity 4: Five Wishes (25 minutes)

Introduce this activity, saying:

While it can be difficult at any time to deal with end-of-life issues because they concern our own mortality and the unknown, it is easier to make known our end-of-life health-care decisions while we are in good health. Atul Gawande, a wise surgeon and author of the book Being Mortal, says, “The two big unfixables are aging and dying. That is why it is good to start earlier to plan for quality of life when you may have an unfixable health problem.”

The last century’s rapid medical advances put all the focus on prolonging life—even if an actual cure was not possible and doing further treatment

would cause detrimental side effects. It is only recently that medical thinking in the United States has begun to change from “Extend life by all means” to having a conversation with the patient to help them consider, “What quality of living do I want for the end of my life?” Then a treatment plan can be developed to go with the patient’s wishes.

You may have heard of the thoughtful, well-constructed document called Five Wishes. It allows an individual to decide their desired quality end-of-life plan and includes an easy-to-complete form for recording those decisions. Waiting until we are confronted with difficult medical decisions makes these decisions more difficult.

Explain that the term *palliative care* is a term in end-of-life treatment conversations that is often misunderstood. Palliative care means noninvasive medical treatment along with relief from pain. It is not the same as hospice care, although it is a part of hospice care, in that it allows a terminally ill person to die peacefully without pain.

Give each participant a copy of the Five Wishes booklet. Review the information in the guide; go over the guide’s purpose and legal status, and how to fill it out. Be specific in telling participants whether the document has legal standing in your state or whether it will serve only as a statement of your wishes and must be supplemented by a different legal document. Ask participants to begin completing it in pencil, completing it in ink only when they are sure how they want their finished

document to read. Invite them to complete the booklet at home and share with a family member and their medical professional.

For Next Time (5 minutes)

Tell participants that you will have a celebration at the final workshop and that lunchtime will be a little longer. Explain your plans (for example, a potluck lunch or a lunch prepared by others) and what participants need to bring.

Distribute Handout 1, Looking Ahead to Workshop 6. Respond to any questions.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them.

Shuffle and set out Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one. Then take a card and read your blessing aloud. Invite participants in turn to share their blessings aloud. Allow a pause between each blessing. Then invite participants to read the closing words in unison.

Extinguish the chalice. Collect Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Looking Ahead to

Workshop 6

On Aging

When you see me sitting quietly, like a sack upon a shelf,

Don't think I need your chattering. I'm listening to myself.

Hold! Stop! Don't pity me! Hold! Stop your sympathy!

Understanding if you got it, otherwise I'll do without it!

When my bones are stiff and aching and my feet won't climb the stair,

I will only ask one favor: Don't bring me no rocking chair.

When you see me walking, stumbling, don't study and get it wrong.

'Cause tired don't mean lazy and every goodbye ain't gone.

I'm the same person I was back then, a little less hair, a little less chin,

A lot less lungs and much less wind.

But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in. —

“On Aging” from AND STILL I RISE by Maya Angelou, copyright © 1978 by Maya Angelou. Used by permission of Random House, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved.

Stretching Exercise

Adapted from *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé (Sterling, 1995)

Interlock the fingers of both of your hands. Turn them palm out and stretch your arms in front of you. With your body facing forward, slowly move your interlocked hands, palm out to the right. Take two slow deep breaths. Then, repeat, moving your hands and arms to the left. Now, slowly bring your arms back to the center and relax them.

Gently squeeze the muscles along each arm with your opposite hand. Move from shoulder to wrist on the inside of your arm, remembering to breathe. Then turn your hand facing up and massage the back of your upper and lower arm. Take a deep breath and give each arm a gentle rub as you finish.

For Next Time

1. Complete your mandala about a time or place where you found true beauty.
2. Complete your Five Wishes booklet and make plans to share it with a family member and your medical professional.

Remember to bring your mug, your Journal, and your Art Toolkit [and whatever participants need to bring for lunch].

Future Workshops

[Date] Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope

[include details of lunch plans]

Find Out More

Information about end-of-life decision making and care:

- Five Wishes is an easy-to-use legal document for planning how a person wishes to be cared for in case they become seriously ill. It is available in English and 22 other languages. Additional information can be found on the Aging with Dignity website.
- Gawande, Atul, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* (Metropolitan Books, 2014)
- “Being Mortal,” Frontline, PBS, February 10, 2015
- Links to wide array of resources on end-of-life issues can be found on the National Caregivers Library website.
- Inspirational readings:
- Fuller, R. Buckminster, *No More Second Hand God* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1967)
- Parker, Rebecca Ann, [*Blessing the World: What Can Save Us Now*](#) (Skinner, 2006)

Workshop 6: Hindsight, Humor, and Hope

Introduction

Workshop 6 applauds the group of wise elders who have shared Hindsight, Humor, and Hope.

Participants are honored for their hard work reviewing personal life happenings and learnings. They have gained appreciation of their personal tapestry of life, developed through the years; claimed inner wisdom; and talked frankly about personal mortality. In this workshop, everyone will have an opportunity to celebrate an inner strength they have discovered through the workshop process. They will also be encouraged to find new ways to reach out and mentor others.

There is significant leader preparation for this workshop. Each participant is honored with a Hindsight, Humor, and Hope achievement certificate and a Touchstone on which to inscribe their word of personal strength. Each person also receives a small sketchbook for creating mandalas and a copy of the poem “Emerging Wisdom” as a reminder of the workshop.

A festive potluck lunch (or a lunch prepared by others) can reinforce the positive relationships among participants, and they may feel encouraged to continue meeting on their own for companionship and support after the final workshop. A few days before the workshop, remind participants by email or phone to bring their journals and a mug and remind them about the lunch arrangements you have made.

Goals

This workshop will:

- Invite participants to celebrate the completion of Hindsight, Humor, and Hope
- Invite participants to identify inner strength and wisdom
- Provide an opportunity to talk about mentoring and reaching out to others.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- Celebrate the completion of Hindsight, Humor, and Hope and receive gifts to help them continue their journey
- Identify and name inner strengths
- Consider ways to mentor or reach out to others.

Workshop-at-a-Glance

Activity	Minutes
Lunch and Opening	35
Activity 1: Stretching	5
Activity 2: Guided Visualization	10
Activity 3: Honoring Inner Strength	25
Activity 4: Inscribing the Touchstones	5
Activity 5: Cultivating and Using Inner Strength	20
Taking It Home	5
Closing	10

Materials

- Coffee, tea, and water service items
- Tissues (for participant use)
- Chalice, candle, and lighter, or LED battery-operated candle
- Cloth

- Chime or bell for signaling time
- Name badges from Workshop 1
- Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1
- *Singing the Living Tradition*, the UUA hymnbook, enough for all participants
- Light-colored, polished river stones, one for each person plus a few extra (flat stones offer more writing space)
- Black medium-point permanent markers
- 4x6-inch spiral bound art pad (24 sheets), one for each participant
- 3-inch circular lid or template for each participant
- 4x5-inch envelope for each person
- Write this journaling prompt on newsprint:
- One way I will reach out to others using my inner strength is...
- Handout 1, Taking It Home
- Handout 2, Emerging Wisdom
- Leader Resource 1, Certificates
- Blessing Cards
- Optional: Recruit the congregation's Caring Committee or other appropriate group to set up and clean up the lunch, allowing participants to concentrate on the workshop

Preparation

- Arrange for coffee, tea, and water at the workshop.
- Arrange for furniture setup:
 - For large group: Place tables in a horseshoe arrangement (leaders at the head table, chairs around outside of tables).
 - For smaller group: Place one or two table tables in a rectangle (leaders sit at

a middle side and chairs are positioned around the outside).

- Table(s) for serving lunch
- Set a hymnbook on the table in front of each chair.
- Obtain polished river stones, black permanent markers, spiral notebooks, and envelopes at a craft or art store.
- Place a chalice or candle on a chalice cloth at the leader's place. Lay stones around the chalice.
- Follow the directions in the Materials section of the program Introduction to make mandala sketch books.
- Customize and make copies of Handout 1, Taking It Home.
- Make copies of Handout 2, Emerging Wisdom.
- Write workshop agenda on a newsprint sheet, using Workshop-at-a-Glance table, and post.
- Post Group Rules of Respect from Workshop 1.
- Download, print, and fill in Leader Resource 1, Certificates, for all participants.
- Create mandala sketchbooks for all participants.
- Write on a newsprint sheet, and set aside:

We close our time by extinguishing the chalice and carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.
- Shuffle the Blessing Cards.

Lunch and Opening (35 minutes)

Welcome participants as they arrive and ask them to put on their name tags. If you are having a

potluck, invite them to put their dishes on the designated food table. If everyone is able to stand, invite them to stand behind their chairs for the table grace. If some are unable to stand, form a circle and join hands for the table grace.

Light the chalice and offer these words:

Today's session is the last one of the Hindsight, Humor, and Hope workshop. We light this chalice in appreciation for our wise companions at the table and our fellow seekers in life. We hold deep gratitude for the bounty of planet Earth and respect its process and teachings. We give thanks to those who grow the food and to those who prepared this shared meal that helps sustain us. Amen.

Invite participants to serve themselves from the lunch table, assisting any who need help. Encourage people to chat over lunch. As people are finishing their lunches, read aloud "I Will Not Die an Unlived Life" by Dawna Markova, used with permission:

*I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise.*

*I choose to risk my significance,
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom,
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.*

Lead the group in singing "Now Let Us Sing," Hymn 368 in *Singing the Living Tradition*.

Activity 1: Stretching (5 minutes)

Introduce the activity, saying:

Each day our body, mind, and heart beg for exercise to stay healthy. Together they carry us where needed every day and night. They don't want us to be couch potatoes; if we are, all parts of us will rebel by stiffening up. Remember the admonition, "Use it or lose it!" Forgive your body its aches and pains... and exercise in order to R-Y-E: "Retain your elasticity!"

Lead the group in these exercises, adapted from the book *Five Minute Massage* by Robert Thé, demonstrating as you lead. Use these exercises from previous workshops. Remind participants to do them only if they are physically able to do so:

Exercise 1: Take a deep, slow breath. Stretch wide your arms out to the side, being careful not to whack your neighbor! Feel your chest expand and stretch. Now, gently tap your chest and sides using a soft fist. (1 min.) It is said that this exercise helps your immune system.

Exercise 2: Take a deep, slow breath. Stretch wide your arms out to the side, being careful not to whack your neighbor! Feel your chest expand and stretch. Now, gently tap your chest and sides using a soft fist. (1 min.) It is said that this exercise helps your immune system.

Activity 2: Guided Visualization (10 minutes)

Tell participants that you will lead a guided visualization. Invite them do this with eyes open or closed. Say:

Sit comfortably with both feet flat on the floor. (Pause.) Breathe in deeply through your nose. Hold it for a moment (pause), and then slowly, slowly let it out. Again, take in a deep breath through your nose. Hold it for a moment (pause), and slowly, let it out. (Pause.)

Let your imagination take you along the path to your favorite beautiful place, the same one you visited a few workshops ago. (Pause.) As you reach that place, you will see your inner self waiting there, the one so full of wisdom and compassion. Give a big hug (pause) and together look at the view. (Pause.) Be aware of what is around you. (Pause.) What colors do you see? (Pause.) What is the air like?

Tell your inner wise one about your connection to this beautiful place (pause), and how you connect to the earth and universe. (Pause.)

Ask your inner wise one to give you a word to describe your inner strength. (Pause.) Silently repeat that word (pause) and thank your inner wise one.

Give your inner wise one a huge hug and acknowledge that you can come together at any time. Then slowly count backward from ten to one while returning on your pathway to where we are gathered. (Pause.) When you are ready, open your eyes and be back in this room.

Ask participants how that experience was for them. Invite them to make a few notes about it in their journal.

Activity 3: Honoring Inner Strength (25 minutes)

Tell participants that you are going to lead a ceremony, and will begin with two quotes from Neil deGrasse Tyson, an astrophysicist and director of the Hayden Planetarium at the American Museum of Natural History.

We are all connected; To each other, biologically. To the earth, chemically. To the rest of the universe, atomically.

The problem, often not discovered until late in life, is that when you look for things in life like love, meaning, motivation, it implies they are sitting behind a tree or under a rock. The most successful people in life recognize, that in life they create their own love, they manufacture their own meaning, they generate their own motivation. For me, I

am driven by two main philosophies, know more today about the world than I knew yesterday. And lessen the suffering of others. You'd be surprised how far that gets you.

Say:

We have been talking about the strength we gain from reviewing and dealing with our past experiences, connections, and learnings. Of your strengths, which one comes to mind as most meaningful for you?

Invite every participant to share one personal inner strength. Explain the ritual, as follows:

One at a time, when you are ready, you will come to the chalice.

State, loudly and with pride, "I am... [name]. My inner strength is..."

After you speak, I will ring the chime or bell, and say, "So be it."

Other participants will be silent for a time to honor your inner strength. During the silence, you will choose a river stone from the chalice cloth.

Then we will all cheer as you return to your place!

After all have claimed their inner strength, lead one more round of cheers. Hand out the Hindsight, Humor, and Hope achievement certificates.

Activity 4: Inscribing the Touchstones (5 minutes)

Say:

This moment, and the next, and the next are not repeated and not repeatable "nows" in your life journey. Each one is a particular moment on your timeline. Each "now" is also a moment on the four-and-a-half-billion-plus-year timeline of planet Earth. We are part of this ongoing narrative of the universe. A piece of that universe story is contained in each of your stones. The stones symbolically represent us and our process. They were once rocks, smoothed into stones as they tumbled and bumped together, then rested, and then moved along again via the stream and river waters that pushed them toward the sea. One touchstone has come to rest with you as a reminder of your journey to smooth the rough places. I invite you to inscribe your word of inner strength on your stone using a black marker, creating a personal touchstone. Carry your touchstone in your pocket, touching it and feeling its smoothness when you need to be reminded of your own strength and grounding.

Allow a few minutes for participants to inscribe their stones.

Activity 5: Cultivating and Using Inner Strength (20 minutes)

Say:

Spiritual journaling is a way be conversant with yourself about those things in life that touch you, the things

that puzzle you, the ones that make your heart smile, the things that break your heart, and those happenings in life that hold deep beauty and bring feelings of gratitude. It becomes a rewarding habit to reflect in Your Journal and to create those colorful mandalas. It helps you take stock of where you are.

Give each participant a portable mandala journal. Encourage them to carry this little book in a pocket or daypack when out for fresh air and exploring. (Thoreau called it sauntering.) Invite them to make notes and ask questions while journaling or creating a mandala. Say:

Your inner wise one has a way of answering questions when sauntering and while you use your hands.

Then invite participants to open their writing journals or their mandala journals. Post the journaling prompt. Say:

Maya Angelou once said, "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud." With this in mind, please respond and complete this sentence: "One way I will reach out to others using my inner strength is..."

Allow five minutes for journaling, and then invite participants, to the degree they are comfortable, to share with the group how they completed the sentence. Distribute Handout 1, Taking It Home.

Closing (10 minutes)

Post the closing words so all can see them. Shuffle and set out Blessing Cards, text side down, and invite each participant to take one and hold it. Lead

them in saying together the words for extinguishing the chalice:

We close our workshop by extinguishing the chalice. We carry its light and our blessings with us into the world.

Ask for a volunteer to give the first blessing and invite other participants to follow in turn, leaving time for silence after each one. Then say:

Blessings, many blessings to you. You are brave souls. I respect your wisdom and inner strength. I applaud you and your hard work. I hope you will stay connected with each other.

Distribute copies of Handout 2, Emerging Wisdom by Jennifer (Jinks) Hoffmann. Close the workshop by reading it aloud. Collect Blessing Cards for reuse.

Handout 1: Taking It Home

Material excerpted from the book *I WILL NOT DIE AN UNLIVED LIFE* © 2000 Dawna Markova, with permission from Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA www.redwheelweiser.com.

I will not die an unlived life.

I will not live in fear of falling or catching fire.

*I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
loosen my heart*

until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise.

*I choose to risk my significance,
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom,
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit. — Dawna Markova*

Taking It Home

Create a mandala that connects you and your interests to others. Remember to write the date on the page. In the future you might find it interesting to look back at the mandala and recall when you made it.

Find Out More

Explore:

- Online resources of the Hayden Planetarium of the American Museum of Natural History and/or sign up for Starstruck, their email newsletter.
- Online resources at Spiritual Direction International

Read:

- Montgomery, Kay, ed., [*Landscapes of Aging and Spirituality: Essays*](#) (Skinner, 2015)
- Blanchard, Eliza, [*The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older*](#) (Skinner, 2012)
- Markova, Dawna, *I Will Not Die an Unlived Life: Reclaiming Purpose and Passion* (Conari Press, 2000)

Handout 2: Emerging Wisdom

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Printing This Handout

Download a [high-resolution copy of this Handout \(PDF\)](#) for printing.

Leader Resource 1: Certificates

Printing This Handout

Download a [high-resolution copy of this Handout \(Word\)](#) for printing.