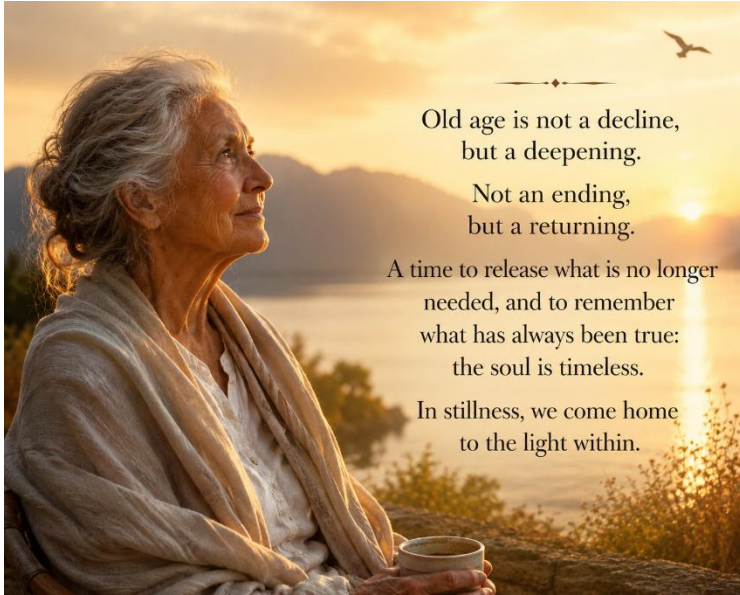


Spiritual thoughts on old age



Old age is not a decline,
but a deepening.

Not an ending,
but a returning.

A time to release what is no longer
needed, and to remember
what has always been true:
the soul is timeless.

In stillness, we come home
to the light within.

Gerrit Gielen
Pamela Kribbe
Suzy Conway

Table of contents

Preface	3
Aging with joy and connection	4
Old age: a time of awakening.....	11
The language of your body in the second half of life.....	21
If we create our own reality, then why do we get old?...33	
Enjoyment as gratitude: the way of the old soul	45
A spiritual perspective on aging	54
A spiritual vision of the aging body	72
Acknowledgments	83

Preface

What are spiritual thoughts and why would you have them about growing old?

Spirituality is all about being honest with yourself and others. Honestly acknowledge that behind the eyes of every human being lies an incomprehensible wonder for which there are no words. Every attempt to capture that wonder in words does an injustice to the reality of being human.

What is remarkable about growing old is that it is precisely then that this wonder can be experienced most fully. The tragedy of our time, however, is that our society is so focused on youth, achievement, and appearance that many older people cannot open themselves up to the wonder. For too long, they have taught themselves a mistaken way of thinking and living. For too long, they have turned away from their own inner beauty and richness.

This eBook is meant for people who are willing to open themselves up to that wonder. And especially for the older ones amongst us who are searching for meaning in their lives.

*Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.*

Robert Herrick

1591-1674

Aging with joy and connection

By Suzy Conway

We have created a culture of youth, surgery on our faces to look younger, salves to erase wrinkles, tucks and nips to make ourselves look twenty and why? How does that advance our souls and spirits or have anything to do with a meaningful purposeful life on Earth? Where did the instruction come from that makes us think our bodies are to be put on altars when everything around us teaches us they are going away? Why do we resist getting older? Why are we blinded to the natural beautiful progression we are on towards returning Home. Why do we feel we need to fix our exterior self when the real pearl of great

price is within. What is so alluring about buying into this common negative phrase, “Getting old isn’t for sissies?” We have a choice in this matter. We can choose to be dire and panicked about it, or we can find beauty and meaning in it. Do we really think the machinations of the body are the be all end all?

People say, “Spend your money, you know you can’t take it with you.” We could tinker with that phrase and say, “Why spend time and money on molding your body so you can look like a teenager when you’re seventy, when you know you can’t take it with you?” Yes, there is a body, but there is an energy inside the body that is overlooked and ignored and yet it is the genuine real true identity we are looking for that never dies. Rumi says, *Marry the one who never goes away.*” Marry the soul and spirit, marry the divine, the eternal essence of who you are. The body is useful; we need one to fulfill our purpose on Earth. However, know without a doubt that it is ephemeral.

If we can’t take our bodies along with us when we die, what do we take with us? We take the fruit of our deeds, actions, and thoughts. The invisible goes with us; how we made people feel, how we have loved or not loved, how we forgave or didn’t, how we hurt or helped, and how we did or did not leave a trail of kindness behind us.

The twin guides, our spirits and souls, are who we really are and what survives the death of the body. Our bodies are like space suits to wear on the Earth plane. We are so

attached to them that we begin to think we ARE them. But they're surface identities. We are convinced we are the space suit because we are bombarded night and day with the message that we are! But we are souls first and foremost. And we are divine light beings tottering around on Earth like little lost lambs trying to figure out why we are here. It's not to look twenty for the rest of your lives. Be assured of that.

I am lucky to be surrounded by young people only because I have a horse and all my barn mates are young women. Crème de la crème! I am also a bicyclist, which puts me into contact with young men at various bike shops I frequent. I pay attention to them because they keep my bike running smoothly. If I crash, I hobble in and while they fix my bike, I cry on their shoulders. They pass me around until the shock of the crash wears off and then they get me back on the bike with hugs and cheers. I am present to them at the shop or the barn. I can offer help at my barn if someone needs it, and I offer presence at the shops when things are tough. I ask questions, I am curious, I weave the thread between me and them every day.

A bike mechanic we all loved dearly died in his sleep one night. The guys were in terrible shape having worked with him for years. I stopped in at the shop to be with them, share stories, cry, hug, and be. It's not at all about fixing anything but just being present. An old grandma who can offer comfort, a shoulder, and share the loss. What does Mary Oliver, the great poet say? *Attention*

without feeling is a mere report. As oldies, that is the most important thing we have to give, our tears, our feelings, our shoulders for the youth to lean on.

If you want to stay young without surgery and pills and diets, hang out with young people. Find a way to share your life with them, be a lighthouse for them, a safe place. Then, when they have a work party, or get married, or experience a loss, they will invite you to be with them because there is a mutual exchange. They've been there for you. This is the circle of youth energy that keeps you young. They don't care if you're wrinkled and gray haired. They just care about how they feel around you. That's the part of you that is not going away. That's the part they want to marry. And that's the part in them you feel magnetized to. It works both ways. Invite them to your table, whatever that might mean for you.

Buddha said, When there is need for a boat, and there is no boat, I will be the boat.

Be the boat. Grow old by remaining young.

One example. A young man by the name of John, works at my horse barn. He's seventeen, shy and quiet, but over time, he and I became friendly. I engaged him in short conversations, asked how school was, etc. One day the subject of old cars came up, and we had a long conversation. I'm old and had old cars which enabled me to hold my own with him. He opened up and blossomed with energy and joy right before my eyes. It was

beautiful. Behind that shyness there was passion and curiosity about life.

He also loves to fish, and I had plenty to add to that long talk. He got so excited that my worry was that he might levitate and blow away like a helium balloon. He had passion and curiosity inside of him. I told him a story about my one and only fishing experience. My dad fixed a pole for me at our lake house, and when I reeled the fish in and saw the catfish with those scary whiskers, I threw the pole into the lake. We had a good hard laugh together.

Weeks later, we were both at the barn and John said, out of the wild blue yonder, “You are very old and have had a lot of adventures and I think you must be wise, can I ask you a question?”

Of course you can.

“Do you think I am a spiritual person?”

(There it is.)

John, I don’t think you’re a spiritual person, I *know* you are a spiritual person.

A long talk in the pasture ensued. He poured his heart out, he wept, he was looking for meaningful conversations about the mystical, the spiritual but he couldn’t find anyone at school who was interested. He loved nature, animals, the wind, the birds, the chickens, the longer he talked the more grounded he became

although his energy shifted to the heights. He loved being alive on the Earth, but he knew there had to be more. It was a sacred holy experience for me and for him. At the end of the conversation, he looked around the field, the herd of horses, the trees, the chickens, sunlight, the wind, and said, “I think this is heaven, right here, right now.”

This is how to remain young. We found Oneness in that field. Age, looks, the physical, took a back seat to two souls conjoined. John was looking for reassurance, for understanding and validation of his experiences. He wanted someone older who had been through the wars, the heights, the lows, someone he could trust. He expressed how lonely he felt at times, how he didn’t have friends. He was scared somewhat but he also knew there was a world inside of this world and that was what he was truly seeking.

We must listen with our whole bodies, our whole energy fields. No judgment, no advice given, no criticism. Just listen and witness. It’s an honor to be in that position where you can create a safe place for someone. Botox can’t do that. Surgery can’t do that. Puffy lips can’t do that. Spirit and soul and heart does that. Connection to the divine does that. Knowing you’re divine does that. Knowing you’re not just a body also does that.

Our true identity is not our form. When you fully realize that you can embrace your age, your fragility, your wrinkles, scars, and age spots and welcome them, you can feel your youth within. These symbols of aging have

their place. They're not running your show. The soul and spirit are. Allow them to come out to play. They are forever young.

How we treat people, our kindness towards others, how we love and give of ourselves is what goes over with us when we die. No one on the other side is going to comment on our face or how we look. They will show us the love we left behind. How we loved and cared for others and how we loved and cared for ourselves. Getting old is a gift. We are sages. We are guides. We are the ones we have been waiting for all along. Look at who you are within yourself. Look in the mirror, into your eyes and see that a part of you is ageless. Connect with that energy. If you do it before you leave the Earth, you will have arrived in John's pasture. You'll have arrived in heaven on Earth.

Old age: a time of awakening

by Gerrit Gielen

Introduction

“What does everyone want to become but no one wants to be?”

“Old.”

In our society, aging is associated with frightening realities such as physical and mental deterioration, the loss of friends and loved ones, isolation, being left alone to figure things out, and the threatening cost of healthcare. The way it is portrayed in the media, growing old is considered highly undesirable. The question is, how do we deal with the inevitable? How do we make our way with confidence and connection to the end of our lives?

Everyone approaches aging in their own way. In this essay, I want to share how I think about it, because having been born in 1956, I am now considered old, and am facing the same negative messages and realities. Ideas about aging as they are expressed in society today are fundamentally wrong and usually negative. If we could let go of these worn-out ideas growing old could be an

enriching, joyful, liberating path back to the light, the truth, yourself.

I may sound naïve, but I believe that the years we have left on mother earth can be a time when we bring our focus back to the source, to presence. Old age doesn't have to equate with living a meaningless and joyless existence. Ask yourself why you might be so sure this can't be the case. Don't believe everything you think. Be aware that most messages about aging play on our fears. Reject them as erroneous and limiting.

If you are certain that old age is a process of watching the body decay, and there is no life after death, there is no hope. Why not entertain the possibility that there is life after death, that there is always hope that we go on without the body. If you suspend your beliefs even for a trial run, hope arises. What is there to lose? The workings of the universe may be different than you think. Look back on your life with an open mind. How many beautiful, inexplicable things have happened to you in your lifetime? Aren't we, not to mention the vastness of the universe, miracles?

I saw an interview with a famous professor of psychology who was in the last phase of his life. He passed away years ago, but I'll never forget what he said, "Why is there no one who will honestly admit that we don't really understand anything at all?" Even people who are experts in their field and have an abundance of knowledge recognize the mystery and wonder of life and

admit that our understanding of it is extremely limited. If we stop relying on our thinking and reasoning so much, we can fill our days with joy and hope.

Take an honest look at your life. Look into someone's eyes and see and feel what is behind them because you will see the presence of an inexplicable miracle. In uncertainty there is room for mystery and hope. The deepest moments of your life cannot be described or explained in words because they are mysteries. As we grow old, allow this mystery in, invite it into your awareness. Old age is meant to be a profound spiritual process and it consists of letting go and allowing.

Letting go

“It all diminishes,” I once heard an elderly woman say. This is why many of us do not look forward to it because she is right, it is a time of loss and diminishment. We decline physically and mentally. Our children are busy, and we don't see them as often. We understand less and less of the world. It is hard to keep track of everything going on around us. Our youth is gone, and many of our friends are gone as well. It is no wonder we don't want this to happen to us. Ironically, it is exactly because we don't want it to happen and can't accept it is happening that we adamantly cling to it. This is a tragedy because clinging to anything makes aging difficult. When we resist change, we suffer because we are unable to let go and flow with life, flow with consciousness. If we can't

let go, we swim against the current and over time this effort robs us of our strength. It takes a great deal of energy to hang on in desperation. We are literally “old” when we cling to ideas whose time has come, while resisting the new that could bring youthful, renewed energy to our lives.

What does it mean to let go? Everything is constantly changing. Look at the world around you and compare what you see now with what you saw as a child. It is clear that things have changed so much. If everything is constantly changing, why do we hang on to what we know is going to go away? How can we *not* release our grip and let go? It is a strange trait humans have, to hold on to things, people, and ideas for dear life. Is it possible *not* to grasp and cling, but instead to say Yes to life and the changes it inevitably brings?

Our minds are full of ideas about ourselves, about who we are, about what happened to us in the past, about how the world should be. Observe these thoughts and ideas that are anchored in the past. Just as a ship’s anchor keeps it from moving with the ocean currents, these thought forms are an inner, energetic anchor that keeps us connected to the past and inhibits moving forward. When we observe this in an aging person, we say they are stuck in their ways. In other words, they are “old.”

Our thinking anchors us in the past, in the way things used to be, the good old days, and living in the past is what really makes us old. When we are stuck, and

anchored in, it is the end of growth. Sometimes we don't realize that we are holding on to outdated, exhausted ideas that belong to a world of the past, not to the world of the present. These ideas we hold onto so tightly are not who we really are. We are not our thoughts. We are timeless beings of pure light.

Those who hold on to the past for dear life grumble about young people who do not live up to their expectations. They see young people who are free and loose, who are less interested in working themselves to death, and are more interested in enjoying life. These young people do not let themselves be pigeonholed, but instead of receiving support, they are sharply condemned.

During my youth in the sixties, when many men had long hair, it was interpreted as a sign that civilization was surely coming to an end. "Long-haired, work-shy scum" was the common cry. In their estimation, it was considered wrong for a man to grow a beautiful head of hair, embrace his feminine side, and enjoy a life freely chosen. This kind of judgment didn't happen just in the sixties, it has happened throughout human history. The older generation always grumbled about the new one—the past was better than the present, young people lack character and do whatever they want, they don't play by the rules. Eventually, the grumbling dies down because life has a way of going on. The sun still rises in the east. We interpret change as bad, negative, less than, and these

critical judgments have been handed out since the beginning of time.

People who condemn the young condemn the energy of their own souls. The soul wants to grow, expand, be adventurous and instead is blocked in its trajectory by worn-out ways of thinking and judging. Old age doesn't have to partner with old thinking. Sometimes, we see an old person, but we can feel they are young in spirit. This is possible. These elders are open, accepting, curious, and non-judging. No matter how old one is, this is a sure sign of youth.

The first step to letting go begins with embracing doubt, because if we admit we have doubts, we acknowledge our ignorance. A person who does not question their thinking assumes they know everything. Socrates said, "All I know is that I know nothing." This is the first step—to admit how little we know. It *is* possible to allow some doubt in and realize that our true self is different from the personality we think we are. Most of the world, however, does not think this way.

Let go of time to experience your eternal self.

Let go of space to embrace oneness with the universe.

Let go of the non-self to be more Yourself.

Let go of fear to embrace love.

Let go of thinking inside the box—you are bigger than the box.

Let go of limiting ideas, and your life will change, you are limitless and eternal.

Allowing

Letting go becomes easier when we realize that we can *allow* something beautiful into our awareness.

“You become old when you cling to something that is past. You do not allow the new, which always carries within it the renewing energy of the young – youth.”

This is a liberating idea because the new always brings with it a refreshing, youthful energy, and when we allow that energy to come in, it is the key to eternal life.

We die in order to be born again, but it need not be a sharp transition. Just as the fetus develops in the womb, an angel of light develops in the aging human being. This angel carries consciousness further along its cosmic journey and is capable of leaving the earthly body behind without holding on. This is the angel of the new. As we age, this angel helps us grow new wings and when we allow that Angel in, we *become it*, and we can also let go of the old.

We have (almost) completely lost ourselves in our belief systems and the fear of living in this world which emphasizes performance, looking and being successful and winning the rat race. But now there is something within us that perceives and experiences things differently and does not want to live in the old way. When you nurture this angel within, you *are it* and a new life will reveal itself, and show you its power, light, and

wholeness. Let go of the past and allow the angel in. This is how to grow old.

Letting go is easier and more natural when we realize what we are allowing our true self to emerge. When we grow old, we can become who we really are. We have played a role for so long in this world that we think we *are* the role, and the game of life is all there is, but as we age, we come to know we are more than that.

Growing old, at its deepest level is not even about letting go per se, as much as it is about our willingness to receive and restore the truth of who we are. It is about growth, not decay. It is about liberation, about allowing. We are liberated from untruths, from the chains of the physical world. Growing old is a process in which we leave behind forever the limitations of physical reality, the limitations of human society, with all its musts and fears. It is a process by which we allow our divine reality, our eternal self, our freedom to come to the fore. Why is that so difficult? Because who we really are is at odds with who we think we are. The Truth is at odds with what we believe.

The aging human being is pregnant with the Angel that is emerging in her or him. But many reject this Angel, do not want to be it; thus reject the nurturing and healing energy of the Angel.

The key to dealing with old age is understanding that you are pregnant, the key to dealing with older people is understanding that they are pregnant.

And the beautiful thing is you are pregnant with yourself. Slowly you allow your true self, slowly you let go of the role you have played in this life. Getting older is only problematic if you do not accept this. Decay occurs when you resist this development: when you resist ascending into the light – the light that you are.

Awakening

What is light? When we talk about light, we think of an external phenomenon like the sun or a lamp we can turn on. But what brings light? Unity brings light. The moment the sun rises, and the night disappears, everything is One in the light. Oneness is, everything is connected. We feel part of the world. Light connects us and banishes fear. The world of cubicles and boundaries and struggles now looks unreal to us. Light is a timeless state. If you travel on a beam light, at the speed of light, time and space disappear. Everything merges into the eternal now. We know light because light is love. Love connects, it transcends time and space. Love brings us back to the source, and in love we *become* the source.

To grow old is to hear the call of the source. “Come back to me, leave the world of separation, of fear, come back to me. This is your home. You are the source. You are the universe. You are love.”

Allow it. Say yes to it. Become who you are.
The time of awakening has arrived.

Accept the inexplicable. Let go and know.

Accept the miracle.
You are the miracle.

The language of your body in the second half of life

Pamela channels Mary Magdalene

Dear friends,

I am Mary Magdalene, your sister and your equal. Today, I invite you to come home to your own energy field, to your body, and to the subtle energy within and around it.

Your energy field extends far beyond your physical body. It consists of a subtle form of matter that cannot be perceived with the naked eye yet can be felt with remarkable clarity. Although this subtle field may seem more fragile or ethereal than the physical body, in truth, it is more fundamental and more powerful. For contrary to what the prevailing scientific worldview tells you, it is not matter that lies at the foundation of reality, but energy.

This energy, which is infused with consciousness, precedes the physical and the entire realm of matter. If you understand your body—the physical whole of cells, muscles, blood, and organs—as being supported and grounded by an energetic field that carries consciousness, you begin to look at your body differently. You begin to see it as an extension or an expression of an inner dynamic, a dynamic of consciousness. Your body, and

everything you feel and experience within it, moves and responds to your inner state and the level of your consciousness.

Consciousness exists on many levels. When you begin a life on Earth, you enter a tiny body the body of a baby, and your soul, the consciousness that is incarnating, must first become accustomed to this form. Even if you have done this many times before, each incarnation is still a leap into the unknown in which soul consciousness must attach itself to an earthly nervous system, a body, and all the laws that govern physical existence. It takes time for the soul to become as fully embodied as possible in its earthly form.

The body you enter is new to your soul consciousness. You have consciously chosen it, but once you arrive, you encounter a body shaped by the genes of your parents. Plus there are all the influences of your surroundings: your immediate environment, your family, the place where you live, your culture, and so on. In childhood, therefore, the soul is primarily occupied with absorbing and adapting. It has little opportunity at that point to consciously feel its own true self, its original soul energy. This begins to unfold during adolescence, although at the same time, the personality is under enormous pressure from the outside world to conform, to belong, to be accepted, to become a person in the eyes of others. During those teenage years, an identity takes shape that is often unstable because it is built largely around external roles: the longing to belong, to be seen, to be loved alongside the longing to distinguish yourself, to feel, *This*

is who I am in relation to my parents and to the world around me.

And so, during the first twenty or thirty years of life, a personality and identity gradually take form. This is necessary. You need an identity in order to begin manifesting yourself in the world as “you,” as a more or less defined self. Yet within that self, there are elements that feel foreign, parts that do not truly belong to you.

You try as best you can to remain true to yourself, but you do not yet know what it really means to be true to yourself. Usually, it takes a number of profound experiences, perhaps a serious crisis, something that shakes you to your very core, before a shift begins to take place in consciousness. Suddenly, what you thought you knew no longer seems certain, and you begin to break free from the roles you have adapted yourself to. The identity you have built, and which has been shaped in part by the expectations of your surroundings, begins to crumble.

This is always an opportunity for the soul. In a sense, it is the soul knocking at your door. A crisis always carries within it the possibility for the soul to flow more deeply into your life, to incarnate more fully.

When things happen that turn your life upside down, it can be interpreted as violent or cruel. And yet, in many cases this is the only way an opening can be created through which your original soul energy can begin to flow. The structures of the personality may have become

like a fortress, a castle surrounded by walls. At times something powerful is needed to break those walls open.

In Western culture, adulthood, roughly from the age of twenty-five to forty-five or fifty, is generally regarded as the time when you establish yourself in the world. You have built an identity of yourself to some degree, acquired knowledge or qualifications, developed skills, and now you are expected to put them to use and create something. You have a career, perhaps buy a house, perhaps create a family. These are the traditional ways in which a person is expected to manifest themselves in adulthood.

But that does not necessarily mean that your soul energy has truly incarnated.

Often, the opposite is true. You may be deeply engaged in the outward “manifestation” of adulthood while being far removed from the flow of your soul. Often, something significant has to happen before you truly awaken and begin asking yourself profound questions: *Is this really who I am? Is this what I truly want? Where are my deepest desires, my most authentic creative gifts?*

The call of the soul grows louder as you move through life. It is only in the second half of life that you truly begin to hear and honor that call, after passing through certain deep valleys and becoming more awake to your essential nature, your original self. You start to listen less to what you are *supposed* to do and what you *ought* to be, and less to the ideals you absorbed from the

outside world. There is more room for you, for your original nature.

And the beautiful thing is that your body begins to cooperate.

By “body,” I mean the entire energy field of subtle matter, of which the physical body is the expression. This intelligent field of the body now has the potential to mature in a profound way, to become increasingly attuned to your original soul energy during the second half of life, which is roughly from your forties onward, until the end of your life.

Why?

Because outwardly, the body begins to become weaker and more vulnerable. In physical terms, it ages. We tend to see this as decline, as deterioration, while the so-called prime of life is associated with the middle years.

But from the perspective of the soul, things look very different.

Precisely in the second half of life, after you have passed through deep crises and finally heard the voice of your soul and begun making room for it, your body may become more sensitive to the influences around you. You may tire more easily. You may develop symptoms that have a psychological or emotional origin. You may simply find that you can no longer tolerate environments that are deeply disharmonious.

You naturally begin to seek out silence and nature. You may feel an overwhelming need for solitude and for contact with what is alive within you. You may also become more sensitive to certain foods or notice that your body reacts increasingly strongly to substances such as alcohol or other means of dulling your consciousness, things that essentially sedate you and lull you into sleep.

You begin to let them go.

It may seem as though your body is becoming more vulnerable. Yet from the perspective of the soul, it is actually becoming a purer and more refined instrument, one that speaks the language of your soul more directly.

To truly understand that language, the first step is to accept the aging body.

As it grows older, the body slowly enters another dimension. It becomes less willing to conform to all the standards of health and beauty, and to the artificial images imposed upon us from the outside. The challenge is not to become discouraged by this, but to attune yourself to what is happening on a deeper level, and to sense that through aging, your body is actually becoming more aligned with a more authentic vibration.

Is it not wonderful to care less about all those external standards you once tried so desperately to live up to?

Does that not bring relief, peace, and an opening inward?

I invite you now to step through that doorway and accept your body exactly as it is. See it as a field—an intelligent field of subtle energy, deeply receptive to the unique vibration of your soul. Your body was made to receive that vibration, to ground it, and to allow it to become embodied.

Imagine that you consciously say *yes* to your body as a refined instrument of your soul. Feel that your soul energy is original, uniquely yours, unlike anything else.

It has nothing to do with the well-worn paths of how things are “supposed” to be or how you “should” live. In fact, your soul recoils from the fear and judgment that keep those paths in place.

Your soul is free by nature. It has traveled through countless dimensions and gathered immeasurable experience. It knows far more than you think.

So let go of your thinking for a moment.

Allow the impulses of your soul to flow freely through your earthly body.

The older you become, the easier this can potentially be, because within the process of aging itself, there is an upward movement, something akin to ascension. You are gradually moving toward the world from which you originally came. Consciously or unconsciously, you begin to remember how vast and infinite that world is, and how brief this earthly sojourn is by comparison.

It is a beautiful realization.

This does not diminish the meaning of earthly life. On the contrary, it makes life even more precious. You begin to feel a gentle but unmistakable urgency to truly *be*—to be who you are and to do what you want to do.

It becomes more a matter of *now or never*.

And that *now* becomes increasingly alive as you grow older, because you spend less time planning for some future moment.

Being present in the now becomes more natural as you age. And within that presence lies an opening. You become a channel through which your soul energy can flow more fully, bringing joy and vitality.

Let it happen now.

Allow your soul energy to enter.

Let the light of your soul pour into the field of your body like rays of sunlight. Especially within the aging body, feel how the cells and tissues can become receptive to this soul light.

You may need them more than ever to experience strength, meaning, and vitality—and your body is also increasingly capable of receiving them. It is already beginning to orient itself toward the world of the soul.

There is a natural process of detachment we take on as we grow old, when things unfold as they should. This need not bring sadness. It can bring joy.

When you feel truly at home in yourself during the second half of life, you no longer envy youth, nor long for the years of adulthood. You feel yourself becoming freer.

And here lies the paradox, precisely as your soul energy becomes freer within you, you gain the potential to express yourself with an authenticity and power that can touch people who do not yet dare to live that way, people who are still caught in the fear of how things are supposed to be, the fear of being different, criticized, or rejected.

The freer you become from all of that, the more fully you can be yourself—*yourself* in the sense of your soul.

I invite you to experiment with this now. Contact yourself as you will be ten years from now.

Simply imagine it.

You do not need to do this with your mind. Instead, allow an image to arise intuitively, whatever it may be, or perhaps simply a feeling.

Be in touch with the future you.

Sense this older version of yourself and notice what he or she radiates. Feel what is important then, and what this future you wants to tell you.

Ask: What is important for me to pay attention to? What matters now? What will help me feel freer and more joyful? What will make life lighter and more meaningful?

Receive the advice of this wise future self.

Allow it to work through you energetically as well. This future self is a bridge to your soul.

Receive the message.

You can also do this by asking a question about something you are currently facing in your daily life, something you are struggling with.

How should I deal with this?

Bring the question before your older self and allow the answer to come to you simply and directly. You may also feel the answer energetically rather than hear it in words.

Ask yourself:

What energetic shift is needed within me for this problem to be resolved?

And:

How will I feel when it is resolved? What will change in my energy?

When you have done this, I invite you, finally, to reconnect with that older version of yourself who is ten years ahead of you, and to feel his or her body from within.

You are now contacting the consciousness of your soul within a body that is ten years older.

Feel that this body stands even closer to the soul and senses the radiant power flowing into it from that deeper source.

Feel that although your body in ten years may be more fragile or vulnerable, at the same time an entirely different source of energy becomes available to you—a source of incomparable strength.

A strength that does not arise from physical matter, but comes from above, so to speak. A cosmic force. The power of your origin, of the home to which you will one day return.

Feel the joy of this.

Also feel that the closer you come to that source, the more you will naturally be able to connect with your intuition, with your guides, and with spiritual wisdom.

This is the promise of the second half of life.

It is a beautiful promise, one that supports you in fulfilling your life's purpose—not merely the purposes of the personality, but the deeper purposes of the soul.

The second half of life offers immense possibilities for fulfillment and growth: listening to the signals of your body, accepting its vulnerability, and recognizing its vulnerability as an opportunity to become more finely attuned to your deepest needs and your essential nature.

That is the challenge.

But it is also the unique gift that the second half of life brings you.

I greet you from a place of deep inner connection and understanding.

Never be afraid.

Love is always available.

If we create our own reality, then why do we get old?

by Gerrit Gielen

Within spiritual circles, the power of positive thinking appears to be undisputed, almost sacrosanct, and we are even told that *we create our own reality*. Authors who write about this subject promise us the most miraculous results. We are told that by thinking the right thoughts, and by repeating affirmations often enough, we can create whatever we want in our future and even transform negative, traumatic events in our past into positive ones. Having de-created the trauma means that we can continue our life as if the negative event had never happened.

Nonetheless, there are a lot of people who try very hard to use positive thinking as a way to create a better life for themselves, but who experience no improvement: no cure of the lingering illness, no wealth, not the life partner they so long for. Are these people doing something wrong? And if positive thoughts affect our reality, would not negative thoughts have the same effect? We often have fearful thoughts and concerns. Think of the worries and anxiety that most parents have about their children. Will they arrive home safely, will they stay away from drugs? Despite those fears, all usually goes well. How often do we have panicky thoughts about some slight ailment we have, fearing that there is something seriously

wrong with our health? As a rule, our negative thoughts fed by fear do not turn into reality – lucky for us!

Have our thoughts then no influence on the reality around us? Are we not the creators of our own reality? Is the universe not concerned with our positive and negative thoughts at all, and does it just go its own indifferent way? No, I do not think so. But the relationship between our thoughts and reality is a lot more subtle than what is proposed in many theories about creating one's own reality. I am going to argue that a proper understanding of this relationship needs to acknowledge the role of our soul in the creation process, and to address the question of how we can support the creation process by connecting with our soul.

Who is the creator of our lives?

To gain insight in the relationship between thought and reality we first need to understand what creation is. Creation is a force that has its origin on the level of utter unity: the All – the primal Source – the mystery we call God. From that Source emerges not creation, but *creators*, beings of a very high order who one might call Archangels. They are very grand cosmic beings, each representing one aspect of the original Source. Although an Archangel is a magnificent and vast being, it is not *everything*; it does not comprise *all* of creation, as there are *many* Archangels. Therefore, as with all individual beings, they perceive a difference between their *inner world* (their way of experiencing life) and

the *outer world* (the rest of creation). That inner world is unique, and therefore with the creation of Archangels, *individuality* comes into being. The experience of an infinite outer world, opposite a unique inner world, creates a sense of individuality.

The distinction between inner and outer reality also implies the concepts of *space* and *time*. As soon as you experience something as being *outside* yourself, it means there is *space* outside you. And from the viewpoint of beings outside you, you occupy a place in the same space; you *share* that space, so in that way, space becomes objective. The very notion of space implies that there are different beings with their own subjective way of experiencing the outer world. If there was only unity, only oneness, the notion of space would lose its meaning; there would be no inside and outside. Next, once you have several individual beings within a shared space, there will be interaction and communication between them. This introduces the notion of *time*. Communication affects the inner reality of the individual beings; they *change* because of it, and change involves the notion of time. Thus, when you have interacting, aware beings, you also have time – a sense of shared time.

With the creation of Archangels, the infinite Source created individuality, the distinction between inner and outer reality, space, time, and the possibility of interaction and communication. With this one step, the basics of creation was laid out. Archangels in their turn create many new beings, new creators who carry part of

the Archangel's essence within themselves, but who also add something unique of their own – every act of creation involves something new. And so it goes on endlessly. The newborn creators will also create new creators. There are always new levels of creators, which bring forth new dimensions of time and space. At one of these levels, the human being arises. All that we as human beings create is ultimately part of the greater process of Source creating a wide diversity of creators who all eventually originate from the same place of Oneness.

One of the basic rules of this process is that, as a creator, *you can create everything you want as long as it is in harmony with the higher source who created you.* For Archangels, their higher Source is God, for us, it is our soul. The soul is the creator of our human personality, and we as a human being reflect one aspect of our soul similar to how an Archangel represents one aspect of God. The two most important factors that determine our human reality are: 1. our soul and its intentions for us, and 2. our willingness or unwillingness to work together in harmony with our soul, the source who created us. Our soul has a life plan for us that may contain goals that differ from our ideas about what is desirable in our lives. *The basic creative force in our lives is our soul and not our human thoughts.* We can work *with* the creative force of our souls, or we can work *against* it. Positive thinking aimed at wishes and desires that do not comply with our soul's plan is not effective. But positive thoughts

that *are* aligned with our soul's intentions, support the creation process and add a sense of grace and ease to it.

Our thoughts do make a lot of difference, and we still have a lot of freedom, even though the soul is the basic creative force in our lives. The soul's plan provides an outline, a playground, and we fill in the details. The soul's plan allows for a lot of leeway, because *we are meant to be creators ourselves*, adding something new to the soul's reality. Still, the soul endows every lifetime with a guiding vision, a general purpose, and by using our creativity to serve that vision and purpose, we acquire the most happiness and fulfillment.

Creating out of synch with the soul

Imagine a gorgeous angel hovering over you, radiating joy and quiet wisdom. This angel loves you unconditionally and never condemns or rejects you, whatever you do. Consider your soul to be that angel. As long as you are close to the angel and feel its presence, everything is well with you and you feel safe and cared for. You feel that there is something higher and love-filled that supports you on our life's journey – you are able to experience joy and contentment even if things do not go smoothly.

If you do not follow the way of your soul, go against your deeper feelings, and try to control life too much, you lose touch with your soul's wisdom and you start to feel empty inside. As with most of us, you may become

carried away by earthly concerns and focus your attention on matters that you think are very important, but that essentially do not contribute to your inner growth: recognition, possessions, success, money, etcetera. Thus, the angel and you follow a different path and you start to feel unhappy and lonely.

You try to solve this dilemma by working harder, by gathering even more success, money, or power, because the society in which you were raised has taught you that these things are very important. Or you try to solve your loneliness by searching for the ideal partner. You are looking for your inner angel in the outside world. That will fail, because another person can never fulfill the role of your inner angel; the result will always be disappointing. Rather than restoring the connection with your soul, you end up feeling even more alienated from it.

Often, at this point a crisis will occur that challenges you to wake up and realign with your soul: perhaps illness or other adversities such as a divorce or losing your job. It is vital that you now turn inward and actively seek to restore the connection with the angel. If you want to create a new and more fulfilling life, positive thinking alone will not help you. If your positive thoughts aim to only remove the setbacks so you can return to the life you were used to, they will fail, because they go against the soul's intentions. And if the positive thoughts or mantras are aimed at merely eliminating the disease or misfortune, they will be a way of denying or suppressing

the inner darkness that needs to be dealt with up front. Only by facing your deepest feelings and fears, and restoring the conscious connection with your soul, will a true solution arise. Your soul will create that solution for you, if you are willing to face your inner darkness and listen to what your heart truly tells you.

You may wonder why we have desires that go against our soul's plan, or why the soul has intentions that go against our plans. The reason why this gap exists is that our soul's primary purpose is *inner growth*, while we often seek *external solutions* to our problems. From the soul's perspective, negative experiences are often there to guide us toward inner growth and liberation, but we generally want to avoid those experiences. We want to rid ourselves of emotional or physical pain, and it is a real challenge to open up to the possibility that this pain has meaning and leads us into deeper self-understanding. Only if we recognize the wisdom of our soul, which often surpasses our human understanding, do our thoughts really gain creative power. Only positive thinking that acknowledges the value and meaning of "negative experiences" is aligned with the divine force that creates the universe.

How to recognize your soul's intentions

I have argued that if we want to change our reality through positive thinking, it is of great importance that we do this *in harmony with our soul*. If positive thinking is not focused on improving the connection with the soul,

and is at odds with the soul's primary purpose, then the result, whatever it may be, will not bring us lasting happiness. But you may now ask: how do we work together with our soul? How do we know whether our wishes and desires are in alignment with our soul's vision and purpose?

1. Keep it fun and playful

Working together with your soul gives you a sense of joy and inspiration – it is not burdensome. The soul speaks to you through feelings of joy, inspiration, and encouragement. So if you are in the process of repeating affirmations, and you experience this as a heavy and difficult task, you are not in harmony with your soul. For example, suppose you desire a new house. You allow yourself to fantasize about it in a playful way. Like a child, you envisage where it is located, how you will furnish and decorate it, and how the garden looks. You imagine what it will be like to receive your friends and family there, and how you will enjoy and appreciate your new house. If this reverie gives you a wonderful feeling, it means you are on the right track: you are creating in alignment with your soul. Allow your imagination to roam freely. Do not limit yourself by negative thoughts such as “This is not realistic, this is not possible for me”; immerse yourself in your fantasy as long it feels light and playful to do this. The joyful feeling is a sign from your soul that your fantasy is consistent with your soul's plan.

In other words, if you think positively in the right way, then positive thinking is *a reward in itself*: it is an experience you enjoy and one that makes you feel better. As long as you are in this flow of happy anticipation and inspiration, you are connected with your soul. If you notice that it does not feel good, or that you need to work hard at it, this is a sign that your imagination is not in harmony with your soul. In fact, when you start to crave for things that are not in alignment with your soul's purpose, there will be a forced and controlling aspect to your positive thinking; the joy and playfulness will be absent.

2. Distinguish between love and fear

To know whether your thoughts are aligned with your soul's purpose, you can also ask: "Is my positive thinking based on fear or on love?"

Suppose someone has money worries. Hundreds of times a day, he solemnly repeats the affirmation "I will be rich and prosperous", focusing on images of wealth and abundance. However, if that thought originates from fear of lack, it will not help. Positive thoughts help only if they spring from love, which you recognize by the joy and lightness which accompanies these thoughts. Affirmations that have true creative power go together with a quiet knowing that all will be well, whereas fearful thoughts are accompanied by a sense of despair or anger. Thoughts that are based on fear, even though they sound very positive, usually do not help. They are not in

harmony with the soul, which you can know by the strained emotions underneath them.

Only when the person with money worries becomes aware of their fear of lack can they formulate thoughts based on love. They first need to take an honest look at the essence of their fear. Perhaps there is a part of them that does not feel entitled to receive abundance, or perhaps there is a part that does not like life on Earth, unconsciously cutting them off from material means. Their angel does not judge any of this, and as this person connects with their soul, they will feel inclined to send loving and comforting thoughts to the fearful part. They will begin to transform on the inner level, and once the inner darkness is faced and resolved, things will change on the outer level. Even if there may not be more money at once, life becomes lighter and easier, because this person is growing on the inner level and feels more appreciative of themselves. Their appearance becomes brighter and more cheerful. New opportunities are attracted by this positive attitude, and the inner abundance will in time be reflected by outer abundance.

If you have wishes and desires, it is wise to check carefully whether they originate from love or from fear. If it is fear, go inward and face the frightened part in yourself. Face it with kindness and honesty. Ask yourself: “What does this part of me really need at this time?” If you do that, you will often find that the answer refers to something *internal*, rather than something *external*: what is needed are qualities such as self-esteem, trust, the

ability to set boundaries, compassion, or a sense of humor. You are often able to give yourself what you need by developing these qualities in your everyday life. In this way, you will heal the fearful part of you and your wishes and desires may change because of that. They will be based on love and genuine self-understanding rather than fear. Healing inner darkness is a deeply creative feat. Facing fear and surrounding it with the energy of love is more powerful than any affirmation you can think of! The result is that you become closely connected with your soul. Your soul light begins to shine through you and it is *this light that is creative*. It will create an outer reality (work, relationships) that provides inner growth, joy, and happiness.

Conclusion

The title of this article is: *If we create our own reality, then why do we become old?* From a human perspective, to be old is undesirable; at least this is how it is often portrayed in the media and in advertisements. A lot of time and money are spent on the ideal of staying and looking young. You can apply positive thinking and affirmations as much as you want here, but you will still grow old. Your thoughts are powerless against the natural aging process. But now look at this issue from the perspective of the soul. Is the soul interested in keeping us young? From the soul's perspective, we are timeless, only our bodies are aging. To connect with your soul's viewpoint, look in the mirror: see how your face is

getting older, while sensing at the same time that there is something inside you, behind your eyes, that does not change. This is who you really are. While you, the human being, would perhaps want to stay forever in this body, your soul does not. The soul knows that there are infinitely more worlds and dimensions to be experienced and explored. The soul looks beyond what our human eyes can see and knows: the universe is waiting for us.

© **Gerrit Gielen**

Enjoyment as gratitude: the way of the old soul

Pamela Kribbe channels Maria

Dear ones, I am Maria, your sister and your equal.

Today I want to speak with you about enjoyment, the wonder of it, the importance of it, and the healing power it holds for your soul, your body, and your entire being.

Enjoyment has long been forbidden. You live in a culture that has grown accustomed to treating enjoyment as something sinful, something undisciplined, something that steps outside morality, breaks the rules, and disobeys the rules.

Those are the associations that have attached themselves to enjoyment. This happened because being human and the human being itself, for a very long time was seen as sinful: a creature inclined toward evil, inclined to fall into desires that would lead into darkness. Humanity has long been treated with suspicion, especially by religious teachings. Just look at the Christian tradition.

The basic problem that arose in paradise, the Garden of Eden, was that the two humans were tempted and they were seduced by the serpent, in other words by their own illusions, and then the fall followed by disobeying a moral command, Eve eating the apple, and being cast out

of the Garden of Eden. You can see the central idea; human beings are inclined toward sin.

I won't go into the background of the story, the expulsion from paradise and all the misleading beliefs that underlie it. What I want to say is that it is a deeply human. By that I mean a story invented by people living within a particular culture, carrying particular judgments.

What I especially want to draw your attention to is the idea that human beings are prone to sin and must therefore be protected against themselves. Enjoyment, as a result, gets reduced to giving in to desire, to temptation. Enjoyment becomes essentially equated with lust: sin is linked to desire, and desire is linked to lust.

In this picture, enjoyment appears as surrendering yourself to something suspect, something questionable. The entire movement of enjoying, surrendering to pleasure, releasing control, and letting go of the mind has been made suspect, and that affects you. If you live in a culture where this image has been imprinted century after century, it's inevitable that you will suffer because of it.

Why does it cause such suffering? Because enjoyment and joy belong to the language of the soul. The soul doesn't speak in words, in cognitive language, it speaks through the heart. The heart stands for feeling, feeling and experiencing all the way to the depths. That is also the essence of true spirituality.

It isn't about ideas, theories, and moral frameworks. It's about feeling from the inside, what is real and true. Because what is real and true always evokes a feeling of joy, a feeling of yes! Letting go of excessive thinking, and instead sensing with certainty that something is right, that something is correct, that is very different from how you're to behave within traditional religion, which dictates everything from the head, from moral rules and principles, and distrusts feeling.

The result was that contact with the soul grew thin and impoverished. Because when you can no longer trust that deep feeling of what is true and real, you become alienated from yourself. You lose contact with a higher source of wisdom, one that rises above the collective consciousness and all the fears within it, and that gives life meaning. What I want to advocate for is the return of enjoyment and joy as the soul's original expression.

Deep within, the soul knows it is not sinful. It travels through light and dark, through an entire cycle of incarnations, but that whole, that interplay of light and dark, belongs to the very core of life. It is an interaction with deep meaning. The soul is not inclined to stand above light and dark and sort them into separate boxes.

The soul dives into this play, into duality, if you want to call it that, with the whole of its consciousness. Its awareness grows and grows as it ages, as it experiences multiple lives on Earth and begins to see patterns from

the inside rather than from the outside. It becomes older, and wiser.

The older and wiser the soul becomes, the more it longs during its earthly life for that deeper, higher source of wisdom. That wisdom cannot be found in a collective consciousness that has been shaped over a very long time, and in part still is, by fear, judgment, and control. So the older the soul becomes, the stronger the pull toward truth from within, toward genuine experience from within, rather than following authorities outside oneself. This is why old souls often feel deeply unhappy within existing systems; they cannot enjoy themselves; they cannot feel joy. Their soul is suffocated by it.

For them, experiencing a stream of joy comes very close to what enjoyment truly is. Enjoyment is very different from experiencing lust. Joy is a deeper feeling that touches your whole being. The old soul senses that joy is a message from the soul. Joy shows the soul it can unfold, that it can be itself. When you're forced to keep pace within a system or structure where you feel no joy, you essentially kill your own soul's impulses. Sooner or later that leads to serious symptoms: emotional, psychological, and physical. Many old souls end up feeling confused, insecure, and doubting themselves as a result.

What's truly needed is for enjoyment and receiving to be honored again as the soul's original language. Not the old thinking that says, if something goes against you and you

can't enjoy it, you must push through, "be strong, discipline yourself." That is the traditional answer. "This is the good, the right thing to do — suppress your resistance, push through, be strong." Because if you don't, you'll condemn yourself and see yourself as weak.

That is devastating for a sensitive soul who longs for contact with the soul, for meaning, for that higher dimension from which a deeper form of knowledge and a deeper inner experience arise. The result can be that the lightworker soul or the old soul, since they are essentially the same, comes to feel so much like an outsider in this world that it struggles to be present here, and begins to wonder whether it truly belongs.

My answer is, "Yes, you belong here completely. You are deeply connected to the Earth." If the language you want to listen to differs from the one in the collective consciousness, trust yourself. Don't let yourself be brainwashed or hypnotized by the voices of fear that can present themselves as moral commandments. Trust your original sense of truth. Notice what joy and enjoyment do for you, how your body lifts because of it.

The word inspiration, which means feeling the fire of your soul and living from that place, is connected to joy and enjoyment. As you discover what brings you joy, what makes you feel vital, what you truly enjoy, you move closer to your soul's mission, to the passion that drives you. For the old soul, that is the only path to genuine fulfillment.

Naturally, the same holds true for the younger soul, it too needs to recognize and follow the language of the soul. The younger soul still has a great deal of energy to dive into the world, to try everything, to experience everything, and, based on those experiences, to eventually decide, I need to return to my core, I need to learn to understand my own soul again. The younger soul still wants to wander a while and gather life experience. There's no point in judging that or trying too hard to redirect it, because there's a necessary dynamic within it, one that you, as an old soul, have also gone through.

Now I want to draw your attention to experiencing pleasure and joy. Bring your awareness into your body and say "yes" to the body — "yes" to every cell and sense: your eyes, your ears, your taste, your touch, the feeling of your skin. Feel what a marvelous instrument the body is. How much it can do, how subtly it can feel and perceive. How closely this instrument is connected to your human emotions, to happiness, love, joy, gratitude, but also to anger, fear, and sadness. What an extraordinary palette of sensations being human offers. This is your gift, not something small or sinful to be transcended or suppressed, but something to bring awareness to.

The whole of human experience, the sensations, the peaks and valleys of emotion, is like a garden full of a great variety of plants and growth. Consciousness is like water and sunlight for that garden, it is its nourishment.

When consciousness and life come together, a beautiful transformation occurs. Order and harmony arise in the garden, not imposed, but spontaneous. When you move with the flow of enjoyment and joy, with whatever brings you delight, a new order arises in your life, and it arises from within. You're no longer following someone else's rules; you're listening to the language of your own soul.

Let's do that now. First, say "yes" to the wonder that you are, that whole body and emotion that has been so darkened in the past by religion. Strip away those strange judgments, that idea of sinfulness. See it as a fantasy in which humanity lost itself. It's time to let go of that fantasy and allow the original wonder back in.

You are good as you are. You are innocent. Even though you have known both light and dark through your journey on Earth, through many lives, see your innocence now. Accept it. See if you can. Bring your attention to your root chakra, at the base of your spine.

Can you truly feel that there. I am worthy, I am allowed to exist. With everything I have done, even the things I later regretted, that I'm sorry for, that may have been shortsighted, I was unaware. I didn't always see the full picture, and that's allowed. I am on a journey through experience. I am allowed to be human. I now allow the awareness of my divinity in. I let it flow through my energy field, my spine, my root chakra.

Feel the blessing of the Divine flowing through everything. You are loved; you are not sinful or small.

You are worthy of enjoying and receiving. And now look, the soul is speaking to you. What do you need most right now? What brings you joy? What do you want to let go of? Feel that you are allowed to. What forces you to do things you don't love?

Look especially at something you feel you "must" do for yourself, and at the feeling behind it, if I don't do this, I'm not a good person. There it is again that idea of sin and moral obligation, I must overcome myself, or else I am not a good person.

Now look at what truly wants to flow, from your belly. In your belly is a deep connection to the whole body. It's a kind of instinctive knowing, and your body is deeply sensitive to the flow of enjoyment. To the body, that flow feels like well-being and ease.

Say to yourself, I allow myself this ease, this well-being. There is nothing shallow about that, nothing wrong with it. In fact, it helps me stay grounded; it helps my soul be present in my daily life.

That, ultimately, is the highest thing you have to offer the Earth, and your fellow human beings. Call up the feeling of enjoyment, ease, and well-being now. You are allowed to receive.

Receiving is essential. What wants to come to you? What falls into your lap? Let the soul answer you. Let the language of your soul back in. Reunite with her. The old soul is increasingly letting go of the struggle. The old

soul wants to simply be on Earth radiating light from within.

She no longer needs to convince, persuade, or push so hard. Her light is subtler, and it can only shine when you say a full "yes" to being human and to the original source of joy within you. The Garden of Eden then blossoms in your heart, and you realize you never truly left it.

You carry the vibration of that garden within you. The higher realm is already inside you. By allowing yourself to enjoy and to relax, which often also means doing less, or even doing "nothing," you begin to radiate something subtle that touches others too, from the inside out.

You will no longer want to change something or someone from the outside. You let the flow from within do its work. And it is precisely when the soul begins to detach from the earthly cycle, as the old soul does, that it has the greatest impact, spiritually speaking.

She is already returning to the frequency of paradise. She remembers her origin. In the smile of the old soul, others are reminded of their own divine origin. That is the gift of the old soul. The old soul who returns to her essence feels abundance, gratitude, and joy and spreads that vibration effortlessly.

I greet you with love and warmth. Be free to trust, and to enjoy.

Thank you.

A spiritual perspective on aging

by Gerrit Gielen and Suzy Conway

If you accept what the newspapers say about getting old, it will seem to be the worst thing that can happen to a human being. And for society at large, an aging population is perceived to be a disaster. Crowded nursing homes, unaffordable health care, dementia, and general deterioration are what we have come to associate with growing old. And yet, there are people of an age who are out volunteering, riding their bikes or playing tennis, holding get-togethers for 90th birthday parties, happy to be getting older when their careers are on the shelf, and they have time to devote to their passions.

Every one of us is getting older. With every second that elapses, we lose a bit of our youth. It is a natural process to which all living creatures are subject. How can it be that we have come to loathe a process so natural? Is there something wrong with nature? Or is there something wrong with us, with our way of thinking about aging? What kind of nonsense have we taken on board from

society that regards aging as a kind of punishment what is not warranted? And youth as the holy grail?

How do old people themselves actually feel about that “dreaded” old age? Scientific research that measures happiness relative to age shows a U-shaped curve. Young and old people are the happiest. During mid-life it is more likely that you are unhappy than in your youth. Research shows that old people are even somewhat happier than young people!¹ How is this possible? How can it be that, although aging is associated with so many problems, people usually start feeling happier anyway? Let’s examine the life cycle of a human being from a spiritual perspective. A perspective that is always left out of the equation and promises a deeper more meaningful understanding of again.

Birth: the loss of ourselves

From a spiritual viewpoint, to be born is to take a dive into matter. We leave the realm of the soul, an atmosphere of joy and peace. In the realm of the soul, the restrictions of time and space, and the sense of separation that we experience on earth, do not exist. Freedom is a natural given. Moreover, everything around us radiates beauty, love, and harmony; fear and suffering are absent.

Nonetheless, at some point we accept the invitation from Mother Earth to be born as a human being. With every birth we begin a long process of descending into, and

connecting with, the physical atmosphere. In ancient literature, the birth of the incarnated soul is called “the fettering of the soul.” The soul lands into the restrictive, dense realm of matter, in which each being seems separate from another, but in truth, it is not. The soul has trouble holding on to its natural vibration in this atmosphere; it does not belong here, and it can survive only by regularly withdrawing. This withdrawal is what we call sleep, and it is essential not merely for our body, but for our spirit.

Although birth marks the beginning of a new incarnation, the process of the soul’s descent is then still far from over. A further descent continues until around the age of forty. Around that time, the dive into matter has reached its peak. As an adult you fully inhabit the realm of matter and human society. From the perspective of your soul, you are now the farthest removed from your source, the heavenly realm you come from. At the deepest point of incarnation, the distance to your origin is the greatest.

During childhood, the bond with the original sphere of the soul is still strong. Children are often intuitive, spontaneously joyful, and totally absorbed in the moment; these qualities are natural to the soul. To enjoy and explore life in a playful and uninhibited way is natural for the child, as well as for the soul.

Unfortunately, our society has become dominated by a twisted, masculine notion of spirituality that does not recognize these qualities as spiritual but rather regards them as signs of immaturity. This heavy and serious

portrayal of spirituality is not actually derived from original Christianity. In the Bible, there are still traces of the soul's perspective. In Mark 10:14, for example, Jeshua says: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

Puberty: the descent downward

Before adulthood arrives there is the transitional phase of puberty, followed by young adulthood. Consciousness descends deeper into the material atmosphere; the distance from our Source becomes greater. The natural happiness and self-confidence from childhood is lost. Doubts and fears emerge; nothing is taken for granted anymore. There will be rebellion and uncertainty. The resistance usually focuses on the surroundings: the parents, the school, or society in general – all of these are often under critical scrutiny. Unconsciously, they get the blame for the loss that is felt by the teenager and young adult. But essentially, their rebellion is directed against the inner development, the deeper descent into the earthly realm and a further cutting loose from the Source.

In the realm of the soul, having a unique place within the whole is a natural given. You do not doubt your right to exist, and you intuitively sense what your role is in the grander scheme of things. The knowledge that the cosmos is not complete without you, that you are an integral part of the greater whole, makes one feel safe

and cared for. At puberty, this realization gets lost and this results in an identity crisis. This crisis may be so overwhelming that young people become addicted to drugs or alcohol, and in some cases even commit suicide. Such acts of despair often originate from a deep desire to restore the connection with the soul.

Fortunately, however, resistance is not the only characteristic of this period. Puberty and adolescence are also a time when many aspects of earthly life are explored with zest and curiosity. We may become interested in nature, music, literature, or explore new and provocative intellectual ideas. Interest in others increases as we fall in love for the first time. Perhaps most importantly, we start to recognize our own originality, our individuality. Every soul is unique and takes its own seeds to the earth, seeds that germinate during childhood and emerge above ground during adolescence. Often, during this phase in life, original thoughts and feelings surface that will have a lasting impact on your future and will take definite shape in adulthood.

If all goes well, the loss of childhood coincides with a period of rediscovery of who you are, independent of your parents and upbringing. That rediscovery ensures that, in the long term, the rebellion subsides, and the current of Life will take you to new and exciting places. The most valuable gift you can give to someone as they go through puberty and young adulthood is trust. Be confident that there is a path and place for them in this confusing world no matter how “different” they are, no

matter their seeming inability to fit in. It is precisely their originality, their individuality, that the world needs and that holds their unique soul's contribution.

Adulthood: the low point of our lives

Adulthood, the physical high point of life, is from a spiritual perspective the low point of life. The distance to the realm of the soul – from our own soul – is now at its greatest. We are now the farthest away from our spiritual origin. We are fully immersed in the material realm, and we have become identified with our human personality and our achievements. During this phase, humans are on average the unhappiest. The physical world with its laws and restrictions is now experienced as the only reality. A lot of concern turns to money and property, to social status and hard work. This fixation causes people to forget themselves even more. The identification with the material realm in adulthood is often so strong that one tends to feel that this is all there is, and that life revolves around these issues.

There may be spiritual beliefs present, but often these are derived from the traditional religions which are largely based on fear and dogma. The traditional religions have a distorted image of spirituality, and they often do more harm than good. The most important thing that an adult can accomplish from a spiritual perspective is to cherish the seeds he or she carried to earth as a soul, and to let

them grow into beautiful flowers. This is our real mission, and one that can only be fulfilled by remaining true to oneself, by not letting oneself be dragged along by the pressures and rules of society. We are not taught this however, we come by it through suffering perhaps, loss, being fired from a job. Some life event that causes us to reflect on how we are living what winds up to be an empty life.

Quite often, this mission fails. In adulthood, the ideals of adolescence and puberty, and the desires and dreams of childhood, are often regarded as unfeasible and naive. After all, they do not fit in with what society seems to expect and considers realistic. Authentic ways of self-expression that are still there may be labeled selfish, irresponsible, or even insane. "Act normal, behave like a responsible adult." We have to fit within the social mold or else we do not belong. Work forty hours a week and take three weeks of holidays a year.

I remember the sadness I felt the day I entered kindergarten. At the age of four, I could already sense what was planned ahead for me: years and years of school and then work. I was wondering when I would be free again. At the end of primary school, I was asked during a test what I wanted to be later in life and my answer was "rentier." I just wanted to be free again; I did not want to be forced into a system that told me what to do and what not to do.

Fortunately, during my adult life I managed to find a comfortable part-time job which allowed me to work no more than three days a week. Other people thought it was peculiar that as a grown man, I had no career and little ambition, and preferred to wander through nature, read books, and have philosophical conversations with my friends. Not until I was in my forties did I realize that it was acceptable and even practicable to be this different. I turned my hobbies (thinking about philosophy and spirituality, practicing hypnotherapy) into work. Eventually, I let go of my part time job. I discovered that I could be free, do the things I really liked and make a living doing it. The key was trust: having faith in the original and unique gifts my soul carried within and trusting that Earth would welcome me and reward me for sharing these gifts. With that realization, I started the way “up,” the way back to my spiritual nature.

Aging: the way “up” again

When we grow older, we begin the way “up” again, back to the soul. The low point of being fully incarnated in, and identified with, the material realm is over. We can let go of this one-sided focus and we are often spurred on to do so by the life challenges we meet, or by being confronted with the increasing frailty of our bodies. We are going back “up” again to eventually return to the Source. The natural movement of aging is growth toward the light, identifying with the greater reality of your soul

rather than the finite and limited reality of your body and personality. Therefore, from a spiritual point of view, you become more rather than less when you age: wisdom, trust, and joy are more likely to increase. Emphasis on ego, personality, getting ahead, making money, raising a family recede to give way to something deeper and meaningful. The reconnection to the soul.

A human being who ages naturally and gracefully is aware that they are much more than their earthly self. They realize that their true self rises above the roles they have played in the material realm of Earth. As the hold of this reality diminishes, they start to realize again who they really are—an eternal being of living light.

Unfortunately, this natural and graceful process is often hampered by deeply ingrained social beliefs. We live in a society which, by and large, believes that physical reality is all there is, that there is no true self beyond the earthly self, and therefore getting old is a bad thing. People have become completely identified with their physical body and personality. Getting old is associated with loss and decay, with a movement toward nothingness. Many people therefore oppose the very process of aging, and this resistance interrupts the natural ascension toward the soul and toward more joy and light. Resisting the aging process creates a self-fulfilling prophecy; what you fear comes true because you fear it. The resistance causes one to cling to the physical dimension and to the body. This clinging is a denial and a turning away from your inner light, and it has a number of tragic consequences for the

aging human. Note, the use of surgery and drugs to make us look younger as if wrinkles and age spots are something to be completely eradicated so when we look in the mirror we see a twenty-year-old looking back at us in a seventy-year-old body.

– First, the aging body could benefit tremendously from a more deeply felt connection with the soul. As a person connects with the realm of the soul during the aging process, the energy from the spiritual realm flows more strongly through their body. The body is uplifted and revitalized by the light and joy from this realm, and it gains extra strength and health from it. The body is lit from within. The ailments of old age have less of an effect on it. But if consciousness does not focus on what lies beyond the earthly, and desperately clings to the physical, the body will have to do without this additional energy. This increases the risk of health problems.

– Second, in society at large, older people could fulfill an important role, radiating spiritual awareness and wisdom to younger generations who are focused on the physical realm and the demands of society. Older people can, through their life experience and their increasing connection with the dimension of the soul, have a positive influence on younger people by sharing their light, their insight, and their compassion. They can offer a wider perspective on things and patiently listen to the younger generation. Young people naturally sense the wisdom and experience of the elders who project an energy of peace and serenity. It would be a beautiful

experiment to have young people living down the hall from the elders who are in assisted living facilities. Imagine the conversations at dinner!

The positive influence of older people can be expressed in various ways: from an influential spiritual personality to a sweet wise grandma to whom the whole family turns for advice. Also, there are writers, artists, and therapists who, at a very advanced age, are doing exceptional work and unknowingly inspire many other people. Older people are the bridge between the realm of the timeless and the practical world of everyday life. The “Oldie” is returning to the same awareness the child had, which is to accept and know on an intuitive level that they are more than a mind and a body, they are also very much a soul and spirit. A society in which the value of old age is not recognized is a society that has lost the connection with the spiritual. We then see a society running amuck. Just look around you.

When the aging human cannot take up their natural place in society, both society and the elders themselves suffer. The elder tends to become lonely, small, and uninteresting as they are shut off from the rest of the population as if an embarrassment. Is it not tragic that right at the age when a human being is ideally suited for spiritual work, they are relegated to the sidelines. Have you ever heard of a writer or artist who quit on his sixty-fifth birthday? Just imagine how many great books and works of art we would be without if they held to the insane rule to stop creating at the age of sixty-five. At

this moment, I am reading the memoirs of Claude Lanzmann, born in 1925, maker of the film Shoah². On every page, I am amazed and touched by the scholarship, wisdom, and richness of this book. According to the standards of our society, this man would have had to retire more than twenty years earlier and do nothing! How absurd! When older people are made to feel small, they make themselves small and physical and mental degeneration are the result.

Aging: five suggestions to lighten the way

In order to find a natural, graceful, and meaningful way to grow old in our society, which holds such negative pictures about old age, a radical change in thinking is required. Here are some suggestions.

Forget all that society tells you about aging and being old

Society's view of aging leaves out the spiritual view. It does not regard human beings as carriers of a timeless soul, but as physical organisms that gradually break down and become useless. But every human being who experiences life with an open heart and an open mind will conclude that there is more to life than this. Life has a spiritual dimension, and this dimension is actually far more fundamental than the physical one. As an elder, you can connect more easily with that dimension and derive inspiration and strength from it.

Realize that nothing is ever lost

Nothing and no one gets “lost in the night.” Everything of value lasts and remains. One of the first things we find out after we die and are on the other side, is that everything is still there. Our family members and dear friends, the world of our childhood, our most cherished experiences – everything is still there. We can connect with our loved ones or relive some experiences if we so choose – it is all there for us. By going along with the flow of life, and surrendering to the aging process, we reach out to this timeless dimension where everything of real substance is preserved. If we dare to let go, we can receive glimpses of this dimension. We then come to realize on the inner level that nothing is lost – and this inner knowing brings peace and equanimity.

Go out into the world.

This is the time to let your light shine. It will serve society and your fellow human beings. Younger people don’t understand the elderly. How can they be so accepting, peaceful, and happy while they are confronted daily with loss of health and abilities, and with death approaching? The answer is that the elderly have an inner knowing that young people do not have. Older people are usually marked and ripened by life experiences that have made them milder and more thoughtful than the average young person. An older person has had to let go and surrender more often. From this grows an equanimity that brings peace and happiness. The elderly would do an

immense service to society and their (younger) fellow humans if they would be aware of their gifts and share them. Take an honest look at what the world needs today: new phones, faster cars? No. What is needed is wisdom, calm, and peacefulness. Isn't that what the elderly have to offer? Gerrit, I'd like to put here what John said to me at the barn. I don't know how to fit it in though...something like. For example. I have a horse which involves a good deal of chores every day. I am by far the elder of the twelve young people I board with and have often been approached for advice. But this one day something exceptionally beautiful happened. John, a seventeen-year-old who helps with chores, said, "Suzy, can I ask you a question? You are old and probably wise?"

Yes, I said.

"Do you think I'm a spiritual person?" The conversation that ensued was remarkable in dozens of ways. There we were sitting in a pasture full of horses, where John poured his heart out to me, a seventy-nine-year-old, talking about his spiritual experiences. Tears flowed, his body shook, and then peace settled all around him. He needed someone to listen. He needed support. He needed to have someone say, you are not crazy, you are on the right track, you are blessed. And so was I. Gerrit. Is this too much or too awkward to fit in? It's such a great example. Let me know.

See the relativity of the roles people play. Do not take these so seriously.

Life is a game. People (read adults) who are completely engaged in the game take their role very seriously. Don't let yourself be carried away too much by the game; maintain some distance. See through it; observe the players playing their parts. To see human society as a game that people play makes it easier to let go of the standards and expectations involved. It makes it easier to let go of the roles that you used to play as a parent, employer, or employee, son, daughter, etcetera and to open up the new chapter of your life.

Put your trust in life. Trust that life will bring new experiences to you, new roles that fit the person you are now, not the person you were then. By letting go of the past and surrendering, you open up to the new, for example, discovering different sides of yourself. If you hold on to something that no longer fits you, a feeling of emptiness and loss will arise. Trust life and let go.

No longer identify with your body and your thoughts and the physical world, but with your consciousness.

Identifying with your role in the physical and social world is fun and interesting as long as you realize it is a game. For a while, you are completely absorbed in it and then you let go again. In that way, you go through a whole range of experiences, and your soul is enriched by that. It is natural during a certain period of your life to identify with the roles you play, but it is also natural to

feel at some point that it is time to let go and to realize who you are beyond that role. This is supposed to happen as you get older. Change is refreshing to the soul. Don't let your soul collect dust.

Imagine that you are driving a car. If you think you are the car, it will be terrible when there is an accident and the car is banged up. If you realize you are the driver, it is not so terribly, you know you are not the car. The car is damaged, but you step away without a scratch.

Go stand in front of the mirror, look at your reflection, and see how your face is getting older. But if you look into your eyes, there is something there that does not age. It is timeless. It is your consciousness. Feel it. By identifying with your consciousness, and not with your aging body, you can more easily go along with the natural flow of the aging process. Then, your connection with who you truly are, with the dimension of your soul deepens. This awareness makes you shine with wisdom and peace. That is your gift to the world. That is the elders gift to itself and to those who come after.

The blessings of old age

There is nothing wrong with an aging population. To start with, older people are on average happier people, so an aging population means that society as a whole will be more contented.

The proportional rise in the aging population also means an end to the disastrous population explosion which has caused the demise of so many animals and plant species. We are heading for a future with fewer people on Earth and therefore humanity and nature will be in more equilibrium.

As a result of the growing number of older people, it will be impossible to ignore and belittle them. Society will be forced to give elderly people their rightful place. And the elderly themselves will be challenged to enter that place. The absurd logic that the elders must retreat from society will be put to an end. And the spiritual viewpoint that they are at their most fertile will come to the surface. Older people will not have to hide but will be able to shine and radiate all their light to the world at large. Older people will bring wisdom, peace, and tranquility to society.

Humankind has gone astray and is in dire need of connection with the timeless reality of the soul. A society, which takes seriously the natural blessings and gifts of old age, will be a society that focuses on harmony between human beings and harmony with Mother Earth, instead of the pursuit of success and exploitation of our planet. It will also be a society in which there is less fear of death and of old age. Growing older will be perceived as a graceful process and as a gradual return to the source of Light we all come from.

© **Gerrit Gielen**

¹) Helliwell, J.F., Putnam, R.D.(2004) The Social Context of Well-Being. Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences. Vol. 359, No. 1449, pp. 1435-1446

²) Claude Lanzmann – The Patagonian Hare: A Memoir

A spiritual vision of the aging body

By Gerrit Gielen

Some people view the body much like they do a machine, for example, a car. The analogy is fitting. A car needs regular oil changes; in an emergency, we may need a blood transfusion. A car goes in for regular checkups; we go in for our yearly medical checkup. Cars have punctures, we fall and break a bone that needs surgery. Carburetors and brakes need to be replaced; so do knees and hips. We live with the constant fear of getting old and dying but tend to assuage the fear with the fixes available to us, which fool us into believing we can escape both.

Are our bodies really only mechanical things, easily fixed with replacement parts?

From the spiritual perspective, the body is intelligent and wise with its own needs and desires. It is also in continuous communication with you, an ongoing energetic exchange is always transpiring. Your body is loyal. It helps you, carries you, and houses your burdens. When you fall out of balance, it does everything it can to restore it.

As you grow older, the body slows down. At the beginning of your life, it was adept at exploring the outer world, now it decreases its speed giving you time to discover the inner one. It wants to integrate the earthly life experiences you have enjoyed in the company of

your soul. In old age, you have time to restore and deepen the connection with your soul as your perspective and goals shift leaving behind the fascinations of youth.

The Function of the Body in Each Phase of Life

The youthful human body wants nothing more than to learn about, discover and enjoy the physical world. It displays an endless energy for play and movement. It is curious and eager to explore what catches it's fancy in the present moment. As a child, we are innocent and pure. We don't know much about the world we find ourselves in, but we have a strong desire to find out. The present moment, the here and now, is our domain. We gladly experience everything the world has to offer and explore it to the fullest.

When I was a schoolboy, I felt extremely tense watching the clock tick toward the late afternoon dismissal. The tension increased with every passing minute. I could feel it building in my legs, hardly able to keep them still. Finally, at four o'clock, we were free to leave and go outside where we could run and play to our heart's content. That energy was thrilling, fun, and enjoyable compared to what I lived through at my desk. To run and skip and discover the world before you was everything. Each discovery was new and exhilarating.

As we grow older the sparkling, enthusiastic energy inevitably diminishes. We become inured and staid as we take on the cloak of adulthood. We know how the world works, we take on more and more responsibility, we work and build an identity we call “me” based on our personality and place in society.

The body, which is now strong and molded by the world, is not as present and carefree. It has undergone years of modification; it has been trained to stand still in the world; mobility decreases as rootedness increases.

And then comes old age.

The body is different now. It is quieter, which enables us to lovingly restore our connection with our soul. It is inviting us to go on the inner journey back to the source and integrate all our life experiences, and heal what needs healing. This is what the age of being old is truly about and it is essential to accomplish this integration.

The body wants to take us Home. It wants to remind us of who we truly are. We have enjoyed countless experiences in our life on Earth. We are adept at putting things into perspective, more at ease with ourselves. We have developed a deeper understanding of others. We are certainly wiser. The world and all its struggles, dramas, and breaking news interest us less and less.

We look at ourselves differently now. We look back on our life and know what we stand for, what we have meant to others, what we have done to others and for others,

which opportunities we have seized, and which ones we passed by.

Your body tries to help you with that process of internalization and integration.

The Language of the Body

Yes, sometimes old age brings aches, pains, disease, and other various ailments. If you look at these changes from a spiritual perspective, the body is trying to tell you something important and you might want to look deeper into what it is saying.

You eventually figure out there is way more to the noises your body makes than what appears on the surface. Pain and discomfort have a voice; they will speak to you if you are still and listen. Imagine what the sharp pain in your back might say to you if you ask, *Why are you here? Do you have a message for me? How can I understand what's happening to me?*

In the quiet process of aging, your body speaks to you. Listen carefully. It may ask, *what do you no longer need to carry? What doesn't fit you anymore? What are you afraid of?*

It may be inviting you to stop doing certain things and turn your focus elsewhere. It may be telling you to spend more time connecting with your soul, and less time with

the goings on in the world, the fast frenzied pace outside your door. Consider it.

How does the body communicate with us? In two ways.

First, over time, our bodies become increasingly sensitive to the energies and urgings of the soul. Elderly people tend to be more sensitive to beauty, truth, and love. They have milder ways, can more easily entertain other perspectives besides their own. The body transmits subtler vibrations than before, which harmonize with the soul, thereby strengthening its presence.

Second, we can now feel how the body signals us when it comes too close to negative energies. They don't resonate with us anymore; the busy, hectic, multitasking energies of modern society fray our nerves. Noise and hustle repel us because they are not useful, they don't teach us anything about our true selves. The frequency is too heavy and difficult to take in. Listen and take heed.

Sometimes, "ailments of old age" are signs that the old ways of how we live, think, and act in the world are no longer genuine. We sense we are about to change or already have.

Physical problems arise when we stubbornly hold on to what no longer serves us. For some reason, we expose ourselves to these old negative energies and tensions, which in the end exhaust us and can cause somatic aches and pains. If we cling to the dark energies of this world, continue to identify with the temporary, and desperately

hold on to the unresolved past without integrating it, life becomes increasingly difficult and constricted resulting in need for control.

It is easier to let things go if we allow the light of the future to shine on us. Our bodies do what is necessary to precisely accomplish this. When we learn to read and interpret what our bodies are saying, we have taken one more step into the deeper meaning of things, our lives, and our true identity. Who are we behind the persona we have created? It is time to remove the mask.

When we experience physical pain, ask it to reveal what energies or experiences no longer benefit us. These energies steal our attention from discovering our inner world, inner self, our souls, while our body is trying to focus our attention on them. The body is there to bring us Home, to remind us of who we really are and point us away from the constant pressure and restlessness of the world. The body is our guide to a higher consciousness, a guide onto a path that takes us toward the recognition of our own divine light. This is what the body is committed to.

When you let go of what you are not, you have the space to embrace and claim who you are. The last chapters of your life are bound to be a profound awakening process, a new journey of discovery. This time, however, you are not discovering the world outside you, you are discovering the world inside of you. You're discovering your own inner light. The great inner awakening comes

when you remember this. You exchange the personality/ego identity with the soul/spirit identity. Then, you've arrived home.

Suppressed Energies

Our body helps us deepen contact with our soul when we take a step back from the world. It also assists in the integration of all the life experiences we have had on Earth. Tension is present between our personality and soul, the worldly energy, and the spiritual energy. The body helps us resolve this. As we age and diminish physically, we let go of our possessions, all the things we have accumulated in our lives, but we fail to let go of what has accumulated inside because we are too afraid to face it.

The personality holds onto less pleasant energies, one could say, those that are suppressed or repressed and are held and stored in the body. This is understandably necessary to some degree in order to function in the world and meet the expectations and responsibilities of a hectic, busy world.

Emotions of fear, grief, anger, and stress are not always allowed to be acknowledged or felt; there is no safe place to express them and there is no time. We have never learned to go inward and give them attention. We push them down, put them aside, and move on to the next piece of busyness. The lack of time and motivation to self-reflect only leads to more of the same. The body is

very capable of carrying an incredible amount of suppressed emotions. It not only carries them, it also absorbs them. Subsequently, we may have a heart attack, pain in the abdominal area, or suffer from terrible headaches.

The body finally loses the willingness to carry the old, buried emotions. It is not responsible for them anymore. It wants to release them after holding them for years and years. What we have refused to see or feel comes up in our consciousness as an invitation. We have the space and time now to heal and integrate these outcasts before we die.

We have to first be aware of them, deal with them, and reap the inner peace that follows.

The unseen wants to be seen.

The unresolved longs to be lovingly accepted.

We must find the courage to face what is buried and say yes to it.

Yes, this belongs to me.

Yes, this fear, anger, or jealousy is part of my human history.

Yes, I want to look at everything and bring it into the light.

Yes, I am afraid, but I will befriend what's hidden.

It is time to turn inward and meet everything that arises with love.

Unconditional self-love is the key to integration. We have to love every moment of our lives; all the foolishness, the mistakes, the times we hurt others, the missed opportunities. It all deserves a home within; it all belongs to us.

Look back on your life with love and understanding, never abandon yourself. With this kind of self-love, we create inner peace. There is no need to run and hide. We are becoming who we truly are by integrating the personality with the soul.

We do this by completely loving and embracing ourselves. To look lovingly at ourselves entails total honesty.

Unconditional love is a strength, not a weakness.

Old Age as Awakening

Summary

In the traditional, materialistic view, the aging body develops ailments and diseases that ultimately cause the death of the body. Old age is seen as a continuous decline culminating in death.

From a spiritual perspective the aging body offers an opportunity to reconnect with your soul. You stop identifying exclusively with what passes away; your body, your achievements, your possessions, your

appearance, your social role, and instead identify with that eternal and immortal part of yourself.

Deep within there is an incredible richness and beauty waiting to be discovered, a radiant, shining light that transcends time and space. This is your soul. This is your timeless essence.

When you recognize the richness of your own inner light and allow it to come in, you will be able to recognize that light everywhere in the world around you, and you will fulfill your spiritual purpose of growing old.

When you can see your own beauty and replace the persona with the identity of soul, you will recognize that beauty in others as well. You need to do very little; say a few words, a look into someone's eyes, or your mere presence is enough for someone to know that they are also pure, eternal light.

The aging body helps you remember your immortality.

When you identify more deeply with the immortal part of yourself, you will experience death very differently. The moment you truly realize *I am* my soul, the meaning of finitude changes, and death ceases to exist.

As your body grows old, and you see the changes in the mirror, ask yourself—*what is my body trying to show me? Is there something within me that is more me than my physical self?*

Yes.

You are not a body that is slowly disappearing. You are an eternal consciousness that temporarily lives through the body and survives the death of the body. Not merely a human being with a past and a finite future, but a soul that transcends time and space.

The aging body does not bring death; it brings eternal life.

© **Gerrit Gielen**

Edited by Suzy Conway

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to thank the co-authors of this eBook, Suzy Conway and Pamela Kribbe. Suzy for all her editing work, the inspiring email exchanges, and her ever-radiant energy.

Pamela for our shared inner journey of discovery of which this book is an expression.

I would also like to thank all the older people I have encountered in my life. My dear parents especially for they have always been a source of inspiration to me.

Gerrit Gielen