

## An Elderhood Guide



To paraphrase "A Finale Story" written by Michael H. Annison:

There is a wonderful story that captures the spirit of the elderhood evolution.

The people of a small community periodically faced issues. Each time there were challenges, the village leaders would go to a wise man to seek guidance. His advice consistently proved helpful and the leaders became to believe he knew about everything.

One day a younger man decided to devise a plan to marginalize/discredit the old man. He would ask a question that the old man could not answer correctly. The plan involved going to the old man with a live bird in his hand behind his back. He would ask the old man, "Is the bird dead or alive?" If the man said dead, he would release the bird. If the man said alive, he would crush the bird. The man thought for a while and replied, "It is all depends on you."

"The final story" summarizes where second-halfers are today. Second-halfers will create the future. The question is: what will the legacy be?

Less than 5% of the population plans ahead. However, most leadership materials emphasize making a plan and working your plan. It also recommends a can do, will do attitude.

Therefore, it is not surprising that few plan and prepare for the second half of life. However, there are a couple of additional reasons when it comes to old age planning.

Second-halfers suffer from the anxiety of their mortality plus images of the seven D's: Decline, Dependence, Disease, Disability, Dementia, Dysfunction, and Dying.

Most motivational literature agrees one becomes what one thinks about most. A positive attitude reinforces this self-fulfilling prophecy. However, a plan and preparation are still an essential part of the formula.

In our second-half journey there are a number of steps we can take to finish extremely well. Dave Ramsey outlines six service commitments:

Ownership: We will transfer ownership of all we have back to the Lord.

Management: We will tell money where to go instead of wondering where it went.

Freedom: We will live more simply and work toward eliminating all financial debt.

Foresight: We will save and invest (not hoard) for the future needs of our family.

Legacy: We will pass on biblical counsel and tangible resources to loved ones.

Generosity: We will support the work of Christ and help others in need.

Doctors say that healthy habits will help get you to age 85, but how to live beyond that remains a medical mystery. Interviews with centenarians tell us what they "do" to have lived so long. The following offers some ideas:

Give back,  
Have a pet,  
Forgive everyone,  
Drink lots of water,  
Brush and floss your teeth,  
Dispose of things. Avoid clutter,  
Develop an attitude of gratitude,  
Do not smoke. Avoid alcohol in excess,  
Be optimistic, laugh, feel, and have fun,  
Stay married and connected with others,  
Continue to learn and exercise your mind,

Never retire. Develop a second-half purpose,  
Pray, study the Bible and attend religious services,  
Get up, get going, get outside, walk, move, and  
keep busy,  
Eat grains, veggies, fish, and an apple a day and  
take two fibers capsules.

Based upon the reality of a new “life stage (65-84),”  
the following unique issues appear urgent service  
areas for second-halfers:

Aging & development Reading Certification;  
Longevity Response-Ability Crusade;  
USA Elderhood Missionary Harvest Campaign;  
Adult wellness and caring: Communication, fall  
prevention, mental issues, nutritional issues,  
physical issues, sexuality issues, sleep issues,  
social issues and spiritual issues;  
Congregational profiling;  
Creation of an estate and planned-gift design  
service as well as a church foundation for facility  
maintenance, renovation, and expansion;  
Cultivation of an intergenerational ‘We-Serve’  
culture  
Death and dying preparation;  
Early second-half preparation;  
Establishment of a system to have meaningful  
contact with those leaving  
fulltime employment (age 67 approximately) and  
six months thereafter;  
Grandparenting;  
Grief sharing;  
Helping oneself and others finish extremely well;  
Individual lay ministry leadership philosophy;  
Military family support;  
New beginnings and positive longevity attitude  
nurturing;  
Practicing stewardship and service: A benevolent  
and generous lifestyle culture in estate planning,  
budgeting, and legacy planning;  
Volunteer management: Recruitment,  
Development, and Placement; and  
Volunteering and working alongside gifted pastors.

If second half ministry is not your sweet spot, passion, or legacy, here is a list of activities that also foster second half of life engagement:

Arts & Crafts: Act, Draw, Paint, Photography, Writing;  
Employment/ Business Venture/ Self-Employment: Part/Full, Current Profession/ New Field, Freelance, Teach, Consult;  
Education: Advanced degree, Certificate/License, Online/Campus, Self-help Books/Workshops, Small group;  
Physical/Sport: Bicycling, Fish, Golf, Swimming, Walking/Hiking;  
Hobbies: Board games, Collecting, Facebook/Website, Family Scrapbooking, Gardening;  
Relationship: Alumni associations, Charitable organizations, Extended family/relatives, Faith-based organizations, Service groups;  
Spiritual/Faith-Based: CASA Network, Christian Grandparenting Network, Finishers Project, New Beginnings, YES! Young Enough to Serve;  
Travel: Family (Grandchildren, Children, Parent) Trips, Historical Sites, Learning Vacations, Missions Trip, National Parks;  
Volunteer/Mentor: American Red Cross, Environment Alliance for Senior Involvement, Feeding the Hungry, Habitat for Humanity, and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

If you are self-sufficient, the above ideas give you a good start. For further guidance, see "Add Years to Your Life and Life to Your Years," by Charles Arn in *Longevity Response-Ability*.