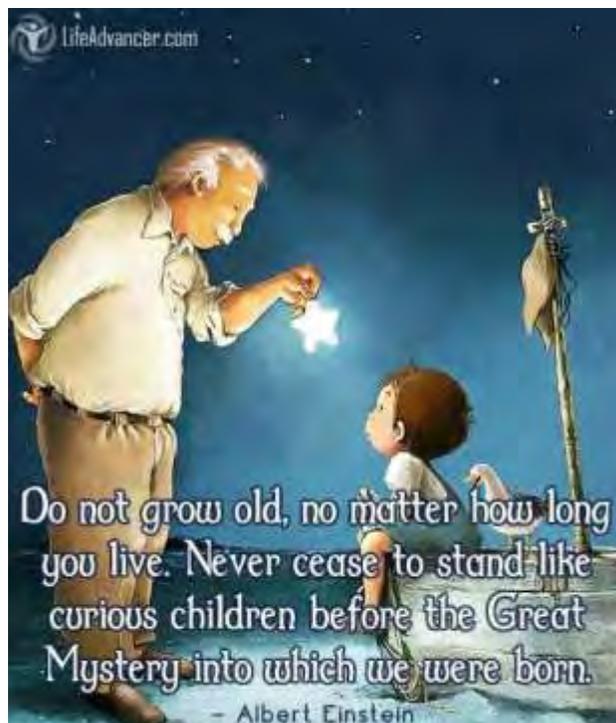


How Not to Grow Old

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No-one wants to grow old. Sure, we long for wisdom, but none of the 20 or 30 somethings I work with ever say, “I wish I was 60 or 70!” Apart from physically ailing, I think the real threat of aging is the dread of becoming a kill-joy wrapped in misery!

It’s not that growing older is so terrible; It’s just that we allow a lifetime of problems and concepts to pile up and strangle us. I was wondering how to avoid this fate when a friend shared with me the Hawaiian practice of Ho’oponopono. The simple elegance of its core concept caught my imagination.

Don’t Grow Old Before Your Time

Having been a student of Human Development, I believe that the ideal trajectory of life should be an ever-expanding arc of growth. That’s defined as movement towards our unique potential. Too often, that is not the case.

Last week, I had a number of conversations that showed me how stuck we can get. Our concepts and memories can create limits and make us old before our time! During one of these conversations the practice of Ho’oponopono leapt off the pages of “Zero Limits” by Joe Vitale, as a possible, simple and elegant solution to the biggest challenge to staying young.

Stuck on Replay

In Zero Limits, Joe Vitale proposes that when a problem surfaces, it often reflects a painful memory that is replaying in our life. The memory or problem might not even be our own – it could be something inherited from the past or absorbed from those around us. Whatever its source, it blocks us from connecting to the Divine.

The problem and its related memory is not who we are, even though it feels that way. For the Hawaiians, who we are, is a very important question. We are perfect, made in the image and likeness of God, whole, complete, timeless. The junk that we carry that burdens us and makes us grow old is not who we are. Maybe you’ve had an experience where this was made crystal clear. I have. I call it my Darth Vader moment!

Kids have a habit of pushing buttons and dragging us down into realms we don’t mean to visit. My father used to yell sometimes. I couldn’t bear it, and always vowed to never lose my temper at my kids. But of course, I did. One particular afternoon, I yelled at my son who was having an attack of the terrible twos. I had an almost out-of-body experience where I watched myself be someone I was not.

I was shocked. It was as if I heard the dreaded words “You are your father!” This wasn’t me, but my problems and memories definitely blocked access to my divine ability to love.

Clear the problems and memories

The idea behind Ho’oponopono is amazingly simple. The premise is that we are all responsible for everything that we see in our world. By taking full personal responsibility and then healing the wounded places within ourselves, we can literally heal ourselves and our world.

Taking responsibility is not about taking the blame, or assuming “I” am at fault. It is a willingness to respond, and to be answerable to the current memory that is running through your life. This is a further expression of the notion “peace starts with me”.

As related by Joe Vitale in Zero Limits, Ho’oponopono practitioner, Dr. Len, suggests a four-stage process. The process begins with self-awareness of a problem or painful memory. Instead of objectifying

the problem and blaming your circumstances or others, you can decide to take responsibility by owning it. You can accept the opportunity to clear it from within yourself and by extension, in the world.

Whenever a place for healing presents itself in your life, you can be open to the place where the hurt resides within you. After identifying this place, with as much feeling as you can, verbalize these four statements:

I love you.

I'm sorry.

Please forgive me.

Thank you.

Receiving Divine Inspiration

By clearing your spirit, you open a pathway to receive Divine inspiration. Our problems and painful memories act like plugs in our spirit. We don't feel energy and inspiration. Unless we deal with our problems and memories, the plug just gets bigger as we age. This is why no-one wants to grow old.

This idea had a captivating effect on me. If you work hard to clear away the hurtful memories and stories (whether they be your own, your ancestors or from society) you will come into a place where you will receive inspiration from the Divine, who is urgent to fill you with life, energy and ideas. That place is the opposite of growing old!

Valuing this spiritual elixir of youth, I decided to try it. When confronted with a problem or consumed by an unhealthy emotion, I engage in Ho'oponopono. This tradition encourages us to let go and allow Divine love to come in and solve or clear away a problem – not just by “overcoming”. I guess it's more about allowing the “incoming” of God's love into our spirit.

Discovering true identity

I thought about where I don't love, and one place that came to mind was my body. We all have some complaint about our bodies. Too fat – too thin. Eyes are too small, or teeth are crooked. It's an endless list. Some of the complaints come from memories. My memory is being teased about being frog-eyed!

But what if we decided to love our body just the way it is, and take care of it – after all, it's the only place we have to live! I started saying to the Divine, I love you; I'm sorry I haven't loved my body; please forgive me; thank you. I'm trying to clear away the memories and problems as they relate to my body and health, and create a new relationship with myself.

After practicing this for a while, I started to receive all these inspirations about health and well-being. I was full of ideas. It's like a plug was pulled out and Divine energy could flow again. The practice of Ho'oponopono reminds me of who I am: whole, complete, perfect, made in the image and likeness of God.

The best antidote to growing old

Imagine going through every day, greeting each problem with a welcome smile. Knowing that in accepting problems, and cleansing or clearing them away, you will experience freedom and new inspiration. We don't need to fear painful memories – they are just prompts to clear away a broken past.

God has so much to say to you. God is waiting for you to get stuff out the way, so inspiration can flow in. See where that inspiration leads you. A life of inspiration is the best antidote to growing old!

“If we can accept that we are the sum total of all past thoughts, emotions, words, deeds and actions, and that our present lives and choices are colored or shaded by this memory bank of the past, then we begin to see how a process of correcting or setting aright can change our lives, our families and our society.” -Mornah Nalamaku Simeona