

THE SET FREE LIFE

Aging Agelessly

I'd like my generation to stop saying, "I'm old." I hear it nearly every day from young men and women in their 50s and 60s, and yes, I mean *young*. It's as though we're hanging on to a 100-year old belief that we might be lucky to live to 65, when the fact is folks now commonly live to their 80s and 90s and even beyond, and frequently do so in very good health.

The *Wall Street Journal* featured an article this past summer on 90-year old former Olympian Adolph Kiefer, who won a gold medal in swimming in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He's been running his own swimming products company for 61 years, has 14 patents on file, still swims every day in spite of physical infirmities and, according to a colleague, "is absolutely still on the cutting edge of the swimming industry." The same issue of the *Journal* ran the obituary of Paul Tessier, a pioneering and driven plastic surgeon who operated on patients into his 80s "and was still making contributions to the field up to his death . . . at age 90."

I realize that everyone will not live to extreme old age, nor will they get there swimming, running, and playing tennis into their hundreds. But as Drs. [Mehmet Oz](#) and [Michael Roizen](#) tell us in their "YOU" series of books (*YOU: The Owners Manual*, *YOU: On a Diet*, *YOU: Staying Young*), we determine the larger part of our aging process by the decisions we make today regarding nutrition, exercise, and healthy choices. As much as is within my power, I want to go into my 70s, 80s, and 90s with everything well-oiled and ticking. It will take

some discipline, but it doesn't appear that discipline has actually killed anyone.

I hear many at the same stage of life as I intoning they are too old to do what used to make them dream big. It may be true that it's a bit harder to get going in the morning and we wear out a tad quicker than we used to. Some of us need more frequent naps; I've always needed them, so I can't gauge a change by that one. But how dismaying to hear people slide into what will essentially be 30- or 40-year retirements! Do they really want to live that long acting as though death is imminent? We have another entire lifetime ahead of us, and we may even have the freedom to decide exactly how we want to live it instead of being shuffled into a job at which we labored with a view to unloading it as quickly as possible. We have the benefit of being able to decide what we will do next.

It is quite possible, even probable, that the best is yet to come! Sometimes finding our way takes a while. Not everybody knows what they want to do with their lives straight out of the high school or college gate, and it can take a few decades to comb out the strands of desire and talent and passion. *There is nothing wrong with this.* William Strauss and Neil Howe make a very significant

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Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her seminars on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused listeners at companies and business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

Quick Links

Dr. Mehmet Oz
Dr. Michael Roizen
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comment in their 1991 groundbreaking book, *Generations*, in which they identify the rolling pattern of American generational cohorts throughout history. The Boomer generation, born between 1943 and 1964, is characterized by a particular idealism, and the world-changers within it, just as they have in previous similar generational cycles, "typically exert their most decisive influence on history late in life."

Did you get that? We certainly have, and have had, the opportunity to influence others, and it can be even more powerful when it's *late in life*. Late in life, we've taken time to find our purpose. Perhaps we're participating in some life coaching or there's been an epiphany that has brought all of our experiences into focus. We may have chased some rabbits along the way, but we see something about what got us here. As we enter our second half or last third of life, we are taking the time to look back and add it all up. Perhaps we've sought out the patterns and looked for the messages, and we are excited about passing on what we've gained.

We're not dead yet! We have decades more to go! Who will show the generations after us that life must be lived fully and vigorously right up to the moment we exit if we stop now and trumpet the agony of our decrepitude? It is not too late to discover that deep, clear-running river of destiny that's been waiting for the appointed time to show itself and to take it and run with it into productively mature years. It is not too late to begin a search for what you were meant to be and soon begin to exert your most decisive influence on history. You might be doing it for the next 40 years, so *get cracking! You are not old!* ♪

Quotable

"When I talk to students—and I still think of myself more than anything as a kind of professor on leave—they say, 'Well, how do I get to do what you do?' . . . And I say, 'Well, you have to start out by being a failed piano major.' And my point to them is don't try to have a 10-year plan. Find the next thing that interests you and follow that."

Condoleezza Rice

"Will Work for Legacy," Philip Weiss
MORE Magazine, May 2008.

I hope many of you have followed The Daily Coyote since I first wrote about it in the February 2008 newsletter. Shreve Stockton took in a baby coyote after its parents were killed and found herself the guardian of a magical, sentient, intelligent being she named Charlie. She has chronicled his life in her blog. (In order to gather his entire story, you must take the time to click back to older posts—at the [original site](#)—until you are at the beginning and then read forward to today.)

Shreve has recently moved her posts to www.dailycoyote.net, where you can investigate "About Us" and "Q&A" and learn more if you don't have the time to go back to the very beginning. Her photographs of Charlie and his world, his life with her and Eli and Chloe, are a source of tremendous wonder for me.

In December, Simon & Schuster will release *The Daily Coyote: A Year With Charlie*. Since one does not exactly drop off one's coyote with friends and leave on an extended book tour in the middle of a Wyoming winter, Shreve is doing some electronic and Web-based book interviews. I am delighted—and super-excited!—to announce that on **Monday, November 24th at 8:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time**, I will be interviewing Shreve on a teleconference call to which you are all invited!

It's a pre-release interview for the book (which can be pre-ordered from all of the usual outlets), but it's also an opportunity to ask a young New Yorker how she came to end up in Wyoming after she had been living in San Francisco and was on her way back to the east coast. You all know how much I value following a leading; Shreve is an inspiring example of someone who was on her way to one place and ended up in another and is finding it to be (I think she would say) a dream fulfilled—perhaps a dream she didn't know was percolating in there. Maybe the dream grabbed *her*. We'll find out when we let Shreve tell us of Charlie, of listening to her instincts, of her struggles and joys.

Please email me at SignMeUp@setfreeliveseminars.com and let me know you'd like to be in on the call. I will send you the telephone number and access code. The line accommodates only 150 people, so make your plans now! ♪

Teddy Bear Says...



We canines have been among you as a domesticated species since 7,000 years before the time of Christ. Our wolf ancestors saw something in humans that made them want to hang around, and a partnership was born. We've done quite well in our relationship, don't you think?

I've heard some say that wolves and their hybrid offspring trained humans over millennia to see them as

dependent creatures needing care. I like that: we trained you! Our species recognized the value of appearances and we practiced until we had peaceful and successful interaction with your species. It took a while, but by golly, we've got you right where we want you! You respond to our big puppy eyes and the way we hang our heads. You want to cuddle us and pamper us and drive the more than \$40 billion annually spent on pets in America. It's working!

What is it, exactly, that works for us? It's the appearances thing. We dogs understood that sometimes our lives would depend upon how well we could fake it.

For some humans, faking it is the name of the game. It's important to understand, though, that behaving in a particular way in order to get what you want or need may be reasonable in some instances, but if that's the only thing with which you operate, then you won't understand why etiquette is important. Etiquette is about more than just acting in a way that gets you what you want. Etiquette has to do with character. This is one thing that sets humans apart from the animal kingdom: we have no choice but to operate by instinct; you have the privilege of operating with character. It's the rare canine that exhibits choice over instinct, such as when a dog runs into a burning building to rescue its master. This is how you identify a superior dog (such as myself).

Instinct is neither good nor bad. Dogs can be trained, but the only context we have for behaving well is the knowledge that we're pleasing you. We perform even when we don't feel like it because we've been trained that the result may be a pat on the head or a treat or the joy of snuggling on the couch with our people.

Good character, on the other hand, rises above instinct and acts in a particular manner because it is right, whether one feels like it or not. One shows good manners not because the result is always favorable but because there must be a determination to act rightly even when others do not. This is integrity, a sign of character. Gracious manners always make others feel comfortable. Gracious manners always cover another's mistakes and never publicly embarrass. Even when you don't like someone, even when they've treated you rudely, etiquette enjoins you to respond with maturity, rising above your desire to do what dogs might do: snap or bite or scratch. When humans stoop to this level of instinctive response, they demonstrate their lack of developed character. What's interesting is they then often say, "I couldn't help myself," or "I was just being real." What they mean is they did not have power over basic instinct. They were out of control. That is poor etiquette.

Here's the thing: good etiquette is the social face of generosity and love. When we're on a train, we'd rather the person next to us restrain the desire to hold a loud and intimately personal cell phone conversation because he or she recognizes we may have had a long day and are tired and want to travel in peace and quiet. That's kindness. That's how a person with good character thinks. Don't you want to hear "please" and "thank you" and "I appreciate your help" from someone even when you have not been on your best behavior? That's a form of love and forgiveness you want to receive when you have been out of sorts. Every day, you are expressing the depth of your character by the countless little interactions you have with others. You demonstrate whether or not you operate by instinct or by character.

You can save your poor behavior for your dog—because we dogs love you anyway, no matter how rotten you act. And there's no faking that. 

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