



Journey into Elderhood: Fact Sheet

Plan, Prepare, Celebrate!!

Purpose and Design

It is not uncommon for individuals to avoid thinking about growing old because it conjures up feelings of dread and anxiety as well as images of inactivity, sadness, and decline. The truth is, however, that life can remain rich, satisfying, and meaningful throughout one's life. Each life stage offers challenges, but incredible rewards as well.

The *Journey into Elderhood* booklet is designed to guide clients through a series of exercises that will help them plan for, and take charge of, their aging process. These steps will not only prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead, but also help them recognize opportunities to increase their life satisfaction and sense of purpose as they grow older.

The publication is divided into two parts:

Part 1 - Later Life Satisfaction: Defining Meaning and Purpose

Part 2 - Later Life Transitions: Clarifying Practical Strategies

Completing both parts will provide clients with valuable insights and point them to important action steps that will help them to chart their course for a successful *Journey into Elderhood*.

The *Journey into Elderhood* booklet is suitable for self-study, 1-on-1 coaching, and workshop presentations.

Content

The **Later Life Satisfaction: Defining Meaning and Purpose** section of the booklet provides educational information and helps clients to explore concepts related to a successful transition into Elderhood. This section also contains two exercises to help clients explore current levels of life satisfaction and visualize their life in the future.

- A truly successful and fulfilling aging experience requires planning and preparation in all areas of life. Financial security is indeed important, but money alone cannot “buy” happiness, good health, meaningful relationships, and purposeful activities.
- Many experts on aging believe that increasing longevity has moved us from the well-accepted three stage model of the lifespan (youth, adulthood, and old age) to a four stage model (youth, adulthood, young-old age, and old-old age).
- Although it is impossible to assign specific age boundaries, we generally think of the Third Age as ranging from 60 to 80 years old. The Fourth Age usually commences when changing health, capabilities, and circumstances require lifestyle adjustments.

However, the Fourth Age is also signaled by a change in focus and perspective; whereas the Third Age is identified by **action**, the Fourth Age is identified by **reflection**.

- This process of reflection not only helps individuals to come to terms with their past, but will also help them to come to terms with the end of their lives as well. The greater understanding clients have of what is truly important to them, the easier it will be to “paint a picture” in their mind of what they want their life to be like, as they grow older, and what they want their legacy to reflect.

The **Later Life Transitions: Clarifying Practical Strategies** section of the booklet guides clients through the *Lifestyle and Circumstances Assessment*, a detailed series of exercises designed to create a baseline that will help them to be aware of subtle, but important, physical, cognitive, and emotional changes as they age.

- Aging sneaks up on us, and we often do not recognize or acknowledge that we need assistance. We are likely to wait too long to make arrangements for the help we need, allowing other individuals and/or agencies to make important decisions on our behalf—a very unhappy result of not planning ahead for this time of life.
- By preparing now, clients can ensure that lifestyle adjustments will take place in a timely fashion and with the cooperation of those who are most important to them.
- The *Lifestyle and Circumstances Assessment* is an in-depth awareness and planning tool developed to help clients prepare for later life. Each step features one or more exercises that will help clients gain clarity about their future and create a framework for making important decisions that will affect their lives in the Fourth Age.
- The *Lifestyle and Circumstances Assessment* guides clients in an appraisal of their current lifestyle, home and location, health and capabilities, physical and mental functionality, and triggers for making change. It also helps them to create an action plan for future transitions, and assists them in communicating their wishes to loved ones.