

Book Review

Ageless Soul: The Lifelong Journey toward Meaning and Joy.

Thomas Moore; New York: St Martin's Press, 2017.

Thomas Moore, appreciated author of the timeless **Care of the Soul**, writes as a 76-year-old contemplative and psychotherapist about the Ageless Soul – providing insights into how we might travel our journey toward meaning and joy in late life. Life is a series of initiations, opportunities to grow into our own unique, complex self.

You truly age, in a positive and desirable sense of the word, when you have been struck by events and are transformed even in small ways. You become what you are capable of. You are educated by life. You make an advance in your personality and character. You grow. You mature. You ripen as a person.

His chapter on transforming loneliness teaches that loneliness is part of living and especially a part of aging. But it does not have to take over your life and one can cope with loneliness in small everyday steps.

It is part of life and can be respected and spoken for. It doesn't have to take over. You don't have to be a lonely old person. You can be an older person who gets lonely sometimes. The difference is vast.

The best way to deal with loneliness is to pursue vitality in small things. This means keeping alive your curiosity, spirit of adventure, love of learning, creative character, interest in people, eccentricity, and contemplative lifestyle. You can do these things even with diminished capacity.

Moore tells many stories drawn from his own aging and from that of his patients. His [psychoanalytic] perspective is that we can grow out of either/or attitudes about good and bad – With maturity, we can grow into both/and attitudes.

As you mature, you can reach a point where your remorse doesn't undo your hope and happiness. In fact, it gives happiness a coloring of pain and wistfulness that only deepens it. Happiness is a worthy goal, but it has to be deepened and made more complex with many other emotions, some of them painful.

Ageless soul is achieved through reflecting on life experiences:

You could understand aging as homecoming, arriving at the place where you belong, where your hero's journey, in which you have created a life and a sled, comes to its fulfillment.

Ageless soul is also achieved through true community:

It helps, as we age and look for a final feeling of fulfillment, to be part of a community where bighearted love is at play.

Finally, Moore ends the book with the fundamental paradox:

You age best by embracing your age, with suitable melancholy, and at the same time choosing to live without age, ageless, with as much joy as you can muster.

This requires that you understand you are not your body, you are not the sum of your experiences, and you are not as restricted by time as you may have thought.

You have a soul, the river of vitality from which your life flows, a tributary of a much grander soul of the world.

Your soul is there at every moment of experience in time, but it is also ageless. You have to learn to live from both places.