

## BOOK REVIEW

### **It's Never Too Late to Begin Again: Discovering Creativity and Meaning at Midlife and Beyond**

Julia Cameron; Tarcher Perigree, 2016

Twenty-five years after publication of classic **The Artist's Way**, Julia Cameron has published a book for older adults to discover creativity and meaning through writing. She offers four basic tools to stimulate creativity and to block writers block. The original tools were Morning Pages (writing three pages every morning) and the weekly Artist's Date (a planned solo hour just to enjoy nature or the arts). Over intervening publications, she added the twice weekly solo walk to the tool chest. Specifically for this book directed toward later life, she adds Memoir (writing a memory).

The book presents a weekly guided process of triggering memories and revisiting your life in several-year increments. Divide your age by 12 – for me, this means approximately six-year segments. I fudge this a bit to coincide with major life transitions, such as moving house, college, jobs, marriage, children, health changes, career shifts, retirement. The Twelve-Week program features reigniting a specific feeling in your older self each week – underpinnings of spirituality such as wonder, purpose, resilience, joy, adventure, and faith.

Regular writing can relieve loneliness, which is so prevalent among all generations in today's society. Cameron's third chapter shows us how to reignite a **Sense of Connection**. In the third week we are still writing memories of our early life (for me, ages 17-23) and experiencing heightened sense of relationship with our mentors and friends from that period. Cameron asks us to think about what relationships we want now – which to affirm, with whom to reconnect, and how we can form new relationships. Who is our community? How can we build community for our sake (especially our creative development) and for the sake of others? How can we grow through mutual support? How can we reach out to relieve our loneliness through engaging with another? What lessons can we learn from writing about our times of loneliness and our times of satisfying connections? The chapter offers prompts for writing memories of relationships in this third period of our life; prompts to consider volunteering in ways that match our values, interests, and skills; prompts to recognize the individuals who have been supportive at different times in our lives and the lessons they have passed on to us. At the end of this and all chapters, weekly check in questions address how often we have used the basic tools (morning pages, artist date, long solo walk) and what 'aha moments' we may have experienced during the week.

Cameron's expertise on writing as a creative and spiritual activity is undoubted, but she acknowledges that living the years past 70 are as unknown to her as to each of us. Her self-deprecating humour, real-life stories of older adults taking on new creative challenges, and her wonderful quotes gracing the wide margins make reading this book a joy. The book would be very useful for small groups – writing groups or groups supporting each other through the process of aging.