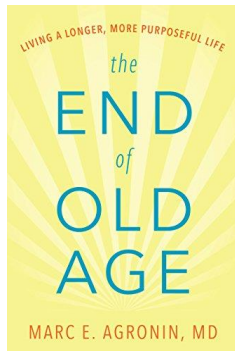


Book Review

The End of Old Age: Living a Longer, More Purposeful Life.
Marc E. Agronin: DaCapo Lifelong Books/Hachette Group, 2018.



*When we truly act our age,
our strengths burst forth and allow us
to create the life, love, and lasting legacy
that is the end of being old
and the beginning of aging with wisdom,
purpose, and creativity.*

Dr. Marc Agronin (author of [How We Age](#)) is a geriatric psychiatrist, deeply influenced at the beginning of his career by Erik Erikson in his 90s and by Gene Cohen (Founder of the National Center for Creative Aging). With years of serving older adults from many ethnic groups in Miami Florida, he argues for new definitions of Aging emphasizing the potential for growth all through life, especially in the latter years.

Dr. Agronin weaves findings from aging research with his own clinical experiences to support a model of growth through aging which individuals can use to support their own purposeful aging and that of others, even those who are very frail.

Resilience refers “to the ability to cope with adversity and regain one’s footing or balance afterwards.” We build resilience as we experience **Age Points** in life – facing an event requiring us to develop new coping skills, going through suspension and reckoning before creative resolution. Age Points challenge us to age by growing through diminishment – to apply our wisdom imaginatively and thereby to grow in wisdom.

The five-pointed crown of wisdom represents our **Reserve**, consisting of all the mental abilities we have accumulated over time. Our **Wisdom** comes through in the way we wear and use the power of this crown. The five jewels within wisdom are denoted by poetic words and specific doing verbs:

- Savant – learns, shows, teaches
- Sage -- weighs, decides
- Curator – cares, connects
- Creator – imagines, makes
- Seer -- accepts, communes

Useful exercises to guide self-reflection as well as planning for frail elders for whom we care are presented at the end of the book with sample charts for different older people in varied circumstances.

The title “End of Old Age” is misleading – Agronin refers to “End of old meanings of Old Age”. This book provides a good starting point for groups of older adults (or middle agers) to talk about the model and strategies for resilient aging – especially the five dimensions of wisdom which we can develop through life to prepare for a meaning-filled old age. I would suggest participants take time to write about Age Points in their lives where they had the opportunity to build wisdom – reflection on these experiences in later life can further strengthen resilience by learning from failures and losses as well as good coping. We can build reserves for purposeful aging by creating and sharing charts for ourselves about how we can build skills necessary for our savant, sage, curator, creator, and seer components of wisdom.

Let me end with two of Agronin’s summary statements about aging with wisdom:

*As we age, we gain wisdom as a multifaceted form of mental currency
that we store away year by year as a critical reserve, ready to yield its dividends.*

*Our age-enhanced resilience gets us through adversity,
proves our value to ourself and others,
and enables us to discover our true purpose in life.*

*We can respond to age-related changes
by taking the best of our past and renewing it,
or by letting go of certain parts and reinventing ourselves.*

*These changes are led by our creative spirit,
which grows and develops with age
and enables us to realize a bursting, blooming age culture.*

*Aging is an experience-dependent series
of cumulative, progressive, intrinsic, and positive psychological changes
that usually begin to manifest themselves at midlife
and eventually culminate in increased well-being.*

*Aging gives us the brain power, abilities, connections, and resources
to make this redefined notion of aging—
and the experiences of our aging selves --
as true as the standard definition based on decline and loss.*