

# More Than Money

Are you spending your life well?

By Di Percy

There's a question that comes up in conversation with people in their 50s and 60s, alongside our unavoidable realization of ageing creeping onwards. Current jobs and careers have a use-by date. That question, often accompanied by bewilderment, anxiety, and even exhilaration is . . .

“What's next?”

*“Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.”* Jim Rohn, American entrepreneur, author and speaker.

As we age, the value of time becomes more and more significant to us. What are you doing with your time? *Are you spending your life well?*

Waking up in the morning feeling as though you can't wait to get going into the day is energising, renewing and tends to bring out the best. When we *feel* good we *are* good, as a rule of thumb. The mantra in our business is “Do what you love and love what you do”.

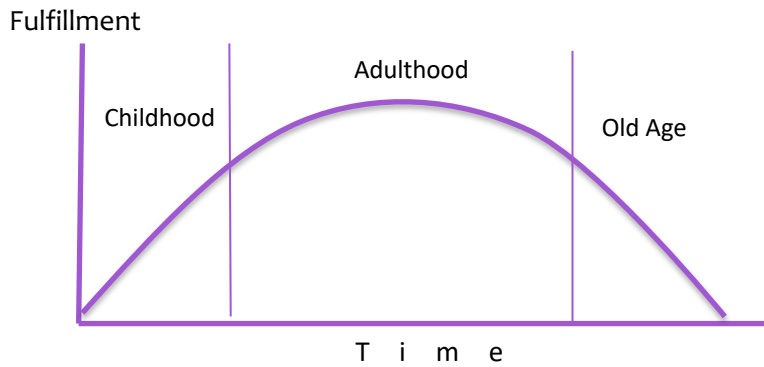
## **We Don't Need To Peak In Adulthood**

It doesn't stop there though, because most Elders (over 60's) want *purpose* to be a key part of loving what they do, according to our studies. Beyond the youthful days of just having fun and enjoying life we want to make a positive contribution as well. In fact, Ben Horowitz of VC firm Andreessen Horowitz says, “... *Don't follow your passion*”, advising instead to find the thing you're great at. Use it to give back and fulfilment will follow. It's all about purpose.

If we do something that lacks purpose and conviction that has no spirit, gusto or depth, then it's compromising our selves, whatever money is earned. Under certain circumstances we may choose compromise for a limited time, to help someone out for instance. But to live without commitment and purpose undermines our potential and dignity. Especially over 55.

Elderhood is the last of three major chunks of life – the first is Childhood followed by Adulthood. Each one of these chunks has its own cycles, challenges, developmental tasks and mythology. Some of these myths and beliefs are right out of date.

For instance, the cultural belief that we've grown up with about lifespan just isn't relevant anymore. It badly needs updating. Most of us believe that Adulthood predominates in life and is the time we reach our peak. That was the pattern for 100s of years but now life has changed. (It is only 100 years ago that the average life expectancy was 47 years; today we are just halfway at 47.)

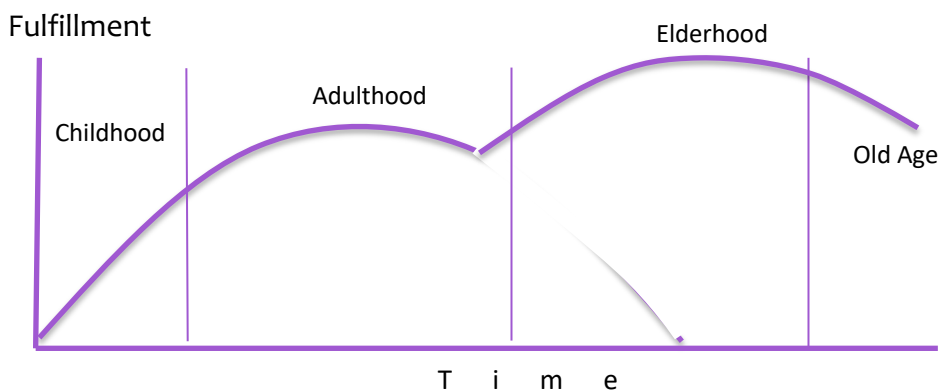


The Old Mindset about Lifespan

It is not a case of simply doubling the length of Adulthood, because as we age our physiology changes. We are no longer equipped with the same stamina or motivators. Instead it's a matter of redefining the life stage that comes *after* the adult years.

### Life In 3 Chunks

Following Adulthood is the vital life-stage of Elderhood with its own distinctive challenges, tasks and purpose. Elderhood builds on and exceeds the previous life stages. Because it is the last major life stage, when we enter it we start to pay attention to time and to our life. This is a great advantage.



The New Lifespan Reality

During Elderhood we have the time, opportunity and relative freedom to do what we love and find what we're great at now. Childhood is spent learning, exploring and being socialized into the culture. In Adulthood we make our way as contemporary warriors and providers, most of us caught in traps of consumerism to some degree, if not by our selves then by what our children want. By the time we reach Elderhood we are pretty well ready for a more authentic life that expresses our true value.

This is the time to re-discover our core purpose – what lights us up and feels compelling. Yes, our purpose expresses our values and talents plus sets a captivating challenge.

It may be an audacious goal or quest out there in the public eye. For others a quiet reflective purpose behind the scenes is ideal – or anything else from wildly disruptive to lyrically synchronized, large or small scale. The spirit soars and you are on a riveting direction, because what we are talking about is *vocation*.

### Vocation

Finding our Elder-vocation takes time – although some people just ‘know’. They have always known but not dared to do it before. Whether we know or need to go on an inner search, being open to opportunity is part of the process. However, (1) opportunity is not the only part. The real source is within us, not out there. Opportunities in our environment are only resonating with something already within. (2) What you envisage may not exactly match the reality as it unfolds; but the reality that eventuates often turns out to be better.

***The last major stage of life is a chance to do something with wholehearted conviction. There is now the time and relative freedom to make inspiring choices.***

Ralph was an engineer joining the family-owned business as a young graduate. He really wanted to be a counselor but was under pressure to conform in the family. Eventually he became MD of the business, which had grown to 360 employees with a revenue of \$183m. He retired at 64, still yearning to work closely with people to help them with life. When Ralph was watching his grandson play basketball, the penny dropped. Seeing the way the coach interacted with the boys, Ralph knew he had found his Thing. He felt clarity and enormous energy, his spirit rising. He saw himself coaching disadvantaged boys, teaching them about life through playing the game and giving them a positive human experience that would change their lives. And that is precisely what he did in suburbs and country regions.

### Third Chunk of Life

We know that Elderhood is the last and final third of life. That is precisely what makes it so rich. Conversely, it is also one of the reasons people try to avoid it and hang on to Adulthood. In Elderhood we are undeniably aware that our time is limited. So we have to get on with it.

The notion of purpose and contribution trumps either making money our goal, or serial short-term activities that have no lasting meaning. When these activities don’t resonate with purpose and renew us, they leave us empty. Just something to do to fill in time.

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