

BEING WHO YOU REALLY ARE IS A RISK WORTH TAKING

I can personally vouch for the truth in the words of The Voice (australia) contestant when he said :”Being who you really are is a risk worth taking”. I was 30, in a safe and responsible position in the Australian Treasury in Canberra. I looked out my window one day thinking ’35 more years of this and then a gold watch? And that’s it??” I decided I hated working for no purpose beyond just paying the bills.

It took another four years of searching to find the answer. Then my life changed in one day, attending a seminar on leisure as a social issue. I was hooked. I passed a Graduate Diploma in Recreation Planning with distinction, got a job in the then new SA Department of Recreation and Sport, quit my job at The Treasury and moved with my wife and young children to Adelaide.

Reactions from Treasury colleagues ranged from “you are mad, Peter” to “I wish I had your courage”. To them the risks were great. To me, my heart had found it’s rightful home. To deny it was pointless. The secret was in the realization at 30 and the four years of subsequent searching.

I have since forever enjoyed being the real me – as a recreation planner for the rest of my working career which gave rise to my first book “Enjoy Being You” in 2001. That book subsequently brought me work in the business world, leading to me becoming a Life Enjoyment Mentor.

Your heart knows what it wants...it just needs you to put it into search mode. It might be during your working career, or after you leave work...or both!

THE BENEFITS OF CREATIVE LEISURE INTERESTS

Leisure is back in town!

Leisure today is about the creative expression of your natural talents for the sheer intrinsic pleasure of the experience. This article spells out leisure's vitally important role in every facet of modern personal and business life and especially in one's post-working life.

Let's start by getting the facts straight about leisure. Derived from the Latin *licere* – to be permitted – leisure is about freedom to choose what you want to do. No work/leisure distinction. The 16th Century church leaders kicked off the negative image of leisure with the belief that “idle hands are the work of the devil”. 19th century Industrial Revolution managers adopted the principle of work being the vital core of life and leisure being a hindrance to productivity – a perception that continues to be held by too many managers today.

So, what's changed?

Leisure is still the freedom to choose. The change is in the way we live, the speed of change, the constant excessive pressures we endure, technology change and the resultant changes in how we think about surviving it all. Suddenly (in historical terms) leisure is back in town – bigger and better than ever – offering huge benefits towards enjoying a resilient, progressive and satisfying life.

Nature's stress manager

A really enjoyable leisure experience is in essence nature's stress manager. It transports your mind away from your stresses and pressures for the duration of the experience. It's not just that you switch off from your problems but that you positively switch your mind on to an interest that is totally unrelated to your work or other areas of your life. Could you possibly even *think* about your problems while you paint a landscape or hit a winning tennis shot past your opponent, sing in a choir, or while you are enjoying the glories of a colourful sunset?

When you lose yourself in an interest you love, you find yourself.

While you are creatively expressing your talents and passions for the enjoyment of it you become so absorbed in the experience that you forget all else. The real you comes alive. You totally control all that you are doing during that time, lifting your self-esteem, self-

confidence, and sense of self-worth. You have an enthusiastically open mind and a heightened sense of innovation and unlimited potential.

The outcome is a refreshed and different perspective of your world, your problems and your attitude towards any stress-related issues you may be dealing with in your life.

The Ripple Effect

The benefits don't just stop when you return to other things. The energy and good feelings you gain flow on into the rest of your day. Done frequently enough they can change your whole outlook on life for the better.

Skills Development

Any passionate leisure experience is using, developing and building your natural talents and skills. For example if you are an office-bearer in a club you could be developing all or any of organisational skills, project management, delegation, social skills, media skills, team-building. Every skill you develop has value in everything you do at play, at work, at home, or in community life. I am amazed how rarely workplace skills audits ask people to identify talents they use in their leisure interests. Moreover they are talents that they enjoy using and would love any opportunity to use them in their job.

The energy that drives your life

I once asked a friend "what do you do for energy? She answered " I go to the gym three times a week". I then asked what energised her and she immediately answered " I love tap-dancing". Physical activity is important for physical fitness. Enjoyable activities/interests are vital to mental fitness. For me personally, golf is important to my physical fitness and choir singing sustains my mental fitness. Whether your interest be physical or mental, it's the enjoyment factor that exercises your mind.

Choices

Because leisure is a freely-chosen experience, in this day and age it is perhaps your last bastion of free choice. No one else can tell you what you should enjoy.. There is an almost limitless range of factors that may influence your leisure choices.

- The experience is custom-designed by you to suit you.
- A truly enjoyable leisure experience self-empowers you – you enjoy the feeling of being totally in control
- you choose to pursue the interest
 - When you want
 - For as long as you want
 - At the pace you like

- In the setting of your choice
- to your chosen level of skill and ability
- With the people you choose, or alone if you prefer
- You allow yourself to be you, not a person you think others might want you to be. So much of your adult life is spent trying to meet the expectations of others.

Your life is your responsibility

Clearly leisure pursuits play a much bigger role in your life than just the fun you gain from it. It forms part of your responsibility to make the most of your talents and the passions with which you were born, that can drive your dreams and enable you to realize a potential unique to you.

My professional qualifications in the area of leisure and recreation planning and development

- Graduate Diploma in Recreation Planning: Canberra University 1975 making me one of the pioneers of the professional recreation movement in Australia Bachelor of Arts ANU Canberra 1965
- Senior Recreation Planner (and various other managerial positions) with the SA Department of Recreation and Sport, 1976 – 1994' Recreation Planner City of Tea Tree Gully Adelaide 1994 – 2002
- Life Member and a past National and State President of my professional association, Parks and Leisure Australia

BEWARE OF THE RETIRED HUSBAND SYNDROME

The days of the one-income family are fading. But the following story resonates with many of us. Hubby earned the money and his wife stayed home and raised the children. Then hubby retired with no plans for his future. Meantime his wife has over the years built life-long personal interests.

The husband, feeling lost, looks for options such as:

- “Where are you going dear? Can I come too?”
- “We can do the shopping together now”
- “Why do you do it that way dear? I know a better way”.

Personal space has disappeared. The relationship is being tested and each is individually facing problems about their future.

In fact the problem is the same for a dual-income relationship. Research shows retirement-related stress is felt more by the wife, not just at retirement but, if the problems are not addressed, more so as time goes by. Men to note!

Enjoying life after work revolves around the freedom to express your authentic unchanging inner self.

Start by each of you separately listing every type of interest you love, especially those you enjoyed before you met. Discuss how you might each help the other expand their interests.

It's another reason for planning well in advance of quitting work.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF BUSINESS IN MAKING SENSE OF WHY WE ARE HERE

If Covid has had one major global benefit, I suggest it is highlighting the world of making money isn't of itself the driving force behind finding purpose in our lives, or why we are here. We read and hear a lot about demands for better workplace culture, mental wellbeing support, quality family time, professional development and work flexibility, (including working from home or office). These and related current issues such as "the Great Resignation", indicate an increasing desire for an improved quality of life. Life-work balance instead of work-life balance - putting life and personal goals first and work as one means to that end.

Covid-19 brought these issues to a head, partly because of the dramatic impact on every aspect of personal and business life. But also because it gave all of us plenty of time to stop and think about ourselves and what is truly important in our lives. Are we at last addressing the need to put the 'human' back into human resources in business? That increasingly seems to be the case in respect of the workers. The jury is still out on whether it applies to business owners, chief executives and shareholders.

Long before Covid's arrival, multiple research findings showed some three quarters of working people were not engaged in their work. Simply they either didn't like their job or they didn't like the way they were being treated. Research was showing the latter as being the main reason people left. The slogan 'we are all in it together' applied as much to business leaders and owners themselves.

This may be part of the reason that business leaders are beginning to recognize what they have always known but too often ignored. That the organisation really does run on the skills, passions, talents, resources – and personal needs - of every person in the organisation, including themselves.

I believe the successful business of the future will know, appreciate, and act on the fact that profit comes from serving human needs – of staff and customers alike - to identify and achieve a harmonious balance of business and personal goals. This would become the core of strategies to re-purpose the aims and structure of:

- their business,
- each job and

- the role, talents, skills, passions and personal goals of each person (at every level).

Not easy, but any business that doesn't make that their target is going to fall by the wayside.

I don't have all the answers but I do have a focus that I know works and directly contributes to the process. It all stems from "when you lose yourself in any interest you deeply enjoy, you find yourself". Such experiences bring our real self to the fore. They are an expression of our natural abilities and passions primarily for the sheer enjoyment we get from them.

Think of any interest you passionately enjoy experiencing in your non-work time and you will quickly understand what I mean. Put that into a context where the experience achieves a goal bigger than self and we have found purpose!

Now transfer that thinking to the task of selecting, re-purposing and valuing each person in relation to their job and the goals of the organisation. You have the wherewithal for maximizing their productivity, loyalty and commitment to corporate goals. The result? Engaged staff who want to go the extra mile and the end of any suggestion of "the great resignation".

The process is based on the principle of selecting/ repurposing each of us to a position where our natural talents and passions can be applied to the needs of our job and the organisation.

We then feel valued and, thereby, be allowed the authority and control to make and implement responsible decisions. We become the front window of the business in relation to our area of responsibility and expertise.

I suggest you test this process in one part of your organisation and watch that group flourish.

If this seems impractical – at least in the short term - I have three other options for gradually building greater recognition/valuing of people's individual natural talents into the workplace culture.

1. Extending work skills audits to include those that staff use in their personal time and which have potential relevance to work place needs. The best example I know of is the engineer who runs a small drama group (and writes his own material) in his personal time. Excellent for running staff role-playing sessions. There are many examples of skills developed outside of work in most workplaces today, usually in the form of the 'go to' people when needed. The organizer of social events, the computer whiz, the mother confessor for people in trouble. Think how much the organization lost when anyone left after many years of

service. Many of their 'go to' abilities were developed in their own time for enjoyment.

2. Official encouragement of all staff to have a passionate interest outside their workplace environment, on the basis that it is important to mental health/wellbeing and life-work balance. This can be supplemented by encouraging team leaders to allow one team member per meeting to outline a creative interest they enjoy outside of work, the skills they use in it and what benefits they get from that interest.
3. The most important tip. The buck must start at the top. Only if and when the CEO supports this approach – personally as well as officially - can it succeed.

DARE TO HAVE FAITH IN YOUR DREAMS

We all have dreams or cherished ideas of what we would like to see happen or to make happen. We have unlimited scope to pursue dreams. With nothing counting on the outcome, we can play with the dream, experiment with possibilities, travel down a variety of paths, explore the unknown, and talk with people who might share the dream.

We have the freedom to think outside the square about how to achieve the dream. There is no pressure to find the answers. Bask in the pleasure of having at least spent some time visualizing the dream a little more clearly.

Imagine, however, the thrill of chancing on something that might bring the dream one step closer to reality. Dare to have faith in your dreams. Make the most of your full array of skills, interests, learning and experiences to turn your dreams into reality.

You cannot fail, you can only learn. The great achievements of the world began with a thought and a dream. The next great achievement could well be yours.

Excerpt from "Enjoy Being You", Peter Nicholls 2001

IT'S TIME TO TEAR DOWN THE WALL THAT SEPARATES WORK AND LEISURE

It is time to tear down the work ethic wall separating work and enjoyment and replace it with a seamless Development Ethic. The dictionary definition of 'work' doesn't include the word 'money': "activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result". Anything we do to creatively use and develop our natural attributes – for pay or passion – adds to the development and progress of the individual and society.

Generations ago the work ethic built a wall between work and leisure. People on the working side had no idea what leisure was all about. They thought it meant laziness, slacking off, even a competitor to work. In essence, a waste of productive working time.

Then 21st century life began to speed up, changes happening daily in every facet of work and life. Stress, pressure, technology and change began to weigh heavily on work productivity and mental health. Stress and burnout had become the number one human and business cost.

Business saw mental problems as a sign of weakness. "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen". Get stronger. Go to a gym, get fit. "A fit worker is more productive". Problem is only about 7 per cent of the population enjoy keeping physically fit. Probably less, when it comes to the workforce.

Technology made working at any time 24/7, pushing the wall further into the leisure space. Work life balance is a nice concept but it's time-based.

What's the answer? While you can't deficit-budget time you can deficit-budget the energy needed to sustain the resilience to deal with stress. You can build your own renewable energy plan.

The source is found in any experience so enjoyable that it takes your mind completely away from your stresses – be it for ten minutes, half a day or a holiday. It can be a physical or mental interest. Any freely chosen creative experience you enjoy so much that you are "in the zone" is, in a word, "energizing". The more frequent the energizing experiences, the greater your resilience to cope and reduce the risk of burnout. Better still it makes work more productive (and a happier boss too).

In effect work and enjoyment becomes a continuous process of work life harmony – a harmonious mix of energizing interests and energy-draining responsibilities at work and

in life. The outdated work ethic wall becomes replaced with, effectively a Development Ethic - a seamless process of progressive and continuous development, utilizing a continuous flow of energy-in and energy out.

The pain of prolonged excessive stress becomes replaced with a natural, personal energy resource for a life in which you are better able to enjoy being your true self.

EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE – WHY THEY ATTRACT STAFF LOYALTY

I wrote this article in 2012 and now (2023) re-publishing it . As a Life Enjoyment Mentor, I got used to being told I am ahead of my time. Barring the first part of this article, it could have been written today. People have always wanted to enjoy their best life.

Covid effectively ended the rule of the work ethic. It's being replaced with what I call a Development Ethic ([click here](#)). Am I still ahead of my time?

One of the biggest decisions taken by western society businesses in the last twenty years or so has come back to bite them. I refer to the decision around 1990 that the cost of permanent staff was too high to sustain and, as much as possible, work should be out-sourced to contract or casual labour. The consequent widespread sacking of staff - especially in the middle management ranges - had a devastating impact on the workforce culture, including workers' dependants.

Loyalty - both ways - died almost overnight. The concept of long-term commitment to the one employer, rewarded with a retirement pension and the proverbial gold watch when they reached their 60's, became a thing of the past. Term contracts for specified objectives became the norm.

It was also the beginning of work life balance as a conflict between the wants of the individual and the wants of her/his employer.

It didn't take long for the workers, including people new to the workforce, to find a positive response to this situation. If business doesn't want to be responsible for workers' careers, the workers were going to have to be responsible for their own.

Workers became their own managers. They began to:

- develop and refine their transferable skills to maintain high employment prospects in a dynamic marketplace.
- choose jobs and employers that best suited their personal goals and enabled them to periodically adapt to changing needs,
- work for as many employers as they wished - consecutively or concurrently, for as long as suited their needs and offering the conditions they wanted.

The rest, as they say, is history. This new flexibility has suited the rapidly changing, stressful, pressurized 21st century lifestyle, offering many benefits to the employer, the employee, industry and society in general.

But business hadn't bargained on other cultural shifts that were going to greatly complicate the issue:

- an ageing workforce,
- a changing interest in life priorities by many 50+ baby boomer managers, and
- people who make up the emerging younger workforce no longer see work as the driver of life but more a passenger.

All of this has given rise to the emergence of the concept of the Employer of Choice offering a range of benefits over and above the money. Flexible working conditions, work/life balance - lovely in theory but difficult in practice - childcare / eldercare provisions and expanded maternity leave involving both the mother and the father are just some of the provisions that have surfaced since the 1990's.

The boot is therefore now on the other foot. Far from business determining the future of the workforce, the workforce now determines the future of business. The dollars that come from work continue to be of major importance but not so the commitment to any one employer. Workers want more than money - they want employment that enables them to achieve their personal dreams and goals.

Employers now find themselves in a struggle to attract, retain, nurture and sustain the best people. The struggle is heightened by the fact that such workers are not sitting at an employment agency, waiting for offers. They are already committed to working for their current employer of choice. Powerful incentives are needed to encourage them to move to another organization, one that is often in direct competition with their present employer. Dollars alone are not enough.

In seeking the best incentives, employers are slowly (I repeat, slowly) beginning to recognize that, to find out what will attract the right individual, they have to look outside their workplace environment. They need to look beyond the person's potential working capabilities and embrace the fact that staff are whole human beings, driven by their reasons for living, not just for working.

To add an interesting twist, the people who are trying to attract staff are themselves not impervious to these cultural changes. They too are increasingly reviewing their life goals and employment aims.

Business, globally, is discovering the need to harmonize its drive for economic success with the desire of its workers to achieve personal goals. It's a bit like satisfying customer demands - you don't need to know every individual person's unique needs but you do have to design your product knowing each buyer will have a personal reason in mind for buying it.

Employers of Choice understand that every employee, or potential employee :

- is on their own personal journey through life, only some of which is spent in the workplace
- has a unique set of life aims and objectives
- chooses workplace cultures that best help them achieve those goals, and
- sees work not as an end in itself but as a means to other ends.

Purchasers buy on emotions - selecting products or services that make them feel good about themselves. We are more likely to commit to employers who appeal to our emotions as much as, if not more than, our pockets. Organizations that cultivate this type of workplace culture are more likely to gain strong staff commitment, sustained high levels of work productivity, reduced long-term stress, improved workforce stability and the vital edge over their competitors.

THE ENQUENCHABLE YEARNING TO FOLLOW YOUR HEART

The unquenchable yearning to follow our heart is there in each of us. Some of us know it and live it to the full. For many it's more often in our personal life. It can be buried at work by the desire to earn enough money to more than pay the bills.

So it was for me for my first 12 working years. Enjoying my personal life was enough to satisfy me. At 30 I wondered, "thirty-five more years of this? And then what?". The yearning had stirred. No answers. Simply a realization from deep within that I was born with a natural unquenchable yearning to follow my heart.

Four frustrating, searching years followed, with still no answer. "I wonder if I would be any good at....?" was my ever-present question. Suddenly my heart, mind and life came together in the form of a one-day seminar on Leisure as a Social Issue. I went on to gain my Graduate Diploma in Recreation Planning (with Distinction). From then to today has been a wondrous journey of transition and revelations.

Have you resolved your unquenchable yearning to follow your heart? It's there and it's never too late. Perhaps start searching for it by asking "I wonder if I would be any good at....?"

MY APPROACH TO EXPONENTIAL PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Issue

This paper aims to show the typical realities of 21st century exponential personal growth and development in the second half of life. It's not until then that we really begin to understand why we are here and what we each uniquely have to offer to the world. With our life statistical expectancy now going beyond age 80 , mid-life is in our 40's.

“Traditionally the United Nations and most researchers have used measures and indicators of population ageing that are mostly or entirely based on people's chronological age, defining older persons as those 60 or 65 years or over. However there has been an increasing recognition that the mortality risks, health status, type and level of activity, productivity and other socio-economic characteristics have changed significantly in many parts of the world over the last century and particularly in the last few decades. This has led to the development of alternative concepts and measures to offer a more nuanced perspective of what population ageing means in different contexts.”^[1]

The Traditional View of the Human Lifecycle

Figure 1 is a simple illustration of the traditional view of the human lifecycle. It reflects a perception that we mature until some point in the middle of our lives and then go into a state of steady decline until we die.

Fig 1:



Continuous Development for Life in the 21st Century

In our early adult years we make major life-establishment decisions based on our limited life experience and the influences of older people such as parents and teachers. These can relate to basic life issues such as paid work, marriage, children, education, a home and a mortgage.

By 30, we have had enough experience of life to often wonder if our original choices were the right ones. By 40 we are beginning to feel like we are making some sense out of :

- our respective unique abilities, and
- whether we can do something that makes us feel we are of value to the world and not just going through the motions of a life journey.

By the time we reach the mid-40's to mid 50's, many of us have what we often call a midlife crisis. While it is indeed statistically the middle of life, the 'crisis' aspect relates more to the perceived prospect of our lives beginning to start the downhill slide. Put bluntly, we still perceive life is almost over when in fact it is only half over.

Mid-Life Awakening

In reality the mid-life crisis is in fact a mid-life awakening. We are starting to realize what we are good, what people value about us and what makes us different to anyone else. We realize we have many years ahead of us in which to discover and apply our natural potential.

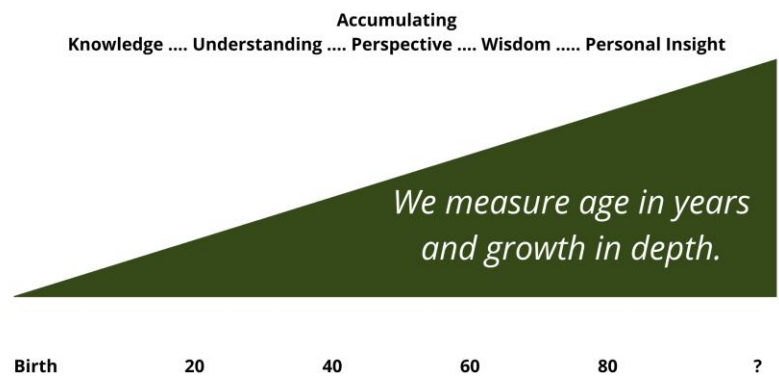
Much of my work as a mentor over the past 18 years has been helping people make the emotional transition from fulltime work to whatever next life adventure they want to create. Most of my clients – and others who were potential clients – did not want to “retire” in its traditional perception. We want to continue developing ourselves for as long as we stay healthy.

The Japanese people don't have a word for retirement. They believe instead in the concept or philosophy of IKIGAI which means 'reason for being' or the value of one's whole life. Certainly in this era of rapidly-expanding longevity, we are increasingly realizing the value and potential of living well beyond age 65.

Here's How I See the Reality of 21st century “second-life living”

I see our growth in this way, “we measure age in years, we measure growth in depth – depth of understanding self (especially self!) and people generally, perspective, insight, experience, knowledge and wisdom”. It would look something like as shown here in Fig

Fig. 2



However this linear perception does not do justice to the complexity and exponential nature of our second-life growth.

Exponential Growth and Development



Typically, from mid-40's much of our establishment needs have been fulfilled, or at least are no longer our top priority. Our 'awareness' of deeper matters about life and the true depth of our potential begins to kick in. From there the exponential growth phase in our lives takes off.

Exponential growth develops in multi-dimensional ways, including expanded perspectives, knowledge, experience, understanding of people and life, insight, awareness and wisdom.

The process is cumulative, compounding, even chaotic, rather than linear. This accumulation continues for as long as we remain healthy and want to search and explore life and our limitless potential.

“A huge part of the change in outlook in terms of aging and retirement is based on new understandings of the brain and neuroplasticity - that we can indeed continue to change through choice - and that this is what keeps our brain and mind healthy. Overcoming limiting beliefs about what is possible and having a growth mindset is key! A sense of curiosity to keep exploring and opening up to new experiences. Attitude is everything but it also takes focus, effort and an intrinsic motivation.... which not everyone has”. Gwen Meyer^[2]

As chaotic or uncertain as the process may be, the one certainty is that it will be based on enjoying using and maximizing the natural gifts and passions unique to each of us. Such a foundation opens the way to a path of life we may not have planned, but opens our minds to why we are here.

Conclusion

The world of the 21st century desperately needs to tap into the accumulated potential of this “explosion” of multi-dimensional human growth and development that naturally occurs in the second half of our lives.

This reality is vital for two reasons of global importance:

1. We live in a world where [people age 60 and over will soon outnumber children aged five and under](#). In 2030 the first millennials will start turning 50, and the first gen-Xers will turn 65. At the end of 2030, the first boomers will begin turning 85. **There is a great need to see the potential in this rather than as a problem.**^[3]
2. To end the scourge of ageism and particularly the current employment problems that are based solely on a person’s age.

^[1] “World Population Prospects 2019” (United Nations, 2019)

^[2] Gwen Meyer, Incremental Steps Pty Ltd Adelaide

^[3] [An ageing workforce isn't a burden. It's an opportunity | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org)

FEAR AND COURAGE – THE ODD COUPLE

Years ago I left the comfort of a secure, well-paying government job in the National Capital, Canberra. I took my young family interstate to Adelaide to take up a lower-paid position of Recreation Planner. Recreation development work, as a profession, was very much in its infancy in Australia. Reactions from friends and colleagues in Canberra ranged from “Peter you are mad”, to “I wish I had the guts to do what you are doing”.

I could have felt all the common fears. Fear of losing what I had gained, moving out of my comfort zone, fear of being seen as different / standing out from the crowd. Or the deeper entrenched fear of upsetting people who have in my past heavily influenced the direction of my life. (a good question in that case is: “are they still part of your life, perhaps even no longer alive?”)

My decision wasn't based on “what a good idea!”. Four years earlier I had mused, “35 more years of this and then retire?”). I was working without any purpose beyond earning money to pay the bills. My mind, heart and soul were searching for a purpose, a challenge. To fulfill my passion to enjoy being my true self.

The answer came in the form of a one-day seminar “*Will leisure be the major social issue of the 1980's?*” I had been enjoying purpose in my leisure through sports administration. The seminar answered many deep-seated questions in my mind – going back as far as my teen years. I devoured the required Grad Dip in Recreation Planning with distinction. Working professionally as a Recreation Planner became my passion for the rest of my employed life.

My fear had been that my search for challenge might never be answered. That I might never find my true purpose or be able to fully develop my natural gifts. That fear vanished at some point during the fateful seminar. If courage came into the equation, it wasn't the absence of fear. The courage came in deciding and acting on the steps I needed to take to secure my new future.

Perhaps courage is really about having the courage to know you do have a place in the sun. All you might need is the courage to search for and act on that fact. Once you know what it is that gives you true enjoyment in life, you think and work with the courage and confidence that the future is yours to create.

There is indeed a unique being within you, whom the world has been waiting to appreciate as a person of worth.

THE GLORIOUS ENIGMA OF UNCERTAINTY

“The secret of enjoying new things is in not knowing the outcome. The secret of life is not in knowing what it is all about but in the journey of discovery. It is uncertainty that gives life its spice. How limited our horizons would be if we knew where we were going and what the result of our efforts would be.

A vision, no matter how clear, is never quite the same as the product or result created. The wonder of creation is that we can never foretell the result. The reality produces exhilaration beyond anything the mind can anticipate.

When you seek to do something new, you are entering on a journey of discovery, buoyed by a sense of anticipation. You are entering a world of magnificent uncertainty. Uncertainty spawns curiosity, exploration, testing and learning, taking us from the unknown to the known.

The more we know, the more we grow. The more we grow, the greater our joy. The greater our joy, the more we want to know. This cyclical journey becomes itself the end, spurred on by the glorious enigma of uncertainty.“

- Extract from my book “Enjoy Being You”, 2001

I WISH I WAS THE ME I ONCE WANTED TO BE

It has been said that inside each of us is a child seeking to be set free, that the child lives within us until we die. Our search for self-identity, for finding out why we are the way we are, frequently takes us back to the events of our childhood. Whether our childhood memories are good or bad, in that child is found everything that is precious and personal to each of us, providing the building blocks for all we are and do today.

How often do you think that the person within you has never really changed, that the only changes are in how other people see you? We do our best to mask our true selves in ways that seem appropriate for each person or situation we encounter. Sometimes we feel the need to suppress, even deny, the fact of having once been a child.

As a child you had hopes and wishes and the pleasures of 'day-dreaming'. What did you hope to be or do one day? Did those hopes become reality, or were they suppressed? Was your creativity encouraged or stifled? Do these questions trigger a sudden sense of pleasure in remembering some long-forgotten ideal?

That child is still in you. The dream can be brought to life again and become reality. The opportunities do exist. The talents that evoked your ideas may be dormant but they are not dead. You have the capacity and the will to play with that dream. The result can release in you a new sense of direction and allow you to satisfy the pangs of a nagging hunger to accomplish the unfulfilled.

Decide that it is time to free the dreaming child within so that you can become the person you wanted to be.

LIFE AFTER WORK WILL BE LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN BEFORE

The world of life after work is dramatically changing. To ensure a long healthy life into your 80's, 90's or beyond, there are now so many new exciting and purposeful perspectives to consider. Let's get your creative planning juices flowing

You might see your new life adventure as a change from:

- Disengaging from work to re-engaging with life
- Working for pay to working for play
- Working with purpose to living with purpose
- The limits of working to the freedom of living, or
- The lows of working to the highs of living

It could perhaps be like:

- Turning over a new leaf
- Trading in your old life for a new one
- Starting an encore career
- Reinventing your self
- Recycling your developed skills to meet a changed need
- Recharging your battered batteries
- Saying yes to exploring new possibilities

I just want to unblock your thinking about what you can still achieve in life. Any of the above could apply to you. How you apply them will be unique to you.

It doesn't require your time yet...just a change in your perspective, a paradigm shift away from 19th C traditional perceptions to 21st century continuing development.

21st century living is like nothing we have ever known before...and so too will be your life after work.

LIST OF LEISURE/RECREATION IDEAS *2005*

I define recreation as the creative development of your natural talents and passionate interests for the sheer intrinsic enjoyment of doing so. Such experiences can be mental or physical. The word 'recreation' when read as 're-creation demonstrates its purpose of re-creating our mental energies to more than cope with the stresses of living.

Your recreational interests have probably always played second fiddle to your work commitments... they have been more like the spaces between the notes that get little recognition for their importance to the beauty of life's music. A passionate recreation interest is vital to your work productivity, resilience, personal growth, mental fitness and work life harmony.

Listed below is an extensive (by no means conclusive) diverse range of interests/activities for you to consider.

Within each type of interest listed, there is an infinite range of options available to you. You can custom-design these to suit your particular situation. Look for interests that:

You used to enjoy somewhere in your past life and had loved but which got put aside by life's changes and responsibilities

You haven't done before but which might well open some new and exciting doors in your life

Have got you curious to know more about them

have the potential to

inspire you,

awaken a new or suppressed passion in you, or

revitalise your outlook on life.

Do this exercise alone, in a quiet location of your choosing. Allow your inner thoughts to flow.

You are totally in control. You are not committed to doing any of the interests that you tick. Enjoy the self-empowerment of your own choices.

(Use the print option just below the title of this page)

CAUTION! If you are considering increasing your level of physical activity, please first consult the advice of your health professional.

Want to know more about your chosen interest/s?

Google the interest and the name of the city/town in which you live.

Abseiling	Belly Dancing
Aerobic Dancing	Bicycle riding
Aeromodeling	Billiards
Anthropology	Bird-watching
Antiques collecting	BMX riding/racing
Antiques restoration	Boat building
Archaeology	Boating
Archery	Bodybuilding
Art	Bonsai
Art appreciation	Botany
Astronomy	Boxing
Athletics	Bridge
Aviation	Bushwalking
Backpacking	Callisthenics
Badminton	Camping
Ballet	Canoeing
Ballooning	Car maintenance
Baseball	Caravan touring
Basketball	Carpentry
Beach Walks	Carving
Beading	Cave diving
Beer brewing	Caving

Ceramics	Darts
Chess	Designing
China painting	Diving
Choral singing	Dog obedience training
Church activities	Do-it-yourself/ handy person
Classical music	Doll collection
Clay modelling	Doll making
Clothes designing	Dragon-boat Racing
Club administration	Drama
Coaching	Drawing
Coin collecting	Dressmaking
Collecting	E-bay activities
Composing music	Ecology awareness
Computers	Electronics
Conservation	Embroidery
Contract bridge	Enamelling
Cooking	Entomology
Country Music playing/listening	Environmental interests
Courses for pleasure	Equestrian
Craft activities	Event management
Creative arts and crafts	Fabric crafts
Creative Memories	Fencing
Creative writing	Feng Shui
Cribbage	Field hockey
Cricket	Figure skating
Crocheting	Film making
Croquet	Firefighting Volunteer
Dancing	Fishing

Five a side soccer	Hiking
Floral arrangements	Historical studies
Folk Dancing	Homing pigeons
Football – Australian Rules	Horse riding
Football - Gaelic	Horticulture
Football – Gridiron	Hospital volunteer
Football – Rugby League	Hot Air Ballooning
Football – Rugby Union	Hunting
Football – Soccer	Hurley (Irish)
French polishing	Ice hockey
Friends of (parks, art galleries, etc)	Ice skating
Furniture restoration	Indoor sports
Garden Shed "Retreat"	Indoor plants
Gardening	Interior decorating
Gem and mineral collecting	Internet activities
Genealogy	Jazz dancing
Geology	Jet skiing
Glass blowing	Jewellery making
Gliding	Judo
Golf	Karate
Gridiron	Kayaking
Guides / leader	Keep fit classes
Guitar playing / lessons	Kickboxing
Gymnastics	Kite Flying / Making
Handball	Knitting
Hang gliding	Korfball
Helping others	Kung Fu
Heritage awareness	Lacrosse

Land Yachting/sailing	Natural history
Language learning	Nature studies
Language Training	Needlework
Lawn bowls	Netball
Leatherwork	New Age activities
Lifesaving	Opera
Living histories	Orchestral activities
Magic/illusion	Orienteering
Marathon running	Origami
Marching	Painting
Martial arts	Parachuting
Massage courses	Paragliding
Meditation	Pets Care
"Men's Sheds" Groups	Philately
Miniatures	Photography
Model making	Picture framing
Model racing	Pigeon racing
Model Trains	Pipe bands
Modelling (clothes)	Pistol shooting
Mosaics	Poetry - reading, writing, listening
Motor cycling	Polo
Motor maintenance	Polocrosse
Motor Racing	Pony clubs
Mountain bike riding	Pool
Mountain climbing	Portrait painting/ sketching
Museum visits	Pottery
Musical appreciation	Power boating
Musical instrument	Powerlifting

Prospecting	Shooting
Public speaking	Showjumping
Puppetry	Sightseeing
Quilting	Signwriting
Racquetball	Silkscreening
Radio announcing	Silvercrafts
Radio-controlled model yachts etc	Singing
Reading	Skateboarding
Reiki	Sketching
Restoring cars/engines	Ski mountaineering
Rhythmic gymnastics	Skindiving
Rifle shooting	Sky diving
Rock climbing	Snooker
Roller-blading	Snorkelling
Roller-skating	Snow skiing
Rowing	Snowboarding
Rugby League	Soccer
Rugby Union	Soft furnishings
Running	Softball
Sailing / yachting	Speed skating
Scouts / leader	Spinning and weaving
Scrapbooking	Spirituality interests
Scuba diving	Sports coaching
Sculpture	Squash
Self defence classes	Story telling
Self-development activities	Story writing
Service clubs	Surf lifesaving
Shiatsu massage	Surfing

Swimming	Water skiing
Synchronised swimming	Weaving
Table tennis	Weight training
Tae Kwon Do	Weightlifting
Tai chi	Wilderness exploration / hiking
Tap dancing	Windsurfing
Tapestry	Wine appreciation
Ten pin bowling	Winemaking
Tennis	Woodcarving
Touch football	Wood-chopping
Toy making	Woodwork
Trail riding - horses	Wrestling
Trail riding - motor bikes	Writing
Trail riding -mountain bikes	Writing childrens' books
Trampolining	Yoga
Travel	Youth leader
Triathlons	Zoology
Underwater activities	
Upholstering	
Veteran sports	
Video/DVD Production	
Vintage vehicles	
Volleyball	
Volunteer activities	
Walking for pleasure	
War Games	
Water polo	
Water safety activities/instruction	

MY DREAM FOR THE WORLD

Cultivating a Blossoming World

I BELIEVE every person has the right to blossom to their full potential, develop their natural talents and follow their passions - at work, home and play.

MY DREAM is for the natural-born potential of the world's people to be collectively in full bloom, the seeds of their talents fertilized by passionate interests and enriched by shared experiences with like-minded people.

The Yearning to Blossom

In terms of human history, we live today in an artificial, 'unnature-al' lifestyle. Long forgotten is our pre-industrial age heritage of living, loving and passionately creating the joys of a natural lifestyle. Fulfilment was found through a family life of linking soil, toil, mind and body to produce food for the table and warmth for the home.

The industrial revolution transformed life from individual endeavour to mass production. Our sensitivities to enjoy smelling the roses were dulled by the demands of the never-ending treadmill, grinding out the constant expectations of others to which we must slavishly adhere to survive.

Individual natural talented beauty was systematically bulldozed into creating endless, mindless crops of uniform growth, managed with machines and by machine-like managers. The seeds of mass passion, potential and creativity were left to wither and die.

The pre-industrial lifestyle is gone forever. But to this day there continues to exist within each heart an unquenchable yearning to grow naturally, follow our passions, creatively express our talents and scale the peaks of our potential. That yearning has been drastically inhibited by the demands and stresses of a world driven by economic rationalism and materialism.

The Worm is Turning.

To feed the insatiable economic appetite of the 21st century, the seeds of individual knowledge are at last being encouraged to germinate. Creative, imaginative, innovative thinking is the key to economic success. No longer can it be left in the hands of the few.

The abundance of dormant seeds of talents are bursting to sprout, thirsting to be watered, fertilized, cultivated and encouraged to blossom.

Now that individual talents are back in vogue as the key to success, we must ensure those talents are used wisely.

The Enemy

The enemy is ourselves, our traditions, our comfort zones, our thought-patterns. We still see progress in the form of unending fields of bland uniformity. New fertile fields of human potential have to be ploughed and new seeds planted, allowing a profusion of desperately-needed natural talents and skills to be unearthed, cultivated and spread abroad.

The enemy is also the expectations of others. A plant's growth is determined not by the expectations of the gardener but by the fertility of its growing environment. The task of the gardener is to encourage the plant to blossom to its full natural beauty. In the same way we must nurture each other's desire to enjoy blossoming to their full natural potential, unhindered by our limiting perceptions of their potential.

It's Natural!

The dream is much greater than simply making people and business more productive and fulfilled. It's a dream to head off society's lemming-like stampede towards the edge of an environmental abyss. The role of nature – of which humans form a major part – is essentially one of self preservation.

For humanity to survive and thrive, it's therefore time to get back to and re-apply the principles of natural human growth and development:

Plant growth is governed by the strength of its hidden root system, relentlessly searching for rich, fertile environments in which to flourish. Similarly, the source of human strength is grounded within our hidden selves, our talents, skills and abilities.

Our seed is an abundance of unique talents, bursting to be unleashed in the fertile environment of our passionate interests, cultivated and enriched by life's experiences, teachings and wisdom.

The fields of bland uniformity are ripe to be converted into fertile gardens of blossoming beauty – ablaze with the colour, energy, purpose, passion and life-expanding fulfillment of human endeavour. It's a vision sustainable for generations to come, grounded in the knowledge that it's what nature intended of humankind in meeting our responsibilities as custodians of the world for future generations.

Human Gardens

There are many human gardens to cultivate:

Each person's desire to

- eradicate the stunted weeds of contrived expectations, withered by the pressures of conformity thinking,
- allow our creatively-expressed talents to flourish and bloom, warmed by the sunshine of passionate interests – at work, home and play
- spread by cross-pollinating new thinking, touching the hearts and minds of positive like-minded others

Every home, fertilizing the positive, warm, rich, earthy environment that recognizes and cultivates the passionate interests of all who live there

Every community, harvesting the talents and skills of its diverse members contributing to community development and wellbeing

Every workplace, employers to

- nurture the strong growth of natural talents and unique potential, allowing the seeds of staff self-esteem, self confidence and self worth to flourish and blossom
- plough-in the fields of bland conformity and arid thinking
- Intensively cultivate, for corporate benefits, the whole field of peoples' personal talents/skills (not just work skills)
- fertilize employees' passionate interests at work, home and play
- ensure that staff leadership, training and development programs:
 - feed passionate interests, and
 - recognize that sensitive gardening of the human mind and emotional resources will generate luxuriant personal growth."

The world of business and economics to change direction from that of destroying earthly nature to one of sustaining human nature.

Wealth has to be defined in terms of :

1. maximized natural human talents, skills and abilities and
2. enabling those talents to be developed to their maximum potential for maximum mental wealth.

Every nation and government, providing and sustaining rich fields of endeavour that encourage and cultivate opportunities for all peoples to contribute their natural talents to the social good.

An Anthem

My poem "The Invisible Me" provides the core philosophy underpinning the manifesto.

*There is a me you cannot see,
A me that even I can't see,
The person I was born to be,
The soul that soars inside of me.*

*Sometimes I see a fantasy,
The younger me I used to be,
A Peter Pan, forever free
To stay the person I love to be.*

*You would see me differently,
Perhaps someone you want to see,
A portrait that you paint of me,
The person you presume I'd be.*

*Please accept the reality
Of an inner me I long to free,
To be the person I was meant to be,
And to love the person I know as me.*

*Our common responsibility
Is not to assume who others might be,
Don't put them in boxes, nor steal the key
That allows their talents to set them free.*

*We all are different, you must agree,
Unique in our talent and ability,
We yearn to allow the world to see
What we can do and give and be.*

*My message for the world to agree
Is for you to be you and me to be me,
To follow our passions and set them free,
To enjoy being you and enjoy being me.*

*View a visual version of this poem on You Tube,
spoken by Peter, music by Rosemary Nairn OAM*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kFSE9x042w>

MY LEFT-FIELD PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE

The new post-pandemic world future demands a different approach to the way we think. It's time to consider life from a left-field perspective. Re-thinking the previously unexpected, the unthinkable, the crazy, the unusual. As the TV series "1% Club" puts it, "it's not about what you know, it's about the way you think".

I've been professionally seeing life from a left field perspective for nearly 50 years. The first half as a Recreation Planner, focusing on what makes people tick at the weekend – the 'life' side of the work / life wall. That's weird in itself. We saw life as working for five days (or more) and living for two days (or less). No wonder working people were stressing, burning out and even committing suicide. After they left work many died of boredom.

In 2003, a friend who knew me well effectively started my encore career. She wanted to change the culture of her private enterprise team of workaholics who were seriously on the brink of burnout. My friend, a left field thinker, wanted me to run a workshop for her staff based on my 2001 book "Enjoy Being You". The workshop was a huge success and (so I was later told), was the trigger for everyone in the team to make a major shift in their attitude to life and massively lifted their personal energy.

I became a Work Leisure Consultant. My book and my talks were well received by women in the workforce, At the time work life balance was very much a women's issue – juggling work , family and home duties. In giving my talks I was often the only male in the room. {Side comment – women have always been more receptive to my message than men. Men have been much more receptive since Covid.]

Business saw work and enjoyment like chalk and cheese. While my passion remained strong, my business was always a battle.

I changed tack. My 25 years in recreation and parks planning taught me we humans, like everything else in nature are born to grow, mature, flourish and blossom to a destined potential. I became Australia's People Gardener – growing better people. Still left field thinking, although people – working or not - could readily understand my nature-based analogies. Connecting nature and business was however still anathema in the money-making world.

I decided to reposition myself as a Life Enjoyment Mentor. While people warmed to this, my message still didn't fit the business philosophy "if it can't be measured, it can't be managed". It would take a global shift in public perceptions of life and work – way beyond any efforts by me - to shift this centuries-old thinking. That shift came in the form of Covid 19. Not so much the pandemic itself but the long lockdowns it triggered.

Covid lockdowns brought the world to a screeching halt, triggering a paradigm shift in every aspect of life. People realized they wanted to enjoy all their life – at work, home and play. What was once left field thinking helps us not just how to enjoy life, it clarifies our purpose. People have begun telling me, "he makes sense".

People found themselves having to make their own unique decisions about their work, life and future. They want to identify, or reidentify, living with purpose. Steve Jobs said people can't see the dots (key features of their life) looking forward, they can only see them looking back. My program has always been based on enabling people to see who they have always really been – since childhood. It's a left field approach and it works.

Whether or not my program approach resonates with you, my message here is we all need to take a left field perspective in clarifying who we really are and what we want to do in this dramatically changed world.

WE NO LONGER ACCEPT LIFE IS OVER WHEN IT'S ONLY HALF OVER

The eye-opening fact about the second half of life is that we move into a new and deeper dimension of living compared to the first half.

We begin to see life differently. A client recently put it so meaningfully when he compared it to Michelangelo's perception of a piece of marble hiding a statue it was his responsibility to find.

We don't like the word retire. We are also realizing the stagnating negativity of the word "ageism". We want to always keep on living a busy active life for as long as we can stay healthy and alert. A belief that itself helps us stay healthy and alert longer!

While we measure age in years we measure growth in depth. Not in a linear fashion but in a multi-dimensional way – adding perspective, insight and wisdom to our ever-growing knowledge and experience.

We trigger a chain reaction firing up the enjoyment of our talents, connections, passions, energies, positivity and continuous development. We become greater than the sum of each of these dimensions.

DON'T THROW YOUR ABILITIES AWAY - RECYCLE THEM!

After my career ended I re-invented myself. Some call it an encore career. A total change? Well yes in that I am serving very different needs to those in my career.

As a recreation planner I worked with people who wanted to improve the range and quality of their recreational, leisure and sporting experiences. My mentoring business is one of helping people to improve the range and quality of their life experiences.

It wasn't planned, it just happened through a quirk of unexpected circumstances. They weren't looking for a recreation planner, they were looking for what I was good at doing.

My career work had taught me to suss out peoples' strengths and individualness, to listen to and serve the needs of the heart more than the head, and not to impose my personal values or judgement on their choices.

The depth of what you have learned and developed over the years is too good to throw away when you leave work. Better to recycle it to meet a different need, where they come to you saying "hey we need what you are good at doing".

Have some fun exploring community needs – local or wider – that could benefit from using your recycled abilities.

SETTING THE STAGE

Imagine you are attending a live theatre performance divided into three Acts. It is interval, following the conclusion of the second Act and you are reflecting on the show so far. You feel that Acts One and Two have been powerful and thought-provoking. You are wondering what surprises the rest of the show might bring.

But this show is unique. There is only one performance...it is a play written by you and you are writing the script as the performance happens in real time...the actors are on stage waiting for their lines. There is no rehearsal and there is only performance – this is opening night and closing night all in one. And no one yet knows – not even you, the playwright – what the ending will be. And the final twist? You are the lead actor, the star of the show.

The play is called “Your Life”.

Act One embraced the early years of your life – the years that prepared you for work. The content of Act Two has been your working life. Act Three is yet to come and you wonder what surprises it has in store for you. Act Three may well be a long one. It's up to you to make it memorable for you and for those who love you. You will want to feel that, at the end of “Your Life”, the rest of the cast and the audience alike will give you a standing ovation, acknowledging that you have given a performance they will never forget.

Excerpt from my book "[The Hunger to Grow](#)" " 2016

SPACE: THE SEPARATION THAT KEEPS US TOGETHER

Space is an issue in all long-term [#relationships](#). Even more so when one or both partners is considering transitioning to life after work when the regular separation in the working week has gone.

In this context I see three types of relationships all of which, if already working well, can continue to do so:

- A dependent relationship – they do most things together
- An independent relationship – they do most things independently of each other
- An inter-dependent relationship – they have a considered mix of separate and shared interests

Life after leaving [#work](#) is a time in which we all want be our true selves and to do the things we love. Understanding the other partner's space needs will take you a long way towards continuing that happy mix of separateness and togetherness.

It's a discussion unique to each couple. Ideally it ought to start now, not left until either partner stops working. With more listening and less talking. Empathetic, heart-centred listening, listening to hear, understand and learn (anew) about each other's individual needs.

(I didn't say it would be easy!)

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU TRUST YOUR TRUE SELF?

I had decided in 1975 to leave a secure well-paying job in Canberra to take up a less-than secure and lower-paid Recreation Planner job in Adelaide. Not a long-term considered decision. One of those things that happens overnight – in my case attending a day seminar on leisure becoming an emerging social issue.

An upheaval affecting not just me but my wife and two small children. For me it just had to happen...not quite so for my wife who was a born-and-bred Canberran. Reflecting on it now reminds me how grateful I have always been that she agreed to the move, albeit with a few agreed conditions.

The expression “sliding doors” became famous in the 1990’s with the film by that name. In essence today it means “what if I had made a different decision?” What if I had simply said at the end of that fateful seminar “well that was interesting, but it puts too much at stake for me and my lovely family”? I had plenty going for me in Canberra – in my work, in my community and especially in sport where I held various senior positions at Club and Territory levels.

There were those who said I was mad to make “such a reckless decision”. Others admitted they wished they had the guts to do what I was doing.

It took me another 45 years to fully understand why I made that decision. In a recent workshop I was posed with a double-question aimed at clarifying why I am doing what I do: “what was it you hated doing and what did you decide you would love to do instead?” I found my thoughts going back not to 1975 but to an event five years earlier in 1970.

It was a day on which I remember looking out my office window, thinking “35 more years of this??”. What did I hate doing? Working for no purpose beyond the money. What would I love to do? Earn my money doing something of purpose and value to others.

I have come to realize that the day seminar I thought was an overnight epiphany was in fact just one small step in a long process of finding my true destiny in life. A process that started as early as when I was 14 and continued in my 60’s when I became a Life Mentor. I wanted to help others who were looking for or reviewing purpose in their work and their lives. I will continue to do so for as long as my health allows.

Finding – or renewing – your purpose in life doesn’t happen by chance. It requires constant questioning of your ‘why?’. A journey of searching for, enjoying, backing and

trusting the real you. It can take you down unknown paths, but with an assurance you are traveling in a direction you were meant to take.

There is no more important trust in life than trusting in yourself and your natural-born gifts and talents.

WHY I WANNA BE A KID AGAIN

Gee I loved being a kid. Living for the moment, laughing for the sheer joy of doing so, letting my imagination run wild, not trying to be someone I wasn't, saying "yes I can do that" to everything I wanted to try, even if I wasn't any good at it. I didn't have to worry about getting a job, a relationship, or pay off a mortgage. Nor did I realize that, while I was playing, I was also learning all the basics of life - how to talk, read, write, make my arms, legs and eyes work together, play by the rules my friends and I made up on the spot and - best of all - negotiation skills, convincing my parents to buy sweets and toys. Problems were resolved by a motherly hug or going without dessert. Those were the days my friend, I thought they'd never end.

But they did.

Life became serious. Parents, friends and teachers carefully taught me what I had to do to succeed in the harsh world of reality. Having fun became a waste of time that could be much more usefully put to earning serious money. I was told to forget silly kid stuff, like jumping, drawing, singing, acting and doing roly-polies down a grassy hill. Instead, look around at what the adults are doing... copy them...don't be different or people will think you're dumb. Get a real job. Become a doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer - anything that makes people look at you in awe.

So I did.

I started taking courses I didn't want to do. I did degrees that were going to take me somewhere, but got me nowhere. I started getting assessed - for the right school, right friends, right sport, right university, right job, right partner...the right path to whatever other people told me would take me down that glorious road to success, fulfillment and happiness. And no, I didn't always get chosen. I often wasn't good enough, qualified enough, wealthy enough, talented enough, dressed well enough, intelligent enough, or trained enough.

Then I started to see the light.

What I was getting enough of was stressed, pressured, changed, controlled, confused, uncertain and misguided. The one life I had was slipping by fast. I was reaching each of "the big 0's" faster and faster. Finally I hit the big 6-0 - when bosses tell you: "you're too old to work anymore. Go find a nice pasture. Book into God's waiting room where you can pass the time until you die".

That's when I exploded.

"Enough is enough is enough!!!" It's time for me to be me - the me I always wanted to be when I was a child. It hit me that life in my 60's had much in common with life in my childhood. I didn't have to worry about a job (though I could work if I wanted to), or a mortgage (it was under control) or even a relationship (I was happily married). I could do anything I felt like doing – even if I wasn't any good at it. I could become a kid again. And this time it could be even better. I now had the benefit of a lifetime of experiences – good and bad – and even a little money on which to build my childhood dreams, skills, fun, interests and plans.

So I have become a kid again.

I am free to do as I please, when I want, with whom I want, for as long as I wish and at the pace I like. I don't have to be good at what I do. I just lose myself in the joy of the moment, laughing for the sheer pleasure of doing so, letting my imagination run wild, being the me I always wanted to be. I love it. I am learning, growing and blossoming into a truly successful person. I now know happiness is the journey, not the end and that life is what you make of it, right this minute.

WHY ITS TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT TO CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

The world is dramatically changing. The global population over 60 continues to grow faster than those under 60. Society needs to see this as an opportunity, not a problem.

The gap today between work and death is dramatically ballooning out to anything from 30 to 50 years or more because a) we are living longer, and b) ageism is shortening our working life to as low as 45. Also:

- Retirement is an increasingly unpopular term
- We feel younger and want to enjoy purposeful lives well into our 80's and beyond.
- People in the workforce are giving professional development a higher priority over salary.

We need a total paradigm shift based on the fact of continuous development from birth to death, be it through payment or passion. Instead of the traditional 'mature then decline' lifecycle, personal development continues for as long as health permits.

Continuous development brings with it more than accumulated experience and knowledge. Age deepens our understanding of life, of people and, most importantly, of ourselves.

This shift is not just to benefit people currently over 50. This is to ensure people of all ages can look forward to being a person of value and worth for life. The only change we need is in how we think.