



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 206 – Retirement as Regeneration
June 21, 2023

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[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson: Welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

[00:00:30] Kathy: Hello and welcome friends. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

Today's show is a Walking The Talk Vancast, a look behind the scenes into what I'm learning and working through along with a takeaway for you. These portable episodes are informal and casual, recorded on the go from wherever I happen to be at the time. And today, I got my van back and I'm enjoying a beautiful afternoon on the local trails.

Today we're going to be exploring retirement as a time of regeneration.



[00:01:11] The decision to leave a long term career can be easier than deciding what's next. And in that void, that's where anxiety can come about on what's waiting or not waiting on the other side of that choice.

Part of this is because we have an outdated view of what can follow a long term career. More and more people are foregoing the traditional idea of retirement, one of pure recreation or leisure, and reframing it as a time of regeneration.

Retirement as we know it today is a fairly new concept. For most of human existence, people worked until they were unable and then they relied on their family and their community for assistance and support.

It wasn't until the 19th century at the apex of the Industrial Revolution, that pension plans came into play as a way for companies to retain their workers. And then in the next century, government supported retirement plans were created, promising time for leisure after decades of work.

But the interesting thing is that not all workers wanted to stop working. This idea was met with some resistance because people wanted to continue to contribute in some way, instead of heading off to a retirement village to stay "active" with others who also had leisure time.

[00:02:41] But now we come into a new century, and a number of factors have challenged our idea of what retirement can be. And some of these factors are:

- The rising cost of living, especially around health care;



- The fact that most companies no longer offer pension plans and we have to rely on government and perhaps a 401k account;
- Life expectancy rates have increased;
- The nature of work has changed. Technology and flexibility and attitudes make it possible for people to still contribute while not working a traditional nine to five job; and
- Our desires have changed. The desire to use our time for meaningful activities, the desire to contribute, to learn, to develop, to continue to grow, and the desire to contribute to our community, using the wisdom and the skills and the experience that we've gained for the greater good.

[00:03:44] There have been early pioneers in this space who've had a resurgence later in their lives. And I wanted to highlight a few to share a glimpse into what's possible and look to them for how we might be able to create a new model for ourselves. Here are a few of my favorites.

The first is **Louise Hay**. She was a self help author who self-published a book called *Heal Your Life*. And she did that when she was 50 years old. Louise was divorced, she worked as a secretary and she started giving talks at her church congregation. As a result, people started to come to her for counseling. And through these counseling sessions, she realized that by healing your inner self, your outer self can be healed as well.

So she wrote what she called her Little Blue Book. And not knowing anything about publishing, she ordered 5000, not realizing what 5000 hardcopy books would be.



This was probably back in the 1970s. But she sold out of that first run, and she got the attention of a mainstream publisher and that book became a *New York Times* bestseller with 50 million copies sold, which got her on Oprah's couch.

She worked using this philosophy with men who had AIDS. She lived in LA and she worked with men's groups in the 80s when nobody wanted to do that work. She also created a small publishing house in her living room that went on to be the global powerhouse Hay House, and it's still in existence.

Louise worked until she passed of natural causes a number of years ago when she was in her 90s. But her work, which is focused on healing and on personal transformation, both in media and workshops, continues to this day.

Next is fitness icon **Ernestine Shepherd**, who became famous in her 70s for her bodybuilding accomplishments. And this all started when she was shopping for bathing suits with her sister when she was 56 years old.

She and her sister were looking at themselves in the mirror in a department store, and they were not happy with the reflection that they were seeing. So they started taking aerobics classes together. And soon they made a pact. Her sister wanted both of them to get into the Guinness Book of World Records for being the oldest bodybuilders, that was the goal.

After they made that pact, her sister suddenly passed from a brain aneurysm and this left Ernestine with the goal of making it into the Guinness Book of World



Records on her own. So she started her bodybuilding career as a tribute and an honor to her sister.

She has run marathons, won bodybuilding titles, and she did get into the Guinness Book of World Records in 2010 as the oldest competitive female bodybuilder at that time.

She no longer competes, but she's still incredibly active at 86 years old, with more than 90,000 followers on Instagram. She appears on podcasts and she still inspires millions of people around the world to get fit and stay active as you age.

[00:07:13] Next is **Frank McCourt**. He was a New York City English teacher and retired after a decades long career when he was in his mid-60s. At the time of his retirement, his wife encouraged him to start writing his memoir.

Frank was born in New York City but was raised in poverty in Ireland. And he wrote a book that is now known as *Angela's Ashes*, followed by several more successful books that have sold millions of copies. And he also won the Pulitzer Prize for *Angela's Ashes* in 1997. But he didn't pick up a pen until he was in his mid-60s.

And how can we talk about early pioneers without mentioning **Julia Childs**? Julia was a chef who focused on French cooking, but didn't start that career until she was in her 50s. She went on to write the best selling cookbook *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. She had her own unique way and was a pioneer in PBS television with her cooking show. Julia wound up working well into her 90s, still making television appearances and speaking as well.



The last I'll mention is **Grandma Moses**. She didn't begin painting until the age of 76. And the reason why she picked up a paintbrush was because her arthritis made doing embroidery, which she loved to do, painful. Painting was easier on her hands.

One of the first paintings she made was for the postman for Christmas one year, because she said it was easier than baking a cake over a hot stove. One of her paintings titled *Sugaring Off* was auctioned by Christie's, and it's sold in 2006, for \$1.36 million dollars. Grandma Moses painted well into her 90s as well.

[00:09:15] So in the wake of these early pioneers, what we're seeing are these new growth shoots of where retirement is being reimagined as a time of regeneration.

And I wanted to spend a moment on the word *regeneration*. It's defined as a new phase of renewal. But when you look at the synonyms there are words like revival, restoration, reactivation, rejuvenation, rebirth, resurgence, and revitalization. I mean, these are words that you can just feel the green shoots of energy going through you, versus the two words that are associated with the word *retirement*, which are withdrawal and seclusion.

We're witnessing more and more people who are leaving long term careers. They're choosing to continue to work to leverage their skills to freelance or consult, to pursue new interests or revive old passions that they hadn't had time to do in the past, or just continuing to learn and develop throughout their lives.



Perhaps most importantly, post career activities keep the maturing body in mind, which happens to us all, engaged with meaningful work. And it also encourages purposeful growth and development.

Why is purpose important? Because without a reason for living, or a reason for being, our desire and our capacity for living life to its fullest starts to dwindle. And we see studies where this happens, people leave their long term careers, and suddenly, their capacities and their willingness starts to erode.

[00:11:08] Purpose is what gets us out of bed in the morning. And that becomes really important when we don't have that place to go five days a week. But how do you find purpose in your life when you're feeling uncertain about the future, or maybe you don't know what your purpose is?

I'd like to share a tool that can help you find your purpose and also help you make future based decisions, ones that are aligned with where you want to go.

There's a purpose model I find very helpful when I do coaching. It includes four components to a happy and fulfilling life in an overlapping Venn diagram. The four components are:

1. **Something you love to do**, such as motivations, interests, or passions;
2. **Something you're good at**, such as talents, qualities, or potential;
3. **Something the world needs**, such as connection, contributions, and community; and



4. **Something that you get paid for**, such as a personal and professional exchange of value in some way.

Where those four circles overlap, that's the sweet spot of **purpose**. Let's take them one by one.

So the first is **what you love to do**. This is what gets you excited about the day, what you find enjoyable and rewarding. It could be a hobby, a project, an abandoned passion, or an element of a job, something that you love to do as part of the work that you've done. Which activities give you energy? Those are the kinds of things that you want to include in a list as you start to collect and gather information.

The next circle is **what you're good at**. What is it that makes you unique? What are your natural talents? What have you accomplished? What skills have you built over the years, you want to make a list of those as well. For this list, it would be great to get some feedback from trusted individuals in your personal and professional life. Folks who can give you a bit of insight and mirror back what they see for you.

Next is **what does the world need**. Who is part of your community and how has your community shaped you? What does your community need from you? And how can you contribute to society and make a positive impact? You can also take a look at a current problem or challenge that people are having and determine how you might be able to offer a solution.



You can use the inventories that you created when answering the first two questions of what you love and what you're good at. And then think about a current problem or challenge that people are having so you can determine how you might be able to offer a solution.

And then the last one is **what can you get paid for**. How can you make a living with this skill set or this offering that you're developing? Is there a market for an exchange of value? And does this exchange contribute to your well-being? Because it's not just an exchange of money for time anymore. This is about aligning with who you are today.

If earning an income is important to you in your post career years, as it is for many, you want to take a look at your list, do some research and find out where there's market demand. And for those where earning an income isn't necessary, you can de-emphasize this step.

The ideal state, though, when you're looking at the overall model is where all four circles intersect. But you can start by connecting two of those circles. And then ultimately, you'll get to the whole picture as you incorporate more of the model.

[00:15:13] I'll wrap up this topic by saying that the future of retirement is still being written. But one thing is for sure, post career life will continue to evolve. There are millions of us that are in this place in our lives, moving from retirement, this period of decline, to one of regeneration, a period of growth and opportunity and contribution.



Taking some mindful steps toward a life you love will ensure that you're prepared for this important transition: a second half of life that's brimming with purpose and happiness and fulfillment.

And that's what I wish for you.

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[00:16:00] Kathy: Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!

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