
Eldering: Toward Wisdom in Action



Eldering™ is a context for living, a way of being “wisdom in action™”. It is an unfolding possibility for growing older and an opportunity to communicate and collaborate with younger people on creating a future that works for everyone.

WISDOM is the capacity to give away the best of who we are in a way that those who listen can realize and manifest the best they are.

It isn't about knowing answers to problems or retelling history. Wisdom comes from our life experiences and expresses itself 'in action' as coaching younger generations to accomplish more than they think is possible.

“The only important thing about me is that I am an average, healthy human being. All the things I have been able to do, any human being, or any one, or you, could do equally well or better. I was able to accomplish what I did by refusing to be hooked on a game of life that had nothing to do with the way the universe was going. I was just a throwaway who was willing to commit myself to what needed to be done.”

—Buckminster Fuller

ACTION happens in language.

Everything we do involves conversations—either conversations with ourselves or others. The only way to achieve anything in the world is by declaring our intentions and commitments and making requests, offers and promises.

COLLABORATION is action that happens in our conversations with others.

Collaborating is about being committed and engaged in the process of creating the future. It is limited by our respect for and commitment to each other—and has nothing to do with our physical capabilities. Mutual respect means that we focus on whether we are all 'walking the talk' (rather than on judging whether we have a good story for why we are doing whatever we it is we're doing or comparing our actions to whatever standards we might have for 'best').

ELDERING is giving away the best we are in committed conversations for the future.



NOTES ON ELDERING

The following guidelines are not a ‘recipe’ for Eldering. They are, however, choices we can make which will affect our ‘way of being’ in the world and bring us closer to practicing Eldering.

1. Accepting what is

When we can accept the fact that the world is just fine the way it is, people aren’t broken and no one ‘needs’ our help or point of view, then we create an opening for Eldering. When we aren’t trying to ‘fix’ the world or impose our views on others, then we develop enough serenity for people to be interested in what we have to say.

2. Listening generously

At the heart of Eldering is generous listening. When we put our assumptions aside and maintain an open mind in our conversations, then we create the space to build trust and understanding. The challenge is that we already have an almost automatic inner conversation going about every person we meet and interact with—no matter who they are or how old they are.

We can start demonstrating our wisdom in action by accepting each individual as they are and by concentrating on what they are saying and *what they’re not saying* (which reveals the essence of their concerns) without censoring or judging them. This kind of deep listening requires that we be totally ‘present’ with people (as in, we’re not distracted by other thoughts or activities, we aren’t talking while they are, and we’re not planning what to say or do next). Very few people have been listened to in this way, and some may find it uncomfortable at first. If we can be compassionate and consistent, eventually they will be more open to communicating more—and to listening to us.

3. Becoming comfortable with being misunderstood

As we grow older, we become less anxious about being understood and more concerned about being ‘authentic’. When we can share who we really are and what we stand for without looking for approval or understanding from everyone, we can be truly ‘present’ as ourselves with others. And they, in turn, can be ‘present’ with us and appreciate the differences that make us valuable to them. For if everyone understood us completely, then we probably wouldn’t have much to offer them.

4. Being responsible

Taking responsibility for our community and our world includes ‘owning’ all the things that don’t work—including all the seemingly intractable problems and the ways of operating that cause suffering and challenge the sustainability of life on our planet. Being responsible is not a duty or an obligation. Being responsible simply means ‘being able to respond’ to what doesn’t work, and, when necessary, to courageously challenge conventional wisdom and common sense in our conversations.



5. Developing multigenerational relationships

Relationships are the foundation for achieving anything. Some of our current relationships with friends, family and colleagues may benefit from an Eldering approach. A Coming of Age Ceremony is an opportunity to declare our intentions to friends, family and the local community. (For more information, visit eldering.org/publications/ceremony.)

We may choose to actively seek out situations where we can create relationships with other generations. Existing intergenerational programs or volunteer opportunities can connect us with younger people who are committed to things we care about as well.

Even when there's no immediate or obvious demand for what we have to offer, there will be a demand somewhere. Whenever we're in conversation, we can be listening from the perspective of an Elder who is committed to co-creating the future with younger generations. Opportunities to make a difference will appear.

LISTENING FOR ELDERING OPPORTUNITIES

No matter where we are or what circumstances we find ourselves in, these key questions can help us see and create openings for Eldering in our conversations.

- ✓ What is wanted and/or needed in this situation right now?
- ✓ What is missing?
- ✓ What do I have to offer?
- ✓ What's wanting/trying to happen?
- ✓ What is here to be learned?
- ✓ What's possible?

More ideas and information on Eldering opportunities are available at www.eldering.org/resources/opportunities.



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www.eldering.org

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