

# **Gifts of Aging**

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**McKay Method**

**School of Energy Healing**

## **The Stages of the Feminine Life**

### **Maiden**

She races

Up through the grass and pines

Climbing up the mountain

Through rocks and snow

At the top

She takes a selfie with her Iphone

Picks up a rock

Victory

Vision quest on the fast track

She glides down the mountain on ego's sled

Rushing, Rushing, Rushing

### **Mother**

Her day is confusing

Life is demanding

She is about to scream

Her teens are rebellious, her husband's a jerk

Mom's going senile, Dad's had a stroke.

The house is in chaos.

She has tripped over the rock.

Midlife smacks her in the face.

Losing it!

She slams out the door.

Doing, Doing

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**Crone**

She walks up the forest path

Going to her favorite place

Tired she leans on her walking stick,

Listening to the chatter of her friends, the chickadees,

Smells the pines, the bushes, the earth,

The camp robber screeches,

The wind whispers

The rock diva greets them with a smile

Blows his happy breath, musses their hair

She places the rock at the base of the falls.

Looking up

She sees water meet sun

Her head is baptized with droplets

Crone Initiation

Being

By Jan Counter

## Chapter I

### Introduction

This paper started to be about the wisdom that older women could offer the younger generation. But as the project unfolded it became about the gifts that can be a part of the aging process. This is not a scientific paper. It holds a lot of personal opinion. Men are not included in this paper only because the focus is on aging women. (There are biological differences between the genders that are significant to the aging journey.)

The second chapter is a literature review. In my search of the literature the majority of it has been about staying young, active and healthy. Very little of the literature has suggested that there are truly gifts within the aging process. Our culture is so entrenched in the culture of youth that there seems no place for the elder person except in senior centers, retirement villages and senior groups. The main two books used for this paper were Crones Don't Whine by Jean Bolen and The Third Chapter by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. The third source for this paper was the cards Wisdom of the Crone by Fields, Somerset and Phillips.

Carl Jung's writings were used as the model to describe the stages of the women. His model of maiden, mother and crone probably come from the pagan tradition.

Aging isn't fun. Trying to stay healthy and active becomes a big task. Changes in the brain and body seem to be a daily occurrence. It's no wonder that children of aging parents shake their heads and cringe at the thought of getting older. But almost invisible to the younger generation are the gifts that can make aging tolerable and even enjoyable.

The fourth chapter is the summation of the conversation a group had on the gifts of aging. A group process was set up to explore this topic. Five women took part in three one and half hour sessions over a three week period. This was a homogenous group who had participated in a dream group over a twelve year period, so it was very easy for participants to easily slip into the process. Fifteen words were chosen from Wisdom of the Crone cards. Each member was asked to randomly pick a card. They started the discussion of the card giving their opinion and feelings of the word on the card. Others then would add their opinion. Fifteen minutes was given for each of the cards. I took notes on their conversation.

These are the group demographics.

- The ages ranged from 57-80.
- Four are retired.
- All have some type of chronic physical problems.
- Two were teachers.
- Two had businesses.
- One has a counseling practice.

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- Four were born and raised in Montana.
- Three have children.
- Three are married, two are single.
- Two have been divorced, one remarried, one is a lesbian without a current partner.
- Two live on ranches, three live in town.

Characterology:

- One is royal/priest.
- One is warrior/gardener.
- Two are gardener/warriors.
- One is gardener/lover.

These are ordinary women from a small town in south central Montana. This process with the group was an enriching personal experience for me. The process gave me some unexpected and delightful surprises about what people thought about aging.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review on Aging

As more people are living longer, more interest has been placed on aging. Erickson in the 1960's was one of the first psychologists to write about the stages of men's aging process. This was followed by Gail Sheehy's book Passages which focused on women's aging processes.

The literature has often been limited to how to stay youthful as long as one can instead of embracing the aging processes and the gifts which can be received in the third chapter of life.

Carl Jung, an early twentieth psychologist, was one of the first to recognize that the third chapter of life could hold great benefits for those in the aging process. He also recognized the three archetypes for women which he called Maiden, Mother and Crone.

Jung wrote about seven tasks which would help a person receive the gifts of aging.

1. The first task was to confront and accept the reality of aging and death. Acceptance takes on a new meaning once we realize that we can't cure our unhappiness over aging by denying we aren't getting old. Aging is a natural process of life. Acceptance allows us to develop a deeper appreciation of our lives and live our lives more fully.
2. The second task is to take an inner journey to review, reflect and sum up our lives. We need to remember, tell our stories and pass our wisdom forward.
3. The third task is to see that our lives have finite limits and to let go of those experiences and dreams that will never be realized. We discover what is important to us. Once we accept our limits we can move beyond them. This task centers on focusing on one's energy on attaining realistic goals.
4. The fourth task is to surrender the dominance of our ego. This requires us to give up old attitudes, power and control. Getting rid of old patterns helps us to access the authentic self.
5. The fifth task involves honoring one's true self and learning how distinguish between true self and ego driven self. When we live our lives according to others' needs or expectation we bury the true self.
6. The sixth task is finding meaning in our lives. This is the inner journey when we finally connect with our soul. We are looking inward rather than at the outer world for meaning.
7. The seventh task is what Jung called rebirth. It is a time to get to know yourself in a new way. Retirement brings time for oneself. We accept losses and dreams unfulfilled. We find ourselves gifted with the opportunity to connect with our creative side which we may have left behind with family, work and social obligations. Life once again becomes playful. (Taken from website – "Maiden, Mother, Crone")

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote the book The Third Chapter. The third chapter is defined as life from 50-75 years. For her book, Lawrence-Lightfoot interviewed 40 people in this age range. The research

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focused on “creative and purposeful learning that goes on in the third chapter of people’s life”. She explored all aspects of learning new information and skills - fear, patience, risk, adaptation, loss, limitations and creativity.

Having so much of the population in their third chapter represents “a significant and new period in our culture”. Yet aging beyond fifty is seen as decline and deterioration of mind, body and spirit. The picture is of loss of vitality, curiosity, sexiness and drive. People of this age are losing interest, slowing down and fading away. Yet the research in this book indicates this is a transformative and generative period of life. It is a time when experience and learning synthesizes into wisdom. The public benefit will be to transform our society.

The transition from one stage of life to the next is not easy. There is pain and confusion. The learning is often to find the balance from competing forces that pull forward or hold back. It is a time to revise and expand the definition of purposeful living.

Jean Bolen wrote the book Crones Don’t Whine. She discusses how women are reinventing themselves in the later years of their live. She covers 13 qualities for this healthy transition. The qualities are covered in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3

### The Stages of the Feminine Life

According to Carl Jung's archetypes, there are three stages of feminine energy. These are the maiden, mother and crone. These basically follow the biological life cycle of an average woman. But a woman at any time of her life can be in any one of these stages.

#### **Maiden**

The maiden is the virgin feminine aspect of energy. It is the vessel ready to take on life, experience and knowledge. The maiden is inexperienced, often naive, bold, and idealistic and in a hurry to experience all that life has to give. (Virgin has to do with the energy and not whether she is sexually active.) Her sexuality is one of the aspects of her exploration. Her passion is finding her way out of the nest and exploring who she wants to be and where she wants to go.

For some this stage is short. Whether they marry or become married to a job or interest, some women move readily into the mother stage of life. For others, they will not move on to other stages of life. These are women who live their lives on their own terms, bold and independent. They are happy to stay in this stage of life.

#### **Mother**

The next aspect of the archetype cycle is mother. This model encompasses the behaviors of nurturing, cooperation and self-sacrifice for the greater good or the family. The developmental task is accepting responsibility. Through the responsibility of motherhood, the mother learns the lessons of compassion. Surrender and compassion are deeply spiritual lessons that carry over into her sexuality. Motherhood is the time when heart energy comes into play. The nurturing lessons are often used in other aspects of a woman's life such as her career and relationships.

#### **Crone**

The developmental task of the crone stage is putting together the learning experiences and sharing that information. This is often called wisdom.

Spiritually is often mastered at this stage. It is a time of going deeply within her spiritual depths, using her institution and finding meaning in life. Some crones are masters of healing at the highest level. The crone has compassion, humor, courage and vitality. She has a good sense of herself. She sees flaws in herself and others, but she is not harsh and judgmental (especially to herself). It is a time to cultivate inner beauty, enjoy who she is and what she is doing. Caretaking has come to an end for many at this stage. This stage is the integration of all the stage: maiden, mother and crone.



In Jean Bolen's book *Crones Don't Whine* she lists thirteen qualities that distinguish crones from other aging women.

- According to Bolen, it is not acceptable to whine. Whining separates the person from the present and the enjoyment of the present. To really enjoy life, they need to let go of what they think should have been, could have been and might have been.
- A crone is zesty, passionate and soulful. Being one's self and appreciating life helps create a juicy crone. Juicy means vitality with a source of water. "For both physical health and emotional well-being, metaphoric moisture and flow are also essential. Genuine feeling and unblocked expression of them are moist. In grief, tears of sorrow flow. In uninhibited laughter and joy, tears flow. Life is a juicy proposition. Every juicy crone taps into a wellspring of meaning in her psyche". (Bolen, p.12)
- Crones are in the generative phase of life. They know how to foster growth. They know what it takes to make people, animals, plants thrive. Crones protect what is vulnerable until it is able to survive on its own. Crones are patient.
- Bolen uses the metaphor of a gardener for the crone. "She is a person who loves what she does, protects the fragile, knows what is valuable and meaningful, and knows when to cut out. It is a time for solitude for reflection, self-expression and inner development. . . . We become role models, sounding boards and a cheering section for each other. Women must build strong boundaries around their time". (Bolen, p. 27)
- Crones trust what is in their bones. They trust their instincts about people and principles. Growing older and learning from life has left an impression and many of the lessons have been painful.
- "The ancient Greeks had two words for knowledge-logos and gnosis. Logos is rational, objective, logical and expressible in words or numbers. Gnosis, on the other hand, is subjective, not rational, nonverbal, feeling-tinged, and not provable. Every sacred experience is subjective such as self related to divinity, a spiritual epiphany, and a moment infused with spiritual insight and grace. Crones trust what they know in their bones from experiences such as these."(p. 33)
- Crones develop ways to reach their inner knowing. Inner life grows more important as one ages. In the younger years the senses direct one out into the world. Older people's senses are not as acute. They draw inwardly on what they have already experienced. Life is seen from a different perspective in moments of reflection. The quiet moments are when creative thought, meaningful feelings and intuition arise. (Bolen, p. 39)
- Crones are fierce and fight for what they think matters. Crones often finally find their voice. They have developed a deep sense of empathy and compassion for others and they are willing to put themselves out there for what they feel is right. (Bolen, p. 45)
- Crones choose their journey with heart. If the journey is chosen with heart, the path can be joyful. If the journey is chosen from fear, then the path is filled with anxiety. To be human is to love and to be vulnerable to suffering and loss. She has learned from experience and

observation, listens to her intuition and “takes reality, herself and the well-being of others into consideration before she acts.” She looks at the past, lets it go and forgives. (Bolen, p. 52)

- Crones speak truth with compassion. Crones are learning how to be truthful and compassionate. Friends tell each other the truth. They are careful about choosing what is important from the superficial. When they speak their truth, it comes from a place of concern.
- Crones listen to their bodies. When crones listen to their bodies, the body teaches them to pay attention to something that is important that they might miss or ignore. When body and psyche come together there is a sense of well being. The body often expresses feelings. If emotions are not allowed to surface, they can come out as pain or physical symptoms. A crone listens for underlying messages between her body and emotions. (Bolen, p.67)
- Crones are flexible and improvise. Bolen list the following as markers of healthy aging - “Flexibility, resourcefulness, good health, friends, the ability to learn and keep on growing, being needed or doing service, having absorbing interest, and the ability to enjoy themselves makes improvising a good life choice.” (Bolen, p.71) The crone does not reinvent herself intentionally, but she improvises, adapts to changes in life and refocuses her energy.
- Crones don’t grovel. Women of a certain age reach menopause, and they often experience the insecurities about attractiveness that they had felt in their adolescence. Older women feel themselves becoming invisible. Wanting to please is normal; however one does not have to grovel to get attention. Groveling is a state of mind when one acts inferior to another person. “Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent.”(Bolen, p. 79)
- Crones laugh together. Women in groups laugh together with zest and bravado. Laughter arises in repose to tales told on oneself. The stories and laughter builds into a general state of hilarity. It’s a slice of shared life. It announces to the world no matter how bad things are, “we are here and we are laughing together. Laughter is a spontaneous expression of freedom and celebration.” (Bolen, p. 84)
- Crones savor the good things in their lives. Savoring is about giving an experience full attention and taking it in. It is about gratitude for this moment. This is enhanced by loss. Crones know how fleeting and precious life is. Crowns have known bad times. But they also know magical moments and they are grateful for those times. “A thank-you for being alive is rising from your soul to fill your heart.” (Bolen, p.86) “Crones are connoisseurs of life’s good moments.” (Bolen, p.88)

## Chapter 4

### The Gifts from Growing Older

Aging is not easy. Anyone who says it's a breeze is really lucky or just oblivious. Aging seems to have more negatives than positives. The majority of us would just like to forget about.

Five women came together to discuss aging and the gifts that aging can bring. The women, ages 58-80, discussed a series of words over three 1 ½ sessions in the May, 2014. The words to be examined came from the literature review. Cards from Wisdom of the Crone were used for the discussion. The following are their comments and ideas about what they feel are the gifts of feminine aging. This is not a scientific study. It is the ideas and feelings of five very unique but still ordinary women who live in Big Timber, Montana in the spring of 2014.

#### Health

Health is the biggest issue for those who are growing older. Sickness can happen to anyone. But as one grows older, people are more apt to suffer from long term, chronic problems. Our group is no exception to the rule. Each person in the group has had some type of health problem that forced them to change something in their life style. They all worked at taking care of themselves. But this didn't guarantee that they hadn't experienced health challenges.

All said they that when they were younger that they took their health for granted. After facing health issues, they had started to listen to their bodies and take care of themselves.

"My body has an intelligence of its own. We don't have control over our bodies. I pushed too hard and I was stopped in my tracks. My (health) issues slowed me down. That is when I started to love life and when I started taking care of myself. Falling in love with life is so wonderful."

All agreed it was necessary to take advantage of available health care. "Stopping the pain gave me a new start. When I felt better, I started to care about life."

In the case of severe health issues, all felt it was important to tap into their communities. "Learn to educate yourself by other's experiences. Have an advocate with you to listen and give support when talking to a doctor about crucial health issues."

Health issues often limit physical choices. This often leads a person to explore her inner world and spiritual connections. The gift of health issues is embracing change.

## **Loss**

Loss is very difficult at any age. As people age losses of family, friends, security and health becomes a daily part of life. The greatest loss for this group seemed to be the death of a friend or a close relative. Most participants felt any type of loss left a hole that could not be filled. This was especially true for the loss of someone who had impacted their life in a unique way. The person became irreplaceable. The hurt from this hole over time became less but the hole was never filled.

Experiencing loss helped each person turns sympathy to empathy. Empathy led to compassion, which is an understanding sorrow. They were more able to be with others and offer support. Each person must walk their own path to healing, but they do not have to do it alone.

The gift of loss is compassion, understanding the hole of loss will always be there. There will be healing. The greatest type of support that can be given is allowing space for the grieving person to work through their own unique process.

## **Forgiveness**

The group felt that forgiveness is very important, but it was easier said than done. Forgiveness seemed to have many levels. True forgiveness is forgiveness that totally lets go of grudges and surrenders to what "is" in a relationship.

One woman told a story about being really angry with a coworker and decided not to talk to him. She did this for six months. Finally she told him how sorry she was that she had held a grudge. He hadn't even noticed she was snubbing him. "The only one that was hurt over this grudge was me. I wasted lot energy over this. We think holding on to our grudge is going to hurt the other person. All it does is hurt ourselves."

"The question one needs to ask is 'Would you rather be right than being happy?'"

Forgiveness is freeing. It allows space for love to come into the heart.

Members of the group found forgiving their parents was one of the hardest things for them to do. One person said, "I have struggled a lot with Mom. Am I supposed to forgive my mother for the things she did? It is easier to forgive the deed than threw out the feelings. But to move on, you need to let go of the anger."

One participant, who cared for her father when he was dying, said, "Forgiving him taught me he didn't have power over me anymore."

All agreed that forgiving didn't mean forgetting. An important step to forgiveness is being with the hurt and the pain. The next step is letting it go. "Forgiveness is the step toward pure joy. Forgiveness allows

wonderful experiences into our lives - the smell of apple blossoms, a car loaded with laughing teenagers, gorgeous purple lilacs and much more.”

The gift of forgiveness is the mending of a broken heart. It lets the heart go free. That is freedom.

### **Surrender**

For the group, surrender was a very negative aspect of aging. They all felt that they couldn't easily surrender to the changes in their lives. It meant giving up on things they loved to do.

Health issues were the hardest for them with which to grapple. One of the participants who had a long and debilitating illness said, “I felt comfort when I finally surrendered.”

Health made a big difference in how this group handled surrender. When one has health issues, there is no escaping. “You can medicate, but at an older age, there are usually no miraculous cures. It leaves a person highly vulnerable, losing strength and balance both physically and spiritual.” “One needs to surrender the idea that things can't go back as they were. That is the lesson.”

The topic turned to control in relationships. One divorced woman said, “I was hoping I could change things to the way I thought they should be for others and me. You don't change them. Go ahead and disagree. But let what will be, will be. Appreciate what drew you together, but honor the differences.”

The group felt this applied to all levels of relationships from personal, group, community to global. Ego creates the defenses, the need to be in control and the need to be right. There is no compromise in politics today. Being wrong means being out of control. One participant mentioned Byron Katie about surrendering to "what is". Surrendering was giving up gluten. It was a struggle because so many of the foods she needed to give up were comfort foods. Giving up comfort foods led to struggle. The gift of surrender is letting go and allowing the new or different twist into one's life.

The gift of surrender is acceptance and allowing change.

### **Acceptance**

The word acceptance seemed to take the group members back to their childhood. Parents' acceptance seemed to be a strong theme. For some, their parents' acceptance was a guarantee. For others, they had to strive for their parents' acceptance. For the child with spina bifida, her parents' acceptance and understanding of the pain and complications would have helped her more easily cope with her defect. Peer acceptance was important, too.

All felt that not being accepted by others left holes that weren't easily filled. It greatly affected their self worth and confidence. The challenge became to accept themselves and to see themselves as perfect.

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Accepting what happened in the past was an important theme. One person whose childhood was pretty rocky said, "Take a look at the hole. Our parents challenged us and we tried to meet the challenge. They were doing the best they could. It's our job to accept the child we were."

Another theme of acceptance was the problems of aging. "No one wants to slow down, experience pain and illness. We don't like to accept we're getting older. Accepting things as they are is the challenge. When we do, we allow ourselves to find more positive attitudes toward ourselves and with others. Accepting ourselves helps us to accept others."

The group talked about a couple of local characters. One is a curmudgeon, very opinionated with a loud abrasive voice. But he's the fellow that opens the door for others and gives a big friendly greeting. He's the fellow that goes to the rest home twice a day to help feed his wife and hold her hand. It's important to look beyond the faults and see the total person.

The other is a strange little fellow up the Boulder River who puts racial slurs on his fence. As one person in the group said, "We wish he would take them down. But we see a shy introvert, an intelligent but backwards man. We don't accept his signs, but we do accept him."

The gift of acceptance is appreciating our gifts and others gifts. It deepens our understanding of the world.

### **Compassion**

The group felt there are three levels for understanding another person's pain and loss. Sympathy is where one recognizes another's pain. Empathy is where one has experiences similar to those of another person. Compassion is the deep understanding of what is happening to the other person without trying to intervene or fix it. It is listening through the heart to the other person's story. It is holding the other person in a comfortable space with unconditional love.

The gift of compassion is love.

### **Appreciation**

The group felt there were different levels to recognizing something special. The model they came up with is:

Appreciation comes from the head - recognition.

Thankfulness is felt in the heart.

Gratefulness is from the soul.

The group brainstormed appreciation. They felt a great appreciation for these everyday items.

- recognizing lessons learned

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- life itself
- living the best life possible
- living what is
- the glass full
- wisdom from aging
- the first sip of coffee
- a warm house
- friends and family
- And much, much more.

Appreciation is recognition that we have been blessed.

Appreciation also means being valued by others. It means a lot when someone says “thank you”. Take the time to say thank you. “We appreciate you and appreciate what you did”.

The gift of appreciation is being valued and valuing what we have been given in life.

### **Community**

The groups said there were many ways communities in which communities form. They come in all sizes and with different perspectives. The one thing communities have in common is mutual purposes and mutual respect. Being a part of a community was very important to every person in the group. They all felt the goal of the community was important, but the camaraderie seemed to be the primary aspect they enjoyed as part of a community. For the community to sustain itself, the community needed to go from “the surface feeling good to a deep understanding and compassion for each other.” There is an The gifts of community are acceptance and respect for the uniqueness of the people within the community.

### **Friendship**

Friendship is the major way older people use to develop deep connections with others. Friends come from all over the place - childhood, work, family, organization and churches, just to name a few. Friendships are built on commonality, memories, interest, location and just because. There are different types of friends from casual to spirit sisters. “Friends are a source of information, laughter, joy, compassion, acceptance for just who we are, and pure love.”

The group said they loved having different type of friends. “I miss Katie. We emailed each other a lot. She was so interested in so many different things. She was always giving me a new perspective.”

The group was skeptical about the current technology. They felt young people were using it way too much to stay in touch. However they felt the new technology allowed for reconnection with old friends.

Aging and illness sometimes separates older friends from younger friends. One in the group talked about how a younger friend deserted her when she became chronically ill. The experience was very hurtful.

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“The best friends of all are those who stick by you through thick and thin. They’re the ones that know all your faults but love you anyway.” The gift of friendships is comfort and joy in old age.

### **Laughter**

Laughter is an important part of healthy aging, especially the laughter whole hearted belly laugh.

“Laughter lights up a room in joy. It's a musical sound.” There are moments where one just doesn’t feel like laughing. The death of a friend or family member is devastating. The inability to do what we use to do brings tears to our eyes. Change that is rapidly happening around us brings fear and the feeling of no control. Aging isn’t for sissy. Laughter makes life bearable.

Laughter helps bring lightness to really painful situations. Laughing about life changes often makes the problem not so formidable. Laughter from the belly brings its own unique healing. When one doesn’t take oneself so seriously, it often allows a person to gain a new perspective or solution to a problem.

“Laughter is the verbal expression of joy and delight. It is a wonderful way of giving joy a voice. Laughter puts the ego into the back seat and lets joy in the front. When we can laugh at ourselves, we take life and ourselves lightly.”

Laughter relieves tension. One in the group told about a fourth-grade student who poured tempera paint all over himself. When she caught him the remorseful look on his face made her laugh. He started to giggle. The laughter changed the situation from tragic into comedy.

Friends are a great source for the laughter bug. (Laughter once it starts is catching.) Laughing together makes synergy and builds connections.

The gift of laughter is giving a voice to joy.

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity was an easy topic for this group to discuss. One person said “Authenticity happens when one surrenders, digs deep, and takes off the mask. You see who you really are through the layers of where you have been.”

Most women felt that age had brought them greater authenticity. They were happier being authentic. They gave up on trying living up to other’s expectations. One called that the hero’s journey. One said she liked being herself not what others wanted her to be. It was embracing me.”

The gift of authenticity is happiness for being just you.

### **Joy**

If there is one thing that the women in this group understood was joy. For them next to health, for them it was one of the most important aspects of aging. It was a feeling they allowed into their lives as they aged.



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“When I was a kid, joy was seen as bad. When you felt joy, you were having too much of a good time. Joy now sneaks up on me. It’s a special moment with a grandchild or time with a spouse. Joy fills you up and makes you comfortable.”

“I love it when joy creeps up on me when I’m with the godchildren at the river. I feel pure joy. It’s a shock and has a surprise element.”

“Joy is a right. It can’t be faked. Joy has the highest vibration. It is when the inner child allows us to embrace joy. That memory of that joyful moment lingers and brings warmth and contentment. Wow!”

“I was lucky when I was a child. I was allowed joy. My mom would drive my friends and me around. She loved to tell jokes. My friends and I would start to giggle. Mom would start laughing and we would guffaw. The memory is pure joy.”

“Joy brings an acceptance of getting older. Joyfulness brings a greater appreciation of life. It is felt in the heart.” The gift of joy is pleasure and delight.

### **Magic**

The person who drew the card did not believe in magic. She felt magic was connected to superstition and doesn’t serve the present moment. She felt those who depended on magic were not taking responsibility for their choices. “Magical thinking limits a person from living in reality. It limits their choices.”

As the group talked, some said they saw magic and joy as closely related. “When people come together in friendship, something magical happens.”

“Magic is recognizing how wonderful our world is and how we hardly understand how it works.”

Synchronicity was seen as the work of magic.

The gift of magic is remembering life is real, profound and sacred.

### **Wisdom**

Wisdom doesn’t come from straight A’s in school. It comes as a synthesis of learning from life’s experiences. The women in the group did not think they were wise though they did believe they did have their moments of wisdom. “I’m wiser than I use to be. But some days it just isn’t there.”

They pointed to older women they knew when they were younger as wise. Many of these women were their grandmothers. These women served as role models for them as they grew older. They said wisdom had a feeling of comfort. It trusts one’s experiences and intuition. A lot had to do with letting go of unimportant stuff. The wise woman knows herself. She brings her “knowings” to her family and the community. The gift of wisdom is the synthesis of life experience and applying it to everyday life.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Old age will come to most of us. It is filled with problems and loss. Our culture doesn't take kindly to growing old. There are examples in the media of products and programs for keeping the aging person youthful and vital.

There are the deaths of friends and family; health goes bad and abilities are lost. All this can take a person to her knees. Significant loss makes a person realize life is changing and it is not going to go back the way it was. For some, this takes them into fear, hopelessness and depression. But for many older women, the life changes offer new opportunities.

Carl Jung called the woman of the third part of life the crone. He felt that each part of life had its own tasks. Jung felt successful aging demanded serious attention to one's inner life and pulling together experience, learning and memories. This leads to maturity and spiritual wholeness.

The focus group of five women support Jung's conclusion. Using the Wisdom of the Crone cards, they examined many aspects of aging and shared with each other what it means to them.

Loss was a catalyst to helping a person adapt to life's changes. Surrender opens up opportunities. Forgiveness releases old baggage and makes space for new opportunities. Loss gives one insight to life and compassion for others.

The women understood the value of their time and they are much more selective about what they do with it. They pick their activities around what they feel is important and enjoyable.

Friendships solidify. Shared experiences and language brings comfort to each other. Laughter is an important ingredient of friendship. Laughing together brings healthy release.

The zesty crone explores her inner world and takes off her mask to the outer world. She lets the pleasure and delight of joy into her life. Joy is the reward for inner work.

The reward is not a trouble free old age. It's hardly the 100% happiness that was sought after in early life. It is learning to "be" and to enjoy precious moments that life brings. Old age has many gifts and blessings. One needs to open up her heart and receive them.

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