

# TO YOUR HEALTH

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## The Importance of Life Review

By Marcia Feldman,  
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As we move through our day to day activities, it can be valuable to look back on our lives from time to time and review all that we have done; the good, the bad and the ugly—to make peace with how our lives have unfolded, gain understanding of what has made us who we are and determine goals for which to strive going forward.

The idea of life review was pioneered by the first director of the National Institute on Aging, psychiatrist Robert Butler. He observed increasing depressive symptoms in his aging patients and felt that they could benefit from revisiting their past experiences, making peace with unresolved issues and develop a deeper sense of self-acceptance. He felt that finding meaning in the choices we have made in the past can help us move forward with a more positive outlook on life.

According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, *life review can help create an acceptance of one's life cycle with few or no regrets. It does this by helping individuals integrate memories into a meaningful whole, and to provide a harmonious view of past, present, and future* (Clayton, 1975).

The method by which we review our pasts can influence what we get out of the life review. Dr. Butler perceived his patients reviewing their past in an "aimless way" that led to depression. He regretted being unable to finish his work around life review before his death in 2007, however others have explored it further.

Psychology Today discusses the life review as "a structured procedure for reconstructing the past to provide personal benefits, including acceptance of life's events, a more authentic understanding of oneself, and greater clarity in the direction of one's life."

The benefits can include the following:

- Acceptance of choices we made that made us who we are from a lens of gratitude instead of self-doubt and regret
- A deeper understanding of what made us the way we are
- Reflecting on what we have learned from the past, a greater clarity in our direction going forward

Some questions to prompt us to think about our lives are at <https://thethrivecenter.org/a-practice-questions-for-life-review>

At CW, the Learning in Retirement department has offered various writing classes to review ones' life. Currently there is a Monday **Writing Life** class offered twice a month on Zoom with prompts given to get participants thinking about various topics. A **Guided Autobiography** class was very successful earlier this year and will start up again in May. Day and time TBA, with one day offered for continuing members and another day for new members. Please check the May calendar or contact Gail Hatfield for more information.

The LiveWell Comfort Care program offers a **Legacy Project** in which Residents can be interviewed on video about their lives. Photo's of major life events can be edited into the video and in the end, Residents have a short documentary about themselves to share with their family and friends, describing their lives in their own words. We have received positive feedback about the Legacy Project. One person wrote:

*"About a year ago, ...[I was] persuaded ... to talk about my life in front of a camera. ... It was hard work, but I urge all of you to take advantage of it while you can. Now, each grandchild has watched the tape with me, and I learned the impact I had on each of them and them on me...Don't delay. Take advantage of [the Legacy Project]."*

To learn more about the Legacy Project at Carleton Willard, please contact Marcia Feldman at [mfeldman@cwvillage.org](mailto:mfeldman@cwvillage.org)





Maeve Lobo in the clinic offers a quarterly group called, “**Navigating End of Life Transitions**” in which she facilitates conversations around end-of-life issues, using a planner and a set of guiding questions to help initiate the discussion. Watch for the next group to be offered this summer.

No matter which format we choose, it can be helpful to make peace with the past by looking back and connecting the dots that have made each of us who we are today. Whether this reflection is done in writing, through interviews, alone or with a friend or family member—the point is to gain greater insight into ourselves and move forward with a sense of contentment and peace in our days.

### New Electronic Medical Records

Carleton Willard has rolled out our new electronic medical record system and Residents will be receiving a new medication form and face sheet in their Message Center box to verify and return to the Clinic. This will appear in a different format than what was previously sent out by the Clinic. The face sheets/medication reviews will not be distributed at the same time, they will be sent out in clusters. Be sure to verify, make any changes, and return to the Clinic as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Clinic.



### Introducing Dr. Bhatia

We are pleased to announce the start of Dr. Ashmeet Bhatia. She is a Board-Certified Geriatrician with over 20 years of experience. She is affiliated with Harvard Medical School and involved in training Geriatric Medicine Fellows in the Boston area. We are very excited to have her part of our team.

### Spotlight on Social Work

By Maeve Lobo, LICSW



According to the Federal Highway administration there are around fifty-two million licensed drivers over the age of sixty-five in the US. This has increased 77% since 2004. Driving helps older adults stay independent. However, as we age the propensity to have an accident increases. Changes in vision, physical and cognitive functioning, medications, and diseases may affect an older adult's ability to drive.



To remain safe on the road:

- Wear a seat belt.
- Determine the safest weather condition to drive. Plan your route.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Review your medications.
- Get your eyes checked annually.
- Avoid distractions in your car.
- Consider alternatives to driving.

Check out the CDC My Mobility Tool. Copies are available in the Clinic.

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In June, the Clinic will be starting a **Strength Through Support** group. The objective of this group is to support individuals with an early diagnosis of cognitive decline and memory loss. While we honor the past we will aim to manage the present. Support makes a big difference in handling a



diagnosis of dementia. The support group is intended to help manage these changes.