

Book Review: Jane Thayer and Peggy Thayer, *Elderscence: The Gift of Longevity* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2005).

We are now experiencing a period of longevity that is extending our lives 20-30 years beyond the age of sixty. How is this new period of longevity being experienced? The writers of this book (a mother and daughter team, a clinical psychologist and a transpersonal psychologist and artist) spent seven years gathering and elucidating the experiential responses of over one hundred people from the age of sixty to ninety-five, from varied walks of life. In this way they were able to elucidate the phenomenon itself (the universal) in its variations (the particular).

For the writers retirement has been a euphemism for what is a new dimension of life that they have identified and named as “Elderscence.” In offering the term the writers present it with honor, inclusiveness and respect. The emphasis is on wisdom and poise rather than on oldness and frailty.

What emerged from the experiential stories of “Elderscents” is important to us all. How do we find peace and meaning in the face of life as ever-changing. This struggle is even more important during life’s times of transition. While each person asks the questions differently and comes to their own resolution, the experience of change is central for all.

Here is book that can help people understand the meaning of longevity that is so clearly identified and explored as “Elderscence.” This is and will be considered by many as a classic book because Jane and Peggy Thayer have given us a direction to life where existing theorists fall short. This work begins with experiential expressions of people then makes the move to identifying a way of talking about it, as “Elderscence.”

“Elderscence” is a theoretical term well grounded in experience. Jane and Peggy have shown us that the world is change and that is what we do too. It is important not only to those facing the later years but to those who want to know about the meaning of life itself. This work is truly a sound contribution to humanity.

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