

The Art of Spiritual Eldering  
Curriculum Plan -Goals and Outcomes

[ADVANCE READING] From Age-ing to Sage-ing, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller

*Guided by a deep, interactive study of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi 's groundbreaking work, and the experience and personal insights generated through the application of his exercises - and other spiritual exercises - apprentices in this track will discover how this work can be a valuable addition to the Anamcara "toolbox", as well as a life practice for themselves which will bring calm, contentment and rich awareness to their personal lives and work.*

**Opening Retreat Webinar: THE THEORY OF SPIRITUAL ELDERING & PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

- 1. HARVESTING ONE'S LIFE**
- 2. THE ART OF LIFE COMPLETION**
- 3. THE ETERNITY FACTOR**
- 4. ETHICAL AND MATERIAL WILLS: WHAT IS MY LEGACY?**
- 5. PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING A SPIRITUAL ELDER**
- 6. SELF-REFLECTION IN THE ELDERING PROCESS**
- 7. MENTORING: TRANSMITTING VALUES TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND BEYOND**
- 8. ELDERS AS HEALERS**

**Closing Retreat Webinar: AN ELDER'S CREED**

## Year Two Opening Retreat Webinar: Sept. 9, 2023 - THE THEORY OF SPIRITUAL ELDERING & PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

**Goal:** To arrive at a working definition of spiritual eldering and an understanding of its implications for impacting the successful aging of future generations.

**Goal:** To become aware of one's own attitudes toward aging through the lens of one's personal experience with aging and the aged

**Outcome:** To describe and define the Sine Qua Non (10 elements) of the Spiritual Eldering work.

**Outcome:** To identify 3 different cultural attitudes toward and name 5 myths of aging in American and Western European cultures.

**Outcome:** To examine positive and negative examples of aging in one's personal experience

### **PRE-RETREAT ASSIGNMENTS**

Video: Ram Dass on website

Reading: Pp. 1-30, *Age-ing to Sage-ing*; on website; these pages will be discussed at the first meeting, but the entire book should be read prior to the Opening Retreat

### **INTRODUCTIONS PLUS**

Q&A -for clarification of recorded teaching

Intro Ex 1: Approaching Elderhood and how to: guided journaling

### **PRACTICUM/EXERCISE**

Exercise 1, in the back of the book, as a guided journaling exercise; 20 mins each partner, then debrief, 10 mins each, asking open and honest questions

### **HARVESTING AND REFLECTION**

Review of the stated outcomes. Introduce Exercise 2: The Cycles of Your Life and the Relationships Map for completion during the following month.

### **INTERIM ASSIGNMENT – to be completed between webinar on Sept. 9 and webinar on Oct. 14**

Complete the two journaling exercises on your own, and discuss your experience and insights with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy, engaging one another with open and honest questions. (Note: partners will be expected to meet for at least one hour-long session each month, for review and practice of the exercises and concepts introduced in that month's teaching.)

Read: Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life, Richard Rohr

## Month One (Oct. 14, 2023) - HARVESTING ONE'S LIFE

**Goal:** To come to a greater appreciation of the life one is living and understand the nature and impact of relationships in one's life

**Outcome:** To explore and describe the aging process through one's own personal stories and myths

**Outcome:** To articulate one's own fears and aspirations in approaching the aging process

### **[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include a discussion of the "unlived life" (MZ); a review of Reb Zalman's "philosophic homework" (VG); and an introduction to the harvesting practice of "recontextualizing" with the guided exercise: A Testimonial Dinner To My Severe Teachers (NG)

### **[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A - for clarification of recorded teaching

Introduce 'socialized meditation' to be used for "Exploring My Psycho-Spiritual World"

### **[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Complete the exercise in socialized meditation; journal your experience and engage one another in further reflection asking open and honest questions.

### **[WEBINAR-FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes. With reference to the reading (Richard Rohr), explore how patterns established in the first 1/2 of life have impacted the second 1/2 of one's life.

### **[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] – to be completed between webinar on Oct. 14 and webinar on Nov. 11**

Complete the Exercise: Life Time Maps, Significant Actions in My Life as a journaling exercise, and meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to discuss the experience and awareness arising out of it.

Read: Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor E. Frankl

## Month Two (Nov.11, 2023) - THE ART OF LIFE COMPLETION

*Goal:* To explore the primary landmarks of life completion as defined by Ira Byock in *Dying Well*

*Outcome:* To name and explain the importance of end-of-life Landmarks, including: the "business" of one's mortality (wills, instructions, etc), and the emotional/spiritual aspects (forgiveness, relationships, meaning, etc)

*Outcome:* To explore several means of achieving these landmarks through "Life Review" activities and personal experience

*Outcome:* To learn how to administer these tools to aging populations

### **[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include a review of the application of Viktor Frankl's theory in life completion work (VG); a thorough introduction to the End-of-Life Landmarks as articulated by Ira Byock (MZ); and a discussion of the art of forgiveness and guided exercise: Giving Yourself the Gift of Forgiveness (NG).

### **[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A -for clarification of recorded teaching  
Review the Spiritual Health Assessment Form

### **[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Complete the SHAF in socialized meditation and journaling.

### **[WEBINAR -FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

### **[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] to be completed between webinar on Nov.11 and webinar on Dec. 9**

View the Ram Dass video

Read: "Death As Homecoming", Abraham Joshua Heschel

Meet with Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to explore your response to the video and reading, and your relationship to your own mortality using 'socialized meditation'/asking open and honest questions

## Month Three (Dec. 9, 2023) - THE ETERNITY FACTOR

*Goal:* To learn how the acceptance of one's mortality allows one to continue to live more fully and fruitfully

*Outcome:* To articulate a number of ways that facing mortality frees the soul to live more fully

*Outcome:* To understand the "Fear Factor" involved in facing mortality

*Outcome:* To practice helpful means of addressing spiritual pain in the aging process (implications of the Spiritual Health Assessment Form)

### **[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include an introduction to the Seven Universal Concepts of Death and Dying (MZ); a review of the "Fear Factor" as articulated in Reh Zalman's work (VG); and a guided visualization: Scripting Your Last Moments on Earth (NG)

### **[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30min.]**

Q & A for clarification of recorded teaching

Introduce the Exercise: Philosophical Homework (examining one's beliefs about God, Soul, Afterlife, Reincarnation, and life here on Earth)

### **[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Complete the Philosophical Homework as a guided journaling exercise, then harvest the insights with open and honest questions.

### **[WEBINAR -FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

Introduce the art of writing one's own obituary.

### **[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT]- to be completed between webinar on Dec. 9 and webinar on Jan. 13**

Watch the movie: *Tuesdays With Morrie*

Write your own obituary; then meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to reflect on that experience.

Practice guiding your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy in the visualization: Scripting Your Last Moments on Earth

Month Four (Jan. 13, 2024) - ETHICAL AND MATERIAL WILLS:  
WHAT IS MY LEGACY?

**Goal:** To see the meaning of one's life through the lens of both spiritual and material bequests

**Outcome:** Revisit results of Life Review exercises to determine what one's spiritual legacy to future generations can be

**Outcome:** To investigate ways in which one's spiritual legacy can be passed on creatively

**Outcome:** To determine what one's material legacy can be.

**[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include a discussion of creative and traditional methods for material bequests, including: financial planning and gifts of personally meaningful mementos accompanied by stories (MZ); personal reflections on the use of previously practiced exercises to arrive at the critical content for one's ethical/spiritual will (VG); and varieties of forms and formats for recording one's spiritual legacy (NG).

**[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A -for clarification of recorded teaching  
Introduce the Spiritual Wills exercise.

**[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Do the Spiritual Wills exercise as a guided journaling process, beginning with the questions to self and then choosing one significant relationship in your life to focus on, and limiting the writing to 20 mins, each. Then, with open and honest questions, share the experience of the exercise and next steps.

**[WEBINAR - FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

**[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] to be completed between webinar on Jan. 13 and webinar on Feb. 10**

Write Ethical Letters to 2 important people in your life. (Return to unfinished exercises from past months which may assist you in this task.)

Complete the exercise: "Checklist for Creating Peace of Mind"; then meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to reflect on your experiences.

Complete the exercise: The Opportunity for Sage-ing in Community, as a journaling exercise (on your own) and be sure to have your responses available at the next session.

Watch the movie: *The Bucket List*

Month Five (February 10, 2024) – PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IN BECOMING A SPIRITUAL ELDER

*Goal:* To determine how lessons learned about eldering can create a plan of action for becoming a spiritual elder oneself.

*Outcome:* To examine what tools for harvesting life would be most appropriate in one's own life

*Outcome:* To outline a plan of living one's life from here on which would be the expression of your spiritual eldering.

*Outcome:* To explore how this same process could be taught to others

**[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include stories of elders living the spiritual eldering path (MZ); personal reflections on life harvesting tools and their benefit (VG); and a guided visualization: Healing a Painful Memory (NG).

**[WEBINAR -1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A –for clarification of recorded teaching

Setup the exercise

**[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Share your responses to the exercise: The Opportunity for Sage-ing in Community, and then, with open and honest questions, begin to articulate “how will you express your Spiritual Eldering?”

**[WEBINAR –FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

Introduce the group Practicum Assignment —each apprentice will invite 3-5 people to participate in a Sage-ing Group, which will include 4 meetings to be concluded in months 8 and 9 of the program.

**[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] – to be completed between webinar on Feb.10 and webinar on March 9**

Create your plan outline for your Sage-ing Group and email to us one week before the next group session. You may want to meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to share ideas and offer feedback.

Read: The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain, Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph. D.

Month Six March 9, 2024) - **SELF-REFLECTION IN THE ELDERING PROCESS**

**Goal:** To determine how meditation, journaling, guided visualization and creative ritual can play a role in the eldering process.

**Outcome:** To experience different types of meditation and determine their usefulness in the eldering process

**Outcome:** To experience guided visualization as a means to self-exploration and understanding as well as recontextualizing one's life

**Outcome:** To use different journaling techniques as a way to revisit the events of one's life .

**[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include a review of the essential wisdom in the book: The Mature Mind and how that impacts our work (VG); a guided 'journey' to one's Inner Elder for insight and blessing (NG); and a re-introduction to the "dialog process" in journaling (MZ).

**[WEBINAR - 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A – for clarification of recorded teaching  
Teach how to guide another to the "Inner Elder"

**[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Guide one another to the "Inner Elder", then continue the 'dialog' through journaling

**[WEBINAR - FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.  
Discussion, as needed, of the group Practicum assignment.

**[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT]- to be completed between webinar on March 9 and webinar on April 13**

Complete plans for your Practicum – including feedback from the faculty for your outline and securing commitments from 3-5 participants.

Meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to revisit exercises which have been particularly useful/challenging/unfinished.

On your own: visit your "Inner Elder" daily for guidance and blessing



Month Seven (April 13, 2024) - **MENTORING: TRANSMITTING VALUES TO THE NEXT GENERATION AND BEYOND**

**Goal:** To determine ways in which life's values can be transmitted

**Outcome:** To position oneself as an elder in one's various communities

**Outcome:** To examine ways in which one can be involved in advocacy or educational processes

**Outcome:** To study the impact that older persons have had creatively, professionally, educationally and politically

**[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include stories of elders' impact on society and culture (MZ) and an introduction to "The Art of Mentoring" (VG & NG)

**[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A -for clarification of recorded teaching

Introduce the exercise: Qualities of a Mentor

**[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Complete the exercise in socialized meditation; write your 10 points: Covenant With the Next Generation

**[WEBINAR - FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

**[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] – to be completed between webinar on April 13 and webinar on May 11**

Practicum should begin during this month -meet with your Anamcara/Spirit Buddy to reflect and offer feedback after your initial session with your group. Write a one-page reflection paper after each of the 4 group sessions and email to the faculty.

On your own: visit your "Inner Elder" daily for guidance and blessing  
Review your exercises in your journal, particularly those which you will be introducing to your Sage-ing Group.

Read: "To Grow Old in Wisdom", Abraham Joshua Heschel

## Month Eight (May 11, 2024) - ELDERS AS HEALERS

**Goal:** To explore the role of elders in healing family, community, culture and the environment

**Outcome:** To explore areas of "the tragic gaps" where older adults have concerns for the future

**Outcome:** To determine possible ways to have an impact in an area of choice

**Outcome:** To outline a plan of action for making a difference as an "elder"

### **[PRE-RECORDED TEACHING]**

Will include the notion of the "tragic gaps" and how they are being addressed among elders (MZ); and a review of "Elder Communities" in existence, their intentions and output, and practices for healing between the generations (VG & NG).

### **[WEBINAR – 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins]**

Q&A -for clarification of recorded teaching

Introduce the exercise: Acting as an Elder-Sage of the Tribe

### **[PRACTICUM/EXERCISE]**

Complete the exercise in socialized meditation and review your Covenant with the Next Generation for additions or edits.

### **[WEBINAR - FINAL HOUR]**

Harvesting and Reflection, including review of the stated outcomes.

Include feedback and reflections from the Practicum Sage-ing Groups, where possible.

### **[INTERIM ASSIGNMENT] – to be completed between webinar on May 11 and webinar at Closing Retreat on June 8**

Practicum should be completed during this month.

Write a one-page reflection paper after each of the 4 group sessions and email to the faculty.

In the final group session, invite the group members to write you (the "leader") a letter of reflection/appreciation. Include your response to those letters in your final reflection paper to the faculty.

On your own: visit your "Inner Elder" daily for guidance and blessing

Review your exercises in your journal, particularly those which you will be introducing to your Sage-ing Group.

Closing Retreat of the Apprenticeship: Bend, June 8, 2024 - AN ELDER'S  
CREED

**Goal:** To leave to the Apprentice a challenge to become Spiritual Elders

**Outcome:** To inspire fellow Apprentices through sharing learnings from this track to become spiritual elders in their own right

**Outcome:** To articulate immediate personal next steps on the eldering path – sharing 'ah-ha' moments

Note: the final process is yet to be determined.

## Readings and other Sources

### BOOKS

From Age-ing to Sage-ing. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller.

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the two Halves of Life. Richard Rohr

Man's Search for Meaning. Viktor E. Frankl

The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain. Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph. D.

The December Project. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi with Carol Davidson

### ARTICLES

"Death As Homecoming" Abraham Joshua Heschel

"To Grow Old in Wisdom" Abraham Joshua Heschel

### SELECTIONS FROM:

The American Book of Living and Dying. Richard F. Groves, pp.21-36, 37-60.

Dying Well. Ira Byock, pp.35-57

The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully. Joan Chittister, chapters selected by participants

### MOVIES

The Bucket List

Tuesdays With Morrie

### VIDEO

Fierce Grace, Ram Dass