

September University: Summoning Passion for an Unfinished Life

Charles D. Hayes

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The sheer size of the baby boom generation has always forced social change; now that baby boomers are moving into their senior years, the dynamics of their aging will affect all of us. *September University: Summoning Passion for an Unfinished Life* challenges the baby boom generation to move beyond the “golden years” cliché and make an effort to transform society in positive ways.

Author Charles D. Hayes suggests that readers “consider the implication of millions of citizens suddenly reaching an age where they must face their own mortality, when they perceive that time is more valuable than money and that their legacy depends upon being concerned about a future they will not live to see.” Why not replace one’s vision of retirement as a time to be idle with a vision of contributing to community?

As Hayes writes, “The 21st century needs the wisdom of adults with a critical mass of life experience that’s contrary to convention for convention’s sake.” He uses the term September University to describe a state of mind in which one sifts through one’s experience to identify what is truly important and to find a way to pass on that wisdom. Not only is this process helpful for others, but it enriches one’s own life.

Based on his own experience during 30 years of intensive self-education, the author concludes that there are three major impediments to getting the most out of life: an existential fear of death, a predilection for cultural conflict, and a lack of curiosity. The ongoing process of self-education, in the author’s view, is an antidote to these ills, and leads to a better understanding of the world and our place in it.

September University describes steps along the path to authentic maturity including conquering fears of death, and strengthening one’s own ability not only to explore ways to find meaning in the ‘fall and winter’ of one’s life, but to experience the wonder of existence and pass along wisdom to future generations.

This is a complex book, and one which might take several readings to fully digest. The author, a self-taught philosopher, laces the chapters with quotes from noted authors and philosophers. Hayes is a strong advocate of lifelong learning and is the author of six other nonfiction books and a novel. His *Beyond the American Dream: Lifelong Learning and the Search for Meaning in a Postmodern World* was named one of the most outstanding academic books of the year by the American Library Association’s *CHOICE Magazine*.

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