



G.R.O.W.
TO GROW

N.O.W.
YOUNGER

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G . R . O . W . N . O . W .

It's true! We don't have any control over the passage of time or our chronological age. The time we are given is one of life's unknowns and a great equalizer because it can't be bought, sold or bargained, only lived as fully as possible.

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” - Mary Oliver

The question Mary Oliver poses is at the heart of this book and exemplifies who I am and why I am drawn to coaching, teaching and facilitating groups. I love to explore narratives and ask open-ended questions, listening for the underlying themes, which serve to illuminate and spawn new life scripts and midlife makeovers. When the accumulation of our lived experience meets the hourglass of time and the bittersweet realization that now is all we have, we tend to get more serious about our dreams and aspirations.

At a certain age, we begin to realize we've been here a long time. I notice this whenever I have to scroll to my birth year on a computerized form and it takes a while to get there. Or when the elected President was born after me, what a milestone that was. When have you been aware of this ah-ha related to your numerical age?

Time sneaks up on all of us. One thing is certain, our perception and approach to how we age is subjective. I believe with positive, intentional activities and attitudes, we can influence not only the years to our lives, but also the *life* to our years. Our ability to adapt and grow is key, which has more to do with our approach and perspective than the reality of our chronological age.

In my work, I have seen examples of people in their sixties and beyond who have ageless spirits and authenticity that is both vital and engaging. I have also met people who put limitations on their path, focusing on the negative, having a victim mentality, or stubbornly resisting change.

Adventurer – Intellect - Connector - Entrepreneur

So if a birth date on an ID can't accurately describe age, what can? Let's dig deeper. Ask yourself, *who is the youngest, older person you know? Why? What about them seems young to you?* Your answer hints at what you value most when it comes to agelessness. Is it the **Adventurer** who has been to all corners of the world? The **Intellect** who can still complete the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle? Perhaps it's the **Connector** with warmth and adept social skills? Or the **Entrepreneur** who stays creative with new ways to make her ideas work in the world?

G . R . O . W . N . O . W .

"We do not quit playing because we grow old; we grow old because we quit playing." ~ Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

When you consider the last century brought 30 extra years to our lifespan, we need to think about "younger-than-their-years" role models, or better yet, *become* such an example. Think about it, 47 was the average life span less than five generations ago. Today, most feel shortchanged if 80+ good years are not in their cards. Yes, good genes and good fortune help, but that's not the whole story and certainly not what is most interesting.

Let us strive
to FLOURISH
MORE
than we strive
to ACCOMPLISH

What I am talking about has to do with positive intentional activities and attitudes, which is under our power and influences situations, relationships and our overall quality (and quantity) of a happy life. Let's call it *flourishing*.

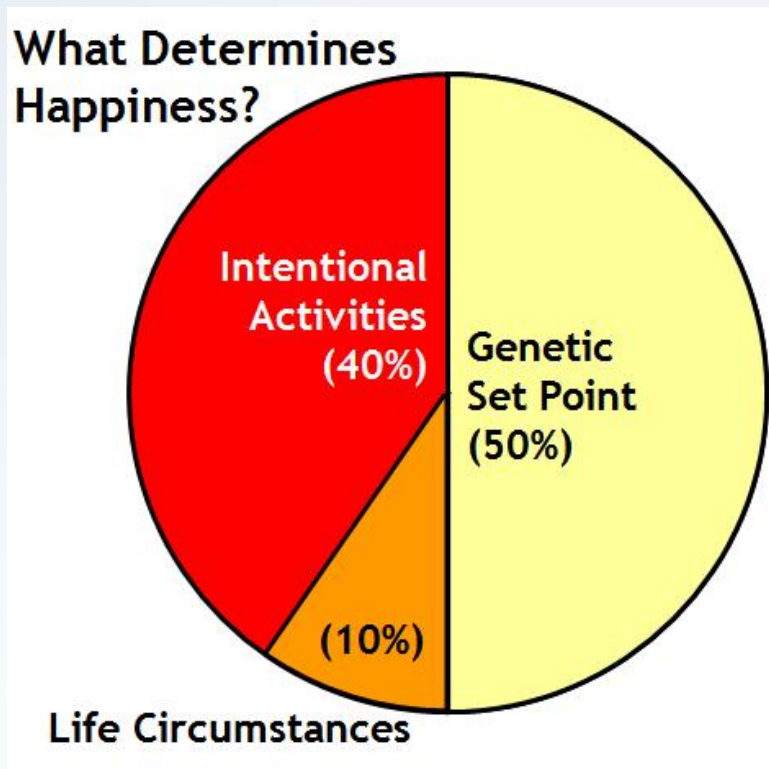
It's an interesting benefit that happy people tend to live longer. Researchers are exploring not only what makes this so, but also why longevity and happiness are linked. It's scientifically challenging to isolate and control for exactly what happy people do differently to enhance and advance their years, but intentional activities and positive emotions are intertwined.

"It's not how old you are, but how you are old" ~ Marie Dressler

There is a new way of looking at the science of human flourishing called Positive Psychology, which is an applied study and approach to optimal behavioral functioning. In traditional psychology, focus is placed on what's *not* working; i.e., maladies and dysfunction, while Positive Psychology builds on an opposite model, examining what *is* working, with an emphasis on outcomes more than experiences. So the focus is on high function behaviors related to flourishing and then maximizing these unique and natural human inclinations.

G.R.O.W. N.O.W.

Happiness studies show that once you take into account genetic predispositions (50%) and external circumstances (10%), what is left to define a person's level of happiness is intentional activities. This 40% represents what you *can* control when it comes to personal happiness, and I am applying this to the concept of Positive Aging.



Graphic source: [The How of Happiness](#) by Sonja Lyubomirsky, 2007

Positive Aging is inextricably associated with conscious, intentional activities. Going back to the youngest older person you know, ask yourself, what does your role model do *differently* than other people their age? Perhaps it has something to do with joie de vivre and their approach to living *The Good Life* that is perceived as joyful and expansive, rather than closed off and narrow minded. We have all seen examples of those who experience their precious days as something to endure and trudge through. We send daily messages to ourselves about our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This self talk influences us on a cellular level and helps define how we show up in the world. **What messages do you give yourself?**

We are what we repeatedly do. What will you repeatedly do as you age?

In looking at similarities and themes related to positive aging, I have isolated specific ways to consciously influence and enhance each day going forward. These seven controllable factors bring together a template for maximizing your years. It's a matter of awareness and approach, as well as optimizing your natural tendencies.

G . R . O . W . N . O . W .



I use the acronym G.R.O.W. N.O.W. to share these insights because positive aging is all about growing and there is no time like the present to begin improving our daily habits and how we show up each day. These seven elements use a wide-angle lens to cover the bigger picture. In the spirit of less is more, here we go:

G - Goals

Goals are fundamental because they set the stage for the future. We make commitments to ourselves and to others, which bring form and function into our lives. Goals are both the frame and the canvas of our life's portrait. They align our words with our actions, helping us feel good about ourselves and nourishing our self-image. Without setting long and short-term goals, we often feel out of sorts and dormant because our purpose is muted without this navigational pull, like sailing without wind and a compass. No matter what our age and stage, setting goals is essential to living a vital and meaningful life. Goals keep us learning, growing and adapting.

As you think about your own life and goal-setting, ask yourself: *What do I really want next? What's missing? How am I going to get it? Who can help me? When is a reasonable time to meet this goal/aspiration?* Helpful hints: Take each goal and chunk it down into smaller, incremental doable benchmarks. Consider engaging with an accountability buddy who can help keep you on track. Remember to record your progress along the way and reward yourself for milestones!

R - Replacement

The idea of replacement is really about being adaptable and evolving. Replacement is less about ego and more about realism. Let me give you a personal example. I was on the track team in high school and could run an eight-minute mile with relative ease. Today, my knee bothers me when I run, so I have learned to replace running with a morning walk with my dog. I am still getting my heart rate up and also making my knees and my dog happy.

Throughout life we shift and change, so honoring these subtle and not-so-subtle adjustments is what grace is about. Ideally, as we age, we have wins through our life experiences, increasing our emotional depth and self-awareness. But there are also losses, most notably in physical strength and mental acuity. Shifting our expectations from *what once was, to what is* allows us to think expansively and create replacements that serve our highest selves. Sure, we may not play tennis with that killer serve like we once did, or we forget where we put the keys more often, but so what? We are still in the game and still have that set of keys to drive our car, so keeping our focus on what we *can* do/be is essential.

As you reflect on your life experiences, ask yourself: *What am I better at now? How have I used grace to adjust and replace? What has given me joy that I could do again in a modified way?* Replacement is finding flow in our daily lives to keep active mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Bottom line: don't sit on the sidelines because you can't be 30 any longer. What can you do? Who can you be? Do and be that.



O - Optimism

I get it. Some of us are naturally more optimistic. The bright side is where we reside, on the sunnier side of the street. It's all about perspective and reality and how we process information and circumstances. Some hear news and think opportunity, while others think problem. Take my dad as an example. I once asked him why he doesn't like to get his hopes up and his reply was, *"That way, I won't get disappointed."* His response was very revealing and helped me understand why he doesn't get excited too often or let his imagination go wild with anticipation.

Where do you fall between optimism, realism and pessimism? Do you have the genetic bump when it comes to optimism, or are you below the bell curve? We can't control our genetics. However, increasing optimism is possible.

Research shows we can infuse more of this half-glass-full mentality through the practice of gratitude, mindfulness and compassion. We have to train our minds to focus on the good in situations, focusing on what we are learning and how we are growing. One of the challenges of aging is to not become increasingly negative or giving too much attention to aches and pains and losses. Instead, it is possible to see where there are cracks that let the light in. Bette Davis once said, *"Old age is no place for sissies."* It takes grit and resilience to get through life's many challenges and the longer we are here, the truer this becomes. No matter what our age, we have to continually train for older age. The good news is, evidence suggests there is a natural increase in our resilience as we become older (and wiser!)

Finding wisdom rather than ranker will enhance your life and make you much better company. Those who get way up there in years tend to use humor and a positive attitude, which makes them easier to be around. P.S. Having a caring support system that actually enjoys being around you is especially helpful later on in life, but you have to start now.

"Whoever in middle age, attempts to realize the wishes and hopes of early youth invariably is deceived. Each ten years of a [person's] life has its own fortunes, its own hopes, its own desires." ~ Wolfgang Von Goethe

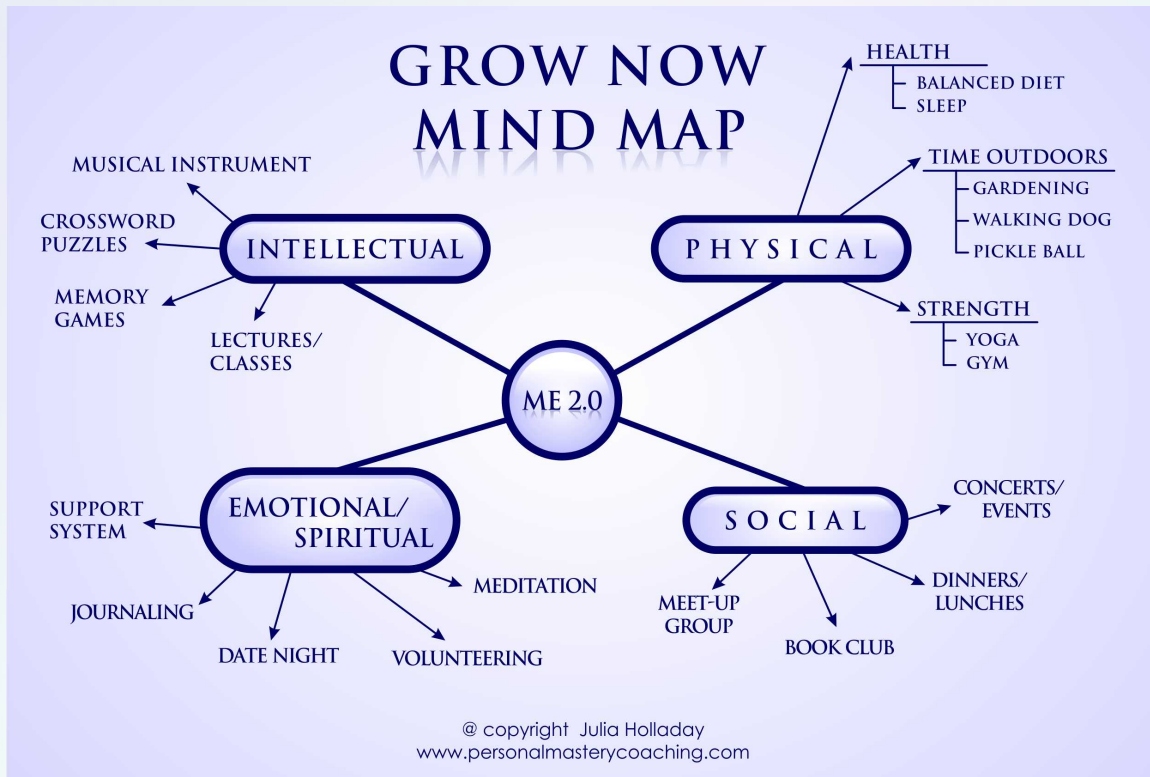
W - Work

I use the word "work" in a more general way. Having work to do is different than having a job. It's about feeling useful, engaged, creative, or of service. Like a job, work offers structure and delineates between its bookend: Play. We've heard *"All work and no play makes for a dull life"*, but the inversion is also true. If all we do is leisure then it can begin to feel a bit empty and lifeless.

The idea is to create *freedom to work and to play* in a way that offers a sense of flow and balance, which is unique to each of us. Think of it as the difference between having a *leisurely lifestyle*, verses exclusively *living a life of leisure*. One is about a more relaxed pace and variance and the other, a more one-dimensional lifestyle. There is a sweet spot for each of us in how we use our time and once a career is no longer the centerpiece of life, we have to figure out what else we want to do that offers enjoyment, engagement, meaning and purpose. Brainstorming ideas is helpful to determine that work/play balance. I use mind-mapping as a

G.R.O.W. N.O.W.

way to get creative and you can, too. Pull out a piece of unlined paper or poster board and put a circle in the middle with your name or a focus word/goal. Then draw a line to another circle with an idea, then another, then another. On each of those sub-circles you can add concepts and action items that will give you a visual representation of how to make forward progress towards your ideal lifestyle. The graph illustrates an example of such a map:



Once you have some solid options to work with, set time aside to share your ideas with a few trusted friends or your spouse and talk about what excites you about each concept. Think about your passions, strengths and talents and what you would like to give more expression to in your next chapter. And remember just because we are good at something doesn't mean it gives us joy, so color outside the lines and consider changing some patterns to evolve into You 2.0. Your work is an outward expression of your values and heart, so find an alignment that puts a spring in your step and makes you want to jump out of bed each morning to meet the day.

N - Novelty

The dictionary defines *novelty* as the quality of being new, original, or unusual. This element is vital to our approach to life and how we say Yes in big *and* small ways. We all have patterns and ways we operate in the world that create our comfort zone.

There is nothing inherently wrong with living in comfort as long as we also infuse life with newness and novelty, consciously and consistently. Think about a ratio of comfort verses novelty that would be your ideal. For some, a daring life is 20% novelty and 80% comfort, while others it's closer to 50%-50%. When you think about your role models, what are their ratios? Can you aspire to a new, more novel ratio by incorporating experiences that make you feel



more alive, operating on all cylinders? We can't be at full throttle for long, but it sure feels good to get there once in a while just to know we still can.

I use sports and activities on vacations to practice pushing myself, like bike races and surf lessons. As we get older we have to create novelty because it is no longer systematically placed in our youthful paths, with school and work, which offer one new beginning after the other. The good news is we now have the experience in handling change and the unfamiliar, so it's common territory. The challenge is how easy it is to fall into a rut and get too comfortable. The goal is to embrace risk in your life, be it physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, even spiritually—these are opportunities to push beyond.

When I went back to school to get my Master's degree, I definitely felt a big shift out of my comfort zone, especially because my cohorts were 20 or more years my junior. This academic experience gave me the push I needed to explore new ways to expand my self-perception. As a result, I had the chance to travel to places such as Africa and Sri Lanka, adventures I wouldn't have taken had I not gone back to school. One thing leads to another when you seek out a bolder life and the momentum continues, making it easier to keep pace with novel choices that go beyond the life you once had.

"The older I get, the greater power I seem to have to help the world. I am like a snowball – the farther I am rolled, the more I gain."

~ Susan B. Anthony.

O – Other's Oriented

How does it feel to be of service to a cause near and dear to your heart? Or to help someone in need in a way that was unmet until you came along? Life is much sweeter when we give of ourselves and see positive outcomes as a result. Often, though, we just

do the good work and never know the result of our efforts, only that it was the right thing to do at the time. And that's enough.

Being oriented to the needs of others is generative and an important component to continue to evolve and grow, especially when it comes to building compassion and empathy. If you did everything I prescribe here (Have Goals, Replacement, Optimism, Work, Novelty and Wonder), but left out being Other's Oriented, there would be a big gap related to how you show up and love. Life is a contact sport and we need each other to help define ourselves and grow. When something feels like it is missing in life, it can often be traced back to not giving back (enough). It's about *living* a legacy by investing your talent and time to benefit the next generation, your community or a cause, rather than leaving a legacy with treasure.

"I am what survives me." ~ Erik Erikson

We all know people who live very full yet self-serving lives. They have it together on the outside, but something is missing inside when you realize it's all about them. Inflexibility can be an outcome, which is the opposite of adapting and growing, and not good for aging successfully. The other extreme is someone who gives and gives, leaving little time to replenish and care for his or her own needs. Anyone who has felt overwhelmed from giving away too much knows the stress of short-term fatigue and long-term consequences.



The trick is to keep appropriate boundaries. Like the idea of work and play, we need to find our sweet spot for helping others and taking care of our own needs and desires. There is no doubt that positive energy is created from giving with an open heart and this is contagious, with rippling effects that the world needs. Finding unique ways to give back helps enhance your years and also serves all and is a beautiful way to contribute and shine your light.

"How will I use these glorious days remaining to me?" ~ Marc Freeman



W - Wonder

From the time I was a young woman, I was encouraged to take time to smell the roses. My mother used the word "busy" to describe me. She was not the only one who made this observation, just the first, and most prominent. I've always had the "doing" part down. "Being" has been my challenge. You may be able to relate. That is where Wonder comes in.

Wonder is all about being and noticing and taking moments to consciously savor, appreciate and recount. I find recollecting each day by writing down awe-inspiring moments to be a *wonder*-ful way to hold onto them. I call it my "Five Moment Memoir", an idea borrowed from a writer who uses it to track her days. It is on these pages I write down memorable snapshots, like seeing three hawks in the sky in a mating ritual, or going out for a walk with my dog and noticing a beautiful bloom on a flower, or simply looking outside my kitchen window to find birds in the birdbath splashing about while they clean their feathers. Birds and flowers seem to be what I notice more now and although they have always been present, I just recently picked them up on my radar. Now I actually see what's always been there and get so much pleasure from this simple act of *noticing*. *Being* is at the heart of how to bring more wonder into your life.

Awe-inspiring moments happen all around us, yet they can go unnoticed if we have our blinders on, going about our day without paying much attention. Have you ever noticed how much more vibrant life is when you are on vacation? Think about why. It's because we are in search of awe-inspiring moments and tune into that circuitry, so we find them.

Bringing this awareness to everyday life is the goal, which brings us back full circle to where we began, with goals and setting them to bring more intention, meaning and joy into *this one wild and precious life*. We each have our own unique recipe for living the life we are here for, and it is thrilling to be present to those moments when we know we are right where we need to be. A Chinese proverb says it best: *"Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid of standing still."*

G . R . O . W . N . O . W .

As a resource maven, life-long learner and influencer of change, my vision is to bring forth positive aging role models and disrupt current stereotypes so the focus is more on *growing* older, not just getting older. No matter what your age or stage, life offers transformational opportunities to grow and flourish if you are ready to answer the questions...

How do I make the most of the years I am given?

What will I do with this one wild and precious life and how will I use these glorious days remaining?

I'm confident I can help you GROW NOW, which is why I am offering you a One-Hour Complimentary coaching session, either in person (San Diego) or via Phone/Skype.

Contact me today at Julia@PersonalMasteryCoaching.com or call 619-992-3372.

What people are saying about GROW NOW...

"Although I have read numerous books on how to experience the last 1/3 of my life, Julia has been able to condense down what is the most logical methodology I have yet to read. Her approach repackages what many of us have learned throughout the first 2/3's of our lives in business and in life and has created a new road map for us to use as guideposts to when life really begins!"

Jackie Meyer

JBK Consulting - Marketing, Sales & Business Development Trusted Advisor

"G.R.O.W. N.O.W. is an insightful gem that helps us identify the positive prospects of 'growing younger' as we age, providing inspiration for a continued renewal of life no matter what your age may be. Julia provides valuable steps and tools we can all incorporate into our lives to feel valuable, playful and alive at every turn. I have a number of clients in my private practice who will benefit greatly from the clear and obtainable guidelines Julia outlines in her G.R.O.W. N.O.W. acronym."

M'Lissa G. Trent, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Executive Coach



About Julia

As a certified life transition coach and teacher, my passion is working with people in the second half of life, when their lived experience meets the hourglass of time. I have learned a great deal in my own life experiences, going from an entrepreneurial background with over 20 years of professional experience in entertainment and education before selling my company for the role of full-time parent and volunteer. That lasted five years before going back to school to earn a Master's degree in 2012. In the journey I knew I had at least one more career in me, and after a lot of soul searching, realized my calling was life transition work. Since receiving more advanced training related to life transitions, change, longevity and wellbeing, I find joy in sharing these ideas and inspirations. I believe there is a wellspring in each of us to tap into our highest potential, and influencing this in a positive way is part of my mission.



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