

Building Bridges at Every Age

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So many people on LinkedIn as friend suggestions and lots of mutual connections. Such an inspiring article in my mailbox from Epigenetic Institute from Agnes Schutz. My birthday celebration yesterday and “A one-off wonder” as Christoph called the family photograph before they all left.

I’m so grateful, I want to share, I reflect, I catchup on my mails and I reflect again. Who do I want to share to? Who am I sharing for?

Aging

The many birthday wishes yesterday came by WhatsApp, Group Messages, Facebook and a phone call. I am grateful. I am here. I am happy.

Am I old? You are as old as you feel they say. You are old when you only look back and not forward any more.

The epigenetic article really struck me as Agnes said that many people reach 60 and then don’t know what to do. The expected and long awaited

“freedom” is suddenly a threat, a feeling of orientationlessness, of I don’t know what to do.

Wo finden sich Vorbilder dafür, wie das Leben im Alter interessant und lebendig weitergehen kann? ... Wir sehen selten Beispiele dafür, wie Menschen sich mit siebzig, achtzig oder neunzig weiterentwickeln.

Role-models

There are no role-models she says. I am particularly struck by this comment, as I met Agnes during one of my first self-development courses, after retirement, as we both joined Christine Schlonski’s “Heart Sells” programme. I am overjoyed at what Agnes is now doing with the Epigenetic Institute. It is so on the ball, on the pulse of the times. But then? She didn’t know what to do! She was a doctor with many different experiences, which did not fit the “normal” course. She wanted something different. Christine showed us the way.

Self-development

There are many ways. I have since signed on for many newsletters and unsubscribed from just as many. I have attended many seminars, done many courses and I host many zoom meetings. I’ve grasped that we need to do something, that the path will be revealed as we go forward.

Just do something

Bob Proctor said successful people are those who decide quickly. Others have told me how important it is to do something, otherwise you waste time trying to figure things out, which would much more efficiently be revealed as you act on faith.

The more I think about it, the more I realise that “doing something” does not necessarily mean making a dramatic life change. Sometimes it simply means allowing yourself to become visible again.

For many of us, especially after retirement, we quietly disappear. We stop raising our hand. We assume younger people know better. We think nobody is interested in what we have to say. Yet every one of us carries decades of experience, mistakes, lessons and encouragement that someone else could benefit from.

Visibility doesn't mean posting every detail of your private life online. It doesn't mean chasing followers or trying to become an influencer. It means contributing. It means sharing a story, an idea, a photograph of your garden, a lesson learned, or a project that gives you purpose.

Today's digital world makes that easier than ever, but it also requires wisdom. We have opportunities previous generations never had, alongside risks they never had to consider. Learning how to use new technologies safely has become part of lifelong learning. We don't have to share everything to share something worthwhile.

Perhaps that is one of the new skills of ageing: to be both open and discerning—to remain visible without becoming vulnerable.

That is especially true now. Artificial intelligence is arriving faster than most of us expected. Some people are excited, others are frightened, and many simply feel overwhelmed. We can choose to ignore it, but that will not stop the world from changing. I would rather learn a little at a time, ask questions, make mistakes and keep growing than quietly retreat because everything feels too complicated.

Even more so today as our AI overwhelm kicks in and we are either with it or already behind, or totally oblivious.

What I really wanted to share

I have two family photos from yesterday as we split our day into two sections. The first was the visit of our son's in-laws for the first time to our new terrace-house. They came for lunch and brought a delicious strawberry cake. Next was the birthday celebration with three of my five sons and their partners.

So, I can tell you all about myself and how I feel and what I do. However, the pictures of the family stay on our family Synology until such time as other arrangements are made.

I am torn apart as I have to admit that I do not trust a lot of what is developing in our world and therefore completely understand that we do not want to provide too many opportunities for misuse of personal information and images.

I'd love to share my family photos, especially to all of you who sent me the thoughtful birthday wishes yesterday. And yes, it was yesterday, not the 26th. You were not late. No need to apologize. Please stop apologizing. Everything is fine as it is.

My social media posts on Instagram have mainly been my garden as I am overjoyed to observe what is developing in our own back yard. When I discovered the hawk moth I was totally blown away. A few days later there was a giant green locust. I wasn't quick enough with my camera. Josef and I had a discussion about the insects. I am happy to see such a variety which represents a healthy ecosystem. The bugs and grasshoppers and of course the big green locust reminded me that sometimes nature gets out of balance.

Now during the heat wave I've been going out to water the garden every morning with my barefoot walk on the grass. The zucchinis are indeed finally coming and even bearing fruit! The flower bed has been a source of constant surprise as the months and seasons change and new flowers come and go. The strawberries are finished and now so are the cherries. The pear-tree that Josef planted, finally sprouted leaves, proving signs of life and I'm already looking forward to see what happens next year.

Plant-App

I am grateful for PlantNet which has given me names for many of my plants and then even identified many edible weeds and herbs. Yes, we still have lots of dandelions in our "lawn", as well as daisies, and we had violets in spring.

Projects

So, I can only subscribe to what Dr Agnes says. I'm happy to be a role model. I am more often concerned about not having enough time to do all I want, rather than wondering what to do. When I get invited to attend events at the UN I am happy for my colleagues who feel important attending as NGO representatives. However, I have long ago recognized my position as a bridge builder.

Building Bridges

When I worked at the UN it seemed that nobody there knew what NGOs did or were doing. Now, back as an NGO representative, I am happy to convey aspects of my experiences working for the IAEA to ordinary people, civil society.

I am often appalled at the general lack of understanding and appreciation for the role of the UN as an international body representing all nations and peoples and for the calls to stop all funding and "find something else". For heaven's sake if you never support the projects you have how do you expect a new one to succeed?

Responsibility

It becomes clearer to me every day that we simply need to take the first step. We all need to do something. Only then does the next step reveal itself. I naturally like to see the whole picture, understand every detail and analyse all the facts before making a decision. Yet life has taught me that clarity often comes through action, not before it.

*The italics (except the German text) are where ChatGPT helped me with clarifying my expressions. All content is my own. But I probably don't need to tell you that.