

Reading through Retirement: A Book Discussion Group about Life's Second Half

[Registration is Available Here](#)

Registration costs \$30.00

***Open to OLLI Members Only**

C.S. Lewis said, "We read to know that we are not alone." At a time when we are all looking for connection, community and shared experiences, Reading Through Retirement, offers you an opportunity to dive deep into issues of aging and life's second half with the guidance and collective wisdom of a group and four devoted facilitators.

With support from facilitators and the shared experience with other participants, you will have the opportunity to explore varied topics related to aging, isolation, connection, joy, meaning, and more in life's second half.

Each of the four books will offer a different topic to consider, and the program will promote connection, community and conversation. Below is a synopsis of the texts to be read, and the dates and times for discussion of each book.

Orientation: September 1 from 12:30-1:30

Book 1: September 8 & 22

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End

By Atul Gawande

Facilitated by David Mouw

Summary:

In *Being Mortal*, bestselling author Atul Gawande tackles the hardest challenge of his profession: how medicine can not only improve life but also the process of its ending. Medicine has triumphed in modern times, transforming birth, injury, and infectious disease from harrowing to manageable. But in the inevitable condition of aging and death, the goals of medicine seem too frequently to run counter to the interest of the human spirit. Nursing homes, preoccupied with safety, pin patients into railed beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals isolate the dying, checking for vital signs long after the goals of cure have become moot. Doctors, committed to extending life, continue to carry out devastating procedures that in the end extend suffering.

Gawande, a practicing surgeon, addresses his profession's ultimate limitation, arguing that quality of life is the desired goal for patients and families. Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be rich and dignified.

Full of eye-opening research and riveting storytelling, *Being Mortal* asserts that medicine can comfort and enhance our experience even to the end, providing not only a good life but also a good end.

Book 2: October 6 & 20

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The Village Effect - Why Face-to-Face Contact Matters

By Susan Pinker

Facilitated by Meridith Miller

Summary:

In her surprising, entertaining and persuasive new book, award-winning author and psychologist Susan Pinker shows how face-to-face contact is crucial for learning, happiness, resilience and longevity.

From birth to death, human beings are hard-wired to connect to other human beings. Face-to-face contact matters: tight bonds of friendship and love heal us, help children learn, extend our lives and make us happy. Looser in-person bonds matter, too, combining with our close relationships to form a personal "village" around us, one that exerts unique effects. And not just any social networks will do: we need the real, face-to-face, in-the-flesh encounters that tie human families, groups of friends and communities together.

Marrying the findings of the new field of social neuroscience together with gripping human stories, Susan Pinker explores the impact of face-to-face contact from cradle to grave, from city to Sardinian mountain village, from classroom to workplace, from love to marriage to divorce. Her results are enlightening and enlivening, and they challenge our assumptions. Most of us have left the literal village behind, and don't want to give up our new technologies to go back there. But, as Pinker writes so compellingly, we need close social bonds and uninterrupted face-time with our friends and families in order to thrive—even to survive. Creating our own "village effect" can make us happier. It can also save our lives.

Book 3: November 3 & 17

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World

By Desmond Tutu and the 14th Dalai Lama

Facilitated by Gail Wiley

Summary:

Nobel Peace Prize Laureates His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have survived more than fifty years of exile and the soul-crushing violence of oppression. Despite their hardships—or, as they would say, because of them—they are two of the most joyful people on the planet.

In April 2015, Archbishop Tutu traveled to the Dalai Lama's home in Dharamsala, India, to celebrate His Holiness's eightieth birthday and to create what they hoped would be a gift for others. They looked back on their long lives to answer a single burning question: How do we find joy in the face of life's inevitable suffering?

They traded intimate stories, teased each other continually, and shared their spiritual practices. By the end of a week filled with laughter and punctuated with tears, these two global

heroes had stared into the abyss and despair of our time and revealed how to live a life brimming with joy.

This book offers us a rare opportunity to experience their astonishing and unprecedented week together, from the first embrace to the final good-bye.

We get to listen as they explore the Nature of True Joy and confront each of the Obstacles of Joy—from fear, stress, and anger to grief, illness, and death. They then offer us the Eight Pillars of Joy, which provide the foundation for lasting happiness. Throughout, they include stories, wisdom, and science. Finally, they share their daily Joy Practices that anchor their own emotional and spiritual lives.

The Archbishop has never claimed sainthood, and the Dalai Lama considers himself a simple monk. In this unique collaboration, they offer us the reflection of real lives filled with pain and turmoil in the midst of which they have been able to discover a level of peace, of courage, and of joy to which we can all aspire in our own lives.

Book 4: December 1 & 8

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Aging

By Ashton Applewhite

Facilitated by Catherine Frank

Summary:

From childhood on, we're barraged by messages that it's sad to be old. That wrinkles are embarrassing, and old people useless. Author and activist Ashton Applewhite believed them too—until she realized where this prejudice comes from and the damage it does. Lively, funny, and deeply researched, *This Chair Rocks* traces Applewhite's journey from apprehensive boomer to pro-aging radical, and in the process debunks myth after myth about late life. The book explains the roots of ageism—in history and in our own age denial—and how it divides and debases, examines how ageist myths and stereotypes cripple the way our brains and bodies function, looks at ageism in the workplace and the bedroom, exposes the cost of the all-American myth of independence, critiques the portrayal of elders as burdens to society, describes what an all-age-friendly world would look like, and concludes with a rousing call to action. Whether you're older or hoping to get there, this book will shake you by the shoulders, cheer you up, make you mad, and change the way you see the rest of your life. Age pride!

Program Manager:

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