



The Masterpiece Living Mosaic

12600 W. Colfax Ave., Suite B-110 • Lakewood, CO

February / March 2019

Finding Meaning in Life: An Interview with Filmmaker Sky Bergman

By: Danielle Palli



"An Indian chief once said, 'you'll be remembered by the tracks you leave behind,' and I'm trying to leave good tracks." ~Santi Visalli

What does it mean to live a meaningful life? How can we find a renewed sense of purpose during those times when purpose feels elusive? To answer these questions, I spoke with filmmaker Sky Bergman. Sky Bergman produced, directed and filmed the award-winning documentary *Lives Well Lived*, and is currently a Professor of Photography at Cal Poly State University and an internationally recognized photographer. To listen to her complete podcast interview [CLICK HERE](#).

In *Lives Well Lived*, 40 older adults share their secrets about what it means to live a meaningful life through their personal stories. Among those stories, Sky noticed several common threads that tied them together. "The people I interviewed were interested in learning something new every day and giving back in some way," Sky told me. "They all had a close support system and saw life as 'the glass half-full'."

The filmmaker noted how everyone she spoke with had survived traumatic life experiences, but came out on the other side being positive and optimistic about the future. "There are days when I wake up and think my day is going in one direction," she confessed. "And, I think about what they've gone through, and suddenly my problems seem miniscule by comparison. I have an attitude adjustment immediately."

The lessons that had most impact, however, came from Sky's then 99-year-old grandmother – the inspiration behind the film. It was her grandmother who taught her it was 'better to be kind than right,' to live life to the limits, stay present in the moment, and never let age define who you are and what you do.

Since the premiere of the film in 2017 at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, it has had significant influence on the greater community. Through one intergenerational project at Cal Poly, students from the Psychology of Aging class had the opportunity to be paired with a local retirement community, where students and residents regularly met to interview one another and produce memoir and life review documents for each other.

Out of the experience, students developed more respect and less fear of approaching older adults, particularly those students who previously had no close connections to their own grandparents.



Finding Meaning in Life (Continued from Page 1)

By: Danielle Palli

And, most recently, Lives Well Lived was screened on Capitol Hill in Sacramento, and was followed by a panel discussion designed to influence decision-makers about policies affecting California's aging population and the need to create a Master Plan for Aging. Sky concluded: "What an amazing gift my grandmother gave me in inspiring me to create this film and to see what an impact it is having."

So, what are Sky Bergman's seven top takeaways for finding meaning in life? Roll up your sleeves ... here we go:

1. Live in the moment.
2. Be kind.
3. Give back.
4. Stay socially connected.
5. Learn something new every day (stay mentally and physically engaged).
6. Be optimistic.
7. Never let age define you.

Laugh Your Way to Health

By: Dr. Roger Landry, MD, MPH

When author, political journalist and world peace advocate, Norman Cousins, learned that he had a degenerative spinal disease, he did what no one would have expected ... he laughed. Armed with Marx Brothers movies and reruns of Candid Camera, he immediately noticed that within ten minutes of laughing, his pain went away. As a result, he kept laughing, and subsequently laughed himself into remission for 30 long years.



We now understand that laughter reduces stress hormones, which are known to suppress immunity. Conversely, laughter activates T cells, immunoglobulins, and natural killer cells, which collectively play a role in rejecting tumors and cells infected with viruses, as well as protecting us from infection. Laughter also increases beta-endorphins, which improve mood, reduce pain, and increase relaxation - all while giving your internal muscles a workout. The bottom line? Laugh more; it's good for your health!

Three Ways to Laugh More...

1. Find movies, comedy shows and TV programs that make you laugh out loud (like Norman Cousins did).
2. Seek out activities with friends that provoke laughter: karaoke, comedy clubs, games, amusement parks - whatever brings out the kid in you.
3. Make a mental note every time you laugh: "I'm getting healthier. I'm going to do more of this." (This is also a great reminder anytime you exercise or do something good for your body and soul.)

Lessons in Happiness: An Interview with Barbara Herrera

By: Danielle Palli

“We are here to learn certain lessons, and to teach certain lessons,” Barbara Herrera, resident engagement team leader at Westminster Woods of Huntingdon, told me. When I asked her to share one a lesson that she’s learned over the years, she said, “It’s important to take time to get to know yourself and to like yourself, and not be so afraid of sharing personal things. Get out of your shell. Be open, and see what life brings you.”

Barbara found a unique way to encourage people to connect with others through her “Pizza and a Book” women’s book club. While they may gather to discuss characters from the latest novel they are reading, it quickly turns into an open-sharing support group. “We are able to see ourselves in these characters.” Barbara believes that this is one example of observing our stressful situations from an outside perspective. “Sometimes, the stress we are experiencing is not about us at all ... It’s so that we can teach others. It can be painful, but the more we can be honest and open with each other the easier it is to get through.”

In addition to her book club, Barbara (a former librarian) manages Westminster’s library, and helps organize the Friends of the Woods annual yard sale, which raises money for the special needs of those in skilled nursing. As a resident engagement team leader, she also educates team members at Westminster Woods on Masterpiece Living.

“My passion is Masterpiece Living,” she said. For Barbara, Westminster Woods is holy ground, and Masterpiece Living supports the spirit of the community. As a Baby Boomer, Barbara felt as if

much of her life had been a competition for resources: education, jobs, even social security, and admits to feeling as if the boomer population has overwhelmed the current system. “This is the first time in my life where there is a group of people who want nothing more than to be the wind under our wings and to help us work together to age successfully. It’s a marvelous gift.”

Spirituality is an integral part of Barbara’s life, and she finds her spiritual center through journaling, spending time in nature, and walking the labyrinth (located on campus). “I always tell people to bring their issue to the labyrinth, and there will be an answer.”

“What’s your secret for leading a happy life,” I asked. She shared five takeaways...

1. Live your passion.
2. Be open to what life brings.
3. Dump the negativity. (It weighs you down like an oversized backpack.)
4. Take time for self-reflection. (Ask yourself: “Who am I? How do I make a difference?”)
5. Recognize that we are all connected.

The Pursuit of Happiness Video

By: Dr. Roger Landry, MD, MPH

We all want to be happy. But are we going about it the wrong way? There is a difference between temporary experiences that bring us pleasure (e.g. food, drink, relationships, material goods, etc.) and true inner joy. Inner joy is that place of peace and sense of wholeness that is lasting. [View the video](#)

