A Generational Journey: Women

The Wisdom of the crone

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Summary:**

In Session 3, “The Wisdom of the Crone,” we discussed the meaning of the word “crone” throughout history, discovered who the modern crones are and what traits they share and explored the evolving role of older women in society over time. We also tackled tough topics like ageism, invisibility and maintaining intergenerational and family connections no matter where we live.

*“Women in their sixties and early seventies are crossing a border and everything interesting happens at borders.”* -Mary Pipher

# NOTES:

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Article: From Invisible to Invincible

By: Teresa Amaral Beshwate, MPH

Ageism - discrimination due to age - is an epidemic in our society and often targeted at older people. It is so rampant that it is normalized and most often flies under our radar. Like fish in water, we hardly recognize its existence in our culture. A prime example is the greeting card aisle: finding a birthday card that honors aging requires a needle-in-haystack search. And well-intended comments like “You look great for your age,” and “You don’t look 55” just adhere to the old-is-bad, young-is-good philosophy of ageism.

Perhaps even more harmful is the ageism that plays on loop in our own minds:

*“At my age I shouldn’t –”*

*“People my age can’t –”*

*“I will never learn that.”*

*“My time has passed.”*

Research has proven that ageism has a dramatic impact on health and longevity. Those who view aging negatively suffer significant consequences physically and mentally. On the flip side, their counterparts with more positive views on aging live 7.5 years longer, with less illness, better functional health, better brain health, better psychological well-being and they exhibit healthier behaviors.

A young-is-good, old-is-bad, anti-aging culture creates many toxic effects for older people, not the least of which is invisibility. It isn’t uncommon for society to stop seeing older people … literally … and to stop seeing their worth, knowledge, experience and potential. For older adults, feeling invisible is to feel under-valued, irrelevant and out of date. These feelings are not only painful but predictive of a less-than-ideal future.

Interestingly, as I was talking with my friend Pat about invisibility, she said adamantly, “It isn’t other people’s job to make me feel visible.”

A powerful statement.

Indeed, letting any circumstance determine how we feel is relinquishing our power. In this case, the circumstance is how others treat us, but it’s true of every circumstance. It is always our thoughts about that circumstance that produce our feelings.

Thoughts are tricky. Like ageism, they too fly under the radar. Eavesdropping on our thoughts is like cleaning out a closet – we can be surprised by what’s in there and then we get to throw out the junk.

Getting our thoughts on paper gives us the opportunity to ask some important questions:

“*What if I’m wrong about this”*

*“If I didn’t believe this, what would I do next?”*

*“Does it serve me?”*

*“What results do I get if I believe it?”*

*“Is this thought current or outdated?”*

*“Do I want to keep it?”*

What thoughts might you choose to think on purpose that would make you feel visible? What actions might you take? What if you chose to volunteer, mentor someone, or otherwise find a need and fill it? What if you discovered a new purpose for your life and pursued it? What if you had the courage to be a beginner?

Imagine the power that comes from recognizing that other people's words and actions were never about you in the first place. Image believing that your chronological age is something to be proud of; as it is the subtotal of the life lessons, experiences and wisdom you've gathered to date.

Only when we harness the power of our thoughts can we truly go from invisible to invincible.

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# Questions for Reflection and Journaling

Choose one or more questions to journal about (either below or in a separate notebook). Consider your current thoughts about the subject matter and some possible action steps surrounding the question. These action steps might be a physical change or a change in thought.

(Questions derived from the book *Women Rowing North* and the article “From Invisible to Invincible.”)

1. INVISIBILITY: What thoughts might you choose to think on purpose that would make you feel visible? What actions might you take?
2. BELIEFS: Ask yourself, “If I didn’t believe this, what would I do next? Does this thought serve me?”
3. STRENGTH: When have you been courageous or stronger than you thought you could be?
4. HAPPINESS: What would your life look like if you were happy and satisfied?
5. RESILIENCE: When you look back at a dreadful situation, what were you able to do that you felt proud of?
6. REALITY TESTING (BEING OFFENDED): Briefly write down the situation. Ask yourself, “What part of this interaction is about me? What is not?”
7. PERSONAL GROWTH: “If we don’t grow bigger, we can become bitter. When our problems become too big for us, our healthiest response is to expand our capacities. That growth is qualitative. We become deeper, kinder to ourselves and others, and more capable of Bliss.” What are your thoughts on this quote from *Women Rowing North?*

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1) Goal I want to accomplish: (example: Reflective journaling about questions posed during the Session)

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2) One step I could take toward that goal: (example: Writing down one question for reflection and then journaling all your current thoughts on the subject.)

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3) Ways I can break this step (#2) into smaller actions: (List as many actions as you can think of.)

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