



## Co-Maturing into Old Age

V. Remy, "**Co-Maturing into Old Age**", *Zest*, no. Summer issue, *Zest*, p. 1, 2010.

What will it be like when I grow old? How will I cope? Will I be lonely? Or even worse, neglected? Will I become mentally or physically impaired? Will I lose my mobility and become dependent on other people?

These were some of the concerns expressed in the workshop on *Co-Maturing into Old Age* offered by **Anne Denniss** and **JanPieter Hoogma** at McCoCo 2010.

The workshop was structured around three areas:

- *Shared awareness* of maturing issues and challenges;
- The search for a *good vision* of old age;
- Asking how we can begin to create a *mutually supportive network* for this process.

Old age is something which everyone who lives long enough will experience. Life for the elderly is not easy at the best of times as we live in what is still in many respects an ageist society. Faced with this reality maintaining self esteem becomes a particular challenge.

But we as Co-Counsellors have distinct advantages as we face old age. The options and possibilities of a shared vision of ageing which being active in the Co-Co Community gives us was something which was highlighted in the workshop. Instead of isolation and despair we can envisage being together with some kindred spirits. Our positive vision of old age can be enhanced by having people around us who value connectedness with and between older people as well as between older and younger people. It can be further enhanced by being valued for our wisdom and experience. The ethic of sharing and mutual support which animates Co-Co could help old people achieve inner peace and harmony even if they are physically or mentally impaired.

One possibility which was discussed in the workshop was whether we might be able to create a residential home for elderly Co-Counsellors which would also be run by the Co-Co Community. Another suggestion was to include an awareness of the needs of old people as part of the Fundamentals. This could help to connect young Co-Counsellors with their older peers and promote the idea of Co-Co as an inter-generational Community in which support for and learning from the elderly becomes an integral part of the Co-Counselling experience and commitment.

The life-enhancing values and skills which we promote might also help to make an old person's passing easier both for them and for their family and friends. A shared positive vision could also help in coping with the death of the old person. The funeral itself does not have to be a sombre and mournful affair. It can be a celebratory, even a fun occasion, appreciating the joyfulness and life-loving qualities of the person who has passed away and expressing gratitude for their life and achievements, in short it can be a Co-Co funeral.

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