

The Broader Impact of Sage-ing® and Positive Aging

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I want to talk a bit this morning about how the Positive Aging movement and specifically we in Sage-ing International might have an impact on our world and the many social and environmental problems we increasingly face.

I think we could agree that we humans are facing a wide range of crises, largely self-inflicted. We are experiencing:

1. Overpopulation
2. Depletion of land and sea resources—Our oceans, forests and farmland are all suffering
3. Effects of climate change—These are beginning to be painfully felt and may be beyond a tipping point already
4. Broken political, economic and social justice systems

That's only a partial list, and none of these problems are currently getting the attention they deserve from the public or from our governments. So where do we as Sage-ing International members and supporters fit in?

First, probably the main influence that Sage-ing International has in the world today is the impact that each of us, as ambassadors of Sage-ing, has on individuals that we encounter, either in our daily lives or in the educational opportunities that we provide (lectures, classes, workshops and conferences). Of course, people are also impacted by reading From Age-ing to Sage-ing or perhaps by finding our website and beginning to experience sage-ing through that lens. But largely, I believe it is the one-on-one connections we in Sage-ing International make that have the greatest impact today. That impact is limited because we have a relatively small number of members (currently less than 1000 world-wide).

Could we have a broader impact in the future? Let us imagine that through the collective efforts of Sage-ing International, its members, our Outreach Committee and other like-minded groups, people were exposed to Sage-ing thought and ideas through a wide variety of new sources--YouTube, Facebook, iTunes University, TED talks, blogs, stories, new books on sage-ing, radio interviews, TV documentaries, etc. All the social media and publicity outlets that we could think of. Our ideas tested and proven through social, medical, psychological and educational research. Book tours for authors of new conscious aging books. Interviews on Good Morning America and The View and Oprah. Activities like these could educate people to the advantages of adopting a Sage-ing outlook on life, and encourage them to become more involved in Sage-ing activities, either as leaders or participants.

And what if this exposure to Sage-ing philosophy and principles began to change more people's thinking about....not just their aging process and how to make that more joyful and productive, but also their whole values system. What if more people began to own the concept that the quality of our relationships is a more important measure of our wealth and well-being than the size of our bank account? What if more people actually began to take seriously our responsibility to serve others and to make this a better world for the next seven generations? What if more people really embraced their spirituality, their God within, and truly saw their interconnections with all living things and their responsibility to nurture the earth? What if this led to a tipping point in which the social and economic systems world-wide were changed to ones where each person in every country was valued, and where creating opportunities for all was seen as more important than creating wealth for a few. Do you suppose we might think of this as one long-term goal for Sage-ing International? I would like to think that we, working alongside other groups of enlightened persons, could really make a difference.

Reb Zalman encouraged us at the Dayton conference four years ago to consider creating an Elder Corps to carry forward humanitarian goals. Recently, Sage-ing International has formed a Service Committee that is beginning to envision how we can be of service to others, both locally and more widely. David Korten, in his book "The Great Turning," talks about Communities of Congruence, where thousands and even millions of small groups of creative and thoughtful people join in common cause to solve economic, environmental and social problems. Paul Hawken, in "Blessed Unrest," describes the millions of organizations with tens of millions of followers who are already working to solve global problems. Clearly, we would be in good company.

So this might be one more way to think about the payoff of our personal and organizational involvement in Sage-ing work—not just for Sage-ing International and its well-being, but also for the well-being of all the people on this earth. Too big a goal? Naive? Too idealistic? Unreachable? Maybe so, but also very exciting and potentially tremendously impactful. What do you think?