

Spiritually and Practice

Book Review

By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Aging as a Spiritual Practice *A Contemplative Guide to Growing Older and Wiser*

Lewis Richmond

Gotham Books 01/12 Hardcover \$22.50

ISBN: 9781592406006

Lewis Richmond is a Zen Buddhist priest and meditation leader whose book [*Work as A Spiritual Practice*](#) (1999) was a bestseller. He leads a Zen meditation group and teaches workshops and retreats in the San Francisco area where he lives. This measured and thoughtful resource started as a blog, morphed into a workshop, and wound up as a book.

Richmond's Buddhist teacher was once asked: "Can you say one thing about Buddhism that I can actually understand?" Shunryu Suzuki Roshi responded, "Everything changes." That is a fact that can be accepted and taken to heart by the 70 million Baby Boomers who are gliding into their fifties and sixties trying to eat right and stay fit. They have found value in what Roger Walsh has called the eight lifestyle factors that contribute to healthy aging.

But this stage of life is also the ideal time for focusing on the inner life and spiritual practice, which is Richmond's focus. Those who travel the path of practice are able to age well thanks to coming to terms with things the way they are, adaptation, and appreciation for the blessings already received.

When asked what they like most about aging, people often talk about doing what I want, time to travel, volunteering, and spending more time with the people they care about. Richmond shares his spiritual exercise of daily going on a "Gratitude Walk." In another section of the book, he salutes the valuable contributions Buddhism and meditation can make to aging well. For example, here is a Loving Kindness Prayer for elders:

"As I grow older, may I be kind to myself;
As I grow older, may I accept joy and sorrow;
As I grow older, may I be happy and at peace."

Buddhism and meditation also can help aging individuals who are hobbled by fear or incessant worry. Sylvia Boorstein, who wrote the introduction to this book, calls herself "a recovering

worrier." Spiritual practices such as finding your spiritual mentor, being generous, and awakening the heart center are antidotes to being imprisoned by anxiety. Richmond ends with a description of a one-day spiritual retreat designed to deepen your experience of thinking about aging and growing wiser.