



As the sun sets

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This article provides a perspective on a doctor's professional journey over a lifetime, with a focus on the last phases of a medical career.

Early in our professional career, there is the excitement and anxiety of finding our way – making decisions about career directions and taking opportunities as they appear. Upon reaching midlife, we have more than likely become established, and the goal here is maintaining what we have established along with our interest and enthusiasm.

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How do we decide the way forward? There is no set formula, but one can gain a sense of the right direction by looking within. Our perspective changes and the importance of being truly ourselves asserts itself.

According to Jung: "the privilege of a lifetime is to become who we truly are". We are also grappling with emerging health problems and losing the energy of youth.

The perspective of regrets expressed by people at the end of life may offer some clues. The top five regrets of the dying as described by Bronnie Ware are:¹

1	I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
2	I wish I didn't work so hard
3	I wish I had the courage to express my feelings.
4	I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends
5	I wish I had let myself be happier.

As we ponder these, we will get a much better sense of what we want to do. So much of our self-image is tied to our work and so much to social kudos. We must remember, we are 'human beings' not 'human doings'.

The key is to be our genuine self. Humans have this remarkable capacity to live as if we aren't going to die. But as we move into our 60s and 70s, we become increasingly aware that ours is not an indefinite presence. We have our agenda and our plans, however, the universe has its own unfolding.

In the play, *A Letter of Resignation* by Hugh Whitmore, two characters discuss the profound question: "What makes God laugh?"

The answer is satirically simple: "People making plans". ■

References:

¹ Ware B. *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. Hay House. 2012.

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