

AGEING UPWARDS

Have you stopped to consider what you think about ageing, in yourself and in others?

Dr Rob Kemp recommends we take some time and dive into a book with plenty to say.

'It is time to challenge our collective story about ageing and stop looking at it as a binary. It is not that we are either young or old. We are somewhere in between, depending on the context.'

Berit Lewis's words in the introduction of *Ageing Upwards* set the scene and position from which this book emanates. Soon after, the idea is introduced that we are happiest when aged 80. This is motivational for a 55-year-old – that the best is yet to come, according to Lewis.

I don't want to go too deeply into the evidence base for this claim, as there is no consensus. In fact, it seems rather controversial if you follow Berit's own reference to a David Blanchflower paper published in 2021, which cites numerous publications that refute the idea. I will leave it to you to make your own mind up about that evidence. For me, aged 55, I hold it as a possibility, rather than an objective fact – albeit one that I want to be true.

More important than objectives truths and the positivist paradigm is the reframing of ageing itself.

The reframing of the old and young dichotomy.
The challenge to how we see what success is in ageing.
From avoiding to embracing.
From mindlessness to noticing, noting and knowing.
From wandering to attention.
From experience to savouring – and the practice of attentional control.
From getting older to growing older.

Lewis tackles a vast array of subjects in this book, including health, activity, social connection, seeking purpose and a plethora of other areas that will be interesting to coaches.

I have been interested deeply in the idea of life stages and transitions for many years now – and that is my primary interest in this book. There are many ways of describing life stage; from Levinson, to Sheehy, to Donald E Super, and in ancient and classical literature, way before any of them were born. But being able to describe a stage or transition is not the same as offering a view on how to improve the experience (albeit some of the authors mentioned do offer views on successful transitions).

TITLE: *Ageing Upwards: A Mindfulness-Based Framework for the Longevity Revolution*

AUTHOR: Berit Lewis

PUBLISHER: Practical Inspiration Publishing

PUBLICATION DATE: April 2023

PAPERBACK PRICE: £15

ISBN: 978-1788604338



I think that is where this book adds real value for coaches – it highlights some areas where we might want to focus attention in working with clients. For fans of 'wheels of anything', there are some great prompt categories here – which may lead to some deep and interesting conversations.

We have an ageing population that will work longer, into expanded and elongated life spans. It's incumbent on coaches to work in these areas and become familiar and adept with some key ideas – including our own attitudes towards ageing in ourselves and others.

Am I a massive mindfulness fan? No, not really (I hear gasps at that heresy). Did that get in the way of my enjoyment of the book, and from taking significant things from it? No. In fact, it may well have just tipped some scales for me in revisiting mindfulness – so thank you for that, Berit Lewis. In any case, *Ageing Upwards* goes beyond mindfulness – and has made a great contribution to challenging what we all think about ageing in more broad terms.

I found myself flipping between views of myself and others while reading this book – as an ageing person, as a coach, and then thinking about client work and 'others' in general. I suspect many who read this book who 'do what we do' will have a similar experience... and I couldn't agree more with Lewis in her call for us to choose our own mindset (in many ways). Anyone who reads this book will think it worth the time – if you do so, I believe you will grow older, not just get so.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Rob Kemp is head of accredited coach training at Barefoot Coaching. After a corporate career Rob dedicated his professional life and learning to coaching – through a postgraduate certificate (2005), an MSc (2013) and a doctorate of coaching and mentoring (2021). Having practised as a coach for almost two decades, Rob is now also developing other coaches through training and supervision. He can be reached at rob@barefootcoaching.co.uk.