



Using writing to explore the challenges of ageing

Whilst ageing can be a positive experience in many ways, it can of course bring significant challenges. Our society, so preoccupied with earlier and 'more productive' phases of life, provides too few opportunities for older people to explore and communicate their experiences of ageing.

This year, the Swinburne Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults will again offer a series of online writing workshops for those who would like to explore and write about issues that really matter to them.

This year's theme will be the challenges of ageing. Among the topics participants might like to write about are:

- Changing roles and their impact on the aging person's sense of personal identity
- Diminishing capacities
- Health concerns and anxiety about physical change and mortality
- Questions about the meaning of life (sometimes called 'existential' questions)
- Changing patterns in key relationships, especially marriage and other partnerships
- Ageing's impact on personal aspirations and dreams
- Skills for adapting to changing life-circumstances
- What 'wellbeing' might look like in later life
- Loneliness and isolation
- Depression and anxiety
- Financial worries
- The quality of care on offer, whether in the community or in residential care environments

There are many other possible topics as well, and generally participants will be free to write about whatever aspect of the theme they wish.

These workshops will focus mainly on memoir-like writing, that is, writing that aims at factual recollection rather than fiction. The term we will use for such writing is 'life-writing'. The workshop series will be offered online (via Zoom) with guidance from Richard Freadman, Emeritus Professor of English at La Trobe University, and Adjunct Professor in the Swinburne Wellbeing Clinic for Older Adults. Professor Freadman is an expert on life-writing and on writing about ageing. He is also a writer himself.

Skills required

You do not need to have done this sort of writing before, and your level of education does not matter. But you will need either to be able to use a computer, or to have someone (say a family member, friend or professional carer) to help you to use one.

Attendance

Ideally applicants should be able to commit to all seven workshops since they are designed as a series; however, if illness or other difficulties causes participants to miss some workshops, Prof. Freadman will help them to catch up.

Cost: Free of charge

Dates: 25th September – 6th November

Time: Wednesdays 10.30am and 2.00pm

The workshop group will be limited to around 6 participants. The general expectation is that participants will be over 55 years of age. Group interaction will be friendly, supportive, and enjoyable.

Program details

The workshop program will comprise 7 x 90-minute weekly workshops. Each participant will be invited to write one piece during the workshop series and to read it to the group for discussion. *There will be no assessment process.* Session #1 will be a 'meet & greet' and an outline of what's to come from Prof. Freadman.

To find out more about this workshop program, you are welcome to email Prof. Freadman at r.freadman@latrobe.edu.au, or phone him on 0411332365.