

Self-Valuation: An Elder's Story - 07-01-2010

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One of my dearest and oldest in life friends, Gary, who will be 84 this winter – had an epiphany a couple of weeks ago. He finally got around to telling me about it in a series of joyful conversations recently, the first of which began with: “It has hit home what you did for me, Valerie.”

What I did for Gary was talk to him about why he *deserved* and could *afford* to give himself the gift of comfort and finally update and improve his home where he has lived for more than 15 years.

It was nearly a year ago that Gary began talking to me about improvements he needed to make around his northern California condo. It was about six months ago that friends began helping him do that. The problem was – the project never got beyond the talking stages and Gary started feeling “stuck” – unable to do anything with all the little things he felt would/could make his nest a little cozier.

All I did for Gary was translate – *It's your money so take it personally*™ for him.

I spoke about his savings (I'm his executor so I know his financial circumstances) and that he should enjoy his money and make it work for him. His remodeling wishes were modest: make a lovely garden of his backyard that would include an area where he could grow a few vegetables and herbs; get a new couch, easy chair and finally a big screen TV (his set was from the late 80s). I reminded him that he deserved these things. I also reminded him that, though longevity is a trait in his family, what was he waiting for to use his long saved money?

He told me that my "translations" were the catalyst that set the wheels in motion for him. That he began to feel influenced by a new perspective on money. What I translated for Gary was that having confidence about the comfort of his home could bring a relaxed state of mind. As he accepted that thought, he says he realized that he was embracing a whole new orientation about how he thought about his money and himself. “I was stuck,” he told me. “My security blanket was that I needed to hold on to my savings, period. I've released the need to be attached to my money that way anymore. Money has taken on a new meaning. A true meaning. Money is something to be used for one's benefit and to benefit others. My security,” Gary went on to say, “comes from another base now – which is: let go of some money to accomplish a vision of the life/comforts I deserve.”

Gary believes his new home environment and surroundings will thoroughly be enjoyed by others, too. “Money is personal,” he said, “and in that sense can be a personality builder and it has done that for me.”

The bigger story is what Gary – as a result – confidently decided to do for himself. I encouraged him to hire a professional organizer who could do in short order (and for a set, reasonable project budget) what friends had volunteered to do to help but never really got around to doing. I referred him to Anne Navach, a woman I've known for years (she and I had been neighbors and pregnant together 30+ years ago) who takes organizing services to a new level (mzorganization@yahoo.com).

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Just five weeks ago Anne, Gary and I had a long conference call, determined his plans and got things in motion. Last week, as he gazed out into his new and almost completed dream garden, he called me and said: *The view from my living room easy chair is just so beautiful and expansive. But I go outside and that's where the impact is the greatest. My favorite place is right in the center so I can look at everything. I'm really going to enjoy this.*"

Gary's reward for being willing to recalculate his relationship with his money provided him with a sense of release from needing to be *so* attached to it that he denied himself simple comforts.

Here's to your health and wealth.

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