My simple prayer is that in all things
I learn to love well.
That I learn to touch the ever-changing
seasons of life
with a great heart of compassion.
That I live with the peace and justice
I wish for the earth.
That I learn to care fully
and let go gracefully.
That I enjoy the abundance of the earth
and return to it
from the natural generosity that is
our human birthright.
That through my own life, through joy
and sorrow, in thought, word, and deed,
I bring benefit and blessings to all that lives.
That my heart and the hearts of all beings
learn to be free.

— Jack Kornfield
Five Daily Recollections

1. I am of a nature to grow old; I cannot avoid aging.

2. I am subject to illness and infirmity; I cannot avoid illness and infirmity.

3. I am of a nature to die; I cannot avoid death.

4. I will be parted from all that is dear and beloved to me.

5. I am the owner of my actions and heir to my actions. Actions are the womb from which I have sprung. My actions are my relations; my actions are my protection. The fruits of all my actions, both wholesome and unwholesome, skillful and unskillful, I will inherit.

*Numerical Discourses of the Buddha – An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikaya, (Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikku Bodhi, trans.); and as conveyed in the teachings of Ayya Khema.
George Carlin's View on Aging

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get old is when we're kids? If you're less than 10 years old, you're so excited about aging that you think in fractions. "How old are you?" "I'm four and a half!" You're never thirty-six and a half. You're four and a half, going on five!

That's the key.

You get into your teens, now they can't hold you back. You jump to the next number, or even a few ahead.

"How old are you?" "I'm gonna be 16!" You could be 13, but hey, you're gonna be 16!

And then the greatest day of your life ... you become 21.

Even the words sound like a ceremony ... YOU BECOME 21! YEYSSSS!!!

But then you turn 30. Ooooh, what happened there? Makes you sound like bad milk. He TURNED; we had to throw him out. There's no fun now, you're just a sour-dumpling. What's wrong? What's changed?

You BECOME 21, you TURN 30, then you're PUSHING 40.

Whoa! Put on the brakes, it's all slipping away. Before you know it, you REACH 50 ... and your dreams are gone.

But wait!!! You MAKE it to 60. You didn't think you would!

So you BECOME 21, TURN 30, PUSH 40, REACH 50 and MAKE it to 60.

You've built up so much speed that you HIT 70! After that it's a day-by-day thing; you HIT Wednesday!

You get into your 80s and every day is a complete cycle; you HIT lunch; you TURN 4:30; you REACH bedtime.

And it doesn't end there. Into the 90s, you start going backwards; "I was JUST 92."

Then a strange thing happens. If you make it over 100, you become a little kid again. "I'm 100 and a half!"

MAY YOU ALL MAKE IT TO A HEALTHY 100 & A HALF!!
Here is a Solzhenitsyn prose poem, found in an article about him in one of this month’s New Yorker magazines. (I think he’s close to 90?) It is so beautiful I had to send it to you. Your Eldering work is all about valuing this. Thought about sending it to the sangha, but not sure enough it’s one to send. Karen

"Growing Old" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

How much easier it is then, how much more receptive we are to death, when advancing years guide us softly to our end. Aging thus is in no sense a punishment from on high, but brings us its own blessings and a warmth of colors all its own. There is even warmth to be drawn from the waning of your own strength compared with the past—just to think how sturdy I once used to be! You can no longer get through a whole day’s work at one stretch, but how good it is to slip into the brief oblivion of sleep, and what a gift to wake once more to the clarity of your second or third morning of the day. And your spirit can find delight in limiting your intake of food, in abandoning the pursuit of novel flavors. You are still of this life, yet you are rising above the material plane. Growing old serenely is not a downhill path but an ascent.
Where to Turn - Boulder County Resource Specialists

BOULDER: Katherine Campbell 303-441-3906
Sandy Hollingsworth 303-441-4388
LONGMONT: Alma Martinez 303-651-8411
Jack McIntyre 303-651-8411
BROOMFIELD: Linda Brennan 303-469-0536
LAFAYETTE: Eorna Maddux 303-665-9052
LYONS: Marie McCreery 303-823-9016
NIWOT: Chris Kanowitz 303-652-3850
ALLENSPARK: Peggy Mills 303-747-2592
LOUISVILLE: Diana Superka 303-666-7400
NEDERLAND: Ellen Trujillo 303-258-3068

Conscious Aging is a growth-oriented way of living that emphasizes the cultivation and celebration of wisdom, love, and insight into the nature of ultimate reality.

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Broomfield, CO 80020

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BLESSING CHANT

JUST as water flowing in the streams and rivers fills the ocean, thus may all your moments of goodness touch and benefit all beings, those here now and those gone before.

May all your wishes be soon fulfilled as completely as the moon on a full-moon night, as successfully as from the Wish-Fulfilling Gem. May all dangers be averted; may all disease leave you.

May no obstacles come across your way and may you enjoy happiness and long life.

May those who are always respectful, honoring the way of the elders, prosper in the four blessings of old age, beauty, happiness, and strength.

adapted from the PATTANUMODANA blessing-chant
Suggested Readings on Aging and Awakening

*Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying* by Ram Dass

*The Inner Work of Age* by Connie Zweig

*Aging with Wisdom* by Olivia Ames Hoblitzelle

*Aging as a Spiritual Practice* by Lew Richmond

*The Grace in Aging* by Kathleen Dowling Singh

*From Age-ing to Sage-ing* by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

*Another Country* by Mary Pipher

*Women Rowing North* by Mary Pipher

*How, Then, Shall We Live?* by Wayne Muller

*Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives* by Wayne Muller

*Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom

*The Sage's Tao Te Ching* by William Martin

*How To Be Sick: A Buddhist Inspired Guide* by Toni Bernhard

*Aging: The Fulfillment of Life* by Henri Nouwen

*Spiritual Passages* by Drew Leder

*Elderhood* by Louise Aronson

*Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande

*From Strength to Strength* by Arthur Brooks

*The Spiritual Eldering Workbook* (available through Sage-ing International [www.sage-ing.org](http://www.sage-ing.org); Resources, then Bookstore)