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How COVID lead older people into a sense of purpose

The trick to drinking less

Your problems aren't going away..

ENGAGING MEN ONLINE Training

It's CancerMate Program

Conquer Your Inner Demons

## How COVID lead older people into a sense of purpose

When Amie Clark, founder of the senior living site TheSeniorList, surveyed over 10,000 people over 60 about their struggles and concerns during COVID-19, she came away with one pleasant surprise: A third of the respondents said they are living a more purposeful life now, in a multitude of ways.

What's more, more than 85% of those surveyed said that living a purposeful life is either extremely important or very important. "Whether exploring new interests, surrounding themselves with positive people or starting conversations with new people, they are doing what it takes to live the purpose-driven life they desire," says Clark. Her interpretation of TheSeniorList's survey findings is that older people may be giving more thought and attention these days to what makes them happy and feel fulfilled.

Take Candace Rivero, who is 65 and semiretired and living in an RV. She teaches RV driving lessons and transports RVs from manufacturers to dealers. Right now, Rivero is traveling with a 63-year-old friend who sold her Nashville house and bought an RV. "She is not comfortable driving it, so she and I are traveling together, and I am doing all the driving for her," Rivero says. Home for them this month is Crestview Fla., in the Florida panhandle. "We dodged the Delta hurricane by moving [the RV] farther inland for a few days," Rivero says. We retired to Athens without speaking Greek — here's how we got the easy travel and affordable life we wanted Rivero would love to RV in a smaller unit in Mexico but that's off the agenda for now due to pandemic travel restrictions. Her advice about finding your purpose in the pandemic: "your life, NOW, today, this week, this YEAR ... no matter what the outside circumstances are. There will always be outside circumstances."

Retirees John and Debbie Stratz are finding purpose by helping neighbors in their Palm Springs, Calif., gated community. For instance, they've picked up groceries for those who couldn't go out. "We're all in this together," says John. He was a pharmaceutical sales executive for 30 years and she owned a graphic-design company for 20 years. They each tested positive for COVID-19 in mid-August and have since recovered. "We were lucky that we had mild symptoms. I am grateful to be here; grateful that I can talk to my grandchildren on FaceTime," says Debbie. Her purpose lately has been bringing joy to her three grandchildren in Seattle and Santa Barbara, Calif. Since she didn't think they could go trick-or-treating on Halloween, she put together a package of coloring books, crayons, pencils, little purses and candy for them. Then, she made bracelets to coordinate with the crazy nails she got them.

Clark was surprised to find a sharp difference in her survey between men and women regarding purpose in the pandemic. "Women find living a purposeful life even more important than men, with 58% of them saying it is extremely important, compared to just 43% of men," says Clark. One of those women, Nancy Aure, of Madison, Wis., has been reaching out to assist people, even ones she doesn't know. Aure says she now contributes to GoFundMe crowdsourcing efforts (sometimes anonymously) for those facing unexpected health challenges or tragic events they have no control over. She wouldn't have done that before the pandemic, Aure says. Aure, a mother of seven adult children and grandmother of five, also had COVID-19 and recovered. "The whole hospital stay made an emotional mess of me," she recalls. "I didn't sleep well. When I got out, I was so ready to live life again. I was so grateful that I had recovered." Clark offers this advice about finding purpose in 2020 and beyond: "Exploring your interests' donating time, money or talent; or simply starting a conversation with a stranger, are all ways to start the journey."

Source [Erin Flynn Jay](#) © 2020 Twin Cities Public Television, Inc. All rights reserved.



## The Trick to Drinking Less – Without Going Sober

I have the greatest respect for anyone who has attempted [Dry January](#), particularly those who have succeeded in their attempt. But it's not for me. The reason I'd like to give is that a short period of enforced abstinence, followed by the resuming of normal service, feels too much like a short-term fix, not a lasting behaviour change. The *actual* reason is that January is a quiet, cold and bleak time of year (in the US) that can best be improved by a nice glass (or two) of Pinot Noir. If, like me, you're looking to cut down on – rather than cut out – alcohol this month, it's good to have a plan of action. So, I consulted Ruari Fairbairns, co-founder of the growing [One Year No Beer](#) movement to learn his tips for a life of healthy moderation.

"Let's start by clearing up a misconception: going dry doesn't mean giving up your social life," says Fairbairns. "In fact, by going out and having a great time without drinking, you're retraining your brain to break its hard-wired 'fun = alcohol' programming." That makes sense to me. Even in January, the idea of leaving my friends to put the world to rights in our local while I sit at home re-watching *Fleabag* is likely to give me FOMO. "So many people who take a break from booze hide away at home, avoiding their friends. Unsurprisingly, they hate the experience," he says. "All this does is reaffirm the limiting belief that alcohol is central to your life." Quite.

Sensibly (though perhaps somewhat disappointingly) Fairbairns advocates scheduling booze-free nights, rather than simply trying to cut yourself off after the first drink: "I've seen people trying to set a 'drinks limit' for their nights out. This rarely works once you're a pint deep. Decide in advance which nights you won't be drinking and remain strong in that position." And if peer pressure gets to you? "You can always buy a drink that looks like alcohol."

Planning is important. Fairbairns suggests having an alcohol-free alternative in mind before you go out, plus a back-up in case your first choice isn't available. Fortunately, most pubs and supermarkets now stock a decent selection of low- and no-alcohol beers, ciders and ales. Personal favourites include Brooklyn Special Effects and Adnams Ghost Ship 0.5%, neither of which look or taste conspicuously low-ABV.

His final tip? Adjust your mindset. "It's very easy to slip back into ruminating on the positive, social-lubricating aspects of alcohol while forgetting the negatives. But the reality is that alcohol is a depressant. It can make you sleepy and exacerbates anxiety," cautions Fairbairns. "Most of us know The Fear: what did I say to that new colleague? Why am I missing a shoe? Alcohol might briefly numb anxious feelings, but these will return with a vengeance the following day. You're not easing stress, just postponing it." Learn to socialise without alcohol, then, and you can have all of the fun, plus a nicer morning after, too. It just takes a little training...

By Source: [Scarlett Wrench](#)



## Your Problems Aren't Going Away

Imagine a life with no more problems. The dream come true. Most of us are going through life valiantly slaying our problems one-by-one, hoping that at some point, they'll stop cropping up and we can finally be happy. But it's not going to happen: you will never eliminate all of your problems. Problems are not only an inevitable part of the human experience (our brains are designed to constantly seek them out, and as soon as one is solved, another one is brought to our attention), but they are also one of the greatest tools we have for being the best version of ourselves - if we know how to harness them for our benefit. The mental model I'm sharing today has transformed my life and been especially critical during hard times. I really hope it helps you, too.

### The Four Types of Problems

When we think of problems, we think of this big, messy mass of things that are blocking us from living our true, happy lives. It looks a little something like this: In fact, problems are not monolithic: there are very distinct types, each with their own characteristics and outcomes.

Separating them out allows us to cut through the mess and effectively deal with them. Here are the four different types: Let's start with the **Choose / Didn't Choose** columns.

**Didn't Choose:** These are problems that you would never choose for yourself such as illness, accidents, loss, destruction and the like. They happen to you, and you have no control over them. Anyone looking at that problem can objectively agree that, "Yes, this is bad, and you wouldn't choose for it to happen to you."

**Choose:** Many of the problems in our life are also the result of things we consciously chose. For example, you set a goal to lose weight, and now you're having a problem with finding enough time to exercise. Or you might be feeling really overwhelmed by your new dream job that you worked for years to get. There are degrees of choice, of course, but owning what we chose is an important way to regain control over our problems (as you'll see when we start to use the model)!

I first noticed this distinction between **Choose / Didn't Choose** when my partner Alex became sick. People would compare his inability to walk to the time they sprained their ankle, and it pissed me off. I realized something important from that: while the problem might be completely chosen, it often leads to the exact same feelings of pain, stress, struggling, and suffering that non-chosen problems lead to. This dimension becomes exceptionally important when we start to tease out our opportunities for choice.

The second dimension is the utility of the problem: **Leads To Growth / Detracts From Growth**. My research has led me to conclude that the primary goal of life is growing as a person: working to become the very best version of you that you can be. Therefore, we want to understand how a problem can either help you to grow or to hold you back from it.

**Leads To Growth:** Goals. Challenges. Pushing yourself to your limits. Helping others. Fighting for justice. Rising above your circumstances. These are all problems that lead to you becoming a better you.

**Detracts From Growth:** Institutional racism. Sexism. Unequal access to economic opportunity. These are problems that limit our ability to grow. A very common problem that detracts from our growth is the limiting beliefs and stories we tell ourselves, like "I am not worthy".

**How to Use This Model** Now that we've teased apart the ball of problems and have a new mental model to use, let's go step-by-step and learn how to apply it to whatever you are facing. Once you get the steps down, this practice will only take you about five minutes.

**Step 1: Document Your Problems** List out all of your current problems on a piece of paper. (As you do, watch as your brain magically conjures problems out of nowhere that were not at all in your awareness before!)

**Step 2: Categorize Each Problem** Now, put each problem into the appropriate box. If your initial tendency is to put them all into the **Didn't Choose/Detracts From Growth** box, worry not: this is completely normal. The whole reason I came up with this model is because I continually found myself saying that all of my problems were ruining my life and were coming from outside of me. I call this the **default perspective**. It leads to feeling victimized and believing that we have no control over our lives, which is an enormous risk factor for depression, anxiety, and unhappiness. Conversely, the more you believe that you can control in your life, the greater your well-being, health, resilience, and motivation, and the lower your stress.

**Step 3: Evaluate Your Problems** Step back and reflect upon what you have listed out, and challenge yourself: is everything in the right place? Here are a few helpful questions to ask yourself for the two stickiest quadrants:

- **Didn't Choose:** Is it really true that this wasn't my choice?
- **Detracts From Growth:** Has there been any benefit from this?

When I first started to use this model, I realized that 80% of my problems were, in fact, things that I had chosen because they were important to me: goals, a purpose, being the person I wanted to be. Yet, I was spending my days miserable, simply because I had tricked myself into believing that I had no control over my life. It was a massive perspective shift to realize that none of those things were, in fact, out of my control, and that I had the power to decide on their continued presence in my life and how I faced them. I was able to reframe the problems from, 'things that were getting in the way of my happiness' to 'the things that are leading to my happiness'.

## Your Problems Aren't Going Away

**Step 4: Poke at the blue Didn't Choose/Detracts From Growth box** This box is often the source of our pain and suffering. But when we push on it, we often discover that we have been using it to trick ourselves, and that less suffering and more joy is easily available.

We tend to see our biggest problems as an all-encompassing lump of coal that we label and shove into this box. As an example, my instinct was to put my partner Alex's illness in here, and label it as the big problem, encompassing all of the pain and suffering that it has created in our lives: When you 'roll it up' into this big, massive problem, it's impossible to tease out any of the elements that you have control over or that might lead to some benefit.

If you see that you have listed out any really big problems like this, try to separate them into various strands. When I did this, I discovered: Not only did I discover that there are many beautiful benefits and choices embedded within 'Alex's illness', but I also discovered that I'm using it as a catch all excuse for the other areas of my life: "I can't exercise because of Alex's illness." "I can't try to pursue that goal because of Alex's illness."

This realization changed my life. Not only was I suddenly able to see where I was deluding myself, but I was also able to find opportunities to grow and areas I could regain control, significantly benefitting my well-being.

**Step 5: Redesign Chosen/Detracts From Growth problems** Take a look at your grey box. Are you choosing problems that are limiting your growth? If so, there are a few things you can do.

- Go long: Ask yourself if this problem will matter in 5 minutes, 5 months, or 5 years? If not, is it really a problem you want to spend your energy on?
- Ask if the problem is true: Is the problem truly a problem, or is it the result of seeing it or the world in a certain way? What would it look like if you looked at it differently?

Who can you learn from? Now that you've isolated the true problem, what tools, resources, or support would help you to overcome it? For example, I listed out a limiting belief that I don't have the time to do the things that matter to me. I could overcome this by talking to other caregivers about how they fit in their passions and self-care.

**Step 6: Find a Chosen/Helps You Grow Problem**

The top left red box is the source of your New Happy: the problem that you want to use your gifts to help solve. If you don't have something to put in this box, your brain will manufacture tons of little stupid problems to fill up the grey Chosen/Detracts from Growth box instead. People who are working towards big, meaningful goals don't really care about office drama or petty grievances — they're too busy!

If you don't have something in this box yet, here's a secret trick to help you find it. Ask yourself, what is in someone else's blue **Didn't Choose/Detracts from Growth** box? What are the problems that are keeping other people from living their truest potential?

Racism. Sexism. Illness. Mental health challenges. Grief. Lack of access. Poverty. Mentoring. Loneliness. The list could go on and on and on. Find the one that fires you up and make it the focus of your red box: choose to make someone else's problem your problem in order to one day wipe it off of their matrix.

Step by step, problem by problem, you can use your mind and energy to take your problems and transform them into opportunities to grow and to contribute. This is a profound shift that will lead to massive benefits in your life. The power of this model is that it shows us our blind spots, where we have been tricking ourselves and handing over our power. When we see them, we can change our behavior — for our benefit, and for the world's benefit, too. Hope this works for you.

Source: [Stephanie Harrison](#)



## ENGAGING MEN ONLINE



## ENGAGING MEN ONLINE

Training that's made with men in mind

**April 15 10.00 am - 1.00 pm**

**April 16 10.00 am - 1.00 pm**

The **ENGAGING MEN ONLINE** Male Health Promotion Training Course equips anyone who wants to work with men with knowledge and skills to work more effectively with males, with the aim of improving their health, wellbeing, and lives. No previous experience or knowledge is required - only a willingness to learn, explore and grow.

The program combines evidence-based theory and practice with a focus on developing individual awareness and interpersonal and group skills. **ENGAGING MEN ONLINE** is based in a social determinants of health model and is inclusive of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers' health and wellbeing needs.

The program identifies barriers in health care and offers solutions to overcome these in a range of health, welfare and community settings. You will learn how to make your services and programs more men friendly. Facilitated by Greg Millan one of Australia's leading experts on men's health promotion.

**EARLY BIRD RATE \$100 for May training up to March 19**

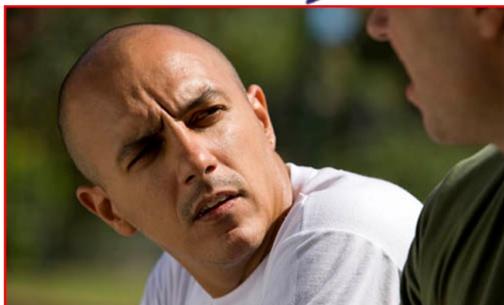
Registration from March 20 is \$150 for online training, all materials plus comprehensive bank of men's health kits and resources including a copy of my book "*Men's health and wellbeing: an a - z guide*".

[Visit the website for Course Content and Registration Form](#)

Ring Greg 0417 772 390 or e [greg@menshealthservices.com.au](mailto:greg@menshealthservices.com.au)

## Cancermate Expressions of Interest

**cancermate**



Even though less than half of the Australian population are men, more men than women are diagnosed with cancer each year.

Research in Australia shows that 20 percent more men than women are diagnosed with cancer and 30 percent more men die from it each year but it is important to remember that survival rates for all cancers are improving in line with early diagnosis and better treatment options.

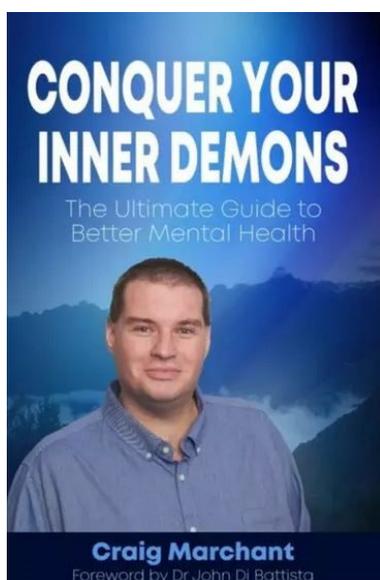
**CANCERMATE is an online program for men with cancer, undergoing treatment for or survivors of any type of cancer.**

This is the only program of its type in Australia providing a safe confidential space to talk about your situation and listen to the experiences of other men. During the program you can gain information on ways to deal with diagnosis, treatment and survivorship; learn more about coping tips for yourself, partners and family and how to plan for the future.

Greg Millan is a men's health promotion specialist and a leukaemia survivor with many years experience in working with men with cancer and survivors of.

Contact me if you are interested in attending this online zoom program. Dates and times will be set up in the next few weeks with those who show interest.

Ring Greg 0417 772 390 or e [greg@menshealthservices.com.au](mailto:greg@menshealthservices.com.au)



Mental illness affects more and more people every year. It affects those who are rich and famous, those who are struggling to make ends meet, and everyone in between. It does not discriminate. It can last just a few months or your entire life. As a person who has suffered from depression, anxiety, and schizoaffective disorder for the majority of his life, Craig Marchant invites you along on his life journey to experience for yourself the ups and downs of living with mental illness. Laugh with Craig as he shares some of his humorous antics, possibly shed a tear at some of his sadder moments and enjoy the sheer exhilaration of Craig's recount of completing the Inca Trail.

This must-read book is not only the story of one man's life journey, but also has a practical section where Craig shares what he believes are the most critical elements when confronted with a mental illness. These steps will help you navigate the world of mental illness, with the hope that can find a way out of the darkness. This book shows you can do this, and no matter how hard it gets, those of us who have undertaken our journey before you – are always with you and have your back. [Conquer Your Inner Demons](#) and take back what is rightfully yours; Your Life!