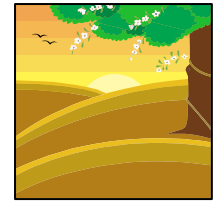




## SECTION FOUR: Nurturing Third Age Transformation— #2—Redefine Success



### Learning the Landscape

The **journey of transformation** invites us to the second major task for thriving in Third Age: to examine how we have defined success in our Second Age and to consider what definition of success is appropriate for who we want to be – *to become* - in our Third Age. A lifetime of cultural conditioning around success, characterized by “doing” and “achieving”, is a strong force to be countered and the challenge is a difficult one. In western cultures, our central values of achievement (Have I accomplished enough?), affluence (Do I have enough money and possessions?), and attractiveness (Do I look good enough?) often determine our sense of our worth and how we measure up. For many of us our sense of our value often lies in the size of our “to do” list. As we leave a career role and its defining achievements, the tendency is to fill up our “to do” list even more. Such Third Age “to doism”, however, can hinder our ability to reflect upon and respond to our emerging vision of who we want to become.

**Third Age is about self actualization** – *becoming* our complete selves. The roots for this kind of growth are in “being”, meaning that it comes about when we allow ourselves to be present in the moment, fully aware of ourselves and our connection to something bigger, and to fully appreciate that we’re talking about *our lives!* So a large part of that “to do” list must include time for “being”; only as we learn to balance “doing” with “being” will our Third Age visions take shape.

**Traditionally**, we have seen First Age as a time for learning and Second Age as a time for doing, to be followed by a life of “being” in retirement, rocking away on that rocking chair on the front porch. We know, however, that what we truly need throughout our lives is an ongoing mix of learning, doing, and being balanced according to our own unique needs and interests. As we redefine our sense of personal success in Third Age, it is helpful to think in terms of the unique balance of learning, doing and being that we desire.



**Redefining “success” is especially challenging** when leaving a defining career role. It means letting go of so many things we have valued such as the activities, routines, colleagues, friends, and familiar situations that framed our Second Age identity. Excessive focus on what we leave behind will hinder our forward movement. That is why successful “graduates” from Second Age, although perhaps grieving their losses, have kept their focus on what they were moving towards. With a focus on clarifying our values and their associated dreams, we are able to let go and move forward.

To be what we are, and to become what we are  
capable of becoming, is the only end in life.

~ *Robert Louis Stevenson*

