

Over-50: The Four Monsters of the Mind

By Jane Genova

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Genova

Dedicated to Manhattan
psychotherapist Will
Meyerhofer. He guides aging
professionals to get out of their
own way.

Other Self-Improvement Books by Jane Genova

“Over-50: Pioneers in the New
Wild Wild West”

“The Critical 14 Years of Your
Professional Life”

“Geezer Guts: Making a Buck,
No Matter Your Age”

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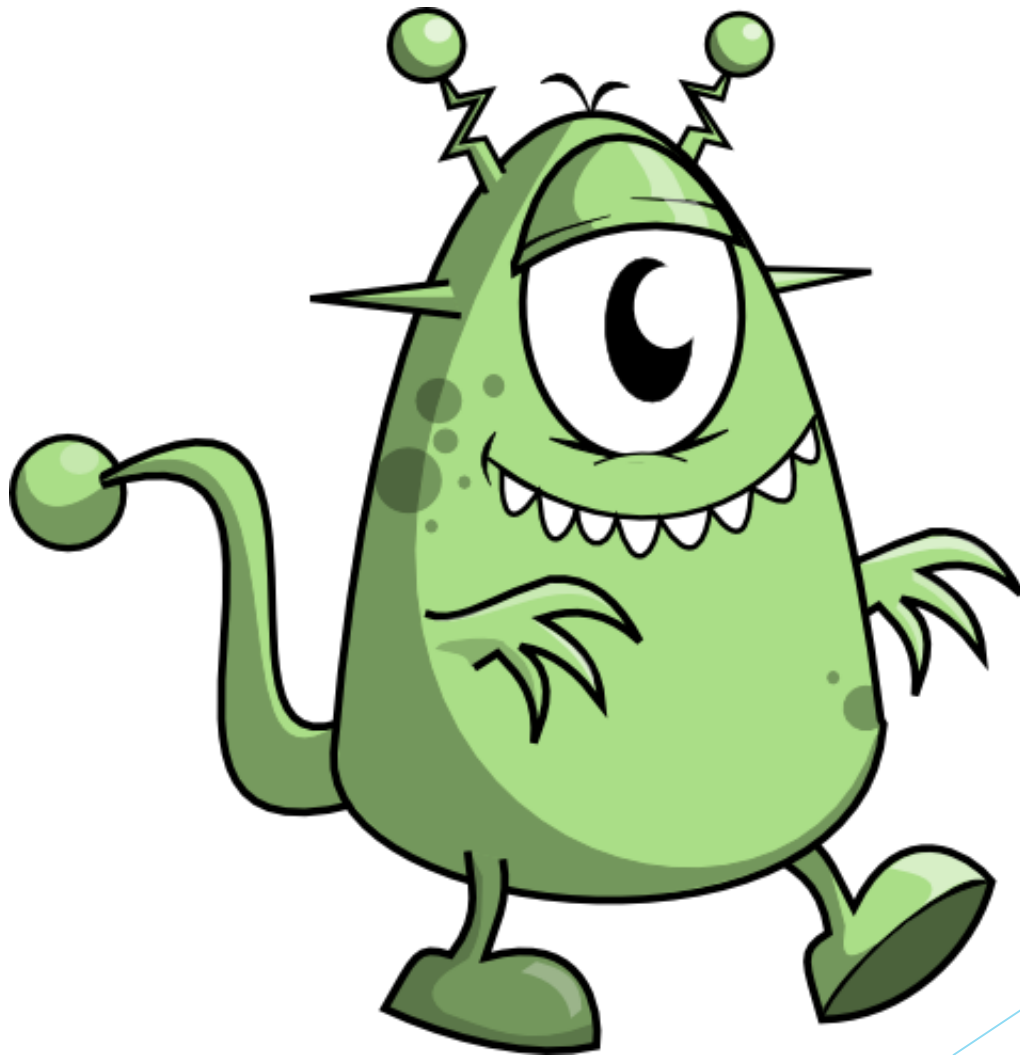
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INTRODUCTION



Those monsters under your bed at age four never go away. They just change form.

Back then, you had mommy, daddy, grandma, or grandpa on monster patrol. They would do their due diligence, find that monster under the bed, and ensure it fled. You went to sleep or back to sleep.

Now that you are over-50 those monsters are just as dangerous.

But they are different than the ones under your bed. And the burden is on you to be the front lines of monster patrol.

Right now, the monsters take on the shape of over-thinking everything, self-criticism, diminished self-confidence, and becoming risk averse. They are the monsters of the mind.

The results? Lousy.

Typically, because of those four monsters of the mind you, who are aging, can wind up standing in your own way. Typically, you land less and less quality work. You can't develop new friendships. And you have no strategy to build bridges with younger generations.

This “syndrome” was confirmed for me by Manhattan psychotherapist Will Meyerhofer. Many of his clients over-50 were self-defeating.

Meyerhofer explained that when I was interviewing him for an article on careers. Manhattan might be thought of as the career capital of the world. So, you bet, Meyerhofer sees it all.

Incidentally, his own professional journey has included being a lawyer, overseeing marketing for a large book chain, and finally becoming a therapist.

In my own coaching the over-50 what I have observed is that those of you standing in your own way are totally unaware of that. You don't know that you have allowed the four monsters in your mind to take over.

Instead you assume that things are not going your way because of external factors. You know the laundry list.

Employers are age-biased.

Extreme professional competition has destroyed the ability to connect. Achievement is valued over attachment.

And, youth writes you off as has-beens.

Because you believe this to be true, for you it is. This book turns the light on. You the over-50 can see the four monsters. The next step is having the courage to slay them. Everyone over-50 needs to become a superhero.

CHAPTER 1 - MONSTERS MOVE IN ON WEAKNESS

AGEISM

Until you entered your 50s, you might have been an in-charge professional and wildly confident social player.

That was then.

Now, you may no longer be the professional and person you were.

In the 2018 book “Enough As She Is,” leadership expert Rachael Simmons describes the same sort of phenomenon when girls become teenagers. In the transition females tend to also lose their sense of self.

That’s because those monsters of the mind move right in when they pick up on weakness. After all, the monsters are bullies.

Young women are thrown off the game of life by the growing number of roles society has pushed on them.

For the aging, you can become overwhelmed by simply existing in a society where ageism dominates.

Those monsters spot what's going on. Soon enough, you're locked into over-thinking, self-criticism, reduced self-confidence, and reluctance to take risk.

Once you gravitate towards 50, you are often demoted to less-than.

Primarily that's because it's assumed you are less productive. Productivity is the platform for profits. America is about maximizing those profits. Yes, America is the headquarters for global capitalism.

In the legal news outlet *Abovethelaw*, employment lawyer Richard Cohen documented that age discrimination is one of the few kinds of bias that is tolerated in supposedly sophisticated society.

Those who wouldn't dare badmouth gays or the disabled - at least not in public - speak harshly about the aging and to them. For some reason, that hasn't been classified as hate speech. And it goes on and on.

One displaced graphic artist I coached said that those in the office imitated her "old lady" maneuvers when she got up from the chair. They assumed they could get away with it and they did.

Another form of abuse is making the aging invisible. Even in friendly social settings such as a coffee fellowship after a church service, those attending might look right through you, as if you aren't there. Or, they could be scanning the room for someone younger to network with.

A third kind of abuse is the patronizing attitude. Examples include thoughtless phrases such as:

- You don't look your age
- I didn't know you could text
- Oh, you can use the content management system
- You must have a good sense of self not to color your hair.

It's unusual for the over-50 to not be negatively affected when hammered by bias.

Not only is clinical depression increasing in middle age.

Currently, the Movember Foundation found that the suicide rate is highest among men in their 50s.

But women in their 50s aren't far behind. The Center for Disease Control documented a 49 percent surge in emergency room admissions for drug-related suicide attempts by aging women.

Takeaway: Ageism can be fatal.

CHAPTER 2 - OVER-THINKING MAKES YOU LOOK, TALK, SOUND LIKE A LOSER



“You over-think things.”

That is a criticism. Not a compliment.

And in a professional setting when a superior says it, that can be the beginning of a downward career trajectory.

The Urban Dictionary defines “over-thinking” as:

“Excessive thinking about a problem, while losing focus on the big picture. The result is an overly complicated analysis ... and probably a fruitless waste of time.”

An example of over-thinking would be replaying over and over in your mind the one conversation you had on the elevator with the chief executive officer. Instead, the big picture analysis should be on your overall presentation of self or creating a presence in the organization. Presence is almost everything.

Over-thinking is so dangerous for you because it's associated with "old."

Yes, all human beings begin to age from the moment sperm meets egg and fertilization takes place. But being perceived as "old" is self-inflicted.

In the famous T.S. Eliot 1920 poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the narrator admits: *"I grow old ... I grow old."*

Then he goes on to over-think everything from how to part his hair to what he should eat. Obviously, this is not the kind of person others want to be around. Or to hire.

In a search for a job, it's all too often that the over-50 over-think, missing the big picture.

They realize, for instance, they blew part of a phone interview. They re-play that over and over again in their heads. No surprise, they become stuck. They become convinced that they can't perform well in interviews. And they don't.

Want to stop over-thinking? Here are three tips:

- Develop the mental habit of positioning and packaging mistakes as a learning experience. Then make it your business to apply that to the next situation. Automatically you move from a negative to an actual accomplishment. On the next interview you don't make that same mistake and can give yourself a pat on the back.

- Read closely biographies of successful people. Analyze what they did when they assumed or even knew they had screwed up. The odds are none stayed in their heads replaying the whatever. After being fired from the company he started, Steve Jobs went on to create another company.
- When you catch yourself over-thinking, immediately change the channel in your head. That's exactly what athletes have to do to prevent performance anxiety. The process can be as simple as commanding yourself to stop ruminating. It also can entail developing a daily meditation practice. One retail clerk in an upscale cosmetics shop literally shakes that monster out of her head when she senses she isn't connecting in the now with customers.

Takeaway: Being in your head is hanging around a dangerous neighborhood.

CHAPTER 3 - SELF-CRITICISM SENDS YOU TO SEVENTH LEVEL OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT



When socializing new pets in the household, you give them praise and concrete treats. Common sense tells you that will be effective in shaping a loving companion relationship.

Harsh treatment, you know, will only produce a neurotic entity. That unhappy creature will continually engage in negative behavior.

The funny thing, though, is that you assume the opposite about how to shape yourself for success. The usual approach is a heavy, sustained dose of self-criticism.

That's even meted out for minor "sins" such as gaining three pounds before a job interview or a presentation in front of the board of directors. In addition, the transgression is never forgiven - or forgotten - by you.

What results is an entity much like that of the cowering dog which has been over-corrected. The harm could be undone, but not easily. Meanwhile, life is not being enjoyed. And new learning is not possible.

It's no secret that self-criticism is embedded - deeply - in the American ethos.

The founders of this new nation were righteous Puritans, along with other groups with rigid ideologies. They wore out their welcome in the old country.

But, by grit, hard work, and luck they did make it here. Big time. The economy they created had been, for centuries, the most powerful in the world. So, their condemning world view has been accepted by some as the template for success.

That probably never really was effective. In aging, given how many screwups you have accumulated, it's downright crazy. You would be spending every minute of every day castigating yourself for real or assumed misdeeds.

Those with track records for big success have an infinite capacity to forgive themselves for the whatevers.

The film “Darkest Hour” features Winston Churchill’s flaws. His falls from grace were spectacular. But he, his wife, and the nation were able to forgive him. He went on to lead the U.K. to take on Hitler - and win.

Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, now in his 80s, made many errors in judgment. Those ranged from buying MySpace to continuing to invest in print newspapers. But his attitude and that of investors seem to be: So?

Takeaway: The world focuses on your success, not your failures.

CHAPTER 4 - SELF-DOUBT IS NOT
ONLY PAINFUL, IT'S
DISTRACTING

trust yourself



Everywhere, there's confirmation that self-confidence is *the* prerequisite to success.

In his classic "The Power Game," journalist Hedrick Smith discussed self-confidence as a key asset for politicians inside the beltway.

When reshaping GE from a sleepy large corporation to a profit machine, then chief executive officer Jack Welch preached to the troops the importance of self-confidence.

And, in her book "Confidence," Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Kanter attributed business and individual comebacks to that mindset.

That's because it takes belief in the team and the self to invest the needed resources to set in motion an upward trajectory.

But there isn't enough on how much damage is caused by the opposite of confidence: self-doubt.

To begin with, it locks the aging into a painful state of being.

While so many others are actively engaged they are holding themselves in - and back.

That's analogous to the pianist who isn't able to go near a piano or the car designer who's assigned to the compliance department in an auto corporation.

In addition, instead of following the law of attraction, it's a repelling force. Who wants to go near a shut-down entity?

And, saddest of all, it distracts you from where you should be focusing.

Fortunately, this is an easy monster to slay.

The most common tool is the one taught to members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): Fake it until you make it.

In AA, what's faked is being the source of prudent adult behavior. Newbies are trained to ask themselves: What would an adult do in this situation?

Eventually, those standards of behavior are internalized. For the aging filled with self-doubt, the question to be asked is: What would someone with self-confidence do? For example, the resume expert at an executive search firm recommends that the 60-year-old unemployed lawyer overhaul all her job search materials.

If she lacked confidence she might become defeated and decide to just take early retirement. But if she asked herself, what would a confident person do she would invest the time and marketing strategy to follow the suggestion.

Given so much rejection the aging encounter, a job search can't even start without confidence - or the faking of it.

Takeaway: Self-doubt imposes a very low ceiling on what you will accomplish.

CHAPTER 5 - IT'S RECKLESS TO RISK NOTHING



Recklessness comes in an odd form among aging professionals.

That's the determination to stay put within a familiar life boat, even though that life boat has obviously sprung a few leaks.

The typical case is the 60-something partner in a law firm. Since the crash in the legal sector in 2008, demand has been flat. It's hard to bring in new business.

But, partners who can't do that were being warned that they could be on short time. Yes, she had been aware that doing superior work practicing law per se was no longer enough.

To "save" her job that lawyer should have made it her business to study marketing and sales. Those are specialized disciplines. The knowledge and skills have to be learned.

No, she didn't take that risk. Instead, she plowed all her time into creating legal strategy for cases.

Those watching recognized her decision to do nothing different as reckless. Of course, she was forced out.

Ironically, the monster in her mind - risk aversion - was telling her that she was smart excelling at what she did best: legal work per se. Yet, the reality was, as Meyerhof would put it: She was standing in her own way.

There is that adage which tilts towards cliché in this volatile era: Not taking a risk is the biggest risk. That operates in careers, outreach to develop new friends, and establishing your worth with other generations. Making standard moves from the 20th century playbook will put you behind the curve. Not in front of it.

Here are four proven tactics to shake loose from risk aversion:

- Take tiny steps, in nothing related to work, intimacy, or building bridges across generations. On Monday night, at 10:00 P.M., watch “Good Girls,” not the usual “The Good Doctor.”
- Click on and read carefully help-wanted ads in categories of work which you could, with training, do for a living. The displaced journalist could become certified in search engine optimization. Then research the kinds of instruction available, how it’s delivered, at what cost, and what are the job placement rate and average compensation.

- Do the equivalent of A/B testing in cover letters. Try out several types. Track which went where and the responses. Keep experimenting with approaches until the right job or assignment comes in.
- Volunteer to work on a project or political campaign where you can meet diverse people. For the socially challenged, an interim step might be to enroll in a Dale Carnegie introductory course. The Carnegie approach really does, as its bible (“How to Win Friends and Influence People”) declares, equip you with the fundamentals of meeting and greeting - in a meaningful way.

The amazing thing about risks is that they don't have to end up in the winners' circle to move you forward. Often significantly.

Lawyer David Boies represented the losing side in “Bush v. Gore.” That was the 2000 election conflict which was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet, his role created his megawatt branding in law.

Takeaway: A risk a day keeps joblessness, loneliness, and isolation from other generations away.

CONCLUSION



When you were four, it was an adult you called in for monster patrol.

He or she would search under the bed. If there had been a monster hiding underneath, you bet it would flee. You would fall asleep or back to sleep.

That's the beauty of trust.

Now, the burden is on you to trust yourself enough to go on monster duty.

Over-thinking, self-hate, inability to invest in yourself, and staying in the box are keeping you standing in your own way.

That means you're losing ground. And, that's not an option for the aging. Not in a digital era.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - YOUR COACH



My name is Jane Genova.

I started coaching you who are over-50 because you asked me to.

You had heard about my own struggle with aging, career transition, betrayals, and being treated as invisible by younger generations.

I lecture nationally on these subjects, including at the New York State Bar Association.

My books include “The Critical 14 Years of Your Professional Life,” “Over-50: Pioneers in the New Wild Wild West,” “Geezer Guts: Earning a Buck at Any Age,” and “The Fat Guy from Greenwich.”

My articles on career transition for the over-50 are reprinted by outplacement firms -

<https://www.firstsun.com/2018/03/25/career-olderworkers-manage-phoneinterview-not-sound-old-need-know-two-things-one-present-well-general-phone-interview-two-n/>

My syndicated blogs are <http://over-50.typepad.com> and <https://wordpress.com/stats/day/agingonyourowntermsthecoach.wordpress.com>

At Case Western Reserve University I studied counseling.

At Harvard Law School I was found out, just as Jack McCoy hammered on “Law & Order,” the law isn’t about justice.

So, I made it my mission to help the over-50 get what represents justice to you. That's through coaching, lecturing, lobbying, and publishing.



COACHING



Age bias? It's there. But, as a coach, I help the over-50 develop a new playbook.

My name is Jane Genova. I want to be your coach.

The edge I bring is my background in marketing communications. That means job searchers think, write, and talk like salespeople.

Here is my recent article which outplacement firms have linked to -

<http://over-50.typepad.com/over-50/2018/03/phone-interview-how-not-to-sound-old.html>

Standard are complimentary consultations and a sliding scale for coaching sessions following that.

Give yourself the gift of a complimentary coaching session. Please contact Jane Genova at janegenova374@gmail.com.

YOUR SUPERHERO CAPE



If you have the courage to slay those monsters of the mind, you can put on your superhero cape.

Wear it under your regular attire when you go after jobs and contract assignments, develop new relationships, and show Millennials and iGens your worth.