

Straight Talk from the Heartland:

An Entrepreneur's Memoir

By John Torinus

Excerpt:

The 15 Freedoms

One of the ironies of old age is that growing old is freeing in many ways. Think about all the challenges of life that no longer apply, about these latter-day freedoms, with tongue in cheek:

1. Freedom to say largely whatever you want to say in a straight-forward, respectful way without worrying too much about what someone might think about what you think or write.
2. The famous freedom to wear purple, to being who you are.
3. Freedom from ambition, having been there, done that.
4. If you were lucky and frugal, freedom from financial stress and the great pressure “to make it.”
5. Freedom to be generous for your causes. What are you saving your reserves for if your children are set in life?
6. Freedom from character development. You are already a character.
7. Freedom from existential questions. Right or wrong, most elders have pragmatically sorted out the big issues, including the God issue, for themselves.
8. Freedom from educational imperatives and costs. Just study what you want to know. Go deeper on what you love and are good at — in my case, journalism.

9. Freedom from the responsibilities of child-raising. I enjoyed every inch of being a father to my two “boys.” But you can play a delightful bit part in raising the grandkids. I enjoyed being “Bad Grandpa,” such as: “Rules are for other people.” You have a huge imprint on the youngsters.
10. Freedom from parental approval — though your spouse sometimes fills in for the departed parents.
11. Freedom from the most urgent of sexual drives, tensions, expectations. You can be another kind of lover.
12. Freedom from job descriptions, accountabilities, demands, except those you choose to take on.
13. Freedom from athletic competition. Who cares anymore? Just play. Just keep shooting, you might hit something. Don’t keep score in golf if you don’t want to. In hunting, my brothers coined the phrase: “Shoot and release.”
14. Freedom to take extended time off, not so much for indulgent pleasures, but for purposeful adventures—maybe a trip with a grandchild.
15. Freedom to mentor. Experience counts in many parts of life. Some younger people welcome help in avoiding the mistakes you made.