

# Older and Wiser: Back-to-school can also apply to seniors

Fall is the perfect time for seniors who love lifelong learning to try something new

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A group of three women take photos together of the beautiful flowers in a garden. kali9 / E+ / Getty Images

It seems that our relaxing summer is nearing an end.

While I was out on a balmy evening last week it got dark by 8:30 p.m. – and as my friend said, “the waning light is a downward slippery slope to fall and winter.”

But fall is not the end of the world! For many of us it signals a time for rejuvenating ourselves through new or perhaps tried and true physical or mental activities. The fall can be a time for excitement and anticipation if we enjoy lifelong learning. As many of us are retired or working less, we can spend more time to explore our innate abilities, talent, and creativity.

“Keeping our minds active is equally as important as keeping our bodies physically active,” the B.C. government notes on their official website devoted to education and lifelong learning. “Lifelong learning means that we continue to learn new skills and gain knowledge throughout our lifetimes – an important part of healthy, active aging.”

Lifelong learning has other tangible outcomes. It can broaden our horizons, keep us from being socially isolated, give us a sense of purpose, and it can give us a sense of belonging. Taking a class can help us make new friends, share ideas, develop our thinking skills, and improve our memories. We may, if we already have a transferable skill, mentor, or transfer our knowledge to others, leading to a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

Lifelong learning is not just about academics or books. We do not have to be in a classroom. There are opportunities all around us.

Lifelong learning can be about how to use a tablet or smartphone; it can be about learning how to knit or weave; and it can be about going on a journey through a slide show of a country we would like to know more about. It can be about learning about a new language through fun conversations. It could be taking an art class in painting, pottery, or drawing and perhaps discovering hidden talents we thought we never had.

So far, this fall looks promising in terms of dealing with the worst effects of COVID-19. The restrictions we faced, even as short a time ago as the early spring, have been mostly lifted, allowing us to select from a smorgasbord of activities. Fingers crossed, we can select courses from a wide variety of places including recreation and community centres, seniors centres, libraries, universities, colleges and more.

Elder College on the North Shore contributes to lifelong learning, with registration opening soon. Try their website at [nseldercollege.org](http://nseldercollege.org). You can find a great array of online and outdoor classes to tickle your fancy. Courses and programs are very popular and affordable. Elder College has programs on current events, geological walking tours, book discussions, and history.

Some of the main organizations on the North Shore serving seniors – including the Silver Harbour Centre, West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre, Parkgate Community Services, North Shore Neighbourhood House, and Capilano Community Services – are gearing up for their fall programs. At all or some of these centres you could take a language class or technology class. You could attend a book club or short presentation. You could join an arts and crafts group or a weaving group and perhaps meet new people and stir up your creative juices. At some of the organizations the arts and crafts groups produce items for sale, which contributes to the centre's ongoing activities.

At the North Shore's libraries, you could take out a book or lounge in their space reading a magazine, both of which contribute to lifelong learning. The libraries are also a great resource for technology classes and other groups (book clubs) for seniors. You could also join the Seniors Gathering at the North Vancouver City Library, which is an excellent place to make social connections while learning something new.

You can find out more about these organizations in the 2022 Seniors Directory published in co-operation with North Shore Community Resources and the North Shore News. Copies can be found at most North Shore seniors organizations or by calling NSCR at 604-982-3302.

Let's not feel bad about the waning summer, but excited about a fall full of wonderful activities geared to making us enjoy lifelong learning and, well, just life.

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