

## Foreword

I was honored and pleased when Dr. Victor Wang asked me to write a foreword for his edited book on adult and community health education, but I was also somewhat intimidated. I have been an adult educator for close to 35 years, and I have worked in a variety of areas within the field including faculty development, self-directed learning, higher education, and transformative learning. But I never really thought much about health education. On a personal level, I have always been healthy, even though I have not paid a lot of attention to my health. I eat well and am fairly active, but not with a conscious connection to health. I am a vegan for environmental reasons and because I care about the welfare of animals; I walk, hike, and ski because I enjoy those activities.

I do have colleagues who have focused on health and adult education, two of whom appear in this volume. Maureen Coady writes about health and literacy, and Stephen Brookfield writes about depression using an autoethnographic approach. My other colleagues write about health literacy in other venues (for example, Allan Quigley), and others still pay attention to health through an exploration of spirituality (for example, Libby Tisdell). But I have mostly not incorporated this work into my own scholarship, except where it overlaps with my interest in transformative learning.

Being a reviewer of the chapters for this volume was, therefore, very insightful for me. For example, I had not thought about the relationship between adult development and health before reviewing several chapters where this connection was made. I am pretty sure that I critiqued more than one article for writing about adult development instead of health, but Dr. Wang wisely overlooked my lack of knowledge in this area.

The range of topics in this volume is impressive. I have learned a great deal about what it means to talk about adult and community health education. I will not go through all of the chapters, as Dr. Wang does that very well in the preface, but I would like to highlight some of the things that I learned from this volume.

It would never have occurred to me to think of talking about how to help adults talk to grieving children about death and dying children as a topic related to health. Yet, in retrospect, how obvious this is. How adults access information about health through technology is another area that struck me as obvious when I read about it, but an area to which I had not given much thought. I am not the kind of person who looks up health information on the Internet, but I realize many people do. I found this to be informative. Related to another chapter, I have become quite interested in the plight of veterans for a couple of reasons. I am working with a doctoral student who is a veteran of the Iraq war. And, in Canada, the veterans' centers are being closed in all but the large cities; veterans from across the country are protesting. For these reasons, I was drawn to the chapter on "empathy politics" in regard to veterans.

As a person who is retired, I was interested in the chapter on the intersection of aging and health. I never would have thought about this a year or two ago. But now, I am astonished to find myself a “senior citizen.” I live alone in a remote rural community in eastern Canada in a harsh climate. I wonder what the author of this chapter would say to me. Along the same lines, I was intrigued by the chapter on living a long and healthy life. I wonder if this is a conscious and deliberate approach to living or if it is something that the author sees in retrospect.

I applaud Dr. Wang for putting together this volume. He has included diverse perspectives, and he has respected many different points of view. But most importantly, he has introduced adult educators, like myself, who may not have thought about adult education and health very deeply, if at all. This book makes a wonderful contribution to the literature in our field. To conclude, I would like to repeat a quote from Buddah from the preface: “Without health life is not life; it is only a state of languor and suffering - an image of death.”

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