

A SPIRITUALITY & HEALTH E-BOOK

Healthy Aging

for Body, Mind & Spirit



Spirituality
& Health

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“The afternoon knows
 what the morning
 never suspected.”

—ROBERT FROST





5 Key Habits for Healthy Aging

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SLOW OR REVERSE THE RAVAGES OF AGING?

AGING IS INEVITABLE but how we age is more within our control than we realize. It helps to understand what aging is and the factors that accelerate it. Aging is defined as the progressive inability to respond to normal stresses, stimuli and injury. And it takes place at the cellular level.

Our cells are listening to our thoughts, and responding to how we move, what we eat, who we spend time with and our attitude. Just look around at your next high school reunion. By the 25th, it is evident that some people are aging better than others. You see it in their posture, skin tone, the way they move and their mental sharpness.

So, what can you do to slow or reverse the ravages of aging? Here's what I've learned over the years.

Understand your stress response and build your resilience toolkit. Stress is unavoidable. Start recognizing your thought patterns and how they feel in your body. I've been practicing mindfulness off and on for twenty years while raising my kids, persistently acquiring tools along the way. One tool I use when I catch myself ruminating is the acronym RAIN: Recognize the thought, allow it to be as is, investigate with kindness and practice non-attachment. Breath awareness, letting go and focusing on the present have also proven effective.

Find your movement balance and keep fine-tuning. According to the latest studies, we lose 3-8% of our muscle mass every decade from age thirty. Nothing stays the same. We are either getting stronger or weaker everyday. We must intelligently exercise all of our tissues including muscles, ligaments, tendons, bones and organs. Various types of yoga, from sweaty to slow, have been a constant since my late 30s. Running, weight training and desk sitting have been a part of my regimen at other stages of life. But it wasn't until I started canoe racing at age 48 that I was able to boost my overall strength in ways I didn't know was possible.

Stop dieting and eat satiating foods. Diet is highly personal. But we know three cellular enemies are inflammation, insulin resistance and oxidative stress, which are fed by sugar and refined carbohydrates. I am

pre-disposed to the Type-2 Diabetes that runs in my family. Despite decades of eating a plant-based diet I became pre-diabetic. Over the last three years I've transitioned to a low carbohydrate, high fat and moderate protein diet. I've brought my blood sugar under control, learned to prepare delicious and energizing foods and rarely feel hunger pangs.

Cultivate close relationships. Surround yourself with people who motivate you to be your best self. Strong social connections are closely linked to longevity and health. Even better, a diverse group of friends of all ages, ethnicities and talents is not only enriching but will challenge and stretch you. Who'd have guessed I'd love racing canoes across the ocean with 30 to 65 year old mavens?

Keep growing. Stay curious and learn new things. You don't know what you don't know. A new interest may surprise you, as I discovered with ceramics at age 51. I can't wait to get my hands in clay everyday! Creating is energizing, as is any new passion that challenges you to grow anew with a beginner's mind.

Aging gracefully is possible when we continuously generate vital energy, contain it in a sound vessel, and let it flow throughout our whole being—body, mind, and spirit. It can be called joy, love, breath, wisdom or chi. It is life itself.

BY SOOKIE KUNST



BODY

“My face carries all my memories.
Why would I erase them?”

—DIANE VON FURSTENBERG



Spirituality
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THE SOUL BODY CONNECTION



Yoga after 50, Still Going Strong

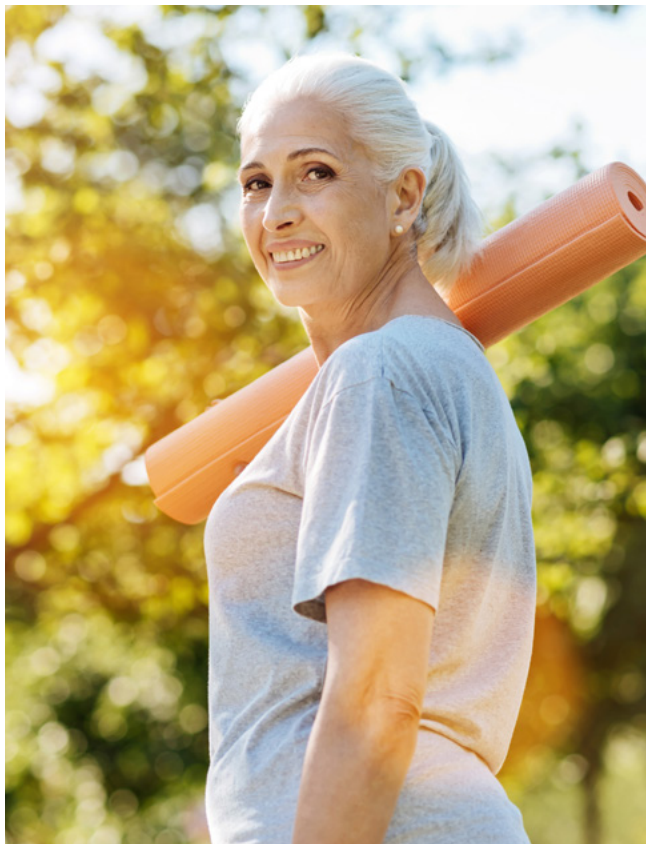
THE STORY WE ARE typically told about aging is that it is a downward slope: we get older, weaker, frailer, and sicker. Upon seeing images of young yogis, an older person might think, I can't do that. That's not for me.

Sure, there are flexible young women in my yoga classes, but there's also Kate, a beautiful white-haired woman with a steady and powerful practice; Don, an older gentleman with a daughter my age; and, of course, my mom, who is also my business partner at my yoga studio. It's not uncommon to see these older students flowing with ease through the postures I offer while younger, newer students struggle and sweat.

My mom is a great example of someone who is not following the linear story about aging. Since she got more consistent in her yoga five years ago, she is stronger, her balance is better, and, she says, “My knees look younger! I think it’s all those Warrior Twos.”

A *New York Times* article on yoga after age 50 quotes Dr. Loren Fishman: “I suspect that yoga was at times an old person’s sport, and that it has prolonged the life and liveliness of people over the millennia.” Indeed, B.K.S. Iyengar, whose yoga system is very much focused on health and healing, told *Namarupa* magazine that he still practices, at age 90: “All the poses you see in *Light on Yoga* and I do them everyday.”

Ana Forrest is a 55-year-old woman who teaches a very powerful style of yoga. Her circus-level abilities took many years to access. She insists she is more able now than she ever was when she was sick, crippled, and addicted in her teens and 20s (In this amazing [video](#), she’s around 50. Now, she says, “I have chosen to model a different, much more enticing future for our young



people rather than allowing myself to be ignored and devalued because I’m over a certain age. I feel like I can embody and model the beauty of a rich spirit rather than just a wrinkle-free face.”

There are three magical ingredients in yoga asana that may contribute to this anti-aging effect:

1 Weight bearing: Bone-density tends to go down as we age, and when we put pressure on our bones, we incite osteoblasts to create more bone. We don’t have many opportunities to put weight on our arms, hands, and wrists in our computer-oriented lives, so doing it in yoga counteracts the bone loss in the upper body.

2 Balancing: The combination of delicate bones with decline in balance as we age can spell trouble. In a yoga practice, we balance on one leg, on our hands, and sometimes even on our heads. As we learn about our centre of gravity and connect to the core, we can become more fluid and graceful.

3 Inversions: In a yoga practice, we make gravity work for us. In the many yoga poses that involve having the head lower than the heart, we condition the blood, calm the nervous system, detoxify, balance shifting hormones, and even flush the face with fresh oxygen, perhaps giving our wrinkles a characteristic glow.

Headstand, which Iyengar recommends for many physical and mental issues, has all three magic elements: weight bearing on the upper body, balance, and a complete inversion. It’s not recommended for everyone, so check with your doctor first.

Regardless of your age, don’t be discouraged by the young models you see in yoga advertising. Most of us don’t look like that. Go at your own pace, and you may find yoga can turn your story about aging on its head (literally).

BY JULIE PETERS



10 Ways to Move with Others

HERE ARE 10 WAYS TO MOVE WHILE INTERACTING WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, COWORKERS OR STRANGERS ABOUT TO BECOME NEW FRIENDS.

WHAT'S ONE OF THE most dangerous things we can do as we age? Watch TV at night. At least, that's what **this study** reported. It found that older people who watched more than five hours of TV per day and did three or fewer hours per week of total physical activity had more than a three times higher risk of being unable to walk or having difficulty walking by the end of the 10-year study.

Luckily, **another study** showed that decreasing sedentary leisure time only 21 minutes a day improved markers of health, such as fasting glucose levels, and helped maintain muscle mass. So clearly, we need to move.

And since this month we're focusing on ways to connect, why not make it a healthy habit to move with other people? Here are 10 ways to move while interacting with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers or strangers about to become new friends.

- 1** Go for a hike, whether with an official hiking group or with a buddy.
- 2** Participate in a river or beach cleanup day.
- 3** Swing a hammer with Habitat for Humanity.
- 4** Turn office coffee meetings into walking meetings.
- 5** Sign up for a 5K walk or fun run.
- 6** Join your kids when they play tag, jump rope or toss a baseball, instead of watching them.
- 7** Get a plot in a community garden.
- 8** Try a sport you've never tested out before, such as Ultimate Frisbee.
- 9** Kick up your heels by salsa or ballroom dancing.
- 10** Take turns working on big chores, like raking the yard, power washing a deck or painting a fence.

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



Signal Your Body to Stay Young

UP UNTIL RECENTLY, there has been an expectation about what aging looks like. The idea that we must lose function and mobility as we age was taken lying down.

A growing number of aging adults have decided that they don't want to slow down with age. They want to stay active, fit, and strong, and enjoy the activities of their choice. They don't want to give in to the "inevitable" cycle of aging and decay.

Put simply, there is a growth signal and decay signal in your body. When you are young, the growth signal dominates. Somewhere around your mid-thirties to early forties, the signal begins to shift to one of decay. You may notice that your body shape begins to change, you aren't as strong, or you just don't have the 'get-up-and-go' that you used to. In their book, *Younger Next Year: The Exercise Program*, Chris Crowley and Henry Lodge, MD have outlined a program that can keep your body in the coveted growth cycle. Their basic premise is that how we live directly affects the signals our body responds to.

Their premise is that by activating your body's inflammation response almost daily, you also activate its repair response, creating growth, which ultimately makes you stronger.

The idea that Crowley and Lodge put forth is that, with intense enough exercise, you can damage your muscles just enough to signal them to grow. They stress the importance of being active six days per week for 45 minutes to one hour, with two of those days involving strength training. Their premise is that by activating your body's inflammation response almost daily, you also activate its repair response, creating growth, which ultimately makes you stronger.

The protocol they lay out has you starting with a visit to your doctor to determine if you are healthy enough to begin a program. Though seemingly rote, it's a sound place to begin.

Once you're given the green light by your doctor, they suggest starting slowly, beginning with a warm up, and doing some kind of aerobic exercise, your choice, at a moderate intensity, for 15-20 minutes, depending on your starting level of fitness. They stress that working up to an hour will create the chemistry in your body that favors growth signals.

Each workout should begin with a warm-up, which they outline in detail, and includes movements that engage your core and work to increase mobility and blood flow to the joints of your body. The warm-up is meant to get you ready to move, in all planes, with as much range of motion as possible.

Strength training, which Crowley and Lodge suggest twice per week is a crucial component in maintaining a high quality of life. The suggested series, designed by Bill Fabrocini, PT, includes full body moves intended to strengthen your muscles, and also challenge your core and balance. Ultimately, they suggest challenging your muscles enough so that the last couple of repetitions

feel like you couldn't do another. That, they say, is the magic point where your chemistry gets altered the signals for growth and repair flood your body.

Their ode to strength training includes four main points:

- It makes you stronger, in essence battling the loss of muscle mass which will happen unless you get lifting.
- It helps your bones regenerate. Stressing your muscles stresses your bones, which triggers bone building.
- It keeps you balanced and coordinated. Loss of balance is a big deal as you age, putting you at risk for falls, and general loss of functional movement. Challenging your muscles and your balance simultaneously will keep you from going down this slippery slope.
- It keeps pain at bay. The aches and pains that come with aging can be warded off with strength training. You may be sore from your workout, but you might learn to call it a "good kind of sore".

Throughout the book, the authors maintain the importance of getting the guidance of trainer if needed to ensure correct form, and not pretending that you are trying to get "younger tomorrow." They insist that it's the cumulative effect of consistent exercise that will bring the profound benefits of being "Younger Next Year". It's enough to make you want to get up off the couch and start moving.

BY KALIA KELMENSEN



5 Ways to Avoid Losing Muscle Mass

A FRIEND OF MINE just moved her elderly mother into a new living situation. Her mom had fallen, twice, and it was only a matter of time before she seriously hurt herself. Falls become more common as we age due to something called sarcopenia, which is a loss of muscle. Having less muscle means we are weaker and have less mobility and our balance gets off—hence, the falls. Sarcopenia is part of the aging process, and according to Harvard Medical School, after age 30, we lose 3 to 5 percent of muscle per decade. But there are actions we can take to mitigate this. Let's look at ways we can preserve muscle mass.

Work out more. No one is particularly keen to hear that, I realize. But aim for up to five days a week, with resistance training two to three days of that. Resistance training can be weights, stretchy bands, your own body weight—the type is not as important as the resistance. The other days can focus on cardio and flexibility, such as walking, swimming and yoga.

Rest. Bodybuilders are very exact with scheduling their rest days to let their muscles rebuild, and as we age, this

healing process takes longer. Give your muscles a good 72 hours at least between strength training sessions.

Boost protein. Harvard suggests upping protein to 1.3 grams per kilogram of body weight, divided among meals through the day. Healthy choices include beans, Greek yogurt, lean chicken and salmon, edamame, or a scoop of whey protein powder in a smoothie.

Watch vitamin D levels. Not getting enough vitamin D is associated with increased fat infiltration into muscle. Proper amounts, which your doctor can test for, means your body has enough for lean muscle mass and strength.

Keep inflammation at bay. While weight lifting and nutrition have been the classic ways of dealing with muscle mass, what happens on a cellular level is gaining interest among gerontologists, who are finding that inflammation accelerates muscle loss. Reducing inflammation overall, through stress beating techniques such as meditation, and eating antioxidant-rich foods, may help preserve muscle as we age.

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



Strategic Aging

MAKING THE MOST OF WHAT CAN BE THE BEST TIME OF OUR LIVES

I RECENTLY RECEIVED an e-newsletter from a respected doctor with the subject line “Growing older is inevitable, aging is optional.” Here’s the thing, actually: Stuff wears out; aging is not optional. Starting in our 30s our normal physiology starts shifting in the direction of entropy, affecting the functioning of our brains (vision, mood, cognition, and sensation), digestive tract, reproductive abilities, the strength of our bones, and more. There is obviously great individual variation both within one individual (my hair is only a bit gray, but my glasses were progressive by the time I was 50) and between individuals (my brother went gray in his 20s!). But gradually, and inexorably, the changes of physiology as we age are well known, and thankfully now measurable and actionable, if we know what we’re doing.

OUR NATURAL LIFESPAN

Opinions abound as to what is our natural lifespan. The Bible might have us counting our lives in centuries, but most modern thinkers opt for somewhere between 75 (“Life really isn’t living past the age of 75,” says Ezekiel Emanuel, one of the architects of Obamacare) and 125 (the goal of the 93-year-old billionaire David Murdoch, who has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into antiaging research and education).

We can look at our natural lifespan by looking at the lifespan of primitive people, living in the environment in which they evolved, with little to none of the toxic effects (stress, chemicals, pollutants) of modern life. Many primitive people die early in life, succumbing to injuries and illnesses that modern people face with impunity. If they live to middle age, however, their lifespan is something like ours, living to their 70s, but without the evidence of chronic diseases reaching epidemic proportions in our modern world. Whether we examine recent primitive people (in New Guinea and other places) or the skeletal remains of the ancients, people living in a preagricultural, preindustrial world show little to no evidence of tooth decay, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or obesity. The health of these indigenous elders suggests that with modern knowledge and medicine we can live significantly longer. But will we live it well?

OPTIONS FOR AGING

We have several options available to us as we crest over the peak of middle age and look toward our sunsets, so to speak. We can follow the suggestions of health advisors such as Dr. Andrew Weil, and follow a sensible diet, stay active and relax, and come to peace with our position as an elder of the world. This means doing our best to stay out of the medical system and accepting gracefully what happens, including medical treatments as they become necessary.

We can turn to our medical system and rely on so-called preventive exams (mammograms, colonoscopy, and the like), which detect disease early rather than prevent it altogether, and then resort to the recommended treatment for these diseases, which may

SURPRISE INFORMATION ABOUT HEART DISEASE...

- Saturated fat and cholesterol in the diet do not lead to heart disease.
- Heart disease is more closely associated with inflammation and sugar load than cholesterol levels.
- Over the age of 60, the higher your total cholesterol, the longer you are likely to live.



significantly extend our lives but at a diminished quality of life that often gets out of our control.

We can consult an antiaging specialist and restore all our hormone levels to those of our teenage years, thereby resuming both menstruation (in women) and our adolescent libidinal desires—and use plastic surgery to keep looking the part.

We can draw up our bucket list, and spend what time we have left indulging in the glory of long-forgotten dreams.

Or we can choose what I call strategic aging, where we become intimate with the physiology of aging, a science unto itself, and we do self-inventories to see which parameters apply personally, and adjust accordingly. Strategic aging is not about recapturing youth; it is about maximizing our vitality in the present moment. Ideally, we combine this ongoing health exploration with finding our “North Star,” the cause or purpose that calls us passionately (see page 45). A North Star is very different from a bucket list, because it is not about looking backward and it will never be crossed off. For example, David Murdoch may make it to 125 in part because of his diet of vegetables, fruits, and fish, but also because his North Star is teaching others about healthy aging. In other words, his health practices and his North Star are in complete alignment. He gets out of bed each morning to help others age better.

THE GUTS OF STRATEGIC AGING

As an example of strategic aging, let's first look at the function of our digestive system from top to bottom. Not only *can* we do the same for the other systems, you *must* do it for all the systems of the body. Why? Because they're all related. I hope you're ready for some nitty-gritty details. That's where the value lies!

THE MOUTH: Several things can go awry with age, starting with a diminished sense of taste, causing us to eat a smaller variety of food with less pleasure. We can restore taste somewhat by keeping zinc levels normal, continuing to challenge our taste buds with new foods, and avoiding habitual eating. We get zinc from animal products (eggs, dairy, meat, fish) or from supplements.

TEETH: Many of us start losing our teeth, partly to periodontal disease and partly due to bone loss in our jaws. Periodontal disease occurs less in those who don't eat a lot of fermentable carbohydrates (sugar!) and who keep their mouth well-rinsed, using salt water or perhaps herbal mouthwash and massage their gums with those little bristly brushes. Risk of tooth loss is increased if your CoQ10 levels fall. So if you've lost the taste for eating organ meats like heart, you'll need supplements. If you're over 50, you no longer activate CoQ10 well into ubiquinol, so you're better off going straight for the ubiquinol to boost your CoQ10 levels. This will help your gums, your brain, your immune system, and more. It's all related. Exercise for the jawbones involves chewing difficult foods: meat on the bone or raw carrots. Use it or lose it!

SWALLOWING: Older folks don't swallow as well as younger ones. You can *work around* weak swallowing by eating in a relaxed frame of mind: The goal here is to stimulate your rest-and-digest parasympathetic nervous system and tone down your fight-or-flight sympathetic nervous system. You can *strengthen* your swallowing abilities by gargling: vigorously! Loudly! Regularly! Give it a try. You'll not only help yourself swallow, you'll reduce your risk of gastroesophageal reflux disease and infections of the small bowel.



ACID AND REFLUX DISEASE: Acid not only helps us digest our food, it also enables digestion to proceed in its normal (downward) rather than its backward (upward) direction, which results in reflux. Alas, older people make a lot less acid than younger people. So if you have a bit of reflux, adding acid to your food (lemon, vinegar, or the supplement betaine) can enhance your overall digestion and help the normal motion of your digestive tract.

There's no getting around the fact, though, that our stomach's absorptive forces aren't what they used to be, so it's important to choose food wisely. The concept of "nutrient density" describes food that includes a rich supply of nutrients among the calories you consume. Look for nutrient-dense foods, and eat proteins and fats together to enhance absorption. Avoid foods with empty calories. They aren't worth the heartburn.

THE SMALL INTESTINE: This should be a place of digestion and absorption. It is rich in digestive enzymes and relatively devoid of the healthy bacterial probiotics that belong farther down in our colon. But many older folks suffer from too much bacteria in the small bowel (small intestinal bacterial overgrowth or SIBO), causing bloating and indigestion, and interfering with the normal digestive and absorptive work to be done. The most effective lifestyle techniques to prevent SIBO is to eat in a calm environment and don't eat at night. Adopt an overnight fast of 12 hours, including at least 3 hours before bedtime.

THE 12-HOUR FAST: During a long fast, the gastrointestinal tract shifts to inactive mode and sends in the housecleaners, aka the migrating motor complexes, which perform a "sweep" operation of the upper intestine, moving the majority of the bacteria, the probiotics, down to the colon where they belong. This housekeeping isn't nearly so effective when the gut is still working on late night snacks. Meanwhile, with fewer calories in the pipeline, our brains perform a kind of triage, saving sustenance for the healthy cells and speeding up the process of sacrificing the less than healthy cells. The process, called apoptosis, removes a drain on the brain's energy systems. Thus an additional value of the overnight fast is clear thinking and cognitive longevity.

THE COLON: This is the proper and important home of our "microbiome," the complex array of bacterial and fungal species that not only keep our digestion regular but contribute to the regulation of every aspect of our metabolism, immune function, and nervous system. As we age, we tend to selectively lose one of the main players in our colon, namely *Bifidobacterium* species. The best way to restore them is to consume them (look for *Bifido*-rich yogurt or probiotic capsule) and to provide them the food they need to live on in our colons: lots of vegetables, maybe a little fruit, while avoiding the toxic (heavy) doses of sugar that might feed competing species.

POOP: When your digestion is properly supported, your senior citizen poop should look as well formed, exit as gently, and float or sink as consistently as it did when you were 20 years younger. So pay attention to any changes.

PAY ATTENTION: You should consider critically every aspect of your digestion: How's your appetite? Do you burp or bloat?

Many older folks need supplemental stomach acid and/or digestive enzymes, and you can experiment with that on your own. SIBO is a tough and multifaceted problem that usually requires handholding from a wise nutritional counselor. For more information, one good book is *Digestive Health with Real Food*, by Aglaee Jacob, M.S., R.D. A good online resource is amazon.com/Natural-Solutions-Digestive-Health-Jillian/dp/1454910313



THE BONES OF STRATEGIC AGING

Bones are constantly being remodeled by the removal of old bone and synthesis of new bone to take its place. Around the age of 30, the balance starts swinging toward more removal and less synthesis, but you can optimize bone synthesis by taking these steps:

- Keeping vitamin D levels between 40 and 65 mg/mL. You get vitamin D from sun exposure, seafood, lard, and supplements. Absorption declines with age, so keep checking.
- Getting calcium from foods (dairy, leafy greens) rather than as a supplement, which is more hazardous than beneficial.
- Getting vitamin K2 (as MK7) from fermented foods or supplements.
- Hard muscle work: a muscle pulling vigorously against its bony tether strengthens the bone.
- Optimal hormone levels: Avoid excessive thyroid or cortisol hormones and maintain adequate sex hormones, including estrogen, testosterone, and DHEA.
- Supplementing magnesium to keep levels optimal. Choose a chelated form with -ate in the name, such as magnesium glycinate.
- Ensuring that you're getting minor nutrients such as boron and strontium, which may be important.



THE BRAINS OF STRATEGIC AGING

A CASE STUDY IN REVERSING DEMENTIA

Even a couple of years ago dementia seemed a one-way street to nowhere. But now, thanks to researchers like Dale Bredesen, PhD, a professor of neurology and director of the Mary S. Easton Center of Alzheimer's Disease Research at UCLA, we have hard evidence that cognitive function can be restored. Dr. Bredesen believes that dementia is like a leaky roof with 30 holes in it. The pharmaceuticals that have been tested to treat dementia may succeed at fixing a single hole, but don't come close to solving the problem. So Dr. Bredesen worked with 10 patients with varying degrees of dementia using a comprehensive lifestyle approach. In the first three to six months, all but one of the patients showed some improvements. Here's one case study, published in the journal *Aging*, that speaks for itself.

A 67-YEAR-OLD WOMAN presented with two years of progressive memory loss. She held a demanding job that involved preparing analytical reports and traveling widely, but found herself no longer able to analyze data or prepare the reports, and therefore was forced to consider quitting her job. She noted that when she would read, by the time she reached the bottom of a page she would have to start at the top once again, since she was unable to remember the material she had just read. She was no longer able to remember numbers, and had to write down even 4-digit numbers to remember them. She also began to have trouble navigating on the road: Even on familiar roads, she would become lost trying to figure out where to enter or exit the road. She also noticed that she would mix up the names of her pets, and forget where the light switches were in her home of years. Her mother had developed similar progressive cognitive decline

beginning in her early 60s, had become severely demented, entered a nursing home, and died at approximately 80 years of age. When the patient consulted her physician about her problems, she was told that she had the same problem her mother had had, and that there was nothing he could do about it.

After three months [of our program] she noted that all of her symptoms had abated: She was able to navigate without problems, remember telephone numbers without difficulty, prepare reports and do all of her work without difficulty, read and retain information, and, overall, she became asymptomatic. She noted that her memory was now better than it had been in many years. On one occasion, she developed an acute viral illness, discontinued the program, and noticed a decline, which reversed when she reinstated the program. Two and one-half years later, now age 70, she remains asymptomatic and continues to work full-time.

- 1 She eliminated all simple carbohydrates and lost 20 pounds;
- 2 She eliminated gluten and processed food from her diet, and increased vegetables, fruits, and non-farmed fish;
- 3 She began yoga, and ultimately became a yoga instructor;
- 4 She began to meditate for 20 minutes twice per day;
- 5 She took melatonin 0.5 mg PO qHS;
- 6 She increased her sleep from 4–5 hours per night to 7–8 hours per night;
- 7 She took methylcobalamin 1 mg each day;
- 8 She took vitamin D3 2000 IU each day;
- 9 She took fish oil 2000 mg each day;
- 10 She took CoQ10 200 mg each day;
- 11 She optimized her oral hygiene using an electric flosser and electric toothbrush;
- 12 She reinstated hormone replacement therapy that had been discontinued following the WHI report in 2002;
- 13 She fasted for a minimum of 12 hours between dinner and breakfast, and for a minimum of three hours between dinner and bedtime;
- 14 She exercised for a minimum of 30 minutes, 4–6 days per week.

BY DEBORAH GORDON MD

MIND

“Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been.”

—DAVID BOWIE



Spirituality
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THE SOUL BODY CONNECTION



How Much of Aging Is in Your Head?

IN 1979 a young Harvard psychology professor named Ellen Langer (soon to be played by Jennifer Aniston in *Counter Clockwise*) realized something astonishing — and true. “Without knowing someone’s chronological age, science cannot pinpoint how old someone is.” Langer had also built a basic theory of mindfulness that has guided her entire career: “It occurred to me that wherever we put the mind, the body should follow.” And so she came up with an experiment on aging worthy of a Hollywood feature.

Dr. Langer recruited elderly men — men who were not ill but “extremely dependent” — and brought them to a beautiful monastery for a week. The men didn’t come to pray or to meditate; they came to turn the clock back 20 years. For that week, all the magazines, music,

art, clothing, and personal photographs were from 1959. Conversations had to be in the present tense and not be about events or experiences after that year. The entire week was carefully choreographed, says Langer; nevertheless, there were surprises: like arriving at the monastery and having no one to carry luggage. So she decided on the spot that each man would somehow have to get his own luggage to his room.

In just one week, the men showed significant changes in physical strength, perception, cognition, taste, hearing, and visual thresholds, as compared to a control group. Their photographs before and after were judged to look, on average, two years younger than when they arrived. But the main difference can be summed up by their condition when they arrived — dismayed and struggling with their bags — versus when they departed . . . and had to be pulled away from their touch football game to climb back into the van.

Dr. Langer's career, as well as her book, *Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of*

Possibility, is a wonderful collection of groundbreaking research and perceptions. Simple studies, like turning the eye charts upside down to read from smallest to largest, have revealed powerful insights. (Doing so, it turns out, creates an expectation that people can see the smaller print, and their eye tests show better vision.) Says Langer, "Mindfulness comes about from simple acts of noticing new things — it doesn't matter how smart or silly they may be, so long as we notice them. Noticing engages us and puts us in the present, better able to take advantage of opportunities. Mindfulness is crucial to our health in several ways. First, when we're mindless, we ignore all the ways we could exercise control over our health. Second, we turn that control over to the medical world, which despite the many things it can do, can't treat us as individuals. Third, we mindlessly accept health limits that we'd be better off questioning, which closes us off to the power of possibility."

If Jennifer Aniston can convey all that, this new movie may change health care forever.

BY STEPHEN KIESLING



Spirituality
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THE SOUL | BODY CONNECTION



Aging with Divine Feminine Beauty

HAVE YOU EVER MET a woman who emits so much love and warmth that you just want to stay near her and bask in her energy? It doesn't matter what she looks like on the outside. Her power is not expressed in the smoothness of her skin or the size of her waist, but in an energy strongly felt, a radiant light that comes from within. This is the expression of healthy feminine energy—what we recognize as inner beauty.

So while the ego tends to seek outer beauty, it is inner beauty that our souls truly crave and is a source of nourishment for ourselves and others.

Granted, most of us have been taught that inner beauty is the most important type of beauty, but it is no secret that our culture encourages a focus on youth and outer beauty, especially for women. And because of this, so many of us have an identity crisis as age creeps in. But there

needn't be a feeling of fear and defeat with each new birthday and newly discovered wrinkle. It's time we recognize the eternal form of beauty that exists as energy inside of us.

All women possess divine feminine energy. This is an eternal, creative energy that balances and compliments masculine life energy—the yin to the yang. Healthy feminine energy manifests itself as radiance, healing, receptivity, harmony, intuition, wisdom, nurturing and compassion. Although both feminine and masculine energy exists in all of creation and in both males and females, feminine energy is especially abundant in females.

A variety of cultures around the world have recognized this eternal gift of feminine beauty that does not decline with age, but simply develops. For example, in Christiane Northrup's book *Goddesses Never Age* she states that "According to Chinese and ancient Ayurvedic medicine, at age 60, women end their householder life and begin to develop their souls. Our fertility

stops being about having children and starts being about what we create for ourselves that benefits us and the people around us."

Similarly, in Native American culture, aging is considered a natural and greatly respected process in life—not something to hide or be ashamed of or fear. There is a balance in appreciation for all qualities and all stages of life, as they believe that everything is connected and will come around again. The elderly are truly honored for their experience and wisdom.

Your body will age. It's an inevitable process for everyone. But remember who you are—an expression of the divine feminine. As your outer shell begins to reflect the time you've spent on earth, you have the option to change your focus to the eternal radiant feminine inside of you, a beauty that never dies or fades. So smile, create, love, and heal. Share with others your radiant feminine energy and bring light into the world. This is the beauty we all possess as women.

BY TRACI PEDERSEN





To Boost Your Memory, Have More Sex

GET BUSY AND SHARPEN YOUR MEMORY.

FORGET CROSSWORD PUZZLES, eating fish, and lifting weights. If you want to have better memory and cognitive skills as you age, there's a much more fun way to keep your brain youthful: Sex! According to a new study published in the journal *Age and Ageing*, being more sexually active over age 50 is associated with better cognition. Now, for the rest of this article, cue the Barry White soundtrack. *Let's get it on...*

In what is the first study of this kind to explore the association between sexual activity and cognitive function in a large group of older, community-dwelling adults, researchers mined data from a longitudinal study on aging in England. They used data from 3,060 men and 3,773 women between the ages of 50 and 89. The adults had been surveyed if they were sexually active in the past 12 months, which was defined as "intercourse, masturbation, petting or fondling." (I challenge you to parse those last two activities, because I have tried, researching everything from 1960s dating columns to Church of Latter Day Saints materials, and I still cannot. But suffice it to say, they both incite lust.)

Participants also took two cognitive tests. One was

testing recall, where respondents heard a list of 10 everyday words, and were asked to recall them either immediately, or after a short delay. The other was a number sequencing test, where they had to determine a number pattern, then which number was missing, and provide the correct answer.

The group who had been getting busy in the past year? They scored better (pardon the pun) on both the word-recall and number-sequencing test than their compatriots who had been living monastically, with males faring particularly well. Women who had been sexually active got higher scores on the word recall test but not the number sequencing.

"The findings have implications for the promotion of sexual counseling in healthcare settings," the study concluded. "Maintaining a healthy sex life in older age could be instrumental in improving cognitive function and well-being."

So tonight, turn to your partner, raise an eyebrow suggestively, and say, "*C'mon baby, let's do it...for our brains!*"

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



The Happiness Track: The Life Stories We Tell for Health

I OFTEN HEAR 50-year-olds saying, “I’m getting old” and see some of them practically hobbling along, as if in time to their own script. But then I know 70-year-olds who say, “I keep forgetting I’m not 16!”—like my mom, who bikes around a big city for miles, takes adult professional ballet classes for an hour and a half a day, and chainsaws trees down and repairs her rooftop on the weekend.

Certainly, genetics plays a factor here: Some people are born lucky. We also know that living through stressful life experiences—things we can’t control—can accelerate aging: Some people are unlucky.

But there’s an important caveat that has to do with how our luck—or lack of it—plays out over a lifetime. There is growing evidence that how some genes are expressed—for good or ill—has to do with how we choose to live. Meanwhile, how our bodies respond to stressful events turns out to have a lot to do with how we live—the things we can control.

For example: If compassion and community service are an integral part of our life, the effects of the stressful life experience can be effectively erased and our mortality is not affected. This good news comes from a fascinating study by psychologist Michael Poulin PhD at the University of Buffalo, who reports that “there was no link between stress and health among people who reported helping their friends and neighbors in the past year. But among people who didn’t engage in such helping, stressful life events predicted decreased odds of survival over the next five years.”

So helping others can help prevent the ravages of stress—and improve your own chance of survival. However, Dr. Poulin cautions, “Helping appears to only be good for you if you really care about those you’re helping. In two separate studies, I found that volunteering on behalf of strangers weakens the link between stress and health—but only for volunteers who have generally positive views of other people. In other words, helping may be good for you specifically to the extent you’re likely to experience compassion for those you help.”

Thus the healing power of compassion is deeply rooted—perhaps compassion is a trigger for genetic expression that promotes longevity?

Let’s explore some more.

Countless studies have now demonstrated that taking a sugar pill believing it is medicine can help us improve our symptoms, whatever they are. That’s the good old *placebo effect*. Similarly, if we think of stress as a positive feeling of excitement and energy, we don’t experience the negative impacts on our health and well-being. In other words, the stories we tell ourselves have huge implications for our own health. We know that. But as we age, it also matters whom we tell our stories to.

For example, one study from Bremen, Germany, found that elderly people who helped adolescents work on a life problem improved their own cognitive performance at the same time. The simple yet empowering act

of advising a younger person helped boost the brainpower of the elder, when measured on a word test.

Another study found that older adults who shared a memorized story with children improved their own memory. Once again, the very act of being in a mentorship role with a younger person helped the elder boost their mental abilities.

Still more research shows that the older we grow in years, the greater our levels of acceptance of our emotions—and, as a consequence, we feel less anger and anxiety. This finding suggests that there is something to be said for the expression *older and wiser*. After all, no matter how old you are, you can look back on your life and see where experience has indeed taught you life lessons that have made you a deeper, more reflective, conscious, and aware human being. This wisdom may be the reason that, in social conflicts, studies show that older people tend to take a more thoughtful stance: emphasizing the need for multiple perspectives, making room for compromise, and recognizing the limits of knowledge.

And this wisdom is contagious: In one study, closeness to a grandparent was associated with reduced emotional problems, reduced hyperactivity, and increased prosocial behaviors.

I think all this science is getting to the roots of the obvious: Caring for others and sharing our wisdom helps keep us alive and healthy. It also makes me think of my mom. She fasts half the day, is vegetarian, and in addition to her high level of physical activity she takes cozy naps. All good. Then again, she smokes, eats copious amounts of cheese, and enjoys a few glasses of wine daily. But the most important secret to her vitality is the fact that she loves life, is deeply grateful for every day, lives very much in the moment, enjoys playing pranks on people, gives money to every single beggar she encounters, and lives to help others. She keeps forgetting she’s not 16, and so does everyone else. We’re all still trying to keep up with her!

BY EMMA SEPPÄLÄ



Treating Alzheimer's with Ayurveda

DRY SKIN. GREY HAIR. Brittle bones. Memory loss. These are all signs we associate with old age. Then there's arguably the most dreaded of all—Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia (AD).

In Ayurveda, all of these symptoms are associated with a Vata dosha imbalance.

No one really believes that they will lose their mental faculties come a certain age, but the reality is it happens . . . A LOT.

The number of people with AD grows each year with millions affected. Statistics from 2015 show that 1 in 9 Americans, age 65 or older and one-third of individuals 85 or older have Alzheimer's disease (and that's not including dementia).

Moreover, these numbers are estimated to grow with baby boomers.

The sooner we use preventative medicine to counteract the effects of a Vata imbalance, the better. Ayurveda has some practical and simple solutions to treat and prevent the above symptoms of so-called “old age”.

The Vata dosha is the “air and space” bodymind constitution. Its qualities are cold, light, dry, irregular, moving, quick and changeable—pretty much the qualities of wind if you think about it.

This age old wisdom teaches us that beyond our personal dosha (mind-body type) we all have doshic stages throughout our lifetime.

As a baby and young child, we are in our Kapha phase. Kapha is the “water and earth” dosha. If you think about a small child, they have that soft, hydrated baby skin and sweet chubbiness that warrants all day cuddling.

The next stage in life is the teen and young adult years or the “Pitta phase” (fire and water. Adolescence is filled with Pitta fire—rebelliousness, inflammatory responses (i.e. acne and a fiery attitude). Our overly dramatic and emotional responses at that stage are a clear combination of fire (excessive and dramatic) and water (emotion).

After that it's adulthood. Every year that goes by, Vata becomes more prevalent if we don't take the necessary and preventative measures to balance excess Vata. In fact, an imbalanced Vata dosha is often referred to as being “Vata deranged.” It's no coincidence that this stage in life can bring about AD and other neurodegenerative disorders.

No matter your dosha, we should all strive to balance Vata. Here are some ayurvedic ways to do so:

Still the mind. The number one prescribed remedy for a Vata imbalance is meditation. Using a mantra during meditation can make it easier for the mind to center. If your mind is going at a rate of a thousand miles a minute, a simple yet profound “So Hum” mantra can be a returning point for an overactive mind.

1. Simply close the eyes and breathe in deeply and slowly while mentally ‘saying’ the sound “so” and on the exhale, hear the sound “hum.”
2. Repeat the “so hum” mantra for 20-30 minutes twice daily.



3. If your mind begins to wander, gently bring your focus back to the mantra and the breath.

Warm your veggies. According to ayurveda, a completely raw food diet is actually not recommended for the Vata dosha. Vatas are known to have a sensitive digestive system. Raw foods are cooling and more challenging to break down, which can deplete the agni (digestive fire).

I'm not saying cook your food to death, but warming at least some of your food and incorporating warming spices into your diet can help by beginning the breaking down process of the food as well as providing some much needed warmth to a weak agni.

Oil, oil and more oil. It may seem too simple to make a big difference, but oil is seriously a magic potion. Vatas don't just suffer from dry skin, they also tend towards a dry digestive system, nervous system and brain.

Nervous system disorders or *VataVyadhi* in Sanskrit, are thrown out of balance by the Vata “wind” energy that moves throughout the brain and the nerves, controlling both voluntary and involuntary movement. Taking oil internally as well as slathering it on topically can be a game changer. It is prescribed to place oil on

the entire body from scalp to feet and everywhere in between and also to taken internally.

1. **SESAME OIL** is a big one for Vata's because of its warming abilities.
2. **COCONUT OIL** is great for brain function, but by itself may be too cooling. Take with cayenne pepper or other warming herbs or mix with heavier oil such as sesame.
3. **EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL** for both skin and internally.
4. **GHEE**, though not technically an oil, is used as such and a very important Ayurvedic food for the Vata dosha.

Ayurvedic healing herbs. Researchers are using ayurvedic medicinal plants called 'nervines' and their constituents to strengthen the nervous system and restore memory. These studies show the presence of many important phytochemical compounds, such as lignans, flavonoids, tannins, polyphenols, sterols, and alkaloids that are presenting a wide range of benefits.

The below ayurvedic medicinal plants have shown promise in reversing Alzheimer's and dementia.

- **Ashwagandha** (*Withania somnifera*)
- **Turmeric** (*Curcuma longa*)
- **Brahmi** (*Bacopa monnieri*)
- **Shankpushpi** (*Convolvulus pluricaulis*)
- **Gotu kola** (*Centella asiatica*)
- **Jyotishmati** (*Celastrus paniculatus*)
- **Jatamansi** (*Nardostachys jatamansi*)
- **Guggulu**

Traditionally these herbs are administered differently than western medicine. Below are a few examples.

1. **NASYA** - This intranasal delivery of medicated oils and dry herbal powders is a practical, rapid, and easy way to deliver the therapeutic herbs into the Central Nervous System (CNS). These medicated oils, require that the herbs be cooked in oil water over a low flame until all of the water evaporates. Recently there has been a growing interest in this intranasal delivery

method as it directly moves across the BBB and targets the CNS, thereby reducing side effects.

2. **ABHYANGA** - A simple massage with an herbalized oil with friction-like and deep strokes. This form of massage heightens the brain function and increases blood flow to the brain. It also reduces levels of cortisol (stress hormone), arginine vasopressin, and a salivary stress protein. It is also believed to relax the tight junctions between endothelial cells in the CNS vessels, allowing entry of 'medicines' into the CNS.

3. **TRANSCRANIAL OLEATION THERAPY** treats nervous system disorders. They are non-invasive therapies such as:

- **Shirodhara and ShiroSeka** - a gentle dripping or continuous stream of warm, herbalized oil on the forehead. Studies suggest that this may influence hormonal and cerebral blood flow. The medicated oil also permeates the skin cells and the frontal lobe and prefrontal cortex.
- **Shirobasti** - Medicated oil is poured and retained on the head in a special cap for 30 to 45 minutes.
- **ShiroAbhyanga** - Medicated oil is smeared on the head followed by a full-body herbalized oil massage.

BY BESS O'CONNOR





SPIRIT

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.”

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Spirituality
& Health

THE SOUL BODY CONNECTION



Redefine Yourself at Midlife

Question: I turn 49 in a few months. I heard that's my personal jubilee year. What is that, exactly?

Rabbi Rami: Leviticus chapter 25 says that every 49 years, all property is returned to its original owners, all debts are canceled, all slaves are freed, and all farmland lays fallow. Apply this to your personal life: For 49 years you've struggled to be the person others said you should be. For 49 years you've done your best to be your best as your family, peer group, and society defined "best." All that ends on your 49th birthday. Take this year to decide for yourself who you want to be. It won't be easy, and it should be done carefully and with compassion for those who may not want to see you change. Seek guidance from a well-trained spiritual director to help you clarify your vision, and share your vision with those affected by it. Then, at 50, begin to make that vision your reality.



Using a Bucket List for Goal Setting

DO YOU HAVE A bucket list—a bunch of things you’d like to achieve before you die? Many people have one, with items on it such as “visit Paris,” or “get scuba certification.” Doctors are now using bucket lists as a way to bring up advance care directives. In a study from the Stanford University School of Medicine, published last week in the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 91 percent of the patients surveyed had bucket lists, making them a surprisingly common opportunity for difficult, end-of-life discussions. But we don’t need to wait until we are facing down a life-threatening illness to use a bucket list for goal setting. Let’s look at how to use a bucket list as a way to calibrate happiness. As the researchers wrote, a bucket list “provides a very nice framework for thinking about your life goals, health and mortality.”

1. What’s on the list? According to the Stanford study, bucket lists tend to fall into six general themes: travel, personal accomplishments (like running a marathon), life milestones (making it to a certain anniversary, for example), quality time, financial stability and daring activities (skydiving, anyone?).

2. What’s most important to you? In the context of the Stanford study, this means having doctors suss out

what is most relevant in a patient’s life and coming up with the best possible care plan based on that. For example, one patient wanted to bring his family to Hawaii and worked with his doctor to delay gall bladder cancer treatment for two weeks. The takeaway: What’s at the top of your list?

3. Time-chunk It. Break the bucket list item that is most important to you down into smaller goals. Let’s say you want to go to Tahiti. Working backwards from that goal, spot smaller goals, such as setting a target date for the trip, creating a budget, and obtaining a passport. Put these mini goals onto a timeline, and break them down further into actionable items on a to-do list or calendar.

Ready to take action? You could write a bucket list in any old notebook. . . . Or, you can order a personalized bucket list from an artist on a site such as Etsy. You could also put technology to use and share your bucket list publicly on a website like [BucketList.com](#), where users share ideas and support, or keep track of your list and goals via a mobile app, such as Soon, iWish, BUCKitDREAM or My Bucket List.

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



Playing an Instrument Might Help You Age Better

BEING A LONGTIME MUSICIAN AIDS IN REACTION TIMES.

MY DAUGHTER RECENTLY STARTED violin lessons. While I'll admit there's quite a bit of squawking involved, my husband and I are soothed, knowing that the music training is doing good things for our daughter. Mastering a musical instrument contributes to academic success, boosts reading and language skills, and helps develop character traits such as discipline and perseverance. A new study published in the journal **Brain and Cognition** suggests that being musical may even alter how she ages.

The study, conducted at the Université de Montréal's School of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology, showed that musicians have faster reaction times to sensory stimuli than people who have not studied music.

Study participants included two groups: some were musicians, who had started playing between the ages of 3 and 10 and had at least seven years of training, while others were non-musicians. They sat in a room with one hand on a computer mouse and the other hand on a box that would vibrate occasionally. They were told to click the mouse if they heard a sound from speakers in the

room, or if the box vibrated, or if both happened. Each of these cues—the audio from the speaker, the tactile of the box moving, and the two combined, was done 180 times. The researchers found a significantly faster reaction times for the musicians, across all three of the types of stimulation.

“These results suggest for the first time that long-term musical training reduces simple non-musical auditory, tactile and multisensory reaction times,” wrote the study's lead researcher, Simon Landry, who is pursuing a doctorate degree in biomedical science. “The more we know about the impact of music on really basic sensory processes, the more we can apply musical training to individuals who might have slower reaction times,” Landry wrote.

What does all this have to do with aging? As humans get older, “we know their reaction times get slower. So if we know that playing a musical instrument increases reaction times, then maybe playing an instrument will be helpful for them.”

Playing an instrument, it seems, affects the senses in ways that are not always related strictly to music.

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



The Heart of Money: When Should I Retire?

Question: I retired at age 55 and hated it, so I went to work as a barista—and love it. I am 73 now, and getting pressure from my kids, ex-wife, and a few friends to retire. Frankly, I don't know what I would do with myself. I am fit and happy and would love to die of a heart attack while making a flat white. Economically, I could quit, but why?

Paul Sutherland: My definition of retirement is working when you want, how you want, if you want, and where you want. It sounds to me like you are retired already. I wrote the book and have studied retirement my whole career. So here are some thoughts:

1. Age is meaningless. I live in Uganda, where it is not uncommon to find 30-year-old grandmothers, and anyone over the age of 45 is considered *old*. When I lived on Maui, I got up at 4:00 a.m. to be in the office at 4:30 (9:30 EST, when the New York Stock Exchange opens). About three times a week, as I drove to work, I would see a biker heading in the opposite direction: an 88-year-old man who regularly biked from sea level to the top of the 10,000+ foot Haleakala Crater. Today, while picking up my 10-, 8-, and 5-year-old boys from school, accompanied by my 23-year-old son, I was chatting with a father who was picking up his 8-year-old daughter. I introduced my kids, and he said, “I have a 43-year-old son and a few kids in between my 8-year-old and him.” He was happy and laid-back. I’m sure you’ve met 35-year-olds who are dead inside and 90-year-olds still happily exploring every moment of life.

2. Hang out with people who love life and want to live forever. We become like the people with whom we associate. So, if you want to choose to feel old and run-down, then join the crowd that defines “retired” as “just waiting to die.” If you want to be young, then be active in the world of ideas: read, exercise, work, volunteer, do activities that are meaningfully important to you.

3. Never let your age be an excuse. I hear people of all ages, but mostly those over 40, wishing they had more options, saying, “I wish I had chosen a better job / got a different degree / saved more / got better investment returns, because then I could have the life I want.” I counsel that life lasts a long time, and there is no rule-book that orders which life events must happen at certain ages. Harland Sanders opened his first KFC when he was 62, Diane Rehm’s eponymous radio show was not syndicated nationally on NPR until she was 59, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* when he was 50, and Duncan Hines introduced his baked goods to the world when he was 72. I’ve met a 50-year-old woman who just started medical school, and I know an 88-year-old woman who still works a regular retail job. The latter is my mother, who calls the period in life after the children are grown the “My Turn” period. Today, thankfully,

equality is becoming more mainstream and spouses can share the responsibilities of family, kids, finances, and career and not wait till the kids are gone to have a more balanced life.

4. Live ready to fail. Why don’t more people quit their job and go back to school at 50, become an artist at 60, or pivot toward a passion? Often this is simply due to a fear of failure, or of not succeeding. We find we reach “retirement” age never really having risked anything—we have safe relationships, safe work, safe 2.3 kids, safe schools, safe neighborhood, safe TV channels, safe friends, safe religion—and mostly never rocking the boat of our life or having an opinion with an edge. So, do the things you want to do! Why? Simply because you want to do them. If your kids, ex, or friends question your sanity, reply, “Why not?”

5. Aging is an adventure, and all of life is about connection. Every conflict, every pain, every tired muscle, and every relationship is an adventure. None of us, whether 16 or 66, knows what tomorrow may bring. The joy comes in seeing this unknown as an adventure. Focus your retirement years on connection. What connects you to your soul? What connects you to those you love? And what connects you to the friends you haven’t yet met (also known as strangers)? The happiest retired people I know experience a deep connection to one or more of these three things. Connection to others and to ourselves gives us meaning and purpose in our life.

I’m not sure that you owe anyone any explanation for how you spend your retirement years. But whenever someone asks me a question that makes me uncomfortable, I try to take a step back and examine what offends me and where the person may be coming from. Does your daughter worry that your barista job is taking time away from her children’s relationship with Grandpa? Are your friends worried about your health? Perhaps your ex is simply jealous of your extra income? It never hurts to consider things from someone else’s point of view, and it also never hurts to have a simple response when friends ask why you are working: “Why not?”

BY PAUL SUTHERLAND



Field of Dreams

SOME GUYS BUY A SPORTS CAR, HAVE AN AFFAIR,
OR GET A TATTOO . . .

A SINGULAR REGRET has dogged me into middle age: the way I betrayed baseball. I loved the game—played it whenever I could, collected boxfuls of cards, delighted in watching the Twins, memorized their batting averages. At 16, I was a starting outfielder for my high-school jayvee team. Until the day a buddy told me he had a bag of pot, and I skipped practice to get stoned with him. I didn't know how to excuse my absence to the coach the next day, so I skipped practice and got stoned again. The day after that, I simply turned in my uniform. My blooming drug addiction had been engulfing my life; baseball became its latest casualty.

I sobered up senior year, played some softball in college, married, and started raising kids. One constant—in addition to my sobriety—remained my love of baseball. I devoured books and articles on the subject, continued to follow the Twins, made pilgrimages to famous ballparks, and wrote countless articles and three books of my own about this great game.

*I can catch this, I thought excitedly,
and I shoved my glove high to snag
the drive—but felt only emptiness.
The ball whizzed past. Dammit.*

Back on the field coaching my son's Little League team, the thwack of the ball in my glove, the dust kicked up in the infield, and the weight of a bat in my hands reminded me how much I had enjoyed playing when I was younger. I couldn't help but wonder what if I had not skipped practice that fateful afternoon—would I still ache to play again?

I mentioned this to a guy at my 12-step meeting who played in a 35-over league. Next day, a friend of his who managed another team in the league called. Which is how I wound up in left field on a cloudless Wednesday evening in June. Two months shy of my 48th birthday, I hadn't played competitive baseball in 31 years. But I didn't want to pass up the chance to reverse a wayward decision—nay, impulse—of my youth.

I was still fit, but on my way to the park I had worried that I might be on my way to humiliation. Once there, I introduced myself to the other guys and discovered that several were new, as well. Turned out half a dozen guys from last year's Rockets had defected to other teams, and the regulars were just happy to have a full roster.

The manager gave me a maroon jersey with a big R on the chest and a pair of white pants. When I put on the uniform along with my old spikes, I was suddenly a 10-year-old all over again, pretending to be Harmon Killebrew. Jogging out to left field, I couldn't believe I was getting the chance to play baseball again after so many years.

The game was harder to play than I remembered. In the first inning, I started back on a line drive but not nearly fast enough, and the ball soared over my head all

the way to the 340-foot sign. Two foul balls sailed out of my reach, though I could have gotten to the second one in high school. In the third inning, I took off for a shot to left-center. I seemed to have it lined up correctly.


I can catch this, I thought excitedly, and I shoved my glove high to snag the drive—but felt only emptiness. The ball whizzed past. Dammit. I cut sharply to give chase and my right glute protested. I got the ball back to the infield—at least I hit the cutoff man—but the pain in my buttocks reminded me I was no longer a teenager.

Batting proved even more difficult. The first pitch that screamed past—Strike!—let me know that this was leagues different from the tennis balls my 10-year-old threw me in the front yard. I popped up meekly in front of the plate.

In the bottom half of the final frame, I batted with two on, one out. I didn't want to mess up in the midst of our last-chance rally. The count mounted to 3-2. *Okay*, I told myself, like I told the kids I coached, *protect the plate*. I choked up. The pitch missed wide. I eventually scored on another walk. From the dugout, I watched our third baseman, a grandfather, ground out with the bases loaded to seal our loss.

I finished the night oh-for-three with a walk and a run scored. I handled five balls in the field, made one throwing error, and suffered a slight muscle pull that promised to be sore the next day. I carried home the memory of standing in the outfield grass under the blue sky, tickled by joy, and thinking, *Thank you*.

BY JOHN ROSENGREN

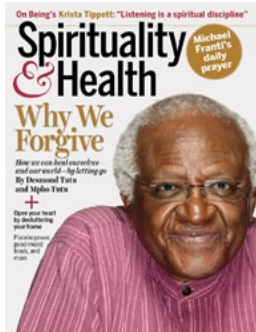


“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.”

— SOPHIA LOREN

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