



KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING 101

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What you do today will affect your future. Nowhere is this as true as it is in issues regarding aging. The way you take care of yourself through the years, both physically and mentally, will impact the natural process of aging. No one knows this better than centenarians, people who are 100 years old and older. Centenarian studies demonstrate that life does not diminish with aging. In fact, 100-year-olds are teaching us that the acceptance of aging can be positive, joyful and exciting. They demonstrate that aging brings new experiences, knowledge, wisdom and a greater ability to engineer a positive approach to the aging process. Many centenarians contribute their longevity to the following:

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- A positive attitude affects overall happiness, health and well-being. A positive attitude can also help you better manage life's transitions and challenges.

EATING SMART AND HEALTHY

- Eating right can help prevent illness and chronic disease. It can also provide you with more energy so that you can be alert and a better decision-maker. Eating healthy includes a well-balanced diet and a healthy relationship with food.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Regular exercise is associated with decreased death and/or disability from diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer. It is also associated with positive psychological benefits such as improved quality of life. The most important thing to remember about exercise is to do it. Make exercise a habit.

BRAIN ACTIVITY

- A healthy brain is crucial to survival, growth and everyday successes. Similar to the rest of the body, the brain needs exercise and maintenance in order to optimize and protect its current and future health. In particular, the brain needs socialization, mental stimulation, physical activity, nutrition and sleep.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY

- Engaged people are often healthier, happier, less depressed and demonstrate enhanced brain vitality. Social activity also improves academic performance, inspires a positive attitude, enhances self-esteem, connects you to family and peers and reduces the risk of illnesses and disease.

TUNING IN TO THE TIMES

- Staying in tune to the times throughout life promotes lifelong learning, which increases knowledge, problem solving and decision making. Staying on top of the latest technology and keeping up with the news also enhances brain stimulation and helps broaden social opportunities and networks.

SAFETY

- Practicing safety is important because it helps keep you out of harm's way. From locking doors to learning how to swim, it is important to be safe in the various realms of life including home, transportation, health, recreation and emergency preparedness.

KNOW YOUR HEALTH NUMBERS

- Certain health numbers can save and extend your life. These numbers are associated with cholesterol, blood pressure, triglycerides, blood sugar, body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference. A lifestyle including regular visits to a health care provider, proper nutrition and physical activity promotes these numbers and contribute to healthy aging throughout the lifespan.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Appropriate stress is healthy and useful; however, when stress overwhelms you, it can become distress, causing anxiety, tension, irritability and a number of health problems. Learning what causes stress and how to manage it in positive ways helps you to cope and live a more balanced, healthy life.

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

- Good financial management is important whether you earn minimum wage or are a millionaire. The first step to healthy financial management is to balance income with expenses. With a money management and spending plan in place, you are more likely to meet your financial goals.

SLEEP

- Sleep has a major impact on overall health and quality of life, including the way we look, feel and perform on a daily basis. Our bodies need sleep to repair muscles, consolidate memories and regulate hormones and appetite. When you sleep well, you wake up feeling refreshed and alert for daily activities. Sleep prepares you to concentrate, make decisions and fully engage in school, work and social activities.

TAKING TIME FOR YOU

- In today's busy world, you juggle multiple priorities and responsibilities. You make time for others before making time for yourself. Taking time for yourself is to take care of you, which makes you a better family member, friend, co-worker, caregiver or leader. If it is just for 10 minutes a day, a time out is good for your mind, body and soul.

CONCLUSION

Since there is no magic potion to stop the aging process, it is important to take care of your body, mind and spirit throughout your whole life. These 12 keys, and many additional healthy behavior practices, encourage optimal aging throughout the lifespan.

REFERENCES

Keys to Embracing Aging Program Publications:

- Attitude Is Everything...Be Positive
- Eating Smart and Healthy
- Physical Activity
- Brain Activity
- Social Activity
- Tuning in to the Times
- Practice Being Safe
- Know Your Health Numbers
- Stress Management
- Financial Affairs
- Sleep
- Taking Time for You



KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Attitude Is Everything...Be Positive

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Because the connection between the mind and body is so strong, an overall positive attitude, including an upbeat outlook on life, can affect overall happiness, health and well-being. Similar to eating well and getting plenty of exercise, good health practices should be a habit that starts early in life (Phillips and Ferguson, 2013). A positive attitude can impact mental health and physical functioning including the ability to fight disease and infection. Attitude can also affect relationships and social networks and can help make success in life more likely. The bottom line: being more positive across the lifespan causes less stress and enables people to live healthier, happy lives (Lawson, 2009; Mayo Clinic, 2011; White, 2012).

Attitude affects:

- How successful you are in achieving your academic, work and personal goals.
- How you feel and look mentally and physically.
- What you do and say.

Do you have a positive attitude?

- Are you optimistic, easygoing or extroverted?
- Are you willing to learn no matter how difficult it is?
- Do you laugh a lot or have a sense of humor by not taking yourself too seriously?
- Do you express emotions rather than bottle them up?
- Do you do your best when studying/working and try to improve how you do your work?
- Do you demonstrate enthusiasm in whatever you say and do?
- Do you welcome challenges, experiments or try new ideas?

DEVELOP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- Be confident.
- Be positive.
- Be patient.
- Be a goal setter.
- Be a hard worker.
- Be fun (don't take yourself too seriously).
- Be accepting of change.

ACCEPTING CHANGE

Being able to accept and adapt to change plays an important role in having a positive attitude (Levy et al., 2002), especially as life is filled with ups and downs. A positive attitude allows you to meet such challenges – both the good and bad – with less resistance. In this position, you are much more open to learn from mistakes, research what it is you may want or see the possibility of new and/or better opportunities. When you approach change with rigid thoughts or feelings of apprehension, strain and stress are more likely to result, leaving you overwhelmed and more susceptible to a sense of failure and even depression.

DO THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY

According to Martin Seligman, Ph.D., the creator of positive psychology, everybody has a right to be happy. Dr. Seligman also believes that happiness helps provide a sense of purpose in life because it is something that we can create and nurture. The Pursuit of Happiness organization has identified seven habits of happy people. Happy people:

- Build close relationships
- Care for others
- Engage in healthy, active lifestyles
- Embrace spirituality
- Practice positive thinking
- Embrace a hobby or activity
- Identify strengths

ATTITUDE AND AGING

A positive attitude about growing old throughout the lifespan can help you live longer, yet we grow up in a society that constantly reinforces negative stereotypes of old age and aging. We grow up thinking that old age is terrible. We associate “old” with senility, crankiness and frailty. When primed with such negativity throughout life, we are more likely to believe such stereotypes and live up to those low expectations, thus performing at lower functioning levels in old age. It is therefore important that we recognize and value the contributions, accomplishments and wisdom of senior adults. Such a societal change in attitude towards aging will affect both today’s and tomorrow’s seniors for the better. When armed with a sense of happiness and purpose, older adults are more apt to suppress negative thoughts and carry on as competent and productive members of society, regardless of age or ability.

CONCLUSION

Everyone has a bad day, but in general, a positive attitude and happy outlook can help pull you through life’s challenges. Such an upbeat and proactive outlook on life, over time, can contribute to better health, optimal aging and longevity.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Eating Smart and Healthy

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Eating is an activity that most of do at least three times a day. We eat because food appeals to our taste buds. We eat because it is a social activity. We also eat because food is good for us. Eating provides our body with energy so that we can breathe and function. It also has an impact on our overall health. Nutritious foods, combined with physical activity, help us maintain a healthy body and protect us against various illnesses, disorders and chronic conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, bone loss, cancer, dementia and obesity (CDC, 2011; USDA, 2011). Diet and nutrition can also help reduce high blood pressure, lower cholesterol, manage arthritis, maintain healthy skin, hair and nails, and manage diabetes (USDA, 2014). It is never too late to start eating well. Smart, nutritious eating contributes to health and well-being at any age.

HOW TO EAT SMART AND HEALTHY

Examine your relationship with food.

- **Find healthy alternatives.** Do you turn to unhealthy foods when you are stressed? If so, find a substitute food or activity. For example, instead of grabbing a candy bar to de-stress, eat a carrot, go for a walk or call a friend to relieve the stress.
- **Think of food in terms of nutrition.** Are you eating because you are hungry, need the energy, you are bored or because you are in a social setting? Instead of eating just to eat, think about food in terms of what it does to keep your body healthy and functioning. Before you eat that cookie, ask yourself if it will help your body function better.
- **Seek help if you have an unhealthy relationship with food.** Are you an emotional eater, turning to food when you are stressed out, angry or sad? Do you withdraw from food as a way to maintain control? Unhealthy food relationships are destructive both mentally and physically and can cause severe long-term health problems. Overeating and undereating are eating disorders classified and treated as mental health illnesses. Unhealthy relationships with food occur for a number of reasons including genetic predisposition, societal pressures on appearance, body image and poor diet practices (Eating Disorders Coalition, 2008). Professionals, such as therapists/counselors, medical providers, nutritionists and university health services, can help you work through the problem or prescribe the appropriate care. Unhealthy food relationships are treatable.

Eat a variety of nutritious foods.

It is important to eat a variety of nutritious foods from all of the food groups. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) newest nutrition guide is called MyPlate. MyPlate reinforces that a well-balanced, well-portioned meal should include approximately 30 percent grains, 30 percent vegetables, 20 percent fruits and 20 percent protein, in addition to a small portion of low-fat dairy, such as a cup of low-fat/nonfat milk or a cup of yogurt. MyPlate also recommends reductions in sodium and sugar intake.

- **Fruits and vegetables** – The USDA recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables (USDA, 2011). Fruits and vegetables are keys to promoting health, especially those that are rich in vitamins, nutrients and antioxidants such as berries, citrus fruits, tomatoes, broccoli and spinach. People who eat generous amounts of fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of chronic disease, including stroke, heart diseases, diabetes and certain cancers (CDC, 2011). Fruits and veggies can also help you manage weight and reduce the risk of obesity.

- **Grains** – The USDA recommends that at least half of the grains you eat should be whole grains versus refined grains (2011). Whole grains are made from the entire grain kernel, which includes bran, germ and endosperm. Refined grains are those that have been milled to have the bran and the germ removed. While this improves shelf life, crucial dietary components such as fiber, iron and many B vitamins are taken out. Whole grains such as oats, whole wheat crackers, bread and pasta, wild and brown rice provide an instant boost of fiber, which can relieve constipation, make you feel fuller longer and help keep your weight under control. Whole grains are also associated with improvement in cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease and prevention of certain cancers (Mayo Clinic, 2014).
- **Protein** – Approximately one quarter of your plate should contain protein (USDA, 2011). Protein is a nutrient that the body needs to grow, repair and maintain itself. Protein acts as a foundation for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin and blood. By choosing lean or low-fat protein choices, you are building a strong foundation and receiving multiple vitamins and minerals such as B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, zinc and magnesium. Both animal and plant foods contain protein; thus diets should include a variety of lean meats, poultry, beans, peas, nuts and eggs to improve nutrient intake and health benefits (USDA, 2011). It is also important to eat at least 2 servings of fish per week. Seafood contains significant amounts of beneficial nutrients that prevent heart disease, specifically the omega-3 fatty acids (AHA, 2012).
- **Calcium and vitamin D** – From the time we are born and throughout our lifetime, we need calcium. Calcium helps cells and nerves function, blood clot, muscles contract, the heart beat and bones and joints stay strong (NIH, 2011). Additional health benefits of calcium include a decreased risk of osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and hypertension. Dairy products, which are great sources of calcium, include milk, plain yogurt and cheese. To avoid empty calories and excess fat, choose fat-free or low-fat products and avoid foods that have been sweetened by added sugars (flavored milk, yogurt and frozen desserts) (USDA, 2011). Some non-dairy products that contain calcium include broccoli, almonds, kale, soy and oranges. In general, if you are not drinking 3 cups of milk daily, starting at age 9, or taking calcium supplements, you are likely not getting enough calcium (USDA, 2011).

Vitamin D helps the body absorb and metabolize calcium more effectively. Vitamin D comes from fortified dairy products, cod liver oil and fatty fish as well as exposure to direct sunlight (about 15 minutes a day).

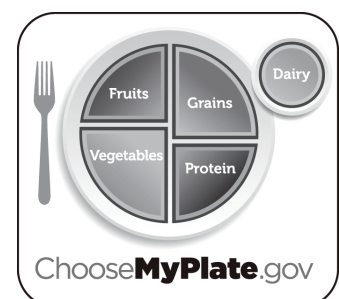
The amount of calcium you need each day depends on your age. The National Institutes of Health and Institute of Medicine recommend the following amounts of daily calcium in milligrams (mg):

0-6 months (ideally breast milk)	200 mg
7-12 months (ideally breast milk)	260 mg
1-3 years	700 mg
4-8 years	1,000 mg
9-18 years	1,300 mg
19-50 years	1,000 mg
51-70 years	1,000 mg (men); 1,200 mg (women)
71+ years	1,200 mg
Pregnant and breastfeeding teens	1,300 mg
Pregnant and breastfeeding adults	1,000 mg

Sources: NIH Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet: Calcium retrieved from <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Calcium-QuickFacts/>; Institute of Medicine: Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D retrieved from <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Dietary-Reference-Intakes-for-Calcium-and-Vitamin-D.aspx>.

MyPlate

- make half of your plate fruits and vegetables
- make the other half of your plate grains and protein
- make at least half of your grains whole grains
- try lean meats, skinless poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts
- choose low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products
- enjoy limited amounts of fats, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars (USDA, 2012)



Don't skip breakfast.

Many people don't make time, think they don't need breakfast or may not even feel hungry enough in the morning to eat. But breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A small nutritious breakfast, such as a piece of fruit and a cup of green tea, is better than no breakfast. Research demonstrates that children who eat breakfast perform better and have fewer behavior problems in school (Affenito, 2007). In addition, a well-balanced breakfast:

- provides you with energy and increases physical activity during the day.
- gets your metabolism started for the day and keeps it active throughout the morning.
- reduces hunger later in the day and prevents you from overeating.
- positively affects mood, patience and cognitive performance.

Control your portions.

The amount you eat is just as important as what you eat. Too many calories, fat and bad cholesterol are often a result of people putting too much food on their plate, taking seconds or eating until they feel full (Clover Way, 2013). A **portion** is the amount of food you put on your plate; whereas, a **serving** is a specific amount of food defined by a common measurement, such as a cup or a tablespoon. For example, one serving size of cooked pasta is a half cup. But the typical portion we are likely to eat is at least double this – especially in a restaurant. To help with portion control, pay close attention to appropriate serving sizes and the number of servings you eat (Clover Way, 2013).

Everything in moderation.

You may decide you are going to give up bad fat or sugar completely. Most of us will eventually break down and binge. Instead, reward yourself. If you go all week without eating a sugar-laden dessert, treat yourself at the end of the week with a few bites of a hot fudge sundae. This gives you something to look forward to and provides you with strength to power through the week. It's important that you eat healthy foods most of the time.

According to the CDC (2014) and USDA (2010), drinking alcohol in moderation is defined as having up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men. This definition is referring to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days.

Drink more water.

Every system in your body needs water. Water flushes out toxins, carries nutrients to cells, provides a moist environment for ear, nose and throat tissues and aids in digestion (Mayo Clinic, 2011; USDA 2011). The water lost from everyday tasks such as breathing, perspiration and digestion must be replenished or else you will become dehydrated. Dehydration can leave you feeling sluggish or tired. Severe dehydration can even lead to confusion and changes in heart rate. Fluid intake varies from person to person depending on environment, activity level and health. On average, you should drink enough fluid, primarily water, so that you rarely feel thirsty and produce about 6.3 or more cups of colorless or light yellow urine (Mayo Clinic, 2011). If you are concerned about your water intake, your health care provider can help you determine an amount that is right for you.

Water also helps you feel full. If you feel like snacking, drink a full glass of water first. Sometimes we confuse hunger for thirst. If after 15 minutes you are still hungry, then grab a healthy snack. Water is also a good substitute for juices or sodas high in sugar or artificial sweeteners.

Give It aTry! Shop the Perimeter.

Next time you're at the supermarket, make it your goal to fill up three-fourths of your cart with foods from the perimeter of the store. Oftentimes, the perimeter is where you will find nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, fresh meats and seafood, dairy, whole-wheat bread products and other healthy options (Mayo Clinic, 2014). Down the aisles is usually where you will find the processed, sugary, salty and high-calorie foods.

Get the skinny on fat.

Fats are an important part of a healthy diet (Mayo, 2014). Fats provide essential fatty acids, keep skin soft, deliver vitamins and are a great source of energy. But there are two kinds of fat from which we have to choose – unsaturated (healthy fat) and saturated (unhealthy fat) (Mayo, 2014).

Unsaturated fats include both polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAS) and monounsaturated fats (MUFUS) (Mayo, 2014). MUFUS helps lower cholesterol, reduce the risk of heart disease and may even influence insulin levels and blood sugar, which can be helpful for those with type 2 diabetes (Mayo, 2014). PUFAS improve cholesterol and can decrease the risk of heart disease. PUFAS are found in vegetable oils, salmon, trout, mackerel, flaxseed and walnuts. Omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat associated with heart health. Omega-3 fatty acids can be found in fatty fish, such as salmon and tuna (Mayo, 2014). MUFUS are found primarily in the form of olive, canola and peanut oils, but can also be found in olives, avocados, hazelnuts, almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, sesame seeds and pumpkin seeds. Monosaturated fats are also a good source of Vitamin E, an antioxidant that helps heal, repair and rejuvenate. Mediterranean diets are often high in monosaturated fats.

The unhealthy fats that should be eaten sparingly include **saturated** and **trans fatty acids**. Both can raise cholesterol levels, clog arteries and increase the risk for heart disease (Mayo, 2014). Saturated fats are found naturally in animal products, such as meat, poultry skin, high-fat dairy and eggs, and in vegetable fats that are solid at room temperature, such as coconut and palm oils. Trans fats can occur naturally, as in dairy products and the fatty part of meat, and it can be added to foods artificially. Artificial trans fats cause great health concerns as even small amounts can increase the risk for heart disease. They are used in frying, baked goods, cookies, icings, packaged snack foods, microwave popcorn and some margarines. The American Heart Association (2012) advises less than 7 percent of total daily calories from saturated fat and less than 1 percent from trans fats. For a 2,000-calorie diet, that allows 15g of saturated fat and 2 g of trans fats.

The bottom line, total fat intake should be limited to less than 20-35 percent of your total daily calories from fat, or 44-78 grams of total fat for a 2,000-calorie diet (Mayo, 2014).

Fight cholesterol.

Good fat and bad fat contribute to cholesterol, a waxy, fat-like substance that is found in all cells of the body (Mayo, 2014). While your body makes all the cholesterol it needs to make hormones, vitamin D and substances that help you digest foods, cholesterol is also found in some of the foods you eat. Unsaturated fats (MUFUS and PUFAS) are good fats that you should consume fairly regularly. They help lower the LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) in your body by raising the good cholesterol (HDL cholesterol) (Mayo, 2014). Foods that are high in unsaturated fats include olive oil, nuts, fish oil and various seed oils. Saturated fats and trans fats such as animal fats and solid butter or shortening are high in the kind of fats that raise your LDL cholesterol levels and consequently your risk for heart disease (Mayo, 2014).

Just say NO to sodium.

An excess intake of sodium, or table salt, can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure and kidney disease (CDC, 2011). While sodium is naturally found in some foods, the majority of sodium intake comes from processed foods, restaurant foods and the salt we personally add at the table or while cooking. The average American consumes 3,436 mg of sodium daily (CDC, 2011). It is recommended that everyone, including children, should limit their intake of sodium to less than 2,300 milligrams per day (about 1 teaspoon of salt). For adults age 51 and older, African Americans of any age and those with hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease, salt intake should be limited to less than 1,500 milligrams per day (about 2/3 of a teaspoon of salt) (USDA, 2011).

To reduce daily sodium intake (NIH, 2008):

- Keep the salt shaker off of the dinner table.
- Choose foods that have “low sodium,” “reduced sodium” or “sodium free” labels.
- When eating out, ask for low-sodium dishes or ask for no salt to be added.
- Enjoy home-cooked meals so you can control the amount of salt.
- When cooking, replace salt with other heart-healthy herbs and spices such as cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, cayenne, oregano, ginger, thyme and rosemary or add a splash of fresh lemon juice.
- Pay attention to condiments like soy sauce, ketchup and seasoning packets that can have excess sodium.

Consume less sugar.

Added sugars are often hidden ingredients that are dense in calories and have zero nutrients. Typically, added sugars can be found in breads, canned soups, canned vegetables, pasta sauces, instant mashed potatoes, frozen dinners, fast food, ketchup, fruit juices, flavored water and soft drinks. Hidden sugars will be listed on ingredients labels as fructose, corn syrup or corn sweetener, fruit juice concentrate, molasses, brown rice syrup, cane or sugar cane juice, fruit nectar, sucrose, glucose, crystal dextrose or maltose (USDA, 2011). Added sugars can lead to tooth decay and adverse health effects such as obesity, lower HDL levels, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes (AAFP, 2010). The American Heart Association recommends no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugar per day for women and no more than 9 teaspoons per day for men. Keep in mind that 4 grams of sugar equals 1 teaspoon (AHA, 2014).

To reduce added sugar intake (AAFP, 2010; AHA, 2012):

- Eat fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables
- Avoid canned fruits in syrup, particularly heavy syrup
- Choose low-carbohydrate, low-sugar or sugar-free versions of syrup, pasta, bread, ice cream and beverages
- Limit candy, baked goods and other sweet treats
- Opt for water instead of sugary fruit drinks, sodas and sweet teas
- Limit processed foods that are typically high in sugar, fat and sodium
- Enhance foods with spices instead of sugar

“Carb” up the healthy way.

Many diet trends warn you to stay away from carbohydrates because they will cause you to gain weight. But the body needs carbohydrates to properly function. Carbohydrates provide energy, protect against disease and can actually help control weight. The trick is choosing healthy carbohydrates. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise that 45 to 65 percent of total daily calories should come from carbohydrates. This is between 900 and 1,300 calories a day if you eat a 2,000-calorie diet. There are three main types of carbohydrates: sugars, starches and fibers (Mayo Clinic, 2011). For the best carbohydrates, aim for fiber-rich fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, beans and legumes that are usually high in vitamins, nutrients and fiber. These types of carbohydrates are filling and slow to digest, which helps keep the digestive system running smoothly (Mayo Clinic, 2011). Limit added sugars and refined grains, including candy, sweets and sugary drinks. These are packed with calories and little nutrition.

Eat smart while eating out.

Eating out is a great opportunity to try new foods, have a night out with friends and family or have a meal prepared for you while you relax. It can be easy to consume foods that are large in portion, calories, rich in bad fat, excess sodium and sugar. To eat smart when eating out:

- Order your food baked, broiled or grilled instead of fried
- Substitute – instead of French fries, ask for a salad, fruit or vegetable of the day
- Choose dishes without gravies or creamy sauces
- Avoid dishes described with words such as creamy, buttery, fried, crispy, smothered, breaded, alfredo, hollandaise, au gratin and smothered
- Ask for dressings on the side or choose a low-fat option
- Split a meal with a friend – it saves calories and money
- Try fruit for dessert

Count your calories.

Depending on your body size, metabolism, activity level and age, the number of daily calories (energy) you need to properly function may vary. Based on activity level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) recommend the following daily caloric intake as defined by age, gender and physical activity level. Always talk with a health care provider before making any major dietary changes.

Gender	Age (years)	Sedentary*	Moderately Active**	Active***
Child (female and male)	2-3	1,000-1,200	1,000-1,400	1,000-1,400
Females	4-8	1,200-1,400	1,400-1,600	1,400-1,800
	9-13	1,400-1,600	1,600-2,000	1,800-2,200
	14-18	1,800	2,000	2,400
	19-30	1,800-2,000	2,000-2,200	2,400
	31-50	1,800	2,000	2,200
	51+	1,600	1,800	2,000-2,200
Male	4-8	1,200-1,400	1,400-1,600	1,600-2,000
	9-13	1,600-2,000	1,800-2,200	2,000-2,600
	14-18	2,000-2,400	2,400-2,800	2,800-3,200
	19-30	2,400-2,600	2,600-2,800	3,000
	31-50	2,200-2,400	2,400-2,600	2,800-3,000
	51+	2,000-2,200	2,200-2,400	2,400-2,800

Sources: Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2010). Retrieved from <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2010/DietaryGuidelines2010.pdf>. National Institute on Aging (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/healthy-eating-after-50>.

* **Sedentary Lifestyle:** light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

** **Moderately Active Lifestyle:** physical activity associated with typical day-to-day living plus physical activity that is equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles at 3 to 4 miles per hour.

*** **Active Lifestyle:** physical activity equal to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life (Dietary Guidelines, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Eating healthy today creates a healthier tomorrow. Healthy eating provides the necessary nutrients that your body needs to create new cells, clean toxins and function every day. Eating right can help prevent future illness and chronic disease. Lastly, eating healthy provides you with more energy so that you can be alert, become a better decision-maker and establish healthy lifestyle behaviors throughout your life that will influence optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Physical Activity

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Regular physical activity is important to both physical and mental health. No matter your size, shape or age, an active lifestyle throughout your lifespan is one of the most important things you can do for well-being.

WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Physical activity includes any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. Walking, gardening, pushing a stroller and climbing the stairs are just a few examples of physical activity that are low in intensity. Exercise is a type of physical activity that is planned and structured for an extended period of time. Exercise often includes more vigor or intensity such as weightlifting, aerobic activity and participating on a sports team.

WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SO IMPORTANT?

- Strengthens bones and muscles
- Improves cardiovascular health
- Maintains or increases range of motion and flexibility
- Protects against certain health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, colon cancer and depression
- Improves mental health and mood
- Improves cognitive functioning
- Protects against dementia, including Alzheimer's disease
- Improves quality of life and ability to do daily activities
- Controls weight
- Increases energy
- Promotes restful sleep
- Reduces the risk of falling
- Contributes to longevity

There are many types of exercise and physical activity. The following information provides various tips to encourage you to be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health and budget. Whether you're just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break or fit enough to run a three-mile race, physical activity is for everyone, including people who are healthy and those who live with ongoing health problems or disability.

TYPES OF EXERCISE

Regardless of your age, weight or athletic ability, physical activity is good for you. In particular, longer, healthier lives are influenced by four main types of physical activity: aerobics, strength training, stretching and balance. Increasing the level of intensity of the exercise, as well as regular participation in all four types of exercises, are ideal for the full health benefits of physical activity.

Aerobic activity uses large muscle groups, can be maintained continuously and is rhythmic in nature. Walking, jogging, dancing and playing tennis are examples of aerobic exercise. Such activity is important because it improves the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system, which can delay and prevent many chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Aerobic activity also improves stamina for daily activities. When performing aerobic activity, there are three factors to keep in mind:

- **Intensity** – the strength and power you put into the activity
- **Frequency** – how often you participate in the activity
- **Duration** – the length of time you perform the activity at one time

Intensity

When exercising, your body speeds up and so does your heart as it works to meet your energy needs. Thus, monitoring your exercise intensity, by working within your target heart rate zone, helps you effectively get the most out of aerobic activity, including improving fitness and burning calories. For most healthy people, the American Heart Association (2012) recommends an exercise target heart rate ranging from 50 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. To calculate heart rate, subtract your age from the number 220.

$$220 - [\text{your age}] = \text{Maximum Heart Rate}$$

If you are 40 years old, your maximum heart rate is 180 beats per minute ($220 - 40 = 180$). Your target heart zone is 90 to 153 beats per minute ($180 \times 50\% = 90$; $180 \times 85\% = 153$).

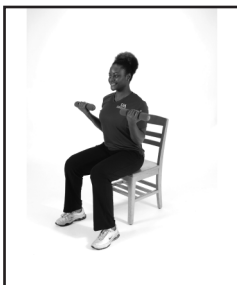
Knowing your target heart rate helps you pace your workouts, avoid burning out or exercising at an intensity level that is too low. To check if you need to intensify your routine or turn it down, you can take your pulse or use a heart rate monitor. To check your pulse, feel for your heart beat by placing your fingers lightly but firmly over the inside of your wrist or place your palm over your heart. Count the number of heartbeats you feel for 10 seconds and then multiply this number by 6 to get your beats per minute. Then compare your actual heart rate to your target heart rate zone.

Frequency and Duration

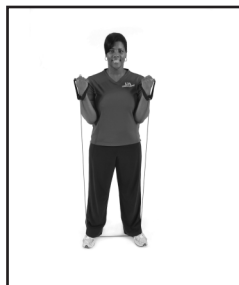
While the minimum recommendation for adult aerobic activity is 150 minutes a week, for added health benefits, adults should ultimately strive to achieve 300 minutes of exercise per week. Aerobic activity should take place *most* days of the week for at least 10 minutes at a time to add up to the recommended 150 minutes. For example, walking from the parking lot to the office or store does not count towards aerobic exercise unless it takes you 10 minutes and you were moving fast enough to meet and maintain your target heart rate. That walk to the store was good physical activity, but it was not exercise. (All physical activity is good, but we are talking about exercise.)

Strength training makes muscles and bones stronger. Such strength allows you to perform daily activities. Strength training also plays a key role in keeping obesity and diabetes at bay by increasing your metabolism, which helps you maintain a healthy weight and ideal blood sugar levels. Strength training can also help prevent the progression of osteoporosis (a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle).

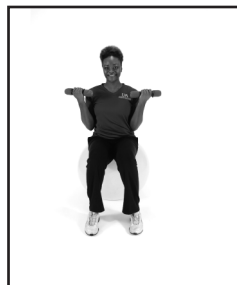
Examples of strength training exercises include lifting or pushing free weights, pulling resistance bands and using strength training equipment at a fitness center or gym. The following pictures are examples of strength training exercises for arm strength called bicep curls. You can perform bicep curls using different equipment.



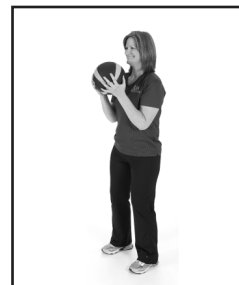
Bicep Curl with Free Weights



Bicep Curl with a Stretch Tube



Bicep Curl with Weights and Stability Ball



Bicep Curl with Medicine Ball

Stretching helps keep your body flexible and limber. Stretching allows muscles and joints to move smoothly and helps give you more freedom of movement to do everyday activities, such as reaching and looking over your shoulder. Although it is often the most overlooked part of an exercise routine, stretching should not be disregarded as it reduces muscle tension, soreness and even low back pain. It increases blood and nutrients to the muscle tissues, improves coordination, contributes to good posture and can even reduce stress. Flexibility will also contribute to your ability to participate in physical activity. Specific stretches are recommended to prevent injuries, but others are recommended to recover from injuries. Flexibility may also play a part in the prevention of falls.

The following pictures highlight a few stretching exercises, including shoulder, back, upper arm, calf and hamstring stretches.



Shoulder Stretch



Back Stretch



Upper Arm Stretch



Calf Stretch



Hamstring Stretch

Balance exercises are recommended specifically for senior adults and adults with balance issues for various reasons. Balance exercises help prevent falls, the most common form of injury and injury-related death among adults age 65 and older. Falling is a major cause of broken hips and other injuries that often lead to disability and loss of independence. Some balance exercises help build muscles while other exercises focus on stability. For adults and senior adults, muscle-strengthening balance exercises, such as front and side leg raises, should be performed two or more days a week. Stability exercises, including forward toe touches and arm reach, should be performed daily. Balance exercises, while not discouraged, are not included in exercise recommendations for children under 18 years of age. Many forms of play, such as walking on a balance beam and hopscotch, enhance balance.

The following pictures demonstrate a variety of balance exercises including strength exercises for the lower body and stability exercises.



Front Leg Raises



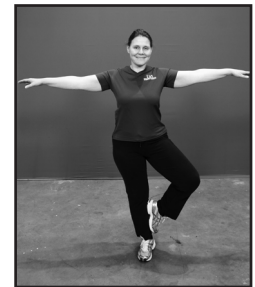
Side Leg Raises



Toe Stands



**Forward
Toe-Touch/Arm
Reach**



Stork Pose

HOW MUCH EXERCISE DO YOU NEED?

In general, some activity is better than no activity. If you are pregnant or recently delivered a baby, live with a disability or chronic medical condition, you should consult with a health care provider. In general, the following exercise guidelines apply:

Infants and Babies (aged 0 to 2)

There are no specific requirements for infants; however, infants/babies/very young children should not be inactive for prolonged periods of time – no more than 1 hour unless they are asleep.

Small Children (aged 2-5)

Toddlers and preschoolers need 90 to 120 minutes of physical activity every day. This activity should be roughly halved between planned exercise and free play physical activity. Small children should not be inactive for more than 2 hours unless they are asleep.

Children and Adolescents (aged 6 to 17)

Children and teenagers need a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity in 15-minute segments or longer every day. Children and adolescents should perform vigorous-intensity aerobic activity and strength training 3 days per week. However, it is important to note that children and adolescents should participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age. For example, muscle and bone strengthening activity for a 7-year-old may include jumping rope and climbing on monkey bars, whereas for a 17-year-old, it may include going to a gym and lifting weights. Children and adolescents also need to stretch.

Adults and Senior Adults (aged 18 and older)

Adults and senior adults should seek 150 minutes of moderate endurance exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise each week. Sounds tough? Not really. Try exercising multiple times per day for short periods of time. For example, 150 weekly minutes can be broken down (approximately) into 20 minutes a day for 7 days a week or 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week or 50 minutes a day for 3 days a week. The goal is to exercise for at least 10 minutes at a time. In addition, adults should stretch daily and strength train all major muscle groups (shoulders, arms, chest, abdomen, back hips, and legs) 2 to 3 days a week with a “rest” day in between the strength training sessions. This “rest” day does not mean to forgo doing the other types of exercises. Adults should also practice balance exercises, as poor balance is a predictor of falling. Many balance exercises begin with good posture.

GETTING STARTED

Sometimes the hardest part of exercising for many is getting started. If this is the case, start out slowly and make it a part of your routine. The National Institutes of Health provides some tips to help you get started and to keep going in their publication, *Exercise and Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging*.

1. Include Physical Activity in Your Everyday Life

Physical activity needs to be a regular, permanent habit to produce benefits. Set yourself up to succeed right from the start by choosing activities that appeal to you, exercising safely, charting your progress to see your success and making your activity routine fit your personal lifestyle. Here are a few ways to make physical activity a regular part of your daily life.

- **Make it a priority.** Many of us lead busy lives, and it’s easy to put physical activity at the bottom of the “to do” list. Make it a point to include physical activities throughout your day. Try being active first thing in the morning before you start your day. Think of your time to exercise as a special appointment, and mark it on your calendar.
- **Make it easy.** If it’s difficult or costs too much, you probably won’t be active. You are more likely to exercise if it’s easy to do. Put your 2-pound weights next to your easy chair so you can strength train while you watch TV.
- **Walk more.** Walking is easy and inexpensive. Walk the entire mall or every aisle of the grocery store when you go shopping. When you go out to get the mail, walk around the block.
- **Make it social.** Enlist a friend or a family member to exercise with you. Many people agree that having an “exercise buddy” keeps them going. If you don’t already have an exercise partner, find one at school, work or join a gym or exercise class.
- **Make it interesting and fun.** Do things you enjoy. If you love the outdoors, try cycling, jogging or hiking. Listen to music or an audiobook while walking, gardening or raking. Plan a hiking trip at a nearby park.

- **Above all, make it an active decision.** Seize opportunities and choose to be active in many places and in many ways.
 - When you unload the groceries, strengthen your arms by lifting the milk carton or a 1-pound can a few times before you put it away.
 - Get off the bus one or two stops earlier than usual.
 - Instead of calling or e-mailing a colleague at work, go in person and take the stairs!
 - Try to do some of your errands on foot rather than in the car.
 - While you're waiting in line, practice your balancing skills by standing on one foot for a few seconds then the other.
 - While you're talking on the phone, stand up and do a few leg raises or toe stands to strengthen your legs.
 - Take advantage of small bits of “down time” to exercise or stretch. For example, while you're waiting for the coffee to brew or for your spouse to get ready to go out, do a few wall push-ups or calf stretches.

2. Try All Four Types of Exercise

Most people tend to focus on one activity or type of exercise and think they're doing enough. The goal is to be creative and choose exercises from each of the four types we've talked about – aerobics, strength training, balance and stretching. Mixing it up will help you reap the benefits of each type of exercise as well as reduce boredom and risk of injury.

3. Plan for Breaks in Your Routine – Life Happens!

Getting older can mean more time for trips to see children and grandchildren or vacations away from home. People retire and move to new houses or even new parts of the country. Sometimes the unexpected happens – family illness, caregiving responsibilities or the death of a loved one. All of these events can interrupt your physical activity routines. These breaks can make it hard or even impossible at times to stick with your regular activities. But you can start again. Here are a few ideas to help you stay active or start again if you've had to stop:

- **Don't be too hard on yourself.** Recognize that there will be times when you don't want to exercise or it feels too hard. You are not alone; everyone has those feelings. Just try to get back to your activities as soon as possible. The sooner you resume some sort of activity, the better you'll feel and the easier it will be to get back into your routine.
- **Talk with your doctor about when you can resume your regular routine** if you stopped exercising because of an illness or new symptoms.
- **Think about the reasons you started exercising** and the goals you set for yourself. Remembering your motivations and how much you've already accomplished may help recharge your batteries and get you started again.
- **Ask family and friends to help you get back on track.** Sometimes, you may want an exercise buddy. At other times, all you may need is a word of support.
- **Try something easier or an activity you haven't done recently** if you don't like the activity you started. You might want to try something you've never done before. Mastering something simple or new may give you the confidence you need to resume a regular exercise program.
- **Talk with your doctor or trainer** to get the boost you need to move past the hurdle.
- **Start again at a comfortable level** if you haven't exercised for several weeks. Then gradually build back up. With a little time, you'll be back on track.
- **Think creatively about other ways to exercise** if you can't do your regular physical activities because of bad weather or a change in your routine. For example, if caring for a loved one is keeping you indoors, try an exercise video, jog in place, dance around your living room, or walk up and down the stairs a few extra times. Just keep moving!
- **Be flexible.** When something prevents you from exercising, like a babysitter cancelling, reschedule or adapt your activity exercise. Exercise during nap time, or take the kids for a walk.
- **Believe in yourself!** Feel confident that even if your activity is interrupted, you can start again and be successful. Don't worry about the time you missed. What's important is to focus on your fitness goals and start again at whatever level is possible for you.

STICKING WITH IT

You're more likely to stay active if you:

- Think you will benefit from your activities
- Include activities you enjoy
- Feel you can do the activities correctly
- Believe the activities are safe
- Have regular access to the activities
- Can fit the activities into your daily schedule
- Find that the activities are affordable
- Can see the benefits of regular exercise and physical activity

CONCLUSION

Regular physical activity throughout the lifespan is one of the most important things you can do for your health and optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Brain Activity

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The brain allows you to interact with the world and understand, analyze and respond to various surroundings. Therefore, a healthy brain is crucial to survival, growth and everyday successes (Smith, 2010). Similar to the rest of the body, the brain needs exercise and maintenance in order to optimize and protect its current and future health. In particular, the brain needs socialization, mental stimulation, physical activity, nutrition and sleep (AARP/Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, 2009; Alzheimer's Association, 2011).

HOW TO STAY MENTALLY FIT

Socialize

Socializing with others provides opportunities for communication, critical thought, creativity and emotional expression. It can also play a role in boosting personal meaning and identity. People who isolate or segregate themselves are at greater risk of developing depression and dementia. Socializing can be easy.

- **Keep in touch with friends and family.** Friends and family can be a simple avenue to maintain a social environment. Busy schedules and various life transitions can challenge such connections and require planning and scheduling.
- **Stay engaged or involved.** Connecting to your community can help the brain thrive. Joining a club, volunteering or becoming active in a church are just a few ways stronger social networks can be developed.
- **Know your neighbors.** From someone living next door to a local shopkeeper, neighbors are right outside your door. They can help you create meaningful connections close to home.
- **Plug into the Internet.** The Internet has the potential to introduce you to a network of new people and reconnect you with old friends or acquaintances. Online communities, dating services, chat rooms and social media accounts such as Facebook are just a few examples of ways to stay connected via the Internet.

There are many ways to be socially active!

- Join a group or club that interests you.
- Organize a game night or play card games with family or friends.
- Volunteer for your favorite charity or nonprofit organization.
- Exercise with a partner or sign up for a class.
- Try a computer class at your local library to learn new and exciting things.
- Scan the paper and notice boards for announcements about community events.

Mental Stimulation

Just as going to the gym is important for your physical health, exercising your brain through mental stimulation is equally important throughout the lifespan. Through mental exercise, you can stimulate and enhance brain cell connections and even delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease (Mitchell, 2010; AARP/Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, 2009).

Some common forms of mental stimulation include:

- **Games and puzzles:** Games and puzzles that challenge you to think and test your skill and intelligence not only provide entertainment when practiced over time, they target areas of the brain linked to memory, concentration, language skills, visual-spatial abilities and logic and organization.
- **Reading and writing:** Reading and writing engage the hippocampus – the memory component of the brain. To further challenge yourself, try reading a word backwards or write with your nondominant hand.
- **Education and lifelong learning:** Education is linked to health and healthy behaviors. The more educated you are, the healthier you are likely to be. Pursuing new knowledge throughout life and beyond formal settings enhances social activity, active citizenship and personal development.
- **Hobbies:** Hobbies can challenge the brain, especially ones that require hand-eye coordination and mental calculation, such as knitting, woodcrafts, painting, sculpting and playing an instrument. Hobbies also create rich environments and provide a sense of purpose.
- **Emotional/psychological/spiritual engagement:** Spirituality encompasses more than religious values and beliefs. It involves an escape from the hurried and material world. Spiritual practices can involve prayer, yoga, walking, meditation, quiet contemplation and other relaxation techniques that help you slow down and connect with the essence of who you are and what you value in life. Such practices can also help reduce stress, which has a negative impact on brain health.
- **Exposure to new environments:** Whether you take a trip or drive a different route to work, new environments are good for the brain. New environments are enriching because they can be exciting and they challenge the brain to process new information.

**Try This:
Sudoku**

The object of Sudoku is to fill the empty cells, one number in each, so that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1-9 exactly once. The answer key can be found on the last page.

1	3		6	9			8	7
		6	3			1	2	
	8	2		1	7			9
2					5	6		8
8			7	4				
6	4	1	8		9	7	5	3
3	2			6		5		
9		4	2		3		7	
		8		7	1	2	3	4

Neurobics™

Neurobics (Katz and Rubin, 1998) involves exercising parts of the brain that are not used on a regular basis. Challenging your physical and emotional senses enhances brain activity and health.

For example, think about your nighttime routine. Much of what you do is out of habit. You likely don't even have to think about brushing your teeth, thus the brain is not being challenged. But, simple changes in your routine, such as brushing your teeth with your opposite hand, can stimulate and challenge your brain to work harder.

Examples of neurobic exercises include:

- Taking a new driving/walking route to work
- Brushing your teeth, vacuuming the house or washing the dishes with the nondominant hand
- Taking a shower with your eyes closed (be careful!)
- Going to new places (such as an ethnic food market) to experience new sights and smells
- Finding change in your wallet using your sense of touch rather than sight

Physical Activity

Engaging in physical activity is one of the biggest boosts you can give your brain, especially exercise that gets your heart pumping. When the heart beats, it pumps blood rich with oxygen and nutrients to the brain. Thus, the more fit your heart, the more effectively your brain can be fed what it needs to stay sharp. There are many ways throughout the day to increase physical activity – try walking 10,000 steps a day, playing with your children or grandchildren outside, taking the stairs, riding a bike, going dancing or moving around during television commercial breaks. It is also important to strength train. Physical activity is associated with better decision-making, focus and conflict resolution skills. Exercise can also trigger other health benefits such as a decreased risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, improved mood, improved sleep, an increase in energy and reduced anxiety and stress.

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a large role in brain development and function throughout life. A brain-healthy diet can help reduce the risk of chronic age-related brain diseases, including Alzheimer’s disease (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011). A brain-healthy diet is one that protects your heart, encourages good blood flow to the brain and fights against diabetes (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011). For a healthy-brain diet:

- **Seek foods high in antioxidants.** Antioxidants are dietary substances that include various nutrients that prevent, slow and even repair natural cell damage, including mental decline. An eating plan containing plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts can supply all the antioxidants your body needs. Some potent antioxidant foods to consider are blueberries and other berries, red delicious apples, sweet cherries, black plums, cranberries, oranges, red grapes, strawberries, avocados, raw garlic, cooked cabbage and broccoli, spinach, kale, red bell peppers, carrots, sweet potatoes, onions, tomatoes, whole wheat, oatmeal, brown rice, pecans, walnuts and hazelnuts.
- **Power up with omega-3.** Omega-3 are fatty acids that the body needs to properly function but does not make on its own. The best way to get omega-3 is through food sources. Examples of foods high in omega-3 include salmon, tuna, mackerel, trout, sardines, walnuts, pecans, almonds, leafy green vegetables, flax, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds and eggs.
- **Cut calories.** Being overweight and obese leads to increased risk of brain function decline in later life. Overweight people often have high cholesterol and high blood pressure, which also increase the risks of developing dementia in later life (Alzheimer’s Association, 2011).
- **Fight sodium and cholesterol.** Go easy on eating meats and other animal products high in fat, be stingy with salt and limit preserved and preprocessed foods.

Stimulating the Brain Through Diet

Brain Healthy Foods to Try	Foods to Limit or Avoid
Dark-skinned vegetables (kale, spinach, Brussels sprouts, alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, beets, red bell pepper, onion, corn, eggplant)	Fried, greasy, high-fat foods
Cold water fish (halibut, mackerel, salmon, trout, tuna)	Excess sugary products and high fructose corn syrup (soda, energy drinks, candy and desserts)
Nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts)	Salty foods (chips, processed meats)
Dark-skinned fruits (prunes, raisins, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, plums, oranges, red grapes, cherries)	Fast foods and processed foods (drive-thru meals, chips, packaged meals)
Drink lots of water	Alcohol and caffeine
Whole grains (whole wheat breads and pasta, brown rice)	Refined grains (white flour, white bread, white rice)
Olive oil	Other oils and solid fats (vegetable oil, lard, shortening)

Catch Your Zzzzzzs

Sleeping well is essential to good health and brain functioning (AARP/Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, 2009). For better sleep:

- Exercise, but not within a few hours of bedtime
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Set regular bedtime and waking hours
- Get up and do something until you are tired and ready to sleep if you cannot fall asleep within the first 20 minutes of getting into bed
- Avoid reading or watching television while in bed
- Keep a sleep journal to keep track of the activities, diet and other things that might affect how you're sleeping
- Consult a health care provider if you're consistently having trouble sleeping

CONCLUSION

Lifestyle is a major factor in determining brain health. Through regular socialization, mental stimulation, physical activity, nutrition and sleep, you can help keep your brain active and healthy. Maintaining a healthy brain and establishing other healthy lifestyle behaviors throughout your life will influence optimal aging.

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Sudoku Puzzle Answer Key

1	3	5	6	9	2	4	8	7
7	9	6	3	8	4	1	2	5
4	8	2	5	1	7	3	6	9
2	7	9	1	3	5	6	4	8
8	5	3	7	4	6	9	1	2
6	4	1	8	2	9	7	5	3
3	2	7	4	6	8	5	9	1
9	1	4	2	5	3	8	7	6
5	6	8	9	7	1	2	3	4



KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Social Activity

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Maintaining social activities and relationships throughout the lifespan is important to health and well-being. Engaged people are often healthier, happier, less depressed and demonstrate enhanced brain vitality (NIA, 2009; Alzheimer's Association, 2011; Park, 2009).

BENEFITS OF BEING SOCIAL

Social activity is good for a person regardless of who you are, how old you are, where you live or what you do. Being socially engaged with friends, family and various activities throughout the lifespan has many positive benefits (Adams, Leibbrandt and Moon, 2011).

- Improved social skills
- Improved academic performance
- Positive attitude
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Connection to peers, groups and the community
- Reduced risk of illnesses and diseases including cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, certain cancers, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
- Reduced risk for mental health disorders, such as depression
- Better brain health
- Overall happier and healthier lifestyle
- May help to increase the quality and length of life

GET CONNECTED

Finding or creating connections is a key to social activity. Social connectedness includes relationships with family, friends, co-workers and other people you interact with as you carry out daily activities, such as your bankers, store clerks and health care providers. These may be people you consistently see or look forward to seeing, people with whom you have something in common or people you trust. Social connectedness also includes various activities in the community or at home. The types of activities that engage you socially are endless, but it is important to try and seek or create an activity that is meaningful to you. By engaging with people and participating in activities that you enjoy, social activity can be easy, fun and fulfilling. Examples of social activities include:

- Joining a community center, club or committee
- Organizing or attending get-togethers with friends, family or neighbors
- Going to a theater, movie, sporting event or festival
- Traveling
- Eating out
- Volunteering
- Taking classes

Sign up for a class in your community and try something new like dancing, cooking or yoga. Or volunteer your time at a local shelter or food pantry.

STAYING CONNECTED THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Being social doesn't always mean you have to leave the house. Today, it is easier than ever to stay connected through technology. Phone calls, e-mails, the Internet, typing letters and even text or video messaging are all common avenues of communication that can be immediate and easy to use. Today, even online medical services, including telemedicine, telenursing and teletherapy, allow health care professionals to check in on you at home. They may remind you of health care needs or walk you through procedures that you can safely attend to at home. Today's technology helps people daily by providing instant information, services and even fun. The Internet is available to all generations and provides endless information and opportunities that can stimulate the brain and create experiences for social activity.

QUALITY SOCIAL INTERACTION

Quality relationships that develop with close family, friends and significant others help provide ongoing joy, excitement, support, love and purpose. Meaningful relationships require hard work, dedication and a conscious effort. They are often characterized by strong lines of communication, honesty, respect, patience, thoughtfulness, compromise, empathy, laughter and respectful confrontation. Maintaining a meaningful relationship contributes to the strength of the relationship and plays an important role in the benefits of social activity. While acquaintances and friendships of all kinds are important, meaningful relationships can provide an increased sense of satisfaction and well-being (Adams, Leibbrandt and Moon, 2011).

It is important for everyone at every age to reflect on the things that matter most and to decide if time and energy are being balanced properly. It is also important to recognize that meaningful social activity will be different for everyone and may change throughout the lifespan. Young children and teenagers, for example, often value time with friends. With age and various life transitions, including various losses, the emphasis may evolve from friends to work to family and back to friends (Barry and Madsen, 2009). Especially in later life, relationships and social activities can help you cope with life's transitions (O'Brien, 2011; Vera, 2013).

There is no recipe or special formula that spells out meaningful social activity. You have to seek and create opportunities and relationships that are fulfilling and meaningful to you, given your personality and place in the world (Yale Medical Group, 2013).

THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE (BEING SOCIAL WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO BE)

It is important to know your personality and social preferences. For some, engaging in social activity is energizing, while others prefer their own inner thoughts and conversations. Some people struggle with social activity because they are depressed. In a case of depression, a person may feel like being alone, but social isolation can actually feed the depression. Even though it can be challenging, the benefits of seeking social activity, including one-on-one interaction with a close friend or even a therapist, are worth the effort and can help ease depressive symptoms. To help keep you connected to the world:

- **Create a schedule.** You are more likely to participate in things when events are scheduled in advance. Calendars and planning ahead eliminate the ease of saying "no" to a last-minute invitation, force you to create a manageable schedule and take away the anxiety of thinking about what you are going to do.
- **Participate in a support group.** Support groups introduce you to others who may be facing similar challenges.
- **Write down your social goals.** Start small and be realistic. Perhaps a goal is to go to the market and say "hi" to the greeter every Saturday or to call a relative or friend once a week.
- **Take a class.** Local community centers, schools/colleges, Cooperative Extension offices, senior centers and public health offices often offer a wide variety of classes on various topics and hobbies.
- **Volunteer.** You may only be one person in the world, but to one person you may mean the world.

CONCLUSION

While being socially active is critical to health and well-being, everyone has limits on how much time can be spent socially engaged. It is acceptable and healthy to enjoy alone time, as these opportunities help you to reflect on life's meaning. Engaging in meaningful social activity and establishing healthy lifestyle behaviors throughout your life will influence optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING Tuning in to the Times

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Can't teach an old dog a new trick? Centenarians (people 100 years old and older) beg to differ. When a group of 100-year-olds was asked why they have lived so long, they shared that they spent a lifetime staying in tune with the times (Reuters, 2007). While the days of Charlie Chaplin, Louis Armstrong, Ted Williams, talk radio programs, Model Ts and party lines have been replaced with reality television, hip hop music, multimillion dollar professional athletes, SUVs and smart phones, it is clear that technology and society are not slowing down. But neither are the “tech-savvy” seniors who drive successful aging through their zest for life and learning. Staying in tune to the times throughout life promotes lifelong learning, which increases knowledge, problem-solving and decision-making (Blaschke and Freddolino, 2009). Staying on top of the latest gadgets, playing video games and keeping up with the news also enhances brain stimulation and helps broaden social opportunities and networks. iPhones, iPads, iPods...iwhat?! This brief introduction to today's technology will help you stay in tune.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT (CELL PHONES AND SMARTPHONES)

Cell phones and smartphones are two devices that many people rarely leave home without. A cell or mobile phone is a hand-held, cordless device that can make and receive calls. A smartphone is a high-end mobile phone that incorporates computing abilities. Smartphones have an “app” or application for almost everything. An application is a computer program that can be downloaded to a smartphone allowing it to take photos, play music and videos and access Internet sites. A smartphone even has the ability to act as a navigation system, start your vehicle and activate your lights or home security system when you are not there. Whether it's a basic cellular phone or a smartphone, one of the best advantages of a mobile device is that it is portable and accessible. Charged on batteries, a mobile phone fits in your pocket and can be ready in hand to call a friend or call for help.

COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET

Today's computers are small, fast, sophisticated and fairly affordable. These convenient and reliable machines can be found in the majority of American homes and workspaces, where they help make jobs and life easier (Nielson, 2011). For example, computers are used to type and print documents, calculate, sort, search and store data. Computers are also used for entertainment; they play and store games, music, movies and photos.

The majority of today's computers are linked to the Internet (Nielson, 2011). The Internet is a worldwide collection of computer networks that connect users through satellite and telephone. It is also a warehouse for data and software. Many people consider the Internet to be the world's largest encyclopedia. The possibilities of the Internet and the information you can find are endless. The Internet allows you to:

- Surf the Net. Surfing the net means spending time on the Internet to see what you find
- Social net-work. Social networking services, such as Facebook, allow you to register and create a personal profile, exchange messages and join common-interest groups
- E-mail. Electronic mail, known as e-mail, is a method of sending digital messages to or exchanging digital messages with one or more persons with Internet accounts. There is no post office or paper needed for this instant, modern-day letter writing

- Video Call. Through the use of webcams and microphones, various computer and social media programs allow you to communicate while both seeing and hearing the person you called
- Share, post and update information for others to see
- Request and provide assistance with problems and questions
- Market, sell and buy products and services
- Read newspapers and other current events
- Research your family tree
- Plan and book a vacation
- Access online dating sites

VIDEO GAMES AREN'T JUST FOR KIDS

Games aren't just played at the table anymore. Games are now played on televisions, computers, mobile phones and other handheld devices. Many of today's video games require human interaction. The Nintendo Wii, Microsoft Xbox 360 and Sony Play Station 3, for example, are popular interactive videos that come with handheld remotes that can be used to point and detect movement in three dimensions. This allows you to bowl, ski, play tennis and even hula in your own living room! Such games encourage people of all ages and abilities to get off the couch and move around. Even the non-interactive games encourage attention and memory. The benefits of playing today's video games include improved (Allaire et al., 2013; Maillot et al., 2012; Reuters Health, 2008; Thompson, 2009):

- Reflexes
- Processing speed
- Memory
- Attention skills
- Spatial abilities
- Reasoning and cognition
- Physical activity

Today's video games also help keep older adults' minds and bodies sharp and responsive. In fact, increasing numbers of retirement homes across the country offer video games in their rotation of available activities. Rehabilitation centers and hospitals also use video games to help patients improve motor function. Video games may contribute to slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (Soong, 2009).

Want to earn a gold medal, practice yoga or drive a race car – all in the comfort of your own living room? Now you can! If you don't own a video gaming system, get together with a friend or family member who does. Sign up to play at your church, at a local community or senior center or even at the local gym to give it a try.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Music is everywhere – elevators, fast food drive thrus, hair salons, banks, grocery stores and shopping malls. While the sound of music may be taken for granted, the health benefits do not go unnoticed. Music releases dopamine, the feel-good chemical in the brain involved in motivation and addiction (Sunil, 2013). As a result, music that moves you provides a sense of emotional arousal and pleasure. It is simple to take music with you wherever you go. Portable music players such as an MP3 player or iPod™ are electronic devices that allow you to download and save digital music and audio books. Most music and many books can be found online. To retrieve or download the music or book, you simply connect the portable music player to your computer, download the material onto the player, unplug the player from your computer, plug in headphones and take your audio along with you.

Music plays an important role in successful aging. Music exposure can also enhance perception, create a distraction from pain, reduce stress and anxiety, lower blood pressure, reduce heart rate and even relax your muscles (eMedExpert, 2014). In patients with Alzheimer's disease, music can even trigger memory, decrease agitation and enhance reality orientation and self-awareness (Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 2014).

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT

Staying connected with the world influences longevity (DeNoon, 2007; Reuters, 2007). Whether it is the television, newspaper, Internet or radio, current events have a positive effect on long life because they encourage social interactions. For example, it is easier and more fun to engage in conversation when there are interesting topics to discuss or debate. Staying in tune to your community and the world also exercises the brain and can keep you more mentally active as you read or listen and process the news.

CONCLUSION

If centenarians can keep up with the times, so can you. Embracing your techie side can be fun, exciting and beneficial. Engaging in technology and learning new technology keeps you mentally active and socially engaged. Staying connected to friends, family and current events helps you feel important and purposeful. Through the advancement of technology, there is always something new and thrilling to learn or play. Try making it your goal to learn something new once a day. Staying in tune to the times and establishing healthy lifestyle behaviors throughout your life will influence optimal aging.

Find a class at your local Extension office, library or community center that offers instruction in technology and make it a goal to try something new.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Practice Being Safe

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Practicing safety is important because it helps keep you out of harm's way. Over the course of our lives, we learn and practice safety, such as looking both ways before crossing the street, wearing a seat belt or locking our doors when away or at night. Simple lifestyle changes and recognizing where most hazards are and how danger or injuries can occur when participating in different activities are keys to safe living.

Safety across the lifespan includes a multitude of realms. The following safety tips are just a few that reflect various life domains: home, transportation, health, recreation and emergency preparedness.

HOME SAFETY

Home is often a place that represents security and comfort. There is no place more important to keep safe than your home. The Underwriters Laboratories (UL) recommend the following home safety tips:

- **Make your house number visible.** In case of an emergency, a house number that is easy to find and read from the street helps emergency personnel find the correct home.
- **Lock doors and windows.** Be sure to have high-quality locks on both your doors and windows.
- **Sound the alarm.** Install smoke detectors on every floor of your home and carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas. If already installed, test them! Replace the batteries every daylight-saving time change.
- **Avoid overload.** Check for overloaded extension cords – usage should not exceed the recommended wattage.
- **Watch cord placement.** Extension cords should not be placed under rugs or heavy furniture, tacked up or coiled while in use.
- **Don't get tippy.** If young children are in the home, bookshelves and other furniture should be firmly secured with wall brackets to prevent tipping.
- **Paint safe.** Check walls for loose paint. If repainting, do so in a well-ventilated area and consider volatile organic compounds (VOC)-free paint.
- **Childproof.** There are many things to think about when childproofing a home. Areas of particular danger include outlets, appliances, electronics, stairs and windows.
- **Get grounded.** All major appliances should be grounded. Be sure to check your ground fault circuit interrupters regularly.
- **Plan your escape.** Practice a fire escape plan with your family where you identify two exits for every room and what to do with young children.
- **Keep extinguishers handy.** Place all-purpose fire extinguishers in key locations in your home – the kitchen, bedroom and basement. Be sure to check expiration dates regularly and know how to use them safely.
- **Create a safe exit.** In addition to alarms and extinguishers, consider an escape ladder if your home has two floors. Keep emergency numbers and contacts readily available by the phone.
- **Unplug appliances.** Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use, and store them out of reach.

- **Give your air heater some space.** All air heaters should be placed at least 3 feet from beds, curtains or anything flammable.
- **Go new in the nursery.** Check that all painted cribs, bassinets and high chairs were made after 1978 to avoid potential lead paint poisoning. Follow all safety recommendations on furniture, furnishing covers and blankets.
- **Cool your jets.** Set your water heater below 120 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid potential burns and to save energy.
- **Put away medications.** Take medications and medical supplies out of your purse, pockets and drawers and put them in a cabinet with a child safety lock.

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injuries and deaths for people between the ages of 1 and 33. The National Safety Council (2012) recommends several ways to reduce your likelihood of getting into an accident and staying alive if you do.

- **Wear safety belts.** Keep yourself and family safe by always buckling up.
- **Avoid distractions.** Distracted driving is a problem on the roadways. Eating, putting on makeup, getting dressed and fidgeting with children or pets are examples of various distractions that take our eyes and minds off the road.
- **Stay off cell phones.** An increasing number of accidents involve cell phone use. Talking on a cell phone while driving makes you four times more likely to crash and texting while driving increases your chance of crashing by up to 8 to 23 times.
- **Keep infants and children safe.** Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death for children age 1 to 12. The best way to protect them is to place all children in age- and size-appropriate car and booster seats and to know how to properly use the seat to reduce serious and fatal injuries. Car and booster seats should be used every time a child is in a car. Children should sit in the back seat at least through the age of 12.
- **Keep teens safe.** Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for teens. Proper parental or guardian guidance in the learning-to-drive process is influential in a teen's ability to become a safe and responsible driver. This includes modeling nondistracted driving and safety belt use.
- **Keep seniors safe.** Over the next 20 years, the number of senior drivers will increase 70 percent. The crash rates for drivers age 65+ are higher than any age group, except teens. Resources are available to help keep drivers safe, including self-assessment tools, education, driver refresher courses and public transportation. Seat belt safety, being aware of medication side effects and interactions, planning trips during low traffic times, driving a car that best fits you and learning the newest highway laws and vehicle changes are also helpful tips for senior drivers.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** Children are killed in and around vehicles each year. All are preventable. Driveway backovers and hot car deaths can be prevented by never leaving a child in or around a vehicle unattended. Be especially vigilant during hectic times, schedule changes and holidays, as these busy times can often result in tragedy. It is also important to know where you parked your car, have your keys ready before walking to your car and checking in and around a car before getting in. Once in a car, lock the doors.
- **Don't drive impaired.** Impaired driving from drinking and/or drugs puts everyone on the road in danger and is a serious threat to communities throughout the nation. To prevent impaired driving, call a friend or taxi, designate someone in the group to drive who has not been drinking and don't let your friends drive drunk.
- **Be a defensive driver.** Speeding, frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating and running red or yellow lights are examples of aggressive driving that result in putting yourself, your family and other drivers in danger. Instead, practice defensive driving techniques to save lives, time and money.
- **Keep the vehicle well maintained.** Having your vehicle serviced regularly reduces mechanical problems and breakdowns. Along with regular oil changes, be sure to check that windshield wipers are in good working order and the spare tire has air in it.

HEALTH SAFETY

Good health leads to happiness, independence, satisfaction and fulfillment in life. The following are just a few tips that promote health safety, according to the National Safety Council (2012).

- **Get trained in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED).** Ideally, at least one person in each household should have these lifesaving skills. Seventy-five percent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home, and 25 percent of hospital emergency room visits could be eliminated if someone knew first aid.
- **Visit the dentist.** By adopting lifelong healthy oral habits at home, making smart choices about diet and lifestyle and seeking regular dental care, you help your teeth last a lifetime and you contribute to overall health, as there is a connection between a healthy body and a healthy mouth. Cavities are still the most prevalent chronic disease of childhood.
- **Visit the doctor.** Annual exams and check-ups help keep children healthy and make it easier for you to stay on top of your health. During children's visits, health care providers will give any vaccines that are due, check your child's growth and development and test vision and hearing. It is important for children to get all of the recommended doses of vaccines to be completely immunized against a disease. Teens are able to start taking some responsibility for their own health. Teens should feel comfortable talking to their health care provider about health and emotional concerns, such as physical development or sexual health. As adults, regular checkups are important to help with health maintenance. With age, more frequent checkups and procedures are common for preventative measures, such as mammograms, prostate exams and colonoscopies.
- **Understand how to use and dispose of your meds.** Talk to your health care provider(s) about all the medications you take, including over-the-counter and herbal medicines and discuss side effects and possible medication interactions. Before taking a pill or giving medication to children, read the label and take it exactly as prescribed in terms of dosage, timing and whether or not it should be taken with food/drink. Don't use medicines after their expiration date and properly dispose of any unused or expired medications.
- **Prevent unintentional medication overdose.** Never take more than is prescribed. If you still have pain, call your physician to discuss your options. Refill pain medication only if you really need it and not until your current prescription is almost empty. Don't mix medications without consulting a health care provider and don't mix medication with alcohol or sedatives.
- **Protect against poisoning.** Unintentional poisoning includes the unsupervised ingestion of drugs or chemicals, "overdoses" or the excessive use of a drug and exposure to environmental substances. The most common poisons include prescription and over-the-counter medications, cleaning products and personal care products. Children are at the greatest risk of poisoning due to eating or swallowing over-the-counter and prescription medicines when an adult is not watching. Avoid leaving medication unattended on countertops and tables, loose in purses or on the floor. Put the poison control number (1-800-222-1222) on or near every home telephone and save it on your cell phone.
- **Prevent falls.** Falls are one of the leading causes of unintentional injuries in the United States. Falls cause injury, diminish independence and can even lead to death. Older adults age 65 years and older are more susceptible to falling. But, having vision and medication checked regularly, maintaining a clutter-free and safe home environment and physical activity can lower the risk of falling and the fear of falling. Supervise young children at all times around fall hazards, such as stairs and playground equipment. Whether you're at home or out to play, keep them safe and help them prevent falls.
- **Practice food safety.** Wash your hands. Know the safe minimum cooking temperatures for meat, fish and poultry. Properly use and wash cutting boards. Wash all fruits and vegetables. Know how to properly store leftovers.
- **Practice safe sex.** Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality— it is important no matter how old you are. As part of their education, children – once they reach an appropriate age – need to learn about sex and sexuality from reliable sources so they better understand male and female bodies and how they work. Adolescence education, from the reliable source (preferably their parent or guardian), should teach about human sexual development, reproduction, types of relationships, healthy versus unhealthy relationships, sexual behavior and how to prevent pregnancy and

STIs (sexually transmitted infections). Moral behavior or family standards regarding premarital sex have to be taught. Adults, even those past the age of bearing children, also need to be aware of sexual health and STIs so they practice healthy behaviors.

RECREATIONAL SAFETY

The National Safety Council (2012) reports that recreation-related injuries affect people of all ages and account for many injury-related emergency room visits.

- **Avoid injury while exercising.** When first starting an exercise program, begin slowly with low-intensity exercises. Stretch and warm up with low-intensity exercises at the beginning of each exercise session. Drink water before, during and after you exercise. Wait at least 2 hours after eating a large meal before doing strenuous exercise. Wear appropriate shoes for your activity and comfortable clothing that allows you to move freely but won't catch on objects. When outdoors, pay attention to your surroundings – consider possible traffic hazards, the weather, uneven walking surfaces and strangers.
 - **Children and exercise.** Children should wear protective gear during sports and recreation. For example, when in-line skating, use wrist guards, knee and elbow pads and a helmet.
 - **Older adults and exercise.** It is important to check with a health care provider before beginning an exercise program. Start out slowly. Be cautious of surgeries, such as hip replacements and follow precautions for any health issue that you may have. Perform the exercise safely and within the limits of your abilities.
- **Learn how to swim.** While swimming does not make drowning impossible, it can make it less likely to happen.
- **Prevent dog bites.** Teach children basic safety around dogs and help them be comfortable versus afraid of dogs. Do not approach an unfamiliar dog and, if approached yourself, stand still versus running and screaming. If you are knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball and lie still. Avoid eye contact. Do not disturb a dog who is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies. Do not pet or approach a dog without allowing it to see or sniff you first. If a dog is with his/her owner, ask before you pet the dog. Report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior. Immediately report any bite to a medical health provider.
- **Prevent playground injuries.** Falls on the playground are a common cause of injury. Check to make sure the surfaces under playground equipment are safe, soft and well-maintained (such as wood chips or sand, not dirt or grass).
- **Travel safely.** Traveling can be fun and exciting, but unwary tourists can make for easy targets. General safety suggestions include: Don't share your travel plans on social media or with people you don't know well. Highlighting that you are going to be gone can increase the risk of break-ins and robberies. Do let a trusted neighbor know so that an eye can be kept on the house. If you're driving, know your route. Pack a map or GPS and be familiar with places to stop for food, drink and gas. At the airport, keep your ticket, identification and passport (if needed) with you at all times. Watch for your suitcase as it appears on the carousel upon landing.
- **Hotel safety.** If possible, choose accommodation that has unmarked 'swipe cards' rather than numbered keys for each room. If you lose your swipe card or if it is stolen, the thief won't know which room to rob. Take note of emergency exits, stairwells, fire escapes and emergency plans. Always lock your hotel door, including the deadbolt or chain. If arranging to meet people you've never met before (such as business associates), wait for them in the lobby. Don't ask them to come up to your room. Ask a hotel concierge about safe versus unsafe local areas.
- **Street smarts.** Limit your night travel, especially if the territory is unfamiliar and known to be dangerous. If you are overseas, always keep your passport with you (on a safety belt, under your clothes) and make a photocopy of your passport and all other documents; keep those copies in a safe place. Use ATMs during the day, when there are people around. Try to rely more on credit cards than cash. Even if you're not sure where you're going, walk like you've got a purpose. Be discreet when map reading, and pay attention to your surroundings and the people around you.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Natural disasters, fires and other catastrophic events can disrupt your home, work and community with little to no warning. It is important to identify and learn about potential hazards common to your area and to make and share a plan to help prevent confusion and worry in the face of an emergency. Depending on the disaster, help may not always be there or be able to get to you due to multiple calls, blocked roads or other barriers. According to the National Safety Council (2012):

- **Determine the safest course of action for you and your family for each hazard.** In some situations, it may be better to stay where you are, also called sheltering in place. For example, this would be necessary during a tornado or hazardous chemical release. Sometimes, leaving an area to escape danger or evacuation is the safer course of action in situations such as a fire or hurricane.
- **Stay informed.** Know how your community alerts citizens in an emergency. It may be an emergency broadcast on the radio or television. You might hear a special siren, get a telephone call or emergency workers may go door to door. If available, sign up for your community's emergency text or email alert system.
- **Plan for your family's comfort during disasters.** Utility outages are common during severe weather and other emergencies. It is important to prepare a kit that can meet your household's basic needs (food, water, etc.) for 72 hours. You should also have a kit that is kept in the car.
- **Practice what to do in an emergency.** Conduct regular drills by yourself and with your family for the most common hazards such as a fire, tornado or earthquake.
- **Know how to keep in touch.** Local telephone service may be interrupted. Sometimes, it is easier to send a text message or contact a family member in another state. Each family member should know how to make contact so it can be known that they are safe.

INTERNET SAFETY

Adults and kids face several risks when they go online. Crimes and scams, such as sexual predation and identity theft, are everywhere. To stay safe on the Internet, the National Safety Council (2012) recommends:

- **Children and Internet safety.** It is important to take an active role in protecting kids from Internet predators and sexually explicit material. You can start by making yourself aware of your kids' computer activities and by educating them about online risks. You can also block or monitor material with various options made available by many Internet service providers. Other ways to keep your kids safe include:
 - Set and enforce rules regarding amount of time spent online, appropriate sites to visit and games to play.
 - Make sure your kids create a screen name to protect their real identity.
 - Keep the computer in a common area, not in individual bedrooms, where you can watch and monitor its use.
 - Share an email account with your child so you can monitor messages.
 - Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
 - Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
 - Monitor your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
 - Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes or anyplace where kids could use a computer without your supervision.
 - Look for signs your child might have been targeted by an online predator or a cyberbully. If your child is secretive, unusually quiet or spending too much time online, ask questions and be supportive.
 - Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.
 - Forward copies of obscene or threatening messages you or your child gets to your Internet service provider.
 - Call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 800-843-5678 if you are aware of the transmission, use or viewing of child pornography online. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet.

- **Adult Internet safety.** The Internet is used for many things, including searching for information or entertainment, communicating with family and friends, referencing educational materials, banking and e-commerce. Online activities make our lives easier but it is also a place for fraud, identity theft, invasion of privacy and other cybercrimes. Some things to consider include:
 - Use passwords wisely. Ideal passwords should have a combination of at least eight upper and lower case letters and numbers. Passwords should not use personal information such as a birth date or social security number. They should not include names of children or pets either. Passwords should be changed every 60 to 90 days and varied for different accounts. Passwords should never be stored online or in mobile devices.
 - Protect your privacy. Do not post information that identifies you or your family (names, addresses) or information that can be used to identify you, such as a nicknames, workplace or school, clubs or organizations to which you belong or favorite hangouts.
 - Document storage. Consider storing your username, personal identification numbers (PINs) and passwords in a secure location away from your residence, such as a safe deposit box at a bank or a safe in your attorney’s office. A key consideration is whether your executor will have convenient access to the documents in the event of your death.
 - Protect your computer. Shut down your computer when it’s not in use. Keep antivirus and antispyware programs updated. Use firewalls to protect against hackers. Use encryption to protect personal information.
 - Smart social networking. Don’t reveal too much about your private life due to the anonymity of the Internet. Consider how your email message could be read by others. Never post anything that would cause you embarrassment or shame. The information can be seen by anyone with a computer and an Internet connection once posted, including family and friends, employers or potential employers, admissions officers at schools you might attend – even police and other law enforcement authorities.
 - Meeting someone online. Learn as much as you can about an individual and verify that information. Don’t share your address but meet instead in a public place where you will arrive separately, and terminate all conversation if this is met with objections. Tell a trusted family member or friend of your plans and who you are meeting. Watch your alcohol intake and never leave a drink unattended. If you suspect you are being followed after your meeting, drive to the nearest police station or a public location for help.
 - Close unused accounts. Permanently close any unused account, including social media networking accounts. If a loved one has died, follow the policies for survivors to delete, update, transfer or preserve the account.

- **Scams and Cons.** Fraudulent activity can happen to anyone, regardless of age or means. Scams and cons are common. These occur via telephone, mail, in person or increasingly the Internet.
 - Never give personal information (social security number or bank information) to anyone who shows up at your door or calls on the phone. If they say they are from the bank, they should have your numbers already. The only exception is if you have called an agency and you are sure you reached the right one.
 - Be cautious of “free” deals where you must pay for taxes or shipping and handling. As a general rule, if you are receiving something for free, the company sponsoring the gift will pay the taxes/shipping.
 - Don’t get pressured into “limited time offers.” These so-called deals usually have a catch, such as balloon interest rate, where there is zero or a low interest rate for a limited time. If the debt is not paid off by a set date, the interest rate is extremely high. It is best to think about the deal, call or go back for more information. It is also good to talk about it with family and friends if you are not sure.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing situations that put your safety and well-being at risk and being aware of ways to prevent danger or injury when participating in different activities are key to safe living and optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING Know Your Health Numbers

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These days our daily lives are flooded with numbers: PIN numbers, phone numbers and various account numbers. But there are also certain health numbers that can save and extend your life. These numbers are associated with cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, blood sugar, body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference. A lifestyle that includes regular visits to a health care provider, proper nutrition and physical activity promotes these numbers and contributes to healthy aging throughout the lifespan.

Keep up with your health numbers by writing them down in a journal or medical log that is kept in a safe place. This will help you track your health patterns and set health goals.

CHOLESTEROL: < 200 mg/dl

The recommended target cholesterol level for men and women is less than 200 milligrams per deciliter of blood (AHA, 2013). Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in the fats (lipids) in your blood. It is essential for the body to build and maintain healthy cells and essential hormones. About 25 percent of cholesterol comes from the foods we eat such as meat, fish and dairy. The rest is made by the human body. There are two forms of cholesterol: low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL), also known as the “bad” cholesterol, and high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL), the “good” cholesterol. Too much LDL cholesterol creates a plaque that can accumulate and clog the arteries causing heart disease and stroke. HDL cholesterol is good because it helps clean the artery walls and carry away the excess bad cholesterol (AHA, 2013; CDC, 2010).

To increase HDL cholesterol:

- Increase unsaturated fats in the diet, including omega-3 fatty acids (sesame, flax or pumpkin seeds or pumpkin seed oil, avocado oil, olive oil, fat in peanut butter and fish).
- Add soluble fiber to your diet (oats, fruits, vegetables and legumes).
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke.
- Talk to a medical provider about medication and other treatment options.

High cholesterol has no symptoms and many people do not even know they are at risk. But there are known factors that can increase the risk of developing high cholesterol. Some of these factors you can control, such as diet, physical activity and weight. Others you cannot control, including family history, age (risk goes up with age) and gender (post-menopausal women are at greatest risk). Cholesterol can be checked through simple blood tests (CDC, 2010). The American Heart Association recommends a “fasting lipoprotein profile” every five years starting at age 20. To fast, it is recommended that you do not eat for 9 to 12 hours prior to the test. This helps accurately measure the total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. Additional screenings are recommended for men age 45+ and women age 50+. Additional screenings are also recommended if total cholesterol is 200 mg/dl or higher, HDL cholesterol levels are lower than 40 mg/dl or other risk factors for heart disease and stroke are present (AHA, 2012).

FASTING TRIGLYCERIDE LEVEL: < 150 mg/dl

According to the American Heart Association (2012), a fasting triglyceride level of less than 150 mg/dl is healthy. Triglycerides, like cholesterol, are a form of fat that circulate in the bloodstream. Triglycerides are responsible for the energy that tissues need to function. Similar to cholesterol, when the blood levels of triglycerides become too high (e.g., over 200 mg/dl), the risk for developing heart disease increases (AHA, 2012; MedicinePlus, 2010). Triglycerides are often measured with cholesterol and should be tested every five years beginning at age 20 or more often depending on risk factors (AHA, 2012).

Dietary and lifestyle changes help lower triglyceride levels.

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Avoid fatty foods and foods high in cholesterol, such as processed meat, fried food and whole fat dairy products
- Eat fruits, vegetables, nonfat or low-fat dairy products most often
- Eat foods high in good unsaturated fats
- Do not drink alcohol in excess
- Exercise moderately for at least 150 minutes per week

Cholesterol and Triglyceride Levels Chart

	Desirable Level to Protect Against Heart Disease	Borderline High Risk for Heart Disease	High Risk for Heart Disease
Total Blood Cholesterol	< 200 mg/dl	200-239 mg/dl	240+ mg/dl
LDL	100-129 mg/dl	130-159 mg/dl	160-189 mg/dl (190+ is very high)
HDL	60+ mg/dl (the higher the better)		< 40 mg/dl for men < 50 mg/dl for women
Triglyceride	< 150 mg/dl	150-199 mg/dl	200+ mg/dl (500+ is very high risk)

Source: AHA (2012). "What Your Cholesterol Level Means."

BLOOD PRESSURE: < 120/80 mm Hg

Blood pressure can vary from minute to minute with changes in exercise, stress, sleep and posture, but it should normally be less than 120/80 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) (AHA, 2013). Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers and written as a ratio. The top number, referred to as the systolic blood pressure, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (AHA, 2013). The diastolic, or bottom number, refers to the amount of pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting and refilling with blood between heartbeats (AHA, 2013). Hypertension or high blood pressure is a condition that causes the pressure in the heart to change. A variety of factors are linked to high blood pressure, including age, a diet too high in sodium or too low in potassium, calcium and magnesium, excess alcohol, smoking, being overweight or obese, high cholesterol, lack of exercise, stress and being insulin resistant. Hypertension has few symptoms, but it can permanently damage the heart, brain, eyes and kidneys even before anything feels like it is wrong (AHA, 2012). The American Heart Association recommends blood pressure screenings beginning at age 20 and to continue at each regular health care visit or at least once every two years. If your blood pressure is consistently higher than 120/80 mmHg, you may be asked to measure it more often (AHA, 2013). Blood pressure can also be checked at home with an over-the-counter blood pressure monitoring system.

Low blood pressure can also be cause for concern. Low blood pressure, referred to as hypotension, occurs when the flow of blood is lower than normal. This may prevent the proper amount of oxygen and nutrients from being pumped into vital organs. Dehydration and nutrient deficiency are two possible causes of low blood pressure. Signs of low blood pressure include dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting, dehydration or unusual thirst, lack of concentration, blurred vision, nausea and fatigue (AHA, 2014).

Maintaining a healthy blood pressure can be simple and easy (Mayo, 2012):

- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat or nonfat dairy products
- Avoid excess salt
- Engage in regular physical activity
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress
- Avoid tobacco
- Limit alcohol
- Limit caffeine
- Monitor blood pressure at home

Blood Pressure Chart

Blood Pressure Category**	Systolic mm Hg (upper number)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower number)	What to Do*
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80	"Maintain or adopt healthy lifestyle."
Prehypertension	120 – 139	or	80 – 89	"Maintain or adopt healthy lifestyle."
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	140 – 159	or	90 – 99	"Maintain or adopt a healthy lifestyle. If blood pressure goal isn't reached in about six months, talk to your doctor about taking one or more medications."
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	160 or higher	or	100 or higher	"Maintain or adopt a healthy lifestyle. Talk to your doctor about taking more than one medication."
Hypertensive Crisis	Higher than 180	or	Higher than 110	"Emergency care needed."

Sources: AHA (2013) and Mayo Clinic (2012). *Mayo Clinic recommendations.

*Note: According to the Mayo Clinic (2011), "ranges may be lower for children and teenagers." They recommend talking to your child's doctor if there is concern regarding high blood pressure. The AHA (2013) recommends having a doctor "evaluate unusually low blood pressure readings."

FASTING BLOOD SUGAR: <100 mg/dl

Blood sugar or glucose is a type of sugar that travels through the bloodstream. It comes from carbohydrate foods and acts as a basic fuel for the body. The three main types of carbohydrates in food include sugars, starches and fiber. The Mayo Clinic (2011) emphasizes the importance of a balanced diet with healthy carbohydrates. Healthy carbohydrates include:

- Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables without added sugar
- Whole grains
- Low-fat dairy
- Beans and legumes
- Limit sugar

There are several different types of blood glucose tests including fasting blood sugar, which is measured 6 to 8 hours after a meal. In a nondiabetic person, this fasting number provides an accurate measure of blood sugar. The normal range of blood sugar is approximately 70 to 100 milligrams per deciliter. After a meal, blood sugar will rise but not usually above 135 to 140 milligrams per deciliter, leaving a fairly narrow range of blood sugar throughout the entire day.

Glucose levels consistently lower than 70 mg/dl is called hypoglycemia or low blood sugar (NIH, 2012). This can result in blurred vision, pounding heartbeat, agitation, nervousness, hunger, headaches, shakiness or trembling, sweating, weakness, drowsiness, insomnia and unclear thinking (NIH, 2012). If sugar levels get too low, mental functioning can become impaired and eventually seizures and unconsciousness may be experienced. While these symptoms are often corrected by eating something sweet, severe hypoglycemia can be a dangerous medical emergency for which you should call for help right away (NIH, 2012).

Hyperglycemia or high blood sugar occurs when the blood glucose levels get above 180 to 200 mg/dl due to too little insulin or when the body cannot use insulin properly (American Diabetes Association, 2013). These high levels affect the ability of kidneys to properly function and can also cause frequent urination, blurred vision, high blood pressure, extreme thirst, weakness or fatigue, dry mouth, unexplained weight loss and fluid retention (Mayo Clinic, 2012).

Diabetes is the most common disease related to blood sugar regulation failure based on the body's inability to produce and/or use the hormone insulin, which helps the body regulate glucose so that levels do not get too high (CDC, 2011). It affects over 25.8 million children and adults (CDC, 2011). If left untreated, diabetes can cause many medical complications including cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, unhealthy cholesterol levels, clogged arteries, metabolic syndrome, blindness, nerve disease, limb amputations and even death (CDC, 2011). To maintain healthy blood sugar levels and prevent diabetes (CDC, 2011; Mayo Clinic, 2013):

- Exercise regularly
- Eat plenty of fiber and whole grains
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Skip fad diets and make healthy choices

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI): 18.5-24.9

BMI stands for Body Mass Index. It is a ratio between height and weight and is used as a tool to help judge body fat and weight. According to BMI calculations, there are five weight categories: underweight, normal, overweight, obese and extremely obese. The normal BMI range for adults is 18.5-24.9 (AHA, 2012; CDC, 2011). Generally speaking, an adult BMI of 25 is considered overweight and 30 or above is obese. A BMI of less than 18.5 indicates underweight. All overweight and underweight individuals should consult with their medical provider. Beginning at age 20, BMI should be assessed at each regular health care visit.

The BMI weight categories help indicate the risk of severe health problems, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cancer, diabetes, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis, female infertility, urinary stress incontinence and gastroesophageal reflux (CDC, 2011). However, there are certain people who should not use BMI as the basis for determining relative disease risk. Athletes and body builders, whose BMI is high due to muscle, and women who are pregnant or lactating should not be disturbed if their BMI is not within the normal range.

Adults (20+ years old) can calculate their BMI using the following formula: $\text{weight (lb)} / [\text{height (in)}]^2 \times 703$. Children and teens (2-19 years old) are recommended to use the free online calculator at the CDC at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/>, as the interpretation of their BMI is both age- and sex-specific.

To take control of your BMI (CDC, 2011):

- Burn more calories than you consume by exercising and maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Exercise 150 minutes/week (minimum) for adults
- Lose or gain weight in a healthy manner
- Consult with a health care provider

BMI Chart

BMI	Rating	What to Do
Below 18.5	Underweight	Consult a health care provider. Low body mass can decrease the immune system and lead to illness.
18.5-24.9	Normal Weight	Maintain exercising and eating healthy.
25-29.9	Overweight	Find healthy ways to lower weight, including healthy eating and exercise.
30+	Obese	At serious risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, gall bladder disease and some cancers; talk to a health care provider and modify your lifestyle.

Sources: AHA, 2012; CDC, 2011

WAIST CIRCUMFERENCE: Males: < 40; Females: < 35

Fat distribution is now just as important as total body weight when it comes to weight-related health problems. This is because body fat that accumulates around the waist and stomach area poses a greater risk than fat stored in the lower half of the body. Therefore, the measurement of your waist size (circumference), like BMI, can predict future health problems, including type 2 diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, especially when BMI is between 25 and 35 (AHA, 2010; NHLBI, 2011, 2013). Waist size can also be useful for athletes who are categorized as overweight in terms of BMI. For example, an athlete with increased muscle mass may have a BMI greater than 25 – making him or her overweight on the BMI scale – but a waist circumference measurement would most likely indicate that he or she is, in fact, not overweight.

The American Heart Association (2010) recommends a waist circumference of 40 inches or less for males and 35 inches or less for females. Beginning at age 20, you should measure your waist circumference and look for changes in measurement over time, as this can indicate an increase or decrease in abdominal fat, which is associated with an increased risk of heart disease and other chronic diseases.

According to the CDC (2011), “to measure your waist size (circumference), place a tape measure around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone. Be sure that the tape is snug, but does not compress your skin and is parallel to the floor. Relax, exhale and measure your waist.”

Source: CDC (2011)

CONCLUSION

Keeping up with your numbers is an important way to maintain a healthy lifestyle and optimal aging throughout the lifespan. Keeping up with your numbers can also help you reduce negative health effects such as obesity, diseases of the heart, hypertension, diabetes and cancers.

A Quick Guide to Keeping Up With Your Numbers

- Cholesterol: < 200
- Triglycerides: < 150
- Blood Pressure: < 120/80
- Blood Sugar: < 100
- BMI: 18 to 25
- Waist Circumference: < 40 (men) and < 35 (women)

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING Stress Management

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Everybody experiences both good and bad stress. It can come from mental activity (for example, working on a research paper), emotional activity (for example, having a milestone birthday) and/or physical activity (for example, walking to school). The way we interpret stress is unique and personal. What may be relaxing to one person may be stressful to another. Good stress can be healthy and useful. It helps us get to an appointment on time or meet a deadline. When stress becomes overwhelming, it becomes distress or bad stress. Bad stress can lead to chronic stress, which can leave you feeling nervous, on edge and tense. It also puts you at greater risk for numerous health problems, including heart disease, sleep problems, digestive problems, depression, obesity, memory impairment and various skin conditions, such as eczema. Learning what causes stress and different ways we can cope with it helps us to be more balanced and healthy throughout life.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the way your body responds to experiences and events. It helps you rise to a challenge in addition to preparing to meet tough situations with focus, strength, stamina and heightened alertness. The events that provoke stress are called **stressors**. Some stressors are caused by negative events such as a family argument, physical danger, test anxiety or concern over finances. Events that we look forward to such as celebrations or going to a movie with a friend are also stressors. Stressors can be single events or a result of a multiple events that pile up.

Sanford Health (2009) describes the body's reaction to stress:

The human body responds to stressors by activating the nervous system and specific hormones. The hypothalamus signals the adrenal glands to produce more of the hormones adrenaline and cortisol and releases them into the bloodstream. These hormones speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and metabolism. Blood vessels open wider to let more blood flow to large muscle groups, putting our muscles on alert. Pupils dilate to improve vision. The liver releases some of its stored glucose to increase the body's energy and sweat is produced to cool the body. All of these physical changes prepare a person to react quickly and effectively to handle the pressure of the moment.

This natural reaction is known as the **stress response**. Working properly, the body's stress response enhances a person's ability to perform well under pressure. The stress response can also cause problems when it overreacts or fails to turn off and reset itself properly.

The stress response (better known as the fight or flight response) is critical during emergency situations, such as when a driver has to slam on the brakes to avoid hitting a child running out into the middle of the street. But the stress response can also be activated in a milder form when there is pressure but no real danger—like getting ready to go to a big dance or sitting down for a mini-mental status exam. A little of this milder stress can help

keep you on your toes, ready to rise to a challenge. The nervous system quickly returns to its normal state after the fight or flight response, ready to respond again when needed. It is not the short-term stress response that causes many medical personnel to talk about the concerns of stress, it is the ongoing or long-term stress that causes the nervous system to produce the excess stress hormones that weaken the body's immune system and causes other health issues.

According to HPMC (Hanford.gov, 2014), people who are experiencing stress overload may notice:

- anxiety or panic attacks
- a feeling of being constantly pressured, hassled and hurried
- irritability and moodiness
- physical symptoms, such as stomach problems, headaches or even chest pain
- allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma
- problems sleeping
- drinking too much, smoking, overeating or doing drugs
- sadness or depression

Everyone experiences stress differently. Some individuals may become angry and act out their stress by taking it out on others, whereas other individuals may internalize it and develop psychosocial disorders such as an eating disorder. For those individuals with a chronic disease, they may find that the symptoms of their illness flare up under an overload of stress.

Stages of Stress

The body reacts to stress in three ways:

- **Stage 1: Alarm.** Certain hormones are pumped into the bloodstream, which speeds up the heart rate, increases respiration and slows down digestive activity. The body is ready for either fight or flight. Such a situation can lead to stress-related illnesses such as ulcers, headaches, backaches, palpitations of the heart, rashes and various other ailments.
- **Stage 2: Resistance and Adaptation.** The body tries to repair the damage caused in stage one and bring the body back to a "normal condition." It is only when stress is not positively dealt with that the third stage occurs.
- **Stage 3: Exhaustion.** A person's body cannot be stressed all the time. Release must occur or illness may result.

MANAGING STRESS

While we cannot rid ourselves of stress, we can learn to manage it. The ultimate goal in stress management is to achieve a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet life's stressors head on.

Identify the sources of stress in your life

The first step in stress management is to identify the stressors in your life. Are there any stressors you can change by avoiding, reducing exposure or eliminating them completely? Can you go to work earlier if parking is a problem or organize your time differently so that you are not studying for an exam at the last minute?

Learning healthier ways to manage stress

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no "one size fits all" solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation; therefore, it is important to experiment with different stress reduction strategies to lessen your feelings of stress. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

How to Deal With Stressful Situations

Change the Situation

- Avoid stressors
- Alter the stressor

Change Your Reaction

- Accept the stressor
- Adapt to the stressor

Two common strategies for managing stress include changing the situation and your response to the situation. If there is a situation that you can identify that causes stress, avoid it. For example, if the crowds and chaos of the State Fair make you feel anxious to the point that you do not like to go, stay home instead. In unavoidable situations, such as a holiday dinner with in-laws, you may have to change your reaction. Accept it for what it is, focus on what is really important, adapt to the environment and move on.

Stress Management Strategy 1: Change the Situation

- **Evaluate your physical environment.** If the color on the walls affects your mood or if you are worried about a toddler falling down the stairs or a loved one with dementia wandering out of the house in the middle of the night – modify your environment with paint, gates or alarms on the door.
- **Take a look at the people in your life.** Is there is a person or a group of people who really cause you stress? If so, you may need to distance yourself or resign from that organization/group.
- **Review your calendar.** Sometimes stress results from our inability to say “no.” Look at your commitments. Are you doing what you want to do, should do, have to do? If part of your stress is overcommitting yourself, pare back. Many commitments and tasks are beneficial but if it is hurting your health, it may not be worth it.

Stress Management Strategy 2: Change Your Reaction

- **Laugh, don't cry.** Some things we just can't change. These are the things that we need to learn to accept versus letting them bother us. So your neighbor painted his garage hot pink. Instead of getting worked up when you drive past, accept the pink and laugh at his lack of style.
- **Compromise.** Our need to be “right” often interferes with good communication and can cause stress when we are so focused on what the other person is doing. If we ask someone to change, we need to be willing to change ourselves.
- **Let it go.** Ask yourself does it really matter? Will it matter in five years? We sometimes have to pick our battles. For instance, a mother and child fought most mornings about what the child was going to wear to school. The child chose gym shorts and t-shirts over the mother's choice of “school clothes.” It was causing stress in their relationship as well as starting the day off with ugly confrontation. When the mother finally decided to let it go and allow her child to choose which clothes to wear, the morning conflict ended. The mother recognized that it really didn't matter if the child wore a t-shirt or a polo as long as the child went to school clean, decently dressed and learned while he or she was there.

Having realistic expectations of yourself, shifting your focus to looking at what is really important and taking care of yourself emotionally and physically will also increase your confidence to deal with stressors. Taking a deep breath, meditating, relaxing or taking time to smell the roses allows you to appreciate the little things so that you don't overreact over the big things.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the lifespan, we face multiple demands, such as peer pressure, school, workloads, relationship issues, making ends meet, taking care of family or just making it out the door on time. Stress should not rule your life. Learning what causes stress and different ways we can cope with it is a healthy lifestyle behavior that will reduce pressure and anxiety and influence optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Financial Affairs

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Financial planning across the life course is influenced by many expected and unexpected factors. Values, goals, personal choices, major life events, lifestyle conditions and needs will influence your financial plan. For the most part, certain age groups tend to have similar life cycle needs. High school kids, for example, ought to be planning for independence and evaluating future financial needs and resources. Young adults often work toward establishing a career, earning financial independence and developing a personal financial identity. With marriage and children come education funds, career expansion and increased need for credit. In middle age, people may be investing, updating retirement plans or creating estate plans. Finally, older adults will likely reevaluate and adjust spending according to housing, health and income.

Despite your life stage, it may likely seem that there is never enough money in the bank. Therefore, you need to plan. Financial planning will help you make large purchases without adding to the financial stress in your budget, help protect your household against the unforeseen loss of income and, in the case of successful aging, help you retire with enough money to meet your expenses. Budget development, money management, wise credit use, consumer protection and savvy saving can contribute to successful financial management.

BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

A budget is often called a spending plan or an accounting plan. A budget is an effective tool to help you get the most for your money. It is even more important when you have a sudden change in your income, such as retirement. A budget helps you make decisions about how to spend your money, determine your needs before your wants and match your spending to your current income. Budgets can even help decrease unnecessary arguments and stress over money.

Developing a budget involves three factors—**income**, **monthly expenses** and the **balance between income and expenses**.

Step 1 – Income

Add up your current total monthly income. Include income from other family members if such income is used toward expenses. Include only the take-home amount or what you actually have to spend after deductions.

Income comes from a variety of sources, including:

- Earnings from employed family members
- Unemployment compensation
- Withdrawal from savings
- Tips or commissions
- Interest or dividends
- Social Security
- Child support or alimony
- Public assistance
- Veterans benefits

Step 2 – Monthly Expenses

Now add up your monthly expenses. Some of these expenses are fixed, such as a mortgage or rent, where others can fluctuate like groceries or entertainment. If you have never had a budget before, you can save and keep track of receipts and/or use old records, such as cancelled checks and bill statements, to help you figure out what you typically spend a month. Some of the most common categories include:

- **Housing** – mortgage or rent payments, property taxes, insurance
- **Utilities** – electricity, gas, oil, phone, water, sewer, garbage, cable or satellite television
- **Food** – groceries, eating out, school/senior center lunches
- **Transportation** – gas, car repairs and maintenance, license, tags, parking, bus, taxi fares
- **Medical Care** – doctor, dentist, clinic, hospital, medicine, glasses
- **Loans** – car payments, installment and education loans, credit cards, charge accounts
- **Insurance** – health, life, liability, car, disability
- **Household Operations and Maintenance Repairs** – cleaning and laundry supplies, paper supplies, towels, equipment
- **Clothing and Personal Care** – new clothing purchases, dry cleaning, hair care, cosmetics, toiletries
- **Education and Recreation** – books, subscriptions, magazines, newspapers, lessons, tuition, hobbies, club dues, sports, entertainment, vacation, alcohol, tobacco
- **Pets** – veterinarian visits, vaccines, food, supplies
- **Miscellaneous** – child care, gifts, contributions, personal allowances, child support

Remember that not all of your expenses are monthly. Property taxes, insurance premiums, tuition and holiday gifts may come once or twice a year. It is easy to forget about them and then not have the money to pay for them. You will need to adjust your monthly budget by setting aside additional money to meet these occasional costs.

Step 3 – Balance Income and Expenses

Add up your adjusted monthly expenses and compare the total to your current monthly income. Then adjust your budget accordingly. You may have to decrease spending in one area to have enough money for another area. As you set your budget, think about the following questions:

- Which expenses are essential to your and/or your family's well-being?
- Which expenses have the highest priority?
- Which spending categories can be reduced to keep expenditures within your income?
- How much can you afford to spend in each category?

MONEY MANAGEMENT

Everyone has a style of spending money. Some people's philosophy is "easy come, easy go," whereas others believe that "a penny saved is a penny earned." A budget supports all kinds of spending styles while helping you maintain enough money to pay the bills. The following smart spending habits can help with money management:

- **Find the best buy.** Look in several places – catalogs, newspapers and multiple stores including garage sales or secondhand stores. Spend time looking before you spend.
- **Use wisely.** Make the things you buy last longer by taking proper care of them. See if you can find ways to make the clothes you buy wear longer and keep the food you buy from spoiling.
- **Substitute.** When you go to buy something, ask yourself if a lower-priced item will do the job just as well. Use store brands and generics instead of name brands. Rent a video or DVD instead of going to a movie.
- **Share it.** Stretch resources by sharing with family, friends and neighbors. You can chip in to buy larger amounts at lower unit prices (for example, share a bushel of apples) or join a carpool.
- **Find it free.** There are some items that are available for free. Use public parks and playgrounds instead of expensive health clubs for exercise. Borrow books, records and Blu-ray discs from the library rather than buying them.
- **Rent or borrow.** When you need something for a short time, it is often cheaper to rent or borrow than to buy. Rented or borrowed items must be returned in good condition.
- **Trade or swap.** Do you have things in your home that you no longer use? Can you trade them for things you need? Do you have talents or skills you could trade with your neighbors, such as time babysitting in exchange for help with home repairs?

- **Make it.** Sometimes it's cheaper (and more fun) to make something than to buy it but this means you must use your time and skills. Make sure the cost of materials is cheaper than buying the finished product.
- **Watch out for "phantom" money.** Keep track of the money in your wallet. Cut back or cut out spending on snacks, phone calls, movies, magazines, eating out, record/book/DVD clubs. Stick to your shopping list and avoid impulse buys.
- **Don't buy it.** Ask yourself if you really need this item or if there's something you want even more. Learn to say "no" to yourself, your children, salespeople and to things you feel pressured into buying. Doing without one item can help you get something else you want more. Don't go shopping just for fun or as form of "retail therapy," which is what some people do to relieve stress. In the long run, such unnecessary spending causes stress.

WISE USE OF CREDIT

Credit is the ability to obtain goods or services before payment, based on the trust that payment will be made in the future. Credit allows you flexibility in managing your budget to purchase goods and services when they are needed the most, then paid off when you have the means to pay for them. Individuals are offered credit because lending institutions, such as a bank or credit card company, trusts you to repay them within a stated period of time. Repayment is as important as the credit process. For example, repayment agreements must be honored. If they are not, you risk damaging your credit score and may not be able to borrow money again when you need it. If you are slow in repayment, you will also have to pay an interest charge. Most lenders will charge interest to borrowers to make a profit and to ensure that they do not lose money if you do not repay the loan. While credit can be helpful, it can also be dangerous.

Consumer credit takes many forms, including installment loans, credit cards, department store revolving charge accounts, home equity loans and other kinds of time payment plans. Wise use of credit means that you keep your credit use at a safe, manageable level you are able to pay off within the stated time. This is often difficult in today's consumer environment because reading contracts can be confusing and calculating the actual cost or interest charges requires knowledge and math skills.

When using or applying for credit, it is important to:

- Budget your credit spending carefully
- Shop around for the lowest total finance charges
- Establish a debt limit and stick to it
- Read credit contracts carefully and ask questions before you sign anything if you do not understand something
- Avoid depending on credit to pay for day-to-day living expenses if and when possible
- Pay your bills on time to ensure that you can continue to use credit
- Use credit for items with values that will outlast the installment payments
- Obtain a copy of your credit report annually; check it for accuracy and completeness

CONSUMER PROTECTION

There are multiple laws that protect the consumer from the unfair business practices and fraud that surround us. For example, the Federal Truth-in-Lending Act requires most businesses who extend credit to tell consumers what that credit will cost in the long run, including the finance charge and annual percentage rate of interest. The Fair Credit Billing Act requires, among other things, prompt investigation of billing errors by creditors.

The best way to protect yourself when using credit or entering into an agreement for services is to read and understand the credit contract before signing it. Contracts are common and expected for various purchases and services, such as buying a car or hiring a lawn service. Some people don't realize that contracts are also involved with downloading new computer software or apps. The "terms of use" or other similar wording is used in electronic downloads and by checking the box that you read such terms holds you accountable to the contract. The following "dos and don'ts" will protect you as a consumer:

- Do insist that the salesman lets you take home a copy of the contract before you sign it or gives you adequate time to read it
- Do show the contract to a friend or a lawyer if you have any questions about some of the provisions

- Do insist that all promises be put in writing
- Do keep copies of all contracts, payment records and complaint letters in a safe place
- Don't deal with any salesman who refuses to let you take home a completed contract before you sign it
- Don't sign anything unless you have time to read it carefully and you fully understand what it says
- Don't ever sign a contract with blank spaces that are to be filled in later by a salesperson
- Don't believe offers that are "too good to be true" because they usually are not true

SAVVY SAVING

When thinking about saving, what are your financial goals? What do you want to do in the next 6 to 12 months (short term), 3 to 5 years (medium term) and 15 to 20 years (long term)? Try writing down your wish list. Sometimes the items in the short term have to be put off to obtain items in the medium term. For example, does your family want to go on vacation this year or pay off the family car in four years?

Follow these saving tips to help you achieve your saving goals:

- **Set a saving goal.** If you have a family, have the entire family agree on this goal. Saving for a goal is easier if all members can agree on it and work toward it together.
- **Set goals of how much to save per day.** When saving for a goal, it is often helpful to think about how many cents a day you need to save. For example, if you want to buy a new pair of shoes for a cruise you are taking in 6 months, that \$100 pair of shoes can motivate you to save approximately 55 cents per day for 90 days. When compelled to buy that soda at the gas station or candy bar at the checkout, think about those shoes and save the cash.
- **Be realistic in determining short/medium/long-term goals.** If you feel you cannot afford to save enough to reach a goal, maybe the goal needs to be adjusted or put off for another 6 months to a year. Larger purchases, such as a house (saving for the down payment), may even have to be put off for even longer.
- **Consider a less-expensive version of your goal.** This is not to say you cannot achieve your goal, but consider ways to achieve what you desire at a lower cost. For example, if one short-term goal is to save enough to splurge for a day at the spa, consider a beauty school and/or massage school. You can still get the spa treatment for a fraction of the retail cost. Another example for a medium-term goal includes buying a car. Rather than buy a new car, investigate purchasing a used car or a program car (a vehicle used by a dealership or a car rental agency that has never been "owned" by an individual).
- **Put your savings where it will draw interest, perhaps a bank, money market or certificate of deposit.** It is best to shop around for the best interest rate to help you make money while saving money.

CONCLUSION

Establishing and maintaining a personal financial plan that includes a budget, money management, wise credit use, consumer protection and saving can contribute to successful financial management across the lifespan. There are always unexpected events out of our control that affect our finances, such as the government changing Medicare/Social Security or a natural disaster like an earthquake or tornado. By having a money savings of three to six months' income where it is accessible in an emergency will make these unexpected events easier to financially manage. A financial plan is a healthy lifestyle choice that contributes to optimal aging.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING

Sleep

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Sleep has a major impact on our overall health and quality of life, including the way we look, feel and perform on a daily basis. Our bodies need sleep to repair muscles, consolidate memories and regulate hormones and appetite. Even though sufficient sleep is increasingly recognized as an essential aspect of chronic disease prevention and health promotion, many people do not get enough sleep or suffer from sleep problems.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

Poor sleep has a negative impact on quality of life. It can lead to accidents, impaired job performance and relationship stress. Insufficient sleep causes distress and impairs alertness, concentration and memory. It is also associated with poor health and a number of chronic diseases and conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and depression. Sufficient sleep positively affects:

- **Learning and memory:** Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory through a process called memory consolidation.
- **Metabolism and weight:** Adequate sleep helps with weight control. Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain by affecting the way our bodies process and store carbohydrates and by altering levels of hormones that affect our appetite.
- **Safety:** A good night's sleep reduces accidents. Sleep debt contributes to a greater tendency to fall asleep during the daytime. These lapses may cause falls and mistakes, such as medical errors, air traffic mishaps and road accidents.
- **Mood:** Sufficient sleep reduces irritability, impatience, inability to concentrate and moodiness. Too little sleep can leave you too tired to do the things you like to do.
- **Cardiovascular health:** Getting enough sleep improves heart health. Serious sleep disorders have been linked to hypertension, increased stress hormone levels and irregular heartbeat.
- **Disease:** Getting enough sleep helps fight disease. Sleep deprivation alters immune function, including the activity of the body's killer cells. Keeping up with sleep may also help fight cancer.

SLEEP NEEDS BASED ON AGE

As early as three to six months, most infants have developed a sleep-wake cycle. Sleep is extremely important for children because it directly impacts both physical and mental development. Teens and young adults are a high-risk population for sleepiness, leaving them vulnerable to injury and injury-related death, especially in vehicle crashes due to lapses in attention, delayed responses, drowsiness and fatigue. Starting in young adulthood and as you continue to age, it is not uncommon for sleep to become less satisfying and less restorative. This is in part because sleep tends to mirror overall health. If health is sound, for example, sleep is often good and vice versa. Increasing age is associated with daily demands that can cause stress in addition to higher risk for health conditions such as high blood pressure, stroke and other heart problems. In general, adults are increasingly decreasing their hours of sleep, unaware of the ramifications on overall health. Many senior adults may have more time for sleep, but they are not getting the number of hours needed. Seniors are more likely to

get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, or they may be distracted from sleep due to various aging issues such as muscle aches, illness or a sick spouse. Restless nights, day naps, earlier bed and wake-up times can also throw off the sleep rhythm.

The amount of sleep needed to function varies from individual to individual and is determined by genetics and hereditary. According to the National Sleep Foundation (2014), the average hours of recommended sleep by age include:

Infants

- Birth-2 months need 10.5-18 hours
- 2-12 months need 14-15 hours

Toddlers/Children

- 12-18 months need 13-15 hours
- 18 months-3 years need 12-14 hours
- 3-5 years need 11-13 hours
- 5-12 years need 9-11 hours

Adolescents

- at least 8.5-9.5 hours

Adults

- 7-9 hours

STATES OF SLEEP

As we sleep, we pass through two alternating states (National Sleep Foundation, 2011). Each state is important for experiencing satisfying and restorative sleep.

- **Non-Rapid Eye Movement (NREM)** or “quiet” sleep. During the deep states of NREM sleep, blood supply to the muscles is increased, energy is restored, tissue growth and repair occur and important hormones are released for growth and development.
- **Rapid Eye Movement (REM)** or “active” sleep. During REM sleep, our brains are active and dreaming occurs. Our bodies become immobile and breathing and heart rates are irregular.

WHY CAN'T I SLEEP?

It is normal to experience an occasional problem with sleeping. It is not normal to feel sleepy during the day, to have problems getting to sleep at night or to wake up not feeling refreshed. If you are having trouble sleeping, examine your symptoms to be sure your sleeping problem is just a minor, passing annoyance versus a sign of a more serious sleep disorder or underlying medical condition. If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms on a regular basis, you may be dealing with a sleep disorder and should contact a health care provider:

- Daytime sleepiness
- Irritability or moodiness
- Difficulty staying awake when sitting still, watching television or reading
- Falling asleep or feeling tired while driving
- Difficulty concentrating
- Told by others that you look tired
- Slow reaction time
- Trouble controlling your emotions
- Feeling the need to take a nap almost every day
- Dependent on caffeinated beverages to keep yourself going

COMMON SLEEP DISORDERS

If sleep problems are a regular occurrence and interfere with your daily life, you may be suffering from a sleep disorder. Some common sleep disorders include (CDC, 2014):

- **Insomnia**, the most common sleeping disorder, is the inability to get the amount of sleep you need to wake up feeling rested and refreshed. It is often a symptom of another problem, such as stress, anxiety, depression or an underlying health condition. It can also be caused by lifestyle choices, including the medications you take, lack of exercise, jet lag or even the amount of coffee you drink.

- **Sleep apnea** is a serious and potentially life-threatening sleep disorder in which your breathing temporarily stops during sleep due to blockage of the upper airways. These pauses in breathing interrupt your sleep, leading to many awakenings each hour. While most people with sleep apnea don't remember these awakenings, they feel the effects in other ways, such as exhaustion during the day, irritability, depression and decreased productivity. Loud, chronic snoring, gasping, snorting or choking during sleep, waking up with shortness of breath, chest pains, headaches, nasal congestion or a dry throat are symptoms of sleep apnea.
- **Restless leg syndrome** causes an almost irresistible urge to move your legs and sometimes arms. The urge to move is due to an uncomfortable tingling, aching or creeping sensations that are triggered by rest and often get worse at night. Moving, stretching or massaging your legs can make the sensations temporarily better.
- **Narcolepsy** involves excessive, uncontrollable daytime sleepiness. It is caused by a dysfunction of the brain mechanism that controls sleeping and waking. If you have narcolepsy, you may have "sleep attacks" while in the middle of talking, working or even driving.
- **Disruptions of circadian rhythms** have been linked to a variety of sleeping problems and sleep disorders, including insomnia, jet lag and shift work sleep difficulties. They have also been linked to depression, bipolar disorder and seasonal affective disorder. Circadian rhythms act as an internal biological clock that regulates our 24-hour sleep-wake cycle. Circadian rhythms are cued by light. When the sun comes up in the morning, the brain tells the body that it is time to wake up. At night, when there is less light, your brain triggers the release of melatonin, a hormone that makes you sleepy. When circadian rhythms are disrupted or thrown off, you may feel groggy, disoriented and sleepy at inconvenient times.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP YOU SLEEP

To get the most out of sleeping, both quantity and quality are important.

- Use your bed for sleep and sex only; avoid reading, conversation or television watching in bed
- Do relaxation training to reduce tension
- Restrict time in bed if time is spent lying awake
- Try therapy to help modify attitudes and beliefs that may contribute to poor sleep
- Exercise in the afternoon or early evening not within a few hours of bedtime
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol at least three to four hours before going to bed
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning
- Keep in mind that daytime naps affect nighttime sleep
- If you cannot fall asleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed and participate in a quiet, relaxing activity; go back to bed when you are sleepy
- Eat a balanced diet and don't eat heavy meals before bedtime
- Practice relaxation techniques – such as deep breathing, visualization or meditation – at bedtime
- Keep a sleep journal to keep track of activities, food, drink, emotional circumstances or other factors that might influence how well you sleep
- Keep a steady room temperature in your bedroom (not too warm)
- Make the bedroom a safe place, with locks on the door, a smoke alarm, telephone and good lighting within reach of the bed
- If you snore, avoid sleeping on your back and elevate your head
- Get treatment for allergies, colds or sinus problems
- Wake up to the sun, or use bright lights in the morning to reset the body's biological clock
- Do not lie in bed once awake in the morning

CONCLUSION

When you sleep well, you wake up feeling refreshed and alert for your daily activities. Sleep prepares you to concentrate, make decisions and fully engage in school, work and social activities. Ignoring sleep problems and disorders can lead to poor health, accidents, impaired job performance and relationship stress. Sleep is a necessity for feeling your best, staying healthy, performing at your best and maximizing your potential for optimal aging throughout the lifespan.

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KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING Taking Time for You

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You spend a lifetime making time for others – parenting, caregiving, volunteering and working, but how often do you take a personal timeout? The American Heart Association (2011) recommends making a conscious decision to do at least one thing every day that you enjoy. Taking time for you is good for your mind, body and soul. Follow these tips and aim to spend at least 10 minutes a day on just you.

GET TO KNOW YOU

What makes you, you? What gets you out of bed in the morning? What is your purpose? To help you answer these questions, think about the things you believe in, the values that guide your life and the passions that motivate you. Have you identified and thought about what is really important to you and what you want to get out of life, including your short-term and long-term goals? Once you answer and/or revisit these questions, gather your thoughts and seek opportunities that fulfill you.

What is your ikigai? *Ikigai* is a Japanese concept that translates to “reason for being” or “sense of purpose.” *Ikigai* is a very personal experience, according to Dan Buettner, author of *Blue Zones: Secrets of a Long Life*.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Life is busy. As a result, you may neglect your own well-being, which can lead to stress, irritability, moodiness and even depression. Proper self care, such as sleep, nutrition, physical activity and low stress, can help improve mood and daily productivity. By taking care of yourself, you will be more relaxed and content. You will also feel stronger and more confident. A person who places an emphasis on self care is more efficient, better able to concentrate and help others and will be more likely to accomplish and enjoy more. There are many ways to take care of yourself.

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Eat healthy
- Laugh more
- De-clutter or organize your house and/or office
- Read a book
- Walk your pet
- Play with your kids/grandkids
- Join a club
- Go to your doctor for checkups

TAKE A BREAK FROM YOUR DAILY ROUTINE WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY

It is mentally healthy to take breaks from life's daily routine and such breaks should not come with guilt. Slipping away from your daily routine doesn't have to occur for extended periods of time. It can mean taking a bath, reading a book uninterrupted or going to your bedroom with your door closed to sit in solitude. Help your family and friends around you understand that this is a time you do not want any interruptions. If it's difficult for people to leave you alone, leave the house and go for a walk, meet a friend for coffee or see a movie.

MAKE A "TO-DO LIST"

A "to-do list" is a motivating and organizational tool that helps you plan your day and manage your time effectively. Prioritizing your list into due dates, short-term and long-term goals and/or rank of importance can help you feel more control and balance. It also helps you recognize that everything does not have to be accomplished in one day. Crossing items off of a to-do list can be gratifying and empowering because it is a mental reminder that you're making progress. Leave enough room in your day for day-to-day tasks and other unplanned events that naturally appear. If you are feeling down at the end of the day because your list is incomplete, remember that some days are better than others and accept the unfinished to-do list for what it is: an opportunity to finish it tomorrow.

Set an alarm to remind you about "me time." Eventually, it will become a habit that you won't want to break.

BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Physical activity and exercise, including strength training, is a healthy way to spend "me time." Exercise affects overall physical and mental well-being. It increases strength, cardiovascular conditioning, flexibility, balance and muscle mass. It also decreases body fat, helps boost self-esteem and confidence and helps lower stress and anxiety. Walking is a great way to get started with an exercise routine, even if it is just around the yard (AHA, 2011). If you already have a regular exercise routine, try something new like joining a yoga or cycling class. Group exercise provides both social and physical stimulation. Children and teens should exercise for approximately one hour per day. Middle-aged and older adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of exercise per week (CDC, 2011).

EAT SMART AND DRINK WATER

Wholesome, nutritious foods provide you with more energy, combat depression by keeping your brain functioning at its best and prevent numerous other health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers. Drinking plenty of water will help hydrate your skin and your body. It also flushes toxins out of your body and helps you concentrate. By considering the following recommendations from the USDA's MyPlate program (2011), you can eat for a healthy and more successful future:

- Enjoy your food, but eat less
- Avoid oversized portions
- Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables
- Make at least half of your grains whole grains
- Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks
- Choose food that is low in sodium

RELAX

Relaxation, the body's natural unwinding technique, has been referred to as the single most important key to health and well-being. As a result of relaxation, you may experience more energy, better sleep, enhanced immunity, increased concentration, problem-solving abilities, greater efficiency, smoother emotions and fewer

physical reactions to stress. Relaxation has also been known to decrease muscle tension and blood pressure and increase blood flow, which is good for the heart (Mayo Clinic, 2011). Relaxation can occur through taking a hot bath, reading a book, getting a massage or taking a few deep breaths (Mayo Clinic, 2011; Kovacs, 2010). Professional methods of relaxation include visual imagery, body awareness and progressive muscle relaxation. Meditation is a form a relaxation. Meditation is a state of peace that occurs when the mind is calm. Meditation helps to reduce stress, depression and anxiety (Allen, 2003). In addition to contributing to a calmer, more peaceful and happier life, meditation can increase creativity and productivity in the workplace or classroom.

LAUGH

It's no joke. Laughter really is the best medicine. Laughter has the ability to increase the "feel good" hormones in the body called endorphins. Laughter boosts the immune system, which contributes to overall healthiness. Finding humor in daily situations can even reduce stress, lower depression and help your mind and body heal (AHA, 2011). With such positive benefits of laughter, make laughing a goal. Laughter is contagious. Watch a funny movie or television show, go to a comedy club, take an impromptu comedy class or simply laugh with a close friend or loved one.

JUST SAY NO

Do you find yourself saying "yes" to everything that is asked of you, even if it is something you really do not want to do? Always saying yes is not healthy. It often overcommits you, which can cause stress and fatigue. Saying no allows you to honor existing obligations and dedicate quality time to those commitments. Saying no to things that you have always done but are tired of doing allows you to try new things. You should not feel guilty saying no, as saying no helps you to focus on what's important.

CREATE A BUCKET LIST

A bucket list can act as a road map for "me time" today and into the future. A bucket list is a list of goals, dreams and life experiences that are important for you to experience within your lifetime. Bucket lists aim to help you maximize every moment of your existence and live your life to the fullest. Bucket lists can be grounding because we too often get caught up in the madness of daily activities and fail to live by personal plans and goals. A bucket list helps you identify purpose and meaning because it provides reminders about what is important in life, what you have done and where you want to go. While bucket lists are often associated with dreams of traveling the world or skydiving, your list should fit your personal goals and dreams no matter how big or small (Grossman and Bly, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In today's busy world, you juggle multiple priorities and responsibilities and likely make time for others before making time for yourself. You are important too. Taking time for you – even if it is just for 10 minutes a day – is a healthy lifestyle behavior that influences optimal aging throughout the lifespan.

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Bucket List

Directions. A bucket list is a list of goals, dreams and life experiences that are important for you to experience within your lifetime. Use this worksheet to help you identify some of the things you want to do and accomplish in your remaining years. As you read the following questions, begin thinking about items you want to put on your bucket list.

- If you knew you were going to die tomorrow, what would you do today?
- Where have you always wanted to travel?
- What do you want to accomplish?
- What skills do you want to have?
- What special moments would you like to have?
- What do you want to experience?
- What would you do if you had unlimited resources?
- What have you always wanted to do, but haven't?
- Who would you like to meet?
- What would you like to witness throughout life?
- What is your biggest dream?
- What would you like to achieve socially, physically, financially, socially, spiritually or with your health and career?

Now that you have started thinking about your bucket list, write down at least 10 of your goals and dreams as well as experiences you wish to have throughout your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____