

Eighty is the new sixty... *Let's keep it that way*



GUEST CORNER

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What does it mean to act your age...to behave in a way appropriate for someone as old as you? But what about feeling younger than your numerical age? Our age should not define who we are. Age is a state of mind. See age as a milestone and reminder to live every day to the fullest because the numerical number will keep growing, but that alone should not be detrimental to your healthy lifestyle. The authentic self is our spirit and reveals who we truly are, and that is ageless.

ACHIEVERS BEYOND THEIR 80s

There are many accomplished individuals who have remained active and continued to make significant contributions in their respective fields well beyond age 70 and into their 80s. Here are a few examples:

- Sir David Attenborough (born 1926): English broadcaster and natural historian.
- Jane Goodall (1934): conservationist who conducted groundbreaking research on chimpanzees.
- Willie Nelson (1933): American country singer, songwriter, and activist.
- Our own Westchester-based Martha Stewart (1941): businesswoman, writer, television personality, who inspire all with her famous saying "making beautiful but simple."

HOW TO KEEP OUR MINDS SHARP

The mind, just like our physical body, is subject to change, for better or worse. According to the National Institute on Aging, occasional forgetfulness (for example forgetting a name or where you put your car keys) can be expected at any age, but cognitive decline and consistently struggling to stay focused are not a natural part of the aging process.

In his book "Keep sharp, building a better brain at any age", Dr. Sanjay Gupta mentioned five pillars to build a stronger brain: move, discover, relax, nourish, and connect. As a physical therapist or movement specialist, it was music to my ears that Dr. Gupta viewed "movement" as his priority pillar to improve brain function, increase and repair brain cells that make you more productive and alert. Movement

not only helps and improves the musculoskeletal system but also the central nervous system.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SHOWS IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO START EXERCISING

Regular physical activity and movement make us feel better and help us to perform tasks easier, but resistance training also helps to rejuvenate muscle tissue in healthy senior citizens. A 2007 medical study* showed that the powerhouse of our bodies, the mitochondria (membrane-bound cell organelles that break down glucose into energy) decline as we age but can be reversed with resistance exercises. Among senior adults who exercised twice a week over a six-month period, it remarkably showed an increase in muscle strength of 50%.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE TO COMBAT THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF AGING

Here are some ways in which regularly moving your body can help you combat the negative effects of aging:

- Reduce the risk of falls (and associated injuries) - according to the CDC, 36 million falls among seniors are reported annually.
- Maintain muscle strength and function - as we age, our muscles weaken and lose mass. Regular exercise, including resistance training and weightbearing activities, help slow down this loss and preserve muscle strength and function. Strong muscles are essential to maintain balance, reduce the risk of falls, and maintain independence.
- Enhance cardiovascular health: regular cardiovascular exercise helps to strengthen the heart muscle, improve circulation, and reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions commonly associated with aging.
- Improve joint flexibility and mobility - as we age, our joints become stiff, and it becomes more difficult to do basic self-care activities like putting on socks and shoes.
- Guard against injury: as we age, we lose bone mass (osteoporosis) - especially women - which makes us more prone to fractures. Weightbearing exercises and weight training helps not only to strengthen muscles but also our bones.
- Protective function against chronic disease - according to the National Council on Aging, 80% of adults over the age of 65 has at least

once chronic condition with high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes as the most common.

- Assist in pain relief as endorphins are released with exercises.
- Preserve cognitive function and lower the risk of dementia.

EXERCISE, AND IF YOU DON'T, START

To enjoy a healthy 80s lifestyle, requires we are physically active (move). It is easier than we think. Start to incorporate short exercise bursts in your daily life: for example -

- Before sitting down behind your computer, practice sit-to-stand 10 times (without pushing up on your hands) and breathe deep in and out as you sit-to-stand to sitting again.
- Park further away when you go to a store, and walk briskly to the store.

• When you stand in line, do heel raises and tighten up your core and squeeze your Glutes.

• When watching TV, get up during the commercials and march in place. If you stay seated, kick your legs out and bring your knee up to your chest bringing your knee to your opposite elbow.

Being active is a gift you will give your body and your mind. It increases not only your longevity, but it also slows the biological clock, and keeps you in better energy, better function, elevates your mood, and stimulates your brain.

If you are not used to regular exercises, talk to your doctor or physical therapist to progress to weight training and more moderate intensity exercise program.

** By the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and McMaster University Medical Center, which summary report is available at www.buckinstitute.org/news/exercise-reverses-aging-in-human-skeletal-muscle*

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