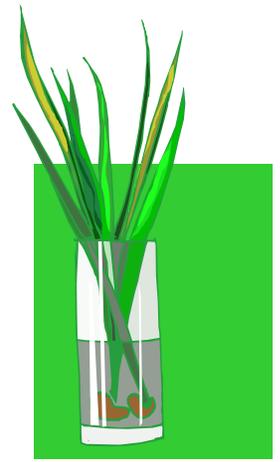




12 Keys to Healthy Aging

Jon Burras



There is only one guarantee in life—you are going to change. However, the manner in which you change is completely up to you. Aging is one way that we change. For most, aging has become a dreaded and inevitable right of passage. It is common for most people to expect to stiffen and harden as they age while being besieged with aches and pains. They expect their bodies to continue to fail as they accumulate calendar days. They believe that it is normal to acquire a horrible disease that will linger until their very last days.

Aging can also be a marvelous adventure with no illness, no pains, with a body that is healthy and a mind that is sharp and focused. The choice is yours. That is right! Aging is a choice. Most people choose the wrong way to age. They follow the negative script established by the media and the mainstream medical profession and then choose to age "poorly." Most people make the wrong choices as they age. Hence, they continue to age "poorly."

There is another choice though. If you do the right things and think the right thoughts, aging can be the highlight of one's life. It does not matter how many calendar days you accumulate on this life journey; it does matter what you do during those days.

The following lists twelve important steps that you might undertake in order to begin the journey of vibrant and dynamic aging. No matter where your starting point and what you have created up to this day, there is no better time to begin turning it all around.

1. Positive Attitude

It's all about attitude. The most important factor in healthy aging is to have a positive attitude. Those who live the longest seem to have a very hopeful and positive outlook on life. Surprisingly, those who appear to have a negative disposition and are pessimistic about things often succumb earlier than expected.

Your thoughts are responsible for creating your reality—including how your physical body functions. Disease and ill-health are not necessarily random acts handed out like punishments to those who deserve to be punished. Ill-health is a creation based on one's thinking.

For instance, do you wake up each morning and expect good things to happen? Do you look for the positive in each day or are you committed to reading the morning newspaper or watching morning television



news programs that reinforce all the bad things happening in the world?

Do you go to bed at night being grateful for all of the good things that happened to you during the previous day or do you retire at night wishing the day were over and worrying about what tomorrow will bring? Do you continue to expect good things to happen to you throughout the day or do you keep a list of how many bad things transpired that day?

Unfortunately, positive thinking cannot be measured by scientists and statisticians. While someone might appear to be positive on the outside they might really be vibrating a negative message inside.

When people who have lived to advanced ages are interviewed, they almost always mention having a positive attitude as the number one factor in good health and a long life. While many people look to a healthy diet as the number one factor, all indications say that is not so. The healthiest eaters do not necessarily live the longest and the oldest living folks do not always eat the best.

For instance, Jerome Irving Rodale, considered the founder of organic foods, died of a heart attack while being interviewed on the Dick Cavett show in 1971. Rodale was only seventy-two years old. Many accounts reveal that Rodale was a driven and obsessed man—hardly the positive attitude that you are seeking.

Jack Lalanne, age ninety-six, noted exercise enthusiast and champion for healthy eating, is a model for health for many. Besides exercising regularly each day and eating well, Jack Lalanne always appears to have a positive and hopeful attitude. While we can measure the hours he spends working out each day and the quality of foods that he is eating, we cannot scientifically measure his attitude.

The current oldest living man is Walter Breuning (age 114) and he lives in Great Falls, Montana, USA. It was on his 113th birthday that Breuning said, "Remember that life's length is not measured by its hours and days, but by that which we have done therein." (Wikipedia)

Walter Breuning continues to enjoy excellent health, despite that fact that he had a long-term habit of smoking cigars. Walter finally gave up the cigars in 1999 at the age of 103. Walter exercises every morning while partaking in full two meals a day. Walter's memory is still clear and his mind is very sharp. Walter takes "no" prescription medications.

"On his 112th birthday, Breuning said the secret to long life is being active: "[if] you keep your mind busy and keep your body busy, you're going to be around a long time." (Wikipedia).

Before his death in July, 2009 at the age of 113, the preceding oldest living man was Henry Allingham of England. Henry boasted that the secret to his long life was "cigarettes, whisky and wild, wild women – and a good sense of humour." (Wikipedia)

Could it be that what kills most people prematurely is not necessarily a poor diet or poor lifestyle habits but a "bad attitude?"

2. Ability to Adapt to Change

Life is all about change. The better you are able to adapt to change the better off you will be. The more you fight change the more difficulties you might encounter. Nothing stands still. Everything continues to evolve. The more you are able to adapt to these changes the healthier you will be.

As we grow older we are often frozen in the past. We cling to what is familiar, from the clothes we put on each day to the friends we enjoy. We collect artifacts from our past and have garages full of memorabilia. We have a hard time letting go of the old in order to allow something new in.

It is not so much the fact that everything continues to evolve that is the issue; the fact that we fight this change becomes the real problem. When you are resisting or fighting against something you remain in a defensive position. You harden in place as you stand your ground. You become suspicious of new things and paranoid of something unfamiliar.

Example #1: Betty

It finally came time where Betty was moved to a nursing home by her children. She just was not able to physically take care of herself anymore. She required more permanent help for her to get through each day. The nursing home facility provided that help for her.

Betty did not fight this transition but embraced it willing. She joined the other seniors for their daily bingo game. She enjoyed having company at her meals. She felt good about her new experiences. She was able to adapt to change rather easily. Betty lived at the nursing home another twelve years before she passed away.

Example #2: George

George was not so easily transformed. He was moved into his new nursing home facility rather reluctantly. Better said, George went "kicking and screaming." George did not want to leave his safe environment in his home that he had lived in for over fifty-years. However, George's family decided that it would be in George's best interest if he were to be relocated to the nursing home.

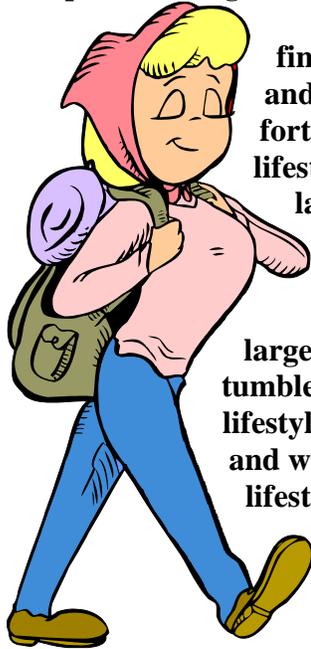
George did not do so well. George was angry that he was forced out of his own home. George felt powerless and out of control. George was not able to adapt to change as Betty had done. George fought his new environment every chance he got. George passed away eight months after entering into the nursing home. George did not want to be there and it showed.

Adapting to change might seem like a simple concept but it can have a dramatic impact on our lives. When we are accepting of our situation we are at "ease." When we are fighting our present condition we are in a state of "war" or "distress." Being in a state of distress begins to weaken the immune system and undermines one's health.

3. Enjoy Where You Are

"The grass is always greener someplace else." How often have you heard this expression? Usually this statement is uttered by someone who is not happy where they are and wishes to be someplace else.

When you are truly lined up with where you are at there is no stress. You are in harmony and balanced. When you remain fighting your situation, internal strife and imbalance begin to grow. Your life situation will continue to change. You might make more money at one time and the next moment be bankrupt. You might have perfect health and in the next instance find yourself trying to manage through a health crisis. The easier it is for you to accept where you are the quicker things will change and the less complications will result.



In the first example, Dave has always had a robust financial portfolio. He has enjoyed fancy vacations, fine wine and a significant amount of leisure time. Suddenly, his fortunes slipped and he found himself needing to adjust his lifestyle. Instead of taking long exotic vacations to foreign lands he now spends time at local attractions that he might never have seen before. He spends far less money and still manages to enjoy where he is at.

Tony took another course though. A lifetime of living large was suddenly taken from Tony. His investments took a tumble and Tony was forced to sell off some assets and adjust his lifestyle. He was reluctant to make this change. Tony was bitter and was not enjoying his new situation. He longed for his former lifestyle and let everyone know how unhappy he was because of these changes. Tony chose to feel like a victim of circumstances. His health began to deteriorate as this bitterness began to eat away at him.

Life will continue to change. You will be best suited if you can learn to "roll with the punches" and enjoy where you are at.

4. Continue to Desire

When we stop wanting we start dying. As long as you can continue to have desires you will continue to desire to live. The more you desire the more you will enjoy your aging process.

Sally just turned eighty-nine years old. She is so thrilled to wake up each day with so many new desires. She is blessed with nine grandchildren and cherishes each moment that she spends with them. She takes painting classes when she is not busy with her bowling club. Sally is planning a trip to Australia in the spring with her church group. She has learned how to navigate her way through the basics of a computer in the past year. Now she can communicate with some of her friends and her family electronically whenever she wishes.

Joan has lost her will to desire. There is nothing new in her life. She remains frozen in the mundane tasks of her day, never seeming to change anything. She wakes up each morning, reads the morning paper, watches her favorite television shows, eats the same meals each day and goes to bed at the same time

each night. Nothing changes. She is just getting by and is not asking for anything new in her life.

Without desires we lose hope. The world is full of so many opportunities that most of us never take. Trying new things, asking for more and envisioning greater experiences provides a deep desire to feel good and continue to thrive in your life.

5. Stop Resisting

There are two primary forces in the world—allowing and resisting. Resistance is what holds us back and make us feel bad. Resistance is what helps to create illnesses and diseases.

Deep within us all we have this innate ability to feel joy and happiness each and every day. Yet many of us wake each day and resist that happiness. We find so many ways to be miserable. In fact, we have mastered the art of feeling bad and of resisting. We somehow believe that we are benefitting by feeling less than perfect.

For instance, Jennifer has lived a long life filled with resistance. She refuses to try anything new. She will not travel or go any place new. Everything in her life is a routine and the same every day. She resists change or new experiences. She spends her entire life contained in a box resisting growing and allowing new experiences to come to her. She has grown up to become that "angry old lady" stereotype that you often see in the movies.

Betty, on the other hand, has a very low resistance point. She is open to new experiences. She enjoys growing and trying new things. She has many friends and travels to new places each year. She is thriving in her life experience as she allows more and more exciting and interesting things into her life. Since her resistance to change is low, she continues to evolve each day into a different person. She never stays the same and is happy and thriving in her life journey.



6. Releasing Old Wounds

We all have had many physical and emotional wounds in our lives. We have slipped on sidewalks, endured relationship breakups and felt the sadness of a loved one's death. These experiences are a normal part of living life.

Physical wounds build up from having played sports, being involved in a car accident or a myriad of other possibilities. You might limp on one leg for most of your life. This may be due to an old injury that you have never bothered to seek out the right healing treatment for. This limp might lead to back problems later on as the pelvis shifts and nerves now become compressed. These old physical wounds make one feel old and feeble. When you reach this stage you often give up trying to feel better and just hold on tightly for the rest of your life.

Emotional wounds are much the same. We all go through times when our emotions are pushed to the limit. Most often we do not have the emotional wisdom to adequately navigate through these experiences. We are left in a state of blame and anger.

The problem arises when we hold onto these stories like a badge of honor and remain bitter and unforgiving throughout our lives. Bitterness can be toxic and will drive us to our grave quicker than any poor diet. When you remain frozen in blame you are projecting out your feelings and making someone else responsible for how you feel. This blaming action then becomes the fuel that drives your existence, wishing suffering on another or trying to "even the score."

Healthy aging requires that you do a bit of inner release work. Learn how to let the past go and not get stuck in revenge. Practicing the art of forgiveness will only set you free. As long as you can stay angry or bitter with someone the more you keep yourself locked up in your own personal jail. There are many techniques available and an assortment of professional services for those who would like assistance in this field.

Exercise:

Start each day and try to think about one person or event that you still feel a strong emotion about. How do you feel like you were wronged or got the short end of the stick? Where do you feel like you had your power taken from you?

See yourself letting this person go, as if you were to place this experience in a bottle, secure the lid on tightly and send it out into the ocean to disappear forever. Feel the sense of freedom and ease as you release this old wound. The more you can do this the more you will feel free and in the present moment rather than living from your past wounds.

7. Expansive Movement

Movement is important to healthy aging. How you move is even more important. The manner in which you move will be a primary element in how you age. Unfortunately, most people do the wrong kinds of movements and these movements only speed up the aging process.

Stress is a force in our lives that causes our muscles to contract and tighten up. This primary force will create a tightening and rigidity in the muscles and connective tissues of the body. Despite this tightening and shortening force, most people further add to this dynamic by moving in a manner that adds more tightening and stiffness to the body. This is usually referred to as "working out." The traditional gym workout will encourage you to age quicker as you move your body more into tightness and stiffness. Joints become compressed, fascia hardens and rigidifies as well as range of motion is reduced. In fact, there is very little that might be considered "healthy" when visiting a gym or health club. (See [JonBurras.com/articles/Health or Fitness](http://JonBurras.com/articles/Health%20or%20Fitness) for more information).

The antidote to the force of stress is to move your body in an expansive fashion. This type of movement might be yoga, Feldenkrais, Alexander or many other types of movement systems. When you move your body in an expansive

way you are creating space in your joints and length in your spine. You are toning your body as well as creating a dynamic sense of freedom as you move. There is absolutely no reason that a person needs to stiffen, harden and shorten as they age. This is a myth that most people tend to believe.

When you expand with your movements you are creating a pattern akin to when you were young. As a youth you enjoyed free range of motion and significant flexibility. Hardness is not health nor is a hard body healthy. Radiant soft tissue that is both toned and flexible is much more of a positive health model. Expansive movements will continue to provide that experience for you. If you practice regular movements in this manner you will age pain free with tone and freedom in your body.

8. Bodywork and Massage

Your body is like a sponge that absorbs everything that has ever happened to you. Every car accident, fall off a skateboard, collision while playing competitive sports and injuries while skiing are still in your body. Just like a sponge that has absorbed water, your body has absorbed those impacts as well.



In addition to physical trauma to your body, emotional trauma is harbored in your soft tissue as well. If you have held your anger back by tightening up your neck or jaw muscles you might begin to experience TMJ (Temporal Mandibular Joint Syndrome) or migraine headaches. Every emotion that you have ever experienced and never released to completion has become stored within your body in one area or another. Stress, (which is another name for fear), has tightened and shortened muscles as well. All told, most of our bodies are a menagerie of stories and holding patterns. What most people do not realize is that these patterns do not just go away by themselves; they are very much alive in your body and will contribute to how quickly you age.

Bodywork and massage are an important step in healthy aging. We usually think about massage as "Swedish massage," where the practitioner rubs warm oil on your body and through a series of strokes, kneads and energizes muscles. There are many other types of treatments that would also be beneficial to healthy aging. These treatments might include Intuitive Connective Tissue Bodywork, Rolfing, Hellerwork, Cranial Sacral Bodywork, Reiki and a host of other styles. The aim is to release the old wounds that have been stored in the body.

If you look around, most senior citizens limp, walk with a cane, have poor posture and a variety of other ailments. This has nothing to do with aging itself. These body limitations are because most people do not make the effort to release what has been stored in their bodies. They just give up, medicate themselves from any pain or discomfort and accept their limitations as just the "facts of aging."

It is certainly possible to live to an advanced age with no aches or pains while taking no medications. Receiving massages and bodywork sessions are an important step in achieving that goal.

9. Take Breaks

We all need to get out of our routines from time to time. The daily rituals of our lives sometimes cause us to spiral out of control and lose our center. Removing yourself from the routines from time to time is a great way to reset your biology and clear your mind. Here are a few of the ways in which to do that.



1. Take a yoga retreat

Participating in a yoga retreat is a marvelous way to rekindle your spirit and refresh your body. Whether a local retreat or one to an exotic location, the retreat experience enlivens your body while providing a new perspective on life.

Feel the openness of having practiced yoga for several days in a row without the worries of work or family. Enjoy the refreshing excitement of meeting new people and seeing new things.

2. Take a personal retreat

We all need time away. Sometimes you do not want to be around other people or mixed into a group. Taking a personal retreat could be anything from going off to a refreshing location by yourself and resting or reading or just relocate to a local hotel for a few days. Take time to contemplate your thoughts.

There is no better way to renew yourself and get out of the grind than to go off on your own personal retreat. Make yourself important as you recharge your spirit and refresh your body.

3. Do a "Staycation"

If you do not have the resources to go off to an exotic location, stay home and recharge by doing some of the things that you love to do. Stay off the computer for a week. Unplug the telephone as if you were gone and nobody could reach you. Rent movies or go for walks on the beach.

The secret to a "staycation" is to remove yourself from as much responsibility as possible. Make yourself important. Be selfish and put yourself first.

4. Go have an adventure

There is not a better way to awaken the sense than to go have an adventure. Do something out of the comfort zone that will cause you to contemplate and shift your perspective on life.

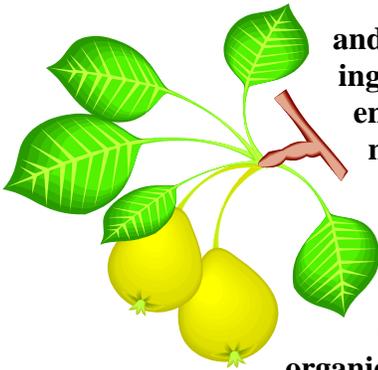
This could mean to go on an African safari, travel to the Great Wall of China or just take a 3 day mini-cruise from a local port. Do something different than your normal routine. Healthy aging is about being excited about the possibilities each day. There are so many opportunities that help to create joy and excitement. Those who are stuck in their "little worlds" of routine will tend to age quicker as they just want to make it through each day. They do not have a trip to look forward to or an adventure to talk about.

5. Take a one day "time out"

Reboot your system by taking one-day just for yourself. Unplug from your world. Do not return any phone calls or emails. Perhaps go to a spa for half a day or drive out of town for a short visit somewhere. You might even do something radical like receiving three massages in one day from three different spas. See [JonBurras.com/articles/A "Radical" Approach to Healing](http://JonBurras.com/articles/A%20Radical%20Approach%20to%20Healing).

We all need time to refresh ourselves. This is our time for exhaling and quietness. Those who have spent quality alone time along their lifespan will be more eager to experience each day. Those who have not taken the time to enjoy themselves and refresh will just be trying to survive each day.

10. Eat Close to Nature



Michael Pollen, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*, has said that if it has more than five ingredients in it, don't eat it. He has also said to shop at the very ends of a supermarket, where the fruits and vegetables are. The most highly processed foods are in the middle of the market.

A balanced diet is important in healthy aging. Food is medicine and nourishment for your body. Imagine a diet that is as close to nature intended. This might include organic, fresh and in-season produce. This might also include non-GMO (genetically modified organisms), a plant-based diet with organic and non-antibiotic laden meats.

The soil that food is grown in matters. Commercial factory farms, where artificial fertilizers and pesticides are the norm, usually contain depleted soils. All of those chemicals will destroy the natural order of good soil and what is left is void of the minerals and nutrients necessary. Due to commercial factory farming, a spinach field today might only contain 10% of the nutrients that the same field contained nearly fifty-years ago. That is how ravaged the soils are.

The more processed a food the less value it contains. For instance, the United States government has made a commitment to building a food industry on genetically modified foods and corn. This is done on corn subsidies paid to corn farmers. Corn is one of the least nutritious foods you could ever eat. It is not even a vegetable; it is a starch. Corn is fed to nearly all non-organic animals. Corn is used to make oils, corn starch and many other products. Nearly 80% of the products found at the average supermarket contain one form of corn in it or another.

The fresher the food the more nutrients it contains. Cooking or pasteurizing a product essentially wipes out some of the beneficial nutrients found in a food product. The closer you can eat to nature the more nourishment your body will collect. This will help your overall aging as your body will be fed what it is demanding.

11. Cleanse the Body

You change the oil in your car and replace the filters in your home heating/air conditioning system on a regular basis. You understand that these simple mechanical systems function at their best when they are cleaned and flushed of debris and dirt. Why would you not choose to cleanse your body in the same manner?

The kidneys and liver are your primary filtering organs in the human body. Your lymphatic system removes toxins and decayed red blood cells. These filters require maintenance. Regular flushing and cleansing of the organs and body systems helps to ensure a longer life-span and a healthier body. Organs are not designed to fail but are supposed to function to full capacity until your very last days.

The human body is a series of rivers. I like to think about these rivers as *The Thirteen Rivers of Health*. These rivers are the following: (Circulation, lymph, digestion, respiration, urinary, skin, glandular, reproductive, muscular/skeletal, nerves, emotions, body electric system and cranial sacral system).

What most people do not realize is that the use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs are one of the primary reasons why organs become clogged up. Your body is trying to filter out these toxins once they have approached their target cells.

Interestingly, gall bladder surgery is the most common surgery in the United States. Most people are taught to believe that if your gall bladder becomes clogged with gall stones (congealed bile), the entire organ needs to be removed. Outside of the United States, lemon juice and olive oil are used to flush out the gall bladder. Another curious fact, Lipitor (to lower cholesterol) is the most frequently prescribed drug in the United States. Outside of the United States, garlic is used as the most popular body cleanser.

As your organs and glands become flushed, your body will function more efficiently. You will not age as quickly and you will feel more vitality. Colon cleanses, liver cleanses, kidney cleanses and gall bladder cleanses all become a necessary longevity experience.

12. Supplements

The last suggestion you might consider for a healthy aging experience is to add the right kinds of supplements to your diet. Supplements might be in the form of herbs, minerals or vitamins. There are more supplements available today than one could ever imagine. It might be important to confide in a health professional in order to choose the right supplements for you.

Taking supplements is the last step in a healthy aging process. Most people use this as the first and only step. It is far easier to take a pill or multi-vitamin

every day then to change some of the other lifestyle choices that we have previously mentioned. Many people deteriorate as they age because they might be doing step twelve but have altogether ignored the other eleven steps. If you believe that just by taking a multivitamin every day your aging will slow down, you will be very disappointed.

Eating a healthy organic diet will provide you with most of the nutrients that are important to healthy aging. Getting your minerals and vitamins as whole foods is always more beneficial than in an isolated pill form. For example, consuming an abundance of organic spinach would be more beneficial than taking calcium in a pill form. However, when you are not able to get your vitamins and minerals in whole food forms, a supplement is always available. There are also dehydrated forms of foods that you might add to a morning smoothie. This might include a green super food or a powdered form of carrots or broccoli. There are many online retailers where you can purchase a supply of powdered fruits and vegetables.

Supporting the biochemistry of the body is important. Having the right nutrients acting on a cellular level can be a vital step in healthy aging.

Conclusion

Healthy aging is not exactly what most of us have been taught. There are many myths and misconceptions to how aging actually works. You are not a victim of the calendar and your body is not supposed to fail as you age. If you begin a lifelong regimen of doing the right things, you will age gracefully and maintain the health and vitality that you have always wished for.

Aging does not have to be about pain or acquiring one ill-fated disease after another. Aging does not have to be about suffering or slowing down and preparing for the "end." Aging can be a dynamic and exciting time.

Healthy aging requires that you begin to implement many of the important steps mentioned in these twelve key steps. As previously noted, the world's oldest living man is in perfect health, takes no medications and enjoys each and every day. You too can enjoy the same healthy and joyous aging experience.

Resources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Breuning
[JonBurras.com/articles/Health or Fitness](http://JonBurras.com/articles/Health%20or%20Fitness)
The Omnivore's Dilemma, Michael Pollen
In Defense of Food, Michael Pollen
Herbdoc.com (Dr. Schulze cleansing products and Super food)
LiveSuperfoods.com (dehydrated fruits and vegetables)
Starwest Botanicals (dehydrated fruits, herbs and vegetables)
[JonBurras.com/articles/Thirteen Body Rivers](http://JonBurras.com/articles/Thirteen%20Body%20Rivers)
King Corn DVD
[JonBurras/articles/A "Radical" Approach to Healing](http://JonBurras.com/articles/A%20%22Radical%22%20Approach%20to%20Healing)

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