Aging Beyond Belief

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69 tips for REAL wellness

Reason Exuberance And Liberty

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Dedication

To my grandchildren Madison (4), Cadence (2), Charlie (2) and Buddy Miles (1). It’s never too late, or too soon, to start aging under the influence—of a REAL wellness lifestyle. Of course, by the time they can read this book, such patterns will be well established, thanks to their parents Sara and Josh, Jeanne and Steve, and Jon and Staci.

To my darling wife Carol, who reads and improves all my stuff. I am fortunate to be aging under the influence of a beautiful and athletic companion whose wellness lifestyle influences my own every day.

To Bob Ludlow, a former cycling buddy and lifelong friend who serves as an unofficial editor-in-chief and part-time director of my continuing education. He provides near-daily streams of articles, political cartoons, book recommendations and, best of all, personal commentaries on current events.

To Judd Allen, Rick Clark, Grant Donovan, Bill Hettler, Lenore Howe, Steve Jonas, Sandy Scott and Wendy Shore, all of whom made invaluable contributions to these tips and to the essays that appear daily at SeekWellness.com and in the weekly ARDELL WELLNESS REPORTS.

Finally, kudos to Carlene, Peg and Joy at Whole Person for skillful editing, patience, tolerance and skillful design.
REAL is used in this book as an acronym for three amazing lifestyle qualities. These qualities are key, in my view, to a life that is healthier, more enjoyable and ever so much more satisfying than what passes for “normal,” which is not very healthy, enjoyable or satisfying. The REAL qualities I offer are Reason, Exuberance And Liberty. These qualities are foundation elements in 69 tips for genuine, authentic and yes, REAL wellness!

The wellness concept is a powerful idea. It’s a term that has been widely used, but the best parts of the original wellness mindset or philosophy have been neglected. These elements include personal responsibility, critical thinking, the quest for added meaning and purpose, humor, play, happiness and emotional intelligence. Make no mistake—there is a lot more to REAL wellness than exercise and nutrition. All parts or skill areas of REAL wellness are addressed in the 69 tips. These tips will demonstrate that REAL wellness is not a product, a healing remedy, a medical service or anything else outside of oneself, but a way of life that you manage and direct. You can’t buy pills or treatments for REAL wellness—it’s a mindset and lifestyle you control. Therefore, let Reason, Exuberance And Liberty—REAL wellness, be your guide!

In these tips, you will find a lot of advice for aging well. The tips are based upon your willingness and ability to employ reason (evidence-based decision-making) in order to experience exuberance in daily life that in turn will enrich your enjoyment of maximum liberty (freedom and choice). That kind of wellness, gentle reader, is the genuine number, the real McCoy—it’s nothing less than REAL wellness. That’s the idea of this book. I’m confident you’ll find it so.
In short, this book applies the term wellness to personal responsibility, exercise and fitness, nutrition, stress management and meaning and purpose. It celebrates reason as critical thinking and exuberant aliveness, joy and pleasure in a context of maximum liberty, choice and freedom. And all this is just for starters. I don’t want to limit the use of the term! REAL wellness invites attention as well to sound relationships, resilience and much else that we associate with a high quality of life, not just related to aging—but in all stages of life.

Thirty years after the publication of my first book *High Level Wellness: An Alternative To Doctors, Drugs and Disease* (Rodale, 1977; Bantam, 1979; Ten Speed Press, 1987), this book about aging well represents a celebration of the wellness concept, at its best. REAL wellness represents the way I celebrate and communicate the concept. That is what I have intended with the 69 tips for aging under the influence of a healthy and satisfying lifestyle. I hope you enjoy and find these tips helpful in shaping your own aging process. After all, if you’re going to age anyway, why not do so along wellness lines? REAL wellness lines.
Introduction

Aging. Getting older, slowing down, the autumn years. Not something any of us would choose for the discounts, if we could stay 39 for another year or, better yet, half a dozen more decades. But, aging happens. We all do it, until the final curtain call. Signs and symptoms of aging creep into our awareness sometime around age 40. I myself am rumored to be approaching senior-hood. Just the other day, I thought I saw a sign of aging in my barely noticeable receding hairline. However, considering I’m only 69, I doubt anyone else noticed, yet. But I’m aware of it—and that’s what matters.

The question is—what of it? Should you struggle, resist, deny, and invest in repairs and restorations? Or, is it better to just give up and resign yourself to a gradual fade—into oblivion or Valhalla? Neither—this is a false dichotomy, a too-narrow choice. You can do something else. You can age under the influence—of a wellness lifestyle. Welcome to this, a guided tour of tips for aging healthfully and well with maximum life enjoyment along the way.

I’ve been pondering, experimenting and writing tips for “aging under the influence” (AUI) of a wellness lifestyle for many years. For this book, I condensed decades of wellness advice-giving into 69 distinct tidbits of guidance for intelligently designing your own evolution. Yes, you can organize your thinking and behavior to evolve into the all-around fittest you possible.

I selected 69 suggestions for AUI based upon the idea that I ought to have one tip for each year of my existence. I hope you find many of these tips highly useful, as well as interesting and provocative.

Feel free to write me with additional tips, if you think of any. They could be helpful if I get much older.
Objectives

If you plan to age, you will enjoy the later years more if you AUI of a wellness lifestyle. Doing so will enable the best possible health, the highest available energy levels, the greatest obtainable degree of physical mobility and the fullest mental capacities. Furthermore, from the perspective of non-positive but still important payoffs, AUI should prove highly beneficial because you will minimize the downside risks or disabilities of aging. AUI of a wellness lifestyle will save money (e.g., you won’t need as many medications and medical interventions as your peers), minimize pain (fewer illnesses and failed parts) and maybe you will last longer—no guarantees, as random chance plays a big role in longevity. However, you will at least boost your odds of a longer life. But the best reason is pure pleasure—you will enjoy yourself more the remaining days of your life. These should be viewed as the true wonder years, the best of all your times.

Thus there are both attractive objectives of a positive (enjoyable) and negative (avoidance) nature that favor devoting serious attention to these 69 tips for AUI. Make a conscious choice to do so—and thereby make the latter decades as fulfilling and delightful as possible.

Caveats

The tips are designed to stimulate your creative adaptations, not as blueprints. That should be obvious but you never know—some folks take everything way too seriously. Not all tips will work for everyone—that’s why there are so many! If just one tips changes your life in a significant way, this book will be great value. Some tips may seem like terrible ideas to some readers (e.g., see tip # 11—definitely
not for everybody). Of course, all the tips make sense to me. You may find some of them a little “out there” or maybe too timid—tastes are widely different. In any event, the tips are consistent with my experiences. Each one seems just the thing for AUI, but it’s best that you interpret all of them to suit your style, tastes and peculiar inclinations.

And one more thing—don’t worry; there are no tips that I myself do not follow. These are tested by my experience as a wellness enthusiast nearly all of my adult years. They are also based, to the extent possible, on science and reason! I have not “channeled” these tips from any 16th century mystics (e.g., Nostradamus), nor have any been delivered on a space ship—just for me. Nor are other amazing revelations at play here. The focus on science and reason is vital in health-related works and everything else, in my opinion. Therefore, I made every effort to ensure that the tips are consistent with studies—and referenced the studies and other sources for your perusal. It’s true—I made up the tips themselves, but I had a lot of help from many bright people who know how aging works from studying the phenomenon over many years in controlled ways.

I have not included any aging tips I find personally unattractive, even if some experts think they could add a few years to your life. An example is calorie restriction. There is no tip in this book to the effect that you should starve yourself in order to live longer. If doing so were a sure thing for added years (highly unlikely), I still would not recommend it. Don’t look for any really bizarre life extension notions in these tips, such as inhaling virgins’ breath, eating gold or implanting monkey glands. I’m guessing you are quite relieved to know that.
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