

Introduction

Imagine life the way you'd like it to be when you're 75 years old. Imagine that you're still able to participate in the recreational activities you enjoy...hiking, skiing, golf, tennis, camping, swimming, and cycling. Imagine that you're still able to travel the world, play with your grandkids, and are in no need of any assistance to perform daily chores and activities. The enjoyment and quality of your life is great. You are physically, mentally and spiritually fit and healthy. Life is good. Now imagine the opposite scenario. Imagine you're 75 years old and you need a motorized wheelchair to get around. Imagine that you've been admitted to a nursing home because you can no longer take care of yourself. Imagine that you've become a burden to your children. Imagine that the relationship with your grandkids is superficial and strained because you're depressing and no fun to be around. Imagine that you never go outside because it's such a hassle. Imagine that every joint and muscle aches all day long. Imagine a state in which you are physically, mentally and spiritually unhealthy. Wow, that's depressing.

The reality is that what you do today will determine the type of existence you can expect as you get older. It is a matter of choice not chance. In fact, the lifestyle that you are living today will cause you to age more slowly or more quickly than your chronological age. It doesn't take a scientist or researcher to have to convince us of this phenomenon. There are lots of real life examples of people

who have been healthy and fit all their life and now find themselves in their later years still having the energy and ability to enjoy life.

A company, FitnessAge, based in San Diego, California has actually put a number to this phenomenon. FitnessAge is a physiological assessment which scientifically calculates whether someone is aging more slowly or more quickly than their chronological age. The assessment involves tests that measure 4 components of fitness: cardio-respiratory, body composition, muscular strength and endurance and flexibility. At the conclusion of the test, the individual's results are plugged into a mathematical formula and compared to a database of 60,000 other results, to determine their FitnessAge. So let's say that an individual is 40 years old but has never exercised and eats poorly - their FitnessAge may be that of a 60 year old - this means that they are aging more quickly than they should be due to their poor lifestyle. For a lot of people this may put things into perspective for them and hopefully will be the kick in the butt they need to start exercising and taking better care of themselves. I've performed FitnessAge assessments on unfit people and I can tell you that immediately, when told their FitnessAge and how poor it is, they decide to finally take action and start exercising. You see, most people realize that they should be exercising - everybody knows it's good for them. But most people don't exercise - they just *think* about starting an exercise program their entire life. There's a definite gap between knowing what we should be doing and actually doing it. For most people they need a compelling reason, a motivating force to

actually get started and stick to an exercise program. And since most people are sensitive about their age (everybody always wants to look and feel younger than they really are), finding out we're aging more quickly than we should be does it for most people. After someone receives a poor FitnessAge score, the common response is "Wow, I knew I was out of shape, but I didn't realize how out of shape I really am. I really need to do something about this". This is when they lock into an exercise program. Now, in contrast, if an individual is 40 years old and has been working out regularly and taking good care of themselves, they could have the FitnessAge of a 20 year old. Imagine their response after getting their score. The common response is a big smile and "YES". It is a definite ego-booster and definitely calls for bragging rights. It's the pat on the back that they deserve. It's a reward for all their efforts and discipline. It definitely reassures them that they're doing the right thing and motivates them to keep on exercising and eating well.

I recently had the honor of meeting Jack LaLanne - the pioneer of fitness. He opened the first-ever fitness club; he was the host of the first-ever TV fitness show and has been exercising every day since he was young. He has been spreading the message regarding the importance and benefits of regular exercise for decades and has become a real-life testimony of why we should all be following in his footsteps. I met him at the age of 85 years old. Imagine the average 85-year-old - definitely nursing home material. Well, Jack is definitely not your typical 85-year-old man. At the age of 85 he can perform 20 full

pushups on his fingers and toes - perfect form. He exercises every day and travels around the world with his wife Elaine. Most people can't keep up with his energy and passion for life. He fills a room with laughter and has inspired thousands. And get this - his FitnessAge is that of a 29-year-old male. He's a great example of our ability to add years to our life and life to our years.

Let's face it folks, aging is an inevitable part of life - in fact we're all aging by the second. But because of the population size of Baby Boomers, this natural aging process will place an incredible strain upon our society. By the year 2021, approximately 16% of our population will be above the age of 65. These trends, common to North America, will be disastrous to our medical system. Even more staggering is the statistic that nearly half this population will have some degree of physical disability. As aging and a subsequent loss of strength occurs, it will have an enormous effect on the capacity of elderly individuals to lead viable and independent lives. This dependence is associated with increased mortality and leads to adverse outcomes such as hospitalization, nursing home placement and greater use of formal and informal home services. If it weren't for technology many people would die at a much younger age. But instead, many unhealthy people are kept alive using medical advancements and are then forced to endure a life full of pain and discomfort. Definitely not what I imagine for my later years!

We can expect certain changes, such as graying hair and wrinkled skin, to accompany aging. In fact, the cosmetic industry preys off our attempts to reverse some of these changes. But the debilitating effects of aging are particularly noticeable in the musculo-skeletal system (the bones, muscles, joints, ligaments, tendons and cartilage). However, luckily, many of the changes commonly attributed to the process of aging are in fact, a result of physical inactivity or disuse. The old adage “use it or lose it” appears to ring true. Muscle tissue, strength, bone density, cardio-vascular fitness, energy levels and functional performance appear to be preserved through exercise. There seems to be no magic pill or drug that holds as much promise for sustained health as a lifetime program of physical exercise and good nutrition!

And a lot of people are taking notice. You can look to Movie Stars to find people who are fighting and winning against the aging process...Sophia Loren, Clint Eastwood, Paul Newman, Meg Ryan, Kevin Costner, Goldie Hawn, Cher, Dick Clark, Sean Connery and many others. Most people who are aging slowly have taken on the attitude "I may be getting older but I'm not dead!"

As a Baby Boomer, you are the largest segment of our society. You are the wealthiest and most health conscious group. You've got the money to take good care of yourselves and you recognize the value in doing so. There has been an 81% increase in the number of people between the ages of 35-54 purchasing a gym membership, a 116% increase in those between the ages of 55-64 and an

804% increase in those over the age of 65 joining a fitness gym. More and more people are realizing that 70% of the costs relating to sickness and disease is preventable and that the quality of life they enjoy now and in the future is directly dependent on whether they exercise or not.

By purchasing this book you've already demonstrated that you take your health and fitness seriously and have been or are ready to commit to an exercise and nutrition program. Throughout this book you will learn many of the steps necessary to live longer and still have the energy to do the things you do now or have always wanted to do.

Hippocrates said it best thousands of years ago even before modern day scientists:

"Speaking generally, all parts of the body which have function, if used in moderation and exercised in labors to which each is accustomed, become thereby healthy and well developed, and age slowly, but if unused and left idle, they become liable to disease, defective in growth, and age quickly." Recently, thousands of years later, The Surgeon General's Report confirmed Hippocrates' views by stating that a sedentary lifestyle is equivalent and has the same health risk associated to smoking 1 pack of cigarettes a day!

My goal is to convince you that exercise and good nutrition is a necessary and critical part of your life so that no matter what obstacles surface, you continue to take good care of yourself - now and ongoing. Good luck and stay fit!