

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50 +

The Importance of Cognitive Engagement and A Positive Lifestyle for Active Aging

Introduction

Some things ARE worth repeating. In the Forever Active's December 2013 newsletter I reviewed the best selling book, "Younger Next Year", <http://forever-active.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/21-December-2013-Younger-Next-Year.pdf>.

In my introduction of that newsletter I stated that "Younger Next Year" is a book about self improvement. It was written for the older adult or, as they say, those who are approaching the last third of their lives, but it is really applicable to everyone of any age. The book is divided into two parts; Taking Charge of Your Body and Taking Charge of your Life. In other words, it is about taking control and being in control.

The December 2013 newsletter was very well received and the book and its powerful message helped serve as a road map for many in their quest for a healthier, happier and more productive retirement life.

The January/February 2016 issue of The Journal on Active Aging had a very enlightening interview with Dr. Harry Lodge, one of the "Younger Next Year" authors. In the interview, he explains how engaging the brain, and having a positive attitude as we age can stave off cognitive decline and physical deterioration and are the keys to healthy, active aging.

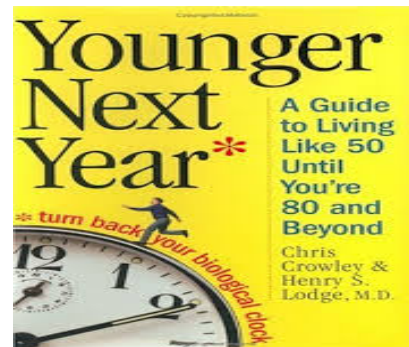
Forever Active is dedicated to educating and promoting a lifestyle that will improve older adults' ability to age actively and as a result enhance their quality of life. The message that Dr. Harry Lodge conveys with respect to being cognitively engaged and living a positive lifestyle is worth discussing in more detail.

References

["Younger Next Year: Live Strong, Fit, and Sexy-Until you are 80 and Beyond"](#) by Chris Crowley and Henry S. Lodge, M.D. ISBN # 978-0-7611-4773-2.

["Younger Next year for Women: Live Strong, Fit, and Sexy-Until you are 80 and Beyond"](#) by Chris Crowley and Henry S. Lodge, M.D. ISBN # 13:978-0-7611-4774-9

www.youngernextyear.com



Younger Next Year; Harry's 7 Rules

1. Exercise 6 days a week for the rest of your life. You want to stay strong, agile, flexible, with good balance and coordination.
2. Do serious (60—70% HRmax) (HRmax= 220-age) aerobic exercise (walking, running, biking, swimming) four days a week for the rest of your life. Build up the strength of your heart.
3. Do serious weight training, (body resistance exercises or weight), 2x's a week for the rest of your life. Build up the strength of your muscles, ligaments and tendons.
4. Spend less than you make. Serious stress reduction technique.
5. Quit eating crap. Eat less sugar, eat less fat, eat less. You are what you eat so eat nutritiously well.
6. Care. You have to care about something to keep yourself alive. Charities, people, family, job. It needs to be specific, important and interesting to you
7. Connect and Commit. You have to be involved with other people.

Cognitive Engagement and its Role in Active Aging?

The key to optimal cognitive health (ability to think, plan and organize) at all ages turns out to be the way we structure and live our lives. Cognitive engagement socially and culturally is essential.



Healthy aging is not determined by genetic information contained in our cells but emerges out of positive continuous engagement with each other and our environment.

What does Cognitive Engagement Mean?

Anything that is fun and easy for you, like crossword puzzles, isn't really challenging your brain and therefore, isn't protective against dementia. Challenging the brain requires that the task be mentally complex. As well, you have to care whether you win or lose based on the outcome. In other words there has to be some payment or social reward for winning. Unfortunately, many of the structured tasks in seniors' lives are not complex enough and there isn't enough at stake for participants.



How does Lifestyle Affect Our Brains?

Research has shown that the major lifestyle risks for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are the same as those for cardiovascular disease— chronic stress, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, lack of exercise. In addition, both social and cognitive engagement turn out to be significant factors. In a landmark study of Nuns, it was revealed that the more the nuns were engaged in their community, the lower their risk of showing clinical dementia. At autopsy, many of the nuns who had a lot of plaque in their brains— thought to be indicative of severe Alzheimer's— showed few clinical signs of dementia if they had a positive attitude and were deeply engaged socially with others. On the other end of the spectrum, many of the nuns who had been isolated and depressed had a lot of clinical manifestations of dementia, even if their brains looked good on autopsy. The take away is that an active and socially integrated lifestyle protects against dementia and Alzheimer's. This "healthy" lifestyle involves physical activity, emotional and community involvement and cognitive engagement.



The Importance of a Positive Attitude to a Healthy Lifestyle?

Daniel Kahneman, who won a Nobel prize for Behavioural Economics says that our "experiencing selves" and our "remembering selves" perceive happiness differently. For example, often while we are 'experiencing' a wonderful event, we will only "remember" something that may have happened negatively during the event. Even though



90% of the event was a great experience we only remember the 10% that went wrong and as a consequence we allow that remembrance to influence our



whole perception of the event. People need to pay more attention to their "experiencing" self. People need to become more aware of

all the really good things about their lives...they need to separate their difficulties from everything that is good. Positive self talk and positive reinforcement are powerful tools to change a person's mood and help them live a healthy lifestyle.