

HOW SENIORS STAY FIT: THE SIX PILLARS OF SENIOR FITNESS



How Seniors Stay Fit- The Six Pillars of Senior Fitness

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Senior Fitness - Staying Fit, Healthy and Strong for the Rest of Our Lives

Hi – I'm Frank Wilhelmi and I hope to be your guide to aging well; getting the most out of our body while we live or, as I like to say, aging optimally. I spent most of my life as an electronic engineer in Aerospace, a job that is conducive to muscle loss and fat gain, and plenty of mental stress.

Fortunately, I started to exercise when I figured that out, and after distance running for three years I joined a gym to build stronger legs so I could run better. In short order I realized that the benefits of weight training far exceeded those of running and have been a gym rat ever since. I sought to eat right and get the most out of my body ever since; I have never been out of the gym for more than a month since age thirty three.

So I was stunned in 2001 to find that my coronary arteries were blocked and wound up on the surgeon's table for a 4-way coronary bypass. I have spent the years since researching why that happened and devising strategies to avoid the negative effects of aging. I use an engineering approach: find what works and use it! I'm still learning, and when I find new strategies for optimal aging I pass them on to my readers. I have learned that we can program our health to a high degree by our lifestyle choices in the six aspects of living discussed below, and this series will give you the basics for aging optimally.

Welcome to your free series on Optimizing the Aging Process and staying Fit into Advanced Age – 6 Pillars to Support Senior Fitness

Consider Our Senior Fitness Goal:

- **Stay strong, agile, pain-free, smart; have enough energy to engage in any activity we so choose, and be able to enjoy it**
- **Avoid the degenerative, debilitating diseases of aging – heart disease, cancer, dementia, arthritis, etc**
- **Resist and/or recover from infective organisms quickly, for as long as possible**
- **Die quickly with grace, dignity and minimal pain, leaving those we share life with richer for having lived with us**

To optimize fitness for life, there are **6 key areas** that should be attended to on a consistent, life-long basis. We can slack our attention for brief periods without much consequence, but get back on track quickly and the results are better. These **6 Pillars** support **Senior Fitness** and allow **Dynamic Senior Living**. Each of these categories

has a significant bulk of knowledge to be understood to get the best results, but in this article series I try to break it down into some **simple strategies** that, if applied simplistically without a lot of study, will produce highly rewarding lifetime benefits. These 6 topics are found in the navigation header on the Senior Fitness website. These are:

- **ANTIAGING,**
- **EXERCISE,**
- **NUTRITION,**
- **SLEEP, RECOVERY & RELAXATION,**
- **SUPPLEMENTS, • THINKING & ATTITUDE.**

Over the next several days we will send you a series of articles detailing the key strategies for optimizing the aging process pertaining to these 6 key pillars supporting a long, dynamic life. Applying these strategies in these 6 areas will increase our odds of a long and healthy life. I sincerely hope these will point the way to bright future for you and your loved ones.

PILLAR # 1 ANTIAGING

ANTIAGING- Slowing the processes involved in aging, and delaying their consequences.

There are practical lifestyle choices that lead to longer, fuller, healthier life. We are building an understanding of how the body ages, what speeds it up and what slows it down. We now understand much of the aging process at the cellular level, and every day this understanding gets better. A growing body of medical practitioners is specializing in this field of Anti-aging Medicine, and it makes sense at this time to seek them out as our physicians of choice. You can find these specialists listed at these sites:

<http://www.worldhealth.net/pages/directory/> and <http://www.lef.org/Health-Wellness/InnovativeDoctors/>. These are search pages where you can find one near you.

Strategy: Make it a primary interest to understand the causes of aging, what can be done to slow the process and avoid its greatest hazards; make it a hobby.

In the first installment of this series we will explain the mechanisms of aging and provide practical strategies for slowing and in some cases reversing these processes. The arrow of time moves forward, but some aging damage can be reversed and our bodies can function at more youthful levels.

PILLAR # 2 EXERCISE

EXERCISE - The primary driver for reversing age-related functional decline.

The body is a **demand-driven**, adaptable, living system that requires **movement and muscular activity** to maintain its function. Consider what happens to someone bedridden for a month or more; muscle mass, flexibility, strength, bone density and range of motion all drop like a downed helicopter, in just a matter of days. The unseen effects are equally damaging; every organ reduces function and slows its activity. Lack of movement is devastating to the human body.

Aging is very much like a longer version of being bedridden. Slowly, over decades, the same decreases in capability occur AND the antidote is the same: **MOVEMENT**. Start moving and your ability to move will improve. Walk, run, dance, stretch, lift weights, play games that require physical motion and the losses due to aging will reverse.

Strategy: Make purposeful movement a part of your daily life; make exercise a key feature of your lifestyle.

Your second installment in this series will discuss and explain the most effective forms of exercise, and why they impart such a massive benefit for health and longevity. Some are better than others for restoring or maintaining strength and fitness in seniors.

PILLAR # 3 NUTRITION

NUTRITION - the Raw Material for Senior Health and Lifetime Fitness

Food provides the basic materials that build and sustain the body. In our prime we can seemingly eat anything and digest it, absorb it, assimilate it and utilize it. But as we age, stomach acid and enzyme production decrease, digestion worsens, absorption and assimilation of nutrients becomes less effective. Mechanisms for getting nutrients into our cells, and waste products out, become less effective. The basic starting point for any anti-aging effort is to eat all the necessary nutrients and enhance the mechanisms for digestion, absorption and assimilation.

We tend to think of our body as a self-contained object like a chair or, maybe a machine, the same today as we were yesterday. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are constantly tearing down and rebuilding every organ, cell and DNA molecule we possess. Even our bones are constantly replacing themselves. The material for all this renovation is food. Any deficiency in the needed materials, even short term, and our body will cleverly sacrifice one part to repair another; like scavenging muscle for protein to repair sunburned skin. Any prolonged deficiency will soon cause some aspect of our physiology to malfunction, causing “dis-ease”.

Strategy: Eat to optimize health and fitness – not to appease cravings for pleasure. Eat real foods, in proper portions, at the right time; for lasting health and bodily soundness.

Our third installment on Nutrition will explain what to eat, how much to eat and when to eat for true fitness for life.

PILLAR # 4 SLEEP, RECOVERY and RELAXATION

SLEEP, RECOVERY and RELAXATION - Time for the body to repair and strengthen itself.

SLEEP - Most of the repair work your body does happens while you sleep. Deprive yourself of this vital activity and you will, to some degree, age more rapidly and decrease your performance in virtually every aspect of your life. Yet, one of the biggest complaints of our senior population is that we don't sleep well, we don't feel rested when we do and don't have inadequate energy when we're awake. We will lay out strategies for getting optimal, restorative sleep.

RECOVERY - has to do with allowing enough time for exercise to be productive rather than destructive. With age, the body heals more slowly and it is imperative to allow both local and systemic recovery to prevent injury or stress and maintain immune system function.

RELAXATION – is important for managing stress, mental and physical. Learn to constructively relax when needed; we show you how.

Strategy: Make healing sleep a priority, learn to pace physical and mental exertion to build body and mind, rather than tear it down; learn purposeful relaxation.

This forth segment gives you a comprehensive guide to handling life's activities with a well rested, recovered mind and body.

PILLAR # 5 SUPPLEMENTS

SUPPLEMENTS – to make up for the losses of aging

Look at supplements as tools to make up for the slowing of energy production with aging. This is the key factor; aging is, at the heart of it, a gradual reduction of the rate at which our cells can produce energy. Every process slows as a result. To counter that, consider these categories of supplements:

- **Digestive Supplements - to fully assimilate what we eat**
- **Nutritional Supplements - to insure complete nutrition**
- **Disease-Specific Supplements – often work better than drugs with fewer side effects**
- **Hormone Maintenance Supplements – in many cases a better alternative than taking hormones or drugs**
- **Sports/bodybuilding Supplements – to improve workout intensity and muscle growth, let us stay strong into advanced age and recover faster from exercise**

Strategy: Make use of supplements to extend our body's functional life and fitness. Count on nutrients for real health; they build and heal us from the cellular level up. Drugs mostly trick the body and there are normally serious side effects to their long-term use.

This 5th installment will coach you in finding specific supplements to improve function in all these areas.

PILLAR # 6 THINKING and ATTITUDE

THINKING and ATTITUDE - One person's junk is another's treasure; it's all a matter of thinking and attitude. Mental fitness leads to physical health.

Are you a glass half-full person or a glass half-empty person? Is this life mostly pleasurable and worth living or painful and largely a drag. Reality is personal; everything is experienced through a sort of internal filter system that our genetics and experiences form over time. Everything we experience is really an interpretation of sensory inputs; the signals bombard us through our eyes, skin, ears, nose and mouth, and millions of sensory neurons in our gut, lungs, muscles and joints. We make sense out of it as we can, and call it reality. When we remember something from the past or imagine something in the future, we use the same mental pathways to re-experience or preexperience events or situations, and we assign emotional meanings to those experiences as they are in our mind.

The critical thing to understand is that THOUGHT or THINKING is made up of the same stuff as our sensory inputs. In other words, thinking is a process of internally creating or re-creating the same words, sounds, images and feelings that we use to sense the world around us. But the interpretation of those experiences is something we can change at will, if we know how.

Do you have ways of dealing with the world that you would change if you could? Would you like to be excited about activities you now avoid, or motivated to change patterns of behavior that no longer serve your greater good?

In this last article of the series we give you practical tools to effect changes in how you experience or manage the world within and around us for a more productive and enjoyable life

Strategy: Use one or all of these techniques to change whatever you wish to change in yourself, to take your life in whatever direction you wish it to go.

The Bottom Line

Get used to the idea that life in this body is finite – we all get to die. In the mean time we are on this earth to be a part of each other's journey through whatever time we can

share. Living is a GOOD enterprise, a gift we should make the most of. Pay attention to what builds up this body and makes it healthy, fit and strong, and walk away from that which tears it down.

For More Information on Senior Living, visit our website at :

<http://www.SeniorFitness.com>

I am looking forward to helping you stay fit and healthy.

To your health and greater fitness!

Frank Wilhelmi

Your Senior Fitness Coach