

Vibrant Living

***Live Longer
Finish Stronger***



Lessons from a Full Life

Fred G. Thompson

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Copyright June 1997
Revised June 1998
Revised April 2002
Revised September 2004

Published by
FUTURESCAN CONSULTING
737A Springland Drive
Ottawa, Canada, K1V 6L9
(613) 521 3897
www.fredgthompson.com

Printed in Canada

USBN 0-9696624-3-2



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INTRODUCTION



This book is about living vitally by breaking the many negative myths of life, looking for new challenges and making life more meaningful. It talks about getting out of ruts, taking risks, generating enthusiasm, and creating a zest for life.

The importance of continuous learning, of a sense of purpose is a recurring theme. People are healthier when they are active with a purpose and focus. Some, as they go into retirement, go into decline because they have lost the challenge and excitement of the full life.

What we believe is what we are. And what we plant in our subconscious is more powerful than we are inclined to believe.

Part of beliefs and attitudes is in recognizing the importance of exercise and diet in the achievement of good vital health.

So this book is about keeping vital, and ageless. Age can be thought of as just a number; what counts is how fit we are.

You will note the style of writing uses many imperative verbs. It is action oriented!

The best years of your life may well be ahead. So read and enjoy!

*"When an idea is new, its custodians have fervor,
live for it, and, if need be, die for it."*

Alfred North Whitehead - 1861 - 1947

Chapter 1

**“SOME WORK OF NOBLE
NOTE”**



It is appropriate to start this book of inspirational readings with a poem that sets the stage for the chapters that follow. It is from Alfred Lord Tennyson's story of the legendary Ulysses.

Ulysses was the Roman name for Odysseus, the hero of Homer's ODYSSEY. As the story goes, Odysseus, an ancient Greek warrior-king, led the Greeks in the conquest of Troy; then sought adventure with his ship and crew for many years throughout the area of the now Mediterranean. When he returned to his home, he lost interest in life, administering his kingdom with patient routine, and missed the excitement of battle and the bold exploration of new territory. Tennyson describes this frustration and his urge to seek newer worlds in his poem "Ulysses."

“It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren
crag,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and
dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know
not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees:

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on
life
Were all too little,

And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought."

He sees life winding down, yet he does not
want to quit without a final challenge:

"Some work of noble note, may yet be
done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with
gods."

Then he rallies his men to the new life ahead:

". . . . Come my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows: for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the paths
Of all the western stars, until I die."

He goes on, talking about the risks and the adventures that lie ahead, and poses the challenge:

“It may be that the gulfs will wash us
down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we
knew.
Tho’ much is taken, much abides; and
tho’
We are not now that strength which in old
days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we
are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in
will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to
yield.”

A great inspiration for one who needs a
renewal of horizons. Worth re-reading from
time to time.

"To fall into a habit is to begin to cease to be."

Miguel de Unamuno - 1864 - 1936

Chapter 2

GET OUT OF THE RUT!



As we have seen, Ulysses found himself bored with his life, even though he had achieved a great deal. He was restless and began looking for new horizons and adventures. In his view he was in a "rut". We too can easily fall into "ruts" which get deeper as we stay in them. Society establishes certain life patterns and it pays to stop and examine just what these are.

It seems that our lives are traditionally divided into three time periods:

- the first is education
- then getting a job, and raising the family;
and finally
- retirement

In the first period, the child spends most of the time getting an education, and the youth is learning to become an adult. There is some job experience by having a paper route, or working in the summer, but the focus is on schooling.

In the second period, there is indeed a lot of learning but not education in the sense of formal schooling. The focus is on the job and on raising and supporting the family. There isn't time for

much else.

In the third period, there is "retirement." And what does that mean? For some it is a kind of withdrawal from the working/learning environment, but at the same time a freedom to do whatever one chooses to do. This choice often has no relation to the first two periods of formal education and full-time employment.

What is wrong with this system? Well, these are the ruts of life. Sometimes very deep and hard to get out of. To avoid digging the ruts too deep, these three periods must be mixed. Get more work experience while getting an education. During the working period, continue with some formal learning, and for two reasons - cultural enrichment, and also to develop some plans and skills for the retirement period. Then in the retirement period be sure to include continuing education and some form of active work experience. And don't forget the element of play. This belongs in good measure in all three periods!

There was the case of a man who was in a deep rut; work was routine and structured and not inspiring; home wasn't much better. He got out of the rut by getting sick, and died before his time. Not a good way to go.

The last of these three periods is often a period of withdrawal from the active life and a loss of identity - you are not a student, you are not

identified with a job or career. Now this doesn't happen to everybody but it does happen to too many seniors and has an unhappy ending.

Notice how this life pattern looks on a graph (Chart 1, p. 14) indicating the level and pace of learning. The first period shows a very fast rate of learning - from the cells of creation to a young adult. It really is an amazing period. In the second period, notice a rather slower rate of growth and learning, and actually a plateau in the latter years of the period. Then for the third period, there is the traditional or mythical decline.

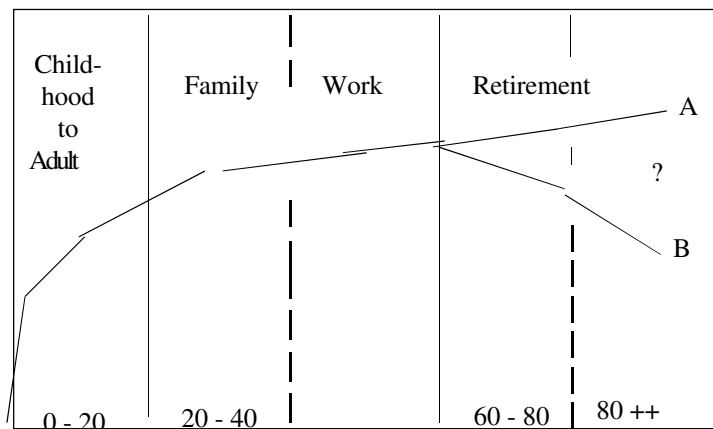
It is in this last period that new ways can be found, to not just prolong life, but to improve it. Notice how long this period can be, compared to the others. If you are 60 then you have 20 years until you are 80. Just think of it. Twenty more years to live. Think of the growth in the first 20; then new growth in the second 20. So it would be a pity to let the third 20 go by without new learning, new growth.

Intermixing these three periods will improve the value of all three. Young people often seek to break the traditional life style of suburbia, by taking a year off to back-pack through Europe, or even around the world. One of the more promising young people in my father's company decided to quit and tour Europe. My father said "What's he doing that for?" and the young man's answer was "To find myself." And my father

responded with some cynicism, "I didn't know he was lost."

However, this break in the life course was a good example of getting out of the common ruts of life. It broke the pattern of full-time education followed immediately by full-time employment in the work force.

Lifetime Learning Curve



40 - 60

Which are you? A, or B?

The teaching profession has found a good way to break the routine of the full-time work pattern with the sabbatical year. The man or woman with a young family is under great pressure to earn the necessary money to support the life style - and the sabbatical provides this break in the traditional routine. Some companies have a sabbatical plan whereby both employer and em-

ployee contribute during the years of earning. This provides a pattern of earning then learning; and should be repeated to spiral to new heights.

Now, consider the third period when both formal education and full time employment are behind you and the future is financially provided for, but the purpose is lacking. Does life lose its meaning? Is it enough to seek warmer climates and spend the days socializing, playing shuffleboard, golf or bingo? For some people the answer is yes. But for the others, life loses its meaning and they are lost.

Ruts are long established habits and are hard to break. But if life is to be lived to the fullest, ruts must be broken! Take courage, assess what is really going on, think it through, and if inecessaary, make the break -- if you can handle it!

"The debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable"

Carl Gustav Jung 1875 - 1961

Chapter 3



MYTHS OF AGING

A myth is something we believe in, and often live by. Myths are not necessarily true.

They are the stories of the culture from which they arise. The myths of the ancient Greeks were the beliefs they lived by. Similarly there are myths about aging in our culture. They are what people believe, but are not necessarily true.

For example, people say that as you age you begin to lose your memory. Is this true? The problem is, if you label it, you've got it! You have heard people say "Oh, I'm getting so forgetful now that I am getting older." Or, "I forgot. I must be getting older." Affirmations can be positive, or negative, and in this case such affirmations are negative, and very powerful. If your friends say you are forgetting things more, now that you are getting older, they are reinforcing what well may be the myth. My reply to this has been "What, me forgetting things more? Not necessarily; my memory was just as bad 20 years ago!"

The loss of memory is in many cases just a myth that people believe in. It is true that aging does affect some people in this way. But be careful; it may be a myth that is unnecessarily adopted. If memory does slip a bit, exert the extra

effort to recall what it is you have “forgotten.” The mind can get lazy and this is reinforced by the excuse that you are getting old. Give it the exercise and apply more positive affirmations.

When you are in a group and are introduced to people, you often immediately forget their names because you are concentrating so hard on what you are going to say next. But don't think that is so unusual. You probably always did it! However, now, you have to try harder to remember, and once you are aware, then it comes naturally.

In fact some old people have fabulous memories, but about the past, and are often very boring because of it. They repeat stories over and over, mostly because they have had no recent interesting new adventures or experiences. This is a habit that can be often overcome if friends help by telling them that they have heard it before, then encourage them to talk about what is new and interesting in life.

Myths can be changed. It depends on what you believe and what you practice.

Another popular myth is that old dogs can't learn new tricks. Maybe that is true about dogs, but what about you and me? I wonder if learning as you get older is partly a matter of energy. If you don't have the energy you are probably too tired to learn new things. Again, the power of affirmations comes in and the effort must be

exerted if one is to keep learning new things and seeking new adventures. In fact the very act of learning new things can provide the necessary energy for doing it.

I was in a computer store recently and a grey-haired man, probably in his late sixties, was waiting for service, and I cheerily said “It is good to see you interested in computers. What kind of computer do you have?” He replied “Oh it’s not for me. It is for my grandson. I am too old to learn computers.” And that is the popular myth - too old to learn new things.

Another popular myth is that the brain shrinks as it gets older. Some cells may indeed die but others replace them, and if the brain is not exercised, as a muscle must be, then in effect it does die. Think how many oldies have gained fame at the age when most people choose to “retire.”

Grandma Moses had to quit embroidery at 76 because of arthritis so she took up painting and became famous and lived to 101. Winston Churchill was defeated as Prime Minister of Great Britain after World War II but got elected to lead the country again at age 77 and continued for another 4 years. Leopold Stokowski was still conducting orchestras in his 80s; and Frank Lloyd Wright was designing and building structures in his 80s and until he was 90. Einstein only made it to 76. Maybe he thought too much!

My father quit at 76 but he didn't look after himself; mother did.

After 65 "everybody goes downhill." Perhaps they do, but how much? and how fast? One older person told me "I'm not going downhill; I haven't reached the top yet!" But it is a myth that everybody goes downhill fast. They say that decline of the body begins in your thirties; so therefore it must be gradual; but it need not be so much that it cramps your lifestyle. Just don't buy the myth that rapid decline must be characteristic of the retirement period. Fight back!

We have to admit though that some body parts eventually just wear out or break down. But the spirit need not. We may have to face some handicap, but remember that Terry Fox walked across Canada with his handicap.

I interviewed a number of seniors for a project I was doing and got some interesting responses to the question "Are you too old to learn new things?" One person didn't think so. He said "I think that age is irrelevant except at the extreme when the central nervous system poops out."

As we say, myths can be changed.

Chapter 4

RE-INVENT YOUR LIFE



One man I know who is older than I, has bought the “old age package.” By that I mean he has resigned himself to accept the many myths of aging, the declining memory, the belief that he is too old to learn new things, and the desire to take it easy, stay home and watch TV.

He has the belief that you should grow old gracefully, and accept the limitations of the aging mind and body. Not necessarily. Rather we should be seen as feisty oldies who are more bloody minded than going gently into the night. Here is where we can be proactive rather than reactive, and make a clear trail where we have been, and be a guide and lesson to those around us.

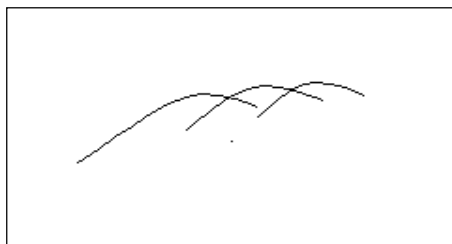
Recently this same friend was feeling down and being threatened with a serious ailment and asked sadly “Why me?” Then the question arises, is it his own doing because of his life style and belief system; or is it really the ravages of time? In his case I believe it is the former. Well, what should he do?

He needs to re-invent his life. But to make a change he must make a major change in his belief system. He must re-examine his life style

and see where he can make some fundamental changes and believe in it. Granted it is not easy, but is it worthwhile? I should think so!

Let me tell you about another friend of mine who was the chief accountant of a company that made products for the building maintenance industry. We enjoyed many talks about his and my business and exchanged stories and adventures. His company would introduce a new product every one or two years, and time the introduction to come just as the last product began to peak out - or indeed just before it peaked. In this way they kept renewing the business and maintained a fairly steady growth curve. And here is a principle that is useful to apply to many situations. We could graphically portray it as successive growth curves:

Chart 2
Growth Renewal



This renewal principle applies not only to companies which depend on the growth of new

products, but to many organizations, associations and even to the individual.

It seemed clear then that my older friend must keep on renewing himself either by new experiences, new learning, or some form of new challenge. The present gets too familiar and interest in life is “inclined to decline”.

Again to quote from Tennyson's Ulysses:
“Come my friends ’tis not too late to seek a newer world.”

But, you might ask, "Where do you get the energy for these new directions?" Diet, exercise and attitude. (See later Chapters.)

*"Envy and wrath shorten the life,
and carefulness bringeth age
before the time"*

Matthew 30:24

Chapter 5

TAKE RISKS - SEEK ADVENTURE



I had a friend who was going through a personal transformation and taking sessions with a professional therapist. She passed on to me many good messages and guidelines to live by, but one in particular I found very powerful:

"Awareness plus Risk equals Growth."

Now there's a formula for an exciting life! So I took new risks. I joined groups, took courses, and started to downhill ski, whitewater canoe and backpack. It was difficult for me to start into new things, but I took the risks. All this when I was over 60, when most over 60s were taking it easy, slowing down and looking forward to traditional retirement. And it brought new joy and energy to my life. At the same time I had to learn to distinguish between a considered risk and a foolish gamble. Now when people say to me the well-intentioned blessing "Take care" I respond with "Take risks!"

My son Bob was living on the West coast and called one day to see if I would go backpacking with him in the Rockies. He said to pack no more than 14 pounds of clothes and equipment. Again, I was no young chicken, and the thought of

packing this weight up and down mountain trails gave me second thoughts. Was I in good enough condition? Would my heart stand it? Well, I decided to take the risk.

When I arrived in Field, B.C. to start the trip, I took a taxi to the base campsite. I didn't want to carry that 14 pound pack any further than necessary. Then I met Bob and he gave me 14 pounds more as my share of the food for the 8 days! The first day I counted my heart beats and when they got to my planned limit, we rested. The next day we took a leisurely day trip with no more pack than lunch. After that I was away and climbed the trails with confidence and forgot about my heart beats. Through that experience, Bob taught me that I could do more than I thought I could. What an important lesson that was. It reinforced my new life guideline:

"Awareness plus Risk equals Growth."

Seek the adventure, take the risk. Life to be meaningful must include growth.

During this process of seeking new adventures, I frequently asked myself "Why are you doing this thing?" But with few exceptions they turned out to be good new adventures.

After that mountain trip with Bob, I took another risk and signed up for an 8-day canoe trip in northern Quebec, and it had been many years

since I had done any extensive canoeing. On the first day I deferred to a younger man when we had to decide who was to stern the boat. But after a mile of rough water in the open lake, I suggested we touch shore and change places, as we were getting well behind the others in the group. We switched positions, and then I rediscovered my old skills and we caught up to the group and at the far shore, we were in the lead. I was discovering that age was not really a factor, but experience, skill and self-worth were what counted. I had taken risks in going on the canoe trip in the first place at my age, among the quite young adults. After crossing the windy lake, I never looked back, and felt an equal among the other canoeists; and they related to me in the same way. It gave me the confidence that I could do more than I previously thought I could.

Before I had adopted the formula of awareness, risk and growth, there were other things I had wanted to do but was too timid to try. So I took the risks and life took on new meaning.

*"Nothing great was ever achieved without
enthusiasm"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson - 1803 - 1882

Chapter 6

ENTHUSIASM FOR LIFE



It is fun talking to someone who is enthusiastic about something. They seem to have a zest for life. They sparkle.

Is enthusiasm genetic, something we have naturally? Or can it be acquired and developed? I believe it can be acquired and is a valuable quality that is worth cultivating.

Some people wake up in the morning draggy, and reluctant to get out of bed. One older gentleman who I asked if he was in good health replied: “Well considering my age, yes. But for me, getting out of bed in the morning makes the raising of Lazarus like a bad joke.”

However that may be, but I believe that you can wake up with the zest for life if you program it. What does that mean? Well, try it. Say to yourself before you go to bed, or during the night if you are half awake, that you will wake up full of pep and feeling a zest for life, looking forward to what the day will bring. For many people, it works. Maybe for you too, although there seem to be two kinds of people: the night people and the day people. The night people are wide awake and active right into the early morning hours, and usually sleep (if they may) late into the day; the

day people, are alive from the start of the day to the evening; then like to go to bed early. Maybe this is genetic, or maybe it is a learned behaviour. I like to think it is learned.

I had a demonstration of the power of programming enthusiasm at a conference one time. It was "playtime" at an Open Space event and a lady got a group of us together and we sang this ditty in front of the whole group at the conference. It is sung to the tune of the camp song "If you're happy and you know it, Clap your hands!"

"I'm alive, awake, alert, enthusiastic
I'm alive, awake, alert, enthusiastic
I'm alive, awake, alert
I'm alert, awake, alive
I'm alive, awake, alert, enthusiastic!"

If I awake one morning and feeling draggy, I sing this ditty aloud a couple of times and it does prepare me better for the day ahead.

One of my early enthusiasms was work simplification. I was trained in the re-designing of work stations so that the simplest motions were used. I tried it out not only at work, where I was paid to do it, but at home and even in the simplest things I did. I tried to simplify the number of moves I took to get dressed. Which comes first, the socks or the pants? Then I tried to simplify setting the table for a meal. It was possible to set

the whole table from only one side of the table - if you had all the dishes and cutlery on a tray and had long arms!!

A friend asked me for some hints for giving a talk to a group of ladies at some particular function. So he talked to them about simplifying the household tasks, as most of them were housewives. Then he finished off by saying that sure, they would end up the day less tired, but then when their husband came home after a hard day at the office, they would be ready to go out dancing! Not good.

Then I moved on as my work changed and became enthusiastic about productivity. That is, productivity of various aspects of business. I gave speeches on it and worked on convincing others about how it would improve the economy. The theory was that reducing the labour costs of a job would lower the overall cost and in the long run generate more business.

After the spell on productivity I became a specialist and enthusiast for the concept of futures. That is the development of future scenarios of the world in terms of environment, over-population and resource conservation.

The next enthusiasm and concurrent with the concern for the future was the use of the computer. I became an addict from the early days, once I discovered all its amazing potential. I got a Radio Shack computer with 16k of memory and

Vibrant Living

worked up to gigabytes. Now it is the Internet and all it can do that is all-consuming

So life is so much more interesting, to one's self and to others, when one is enthusiastic. What is **your** enthusiasm?

"Most people live in a very restricted circle of their potential being."

William James 1842 - 1910

Chapter 7

REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL



My mother was in her 90s when I would visit her in the nursing home. She felt her days were done and wanted to pass on as life seemed no longer to have any meaning. I wondered why this was so, as life to me seemed so wonderful. I guess she felt very low in energy and that she had lived a good life and what more was there to do? She was well looked after in the home, and had no financial or other worries. Then I thought of a life principle that she could apply, and this would give her a purpose in life:

“Help people reach their full potential”

Such a philosophy of life would be useful to any one at any age. It would work for a person with lots of energy and active, or even if one were confined to bed or a wheelchair. In fact I liked it so much, my wife and I adopted it ourselves!

How do we know if we have really reached our full potential - yet? We are born, go to school, join the working world, get married, raise a family then come to retirement. Is there a feeling that that is the end, and it is downhill from there on? Or,

do we feel that there is still unfinished business, that we have potential that has never yet been fully realized?

The story of Chris is an interesting one about reaching full potential. He was in a marriage that was stressful. He never felt in charge or with his own power. He was always being put down and told he couldn't do things, and for peace in the family always conforming. His world was circumscribed by the constant wants and demands of the family for 25 years. Then he met a lady that had just come through a difficult separation and was into therapy and discovering her own potential. He realized then what he had been missing. He read all the New Age books, visited a psychiatrist, and went through two years of struggle to try to get his own feeling of self-worth. At one point, he told me, he went half blind in the office one day. He consulted his doctor who said, after hearing Chris's story, that it was just stress.

Then he made the break. His children were now old enough to manage on their own, so he negotiated a separation leading eventually to divorce.

Psychologists have said that certain major changes in life can create sickness within two years. Well, Chris separated, moved into his own condominium, lost his job, was elected head of a national association and all this within two months of separation - and he did not get sick. He prospered! He began then to discover many new

and exciting things. He found a better job; he took chances joining new groups and taking on adventures that gave him a new sense of self-worth. He found that people really liked him and that boosted his self-esteem.

After two years of being on his own, making new friends, finding his own power, and true potential, he finally found true love and got married. Now they are both happy, in love and working to help others reach their full potential.

The story is not meant to recommend divorce to find your full potential, but to show that it often takes courage and wisdom to take whatever steps are necessary to reach that full potential..

(N.B. The above is fiction, but in essence based on my own story)

"Nothing endures but change ..."
Heraclitus 540 - 480 B.C.

Chapter 8

CELEBRATE CHANGE



Some guidelines are helpful when major changes are made, or thrust upon us. Retirement is a sudden change when we have worked all our lives in a structured environment. The job defines us, then suddenly there is no job, and no time structure. What to do?

There are four stages one must go through when entering such a major period of change:

1. Check “What’s going on?”
2. Establish the security base
3. Set the roles and goals
4. Plan effective action

Remember Stephen Leacock’s expression “He..flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions”? And the expression “Ready, Fire, Aim!”? Well, to cope with any new and major change, first, stop and reconnoitre, ask yourself “What’s going on here?” This is the period of chaos that takes place during the initial period of any major change. Allow it to be. Take your time. Look around before you make any false moves.

You have read about executives who, when parachuted into a big company, make a tour of the operations to find out what is going on, before they take over their full responsibility. Don't get on your horse and ride off in all directions.

In a divorce, death or major change in life, stop and reconnoitre before making any significant decisions. Retirement, for some, is one of these major decisions.

In this first stage, "What's Going On?", there might be a grieving period to be dealt with. Again, allow it to be, that is part of the process, but keep it within limits, then get on with life.

The next stage, once you have found out what is going on, is to secure your operating base. This means your income, your health, and your relationships.

I went to a psychiatrist one time to help sort out my life. She had some words of wisdom about coping with change that I thought were amusing but had a good ring of truth about them. She said “..the bull in the pasture first of all secures his turf, that is, his food supply, then deals with his enemies; then, and not until then, can he make love to the ladies.”

So, secure your pasture so your dependents as well as yourself can survive.

Now, the third phase in the process of adjusting to major change is to set the role and goals, to define a kind of purpose for your new life. It is not enough to just let things happen. Happiness

grows along with personal progress and growth. Vibrant living is the by-product of an active and purposeful life.

Finally, the fourth step in the adjustment to change is making the foregoing effective, giving it expression. Remember the bit from Tennyson's poem Ulysses (see Chapter One) "Some work of noble note, may yet be done."

When I was first separated and feeling somewhat lost - that was my period of chaos - I confided this state to a friend and she said "Throw a party!" I did, and it did the trick. So, I pass it on to you.

"If change confuses you, throw a party!"

"Celebrate change!"

"Men willingly believe what they wish"
Julius Caesar 100 - 44 B.C.

Chapter 9

**WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS WHAT
YOU ARE**



What you believe is what you are - unless you are hallucinat-

ing: We already know about the power of the mind over the body. Beliefs and attitudes are an integral part of what the body does and is. Do you believe you are less smart or intelligent than your business associates, or social companions?

You may be, but not in all ways. As one comic said “We are all ignorant, only on different subjects.” This helps.

The successful entrepreneur often has a record of success and then this is followed by failure. But he believes so much in himself, that he tries again - and again - and eventually succeeds. The unsuccessful entrepreneur gives up after the first try and first failure - and goes back to work in a protective environment.

An important part of a belief system is to DIS-believe in the many myths about aging. Breaking the myths about aging is a recurring theme in these readings. What is critical about myths is that you can CHANGE them. Rather than believe that you are losing your memory as

you get older, work harder at remembering things. By keeping up in information of the world and your particular interests, you become current and interesting, and therefore increase your sense of self-worth and self-confidence.

One ninety-six year old lady told me: "Nobody will listen to your tale of woe; they always have better ones!" Instead of discussing all your ailments, aches and pains with your fellow oldies, talk current events and new technologies. Reinforce the optimistic approach. Who wants to listen to a litany of complaints and what is wrong with the world and all its troubles. Not only is it true that what you believe is what you are, but what you THINK is what you are. As the old song says "Accentuate the Positive!"

Belief systems are so powerful that the medicine men of primitive tribes can actually will their subjects to get sick and die. And so can we. In fact so DO we sometimes. But let us reverse this and will ourselves into vibrant living and good health. This is sometimes called positive visioning. Envision yourself in the state you wish to be, and presto! you eventually get there. Norman Vincent Peale called it Positive Thinking. His book on this subject has had sales into the millions of copies.⁽¹⁾

I have a favourite expression that is part of my belief system: "Label it and you've got it!"
One day you feel a bit out of sorts and you talk

to a friend and who says you have “Whatever disease.” You have never heard of that particular ailment before, but now that he has put a label on it you believe that you actually DO have that disease. Label it and you’ve got it.

Have you ever read a Home Health type of book and seen how many diseases there are for which you have the exact symptoms?

So, be sure to build a strong and positive belief system, a fresh set of attitudes, to enjoy the best years of your life.

"It seems common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all try something."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt - 1882 - 1945

Chapter 10

TRYING HARDER



Much of my career was spent in industrial engineering, and for one period I developed expertise in work measurement. One particular method of work measurement was based on a set of standard times for each motion of the fingers, hand and body. So when the hand moved to pick up an object, the time was found by looking up in the table for the standard time taken to move the hand that many inches. In this way the time taken to assemble a piece of work could be determined, not by the hated stop-watch, but by measuring all the motions. And this could be done away from the work place by simulating the motions required to do the job. It really was an ingenious approach to work measurement. From this research it was clear that the speed of the job was limited by the speed of the motions, and this had a human limit. But what was also clear was that if the job had to be done in significantly less time, then the method of doing it must change. Now that was an important discovery. And this is an important lesson in many other aspects of life. To improve the output in any significant way, change the method - don't try to hurry. In other words, HURRYING and TRYING HARDER don't make a real big difference. New

methods must be used.

In fact, it was determined that the increase in speed of work, using the same method of doing the work, and trying to work faster, could only increase output by 28% above normal pace.

So, to make any significant change, don't just try harder in the same old way, go back to fundamentals. Find a better method.

More stories. I was on a consulting job doing job evaluation in a large organization and we were committed to describe and rate 10,000 jobs in one year. A huge challenge. We had quite a team working on it and we were completing about 3 job descriptions per team member per day. Working that way would not reach our target, even close, so I told the team members the urgency of getting an increase in productivity. They must try harder.

The days went by and the sense of urgency made no difference in output. Then I was talking to my brother Gordon who had just come back from a conference in New York on how to get a major increase in output on large projects. He said there are four ways:

1. Inject a massive amount of new money
2. Add a large number of workers to the job
3. Increase the quality risk
4. Make major changes in method

Well, we couldn't ask for more money; we couldn't ask for more people on the job. So, we had only quality and method to work on. We had been writing job descriptions by personal one-on-one interviews.

We decided then to train supervisors in groups to write the job descriptions of the positions under them, and our team member would edit them. This was indeed a major change in method. We held classes to train supervisors and the output increased dramatically. There was a small risk of quality, but we worked to reduce that as much as we could. Productivity went up to about 20 per team member per day, and we reached our target.

There is another rule to increasing output that I learned in my industrial engineering career. An Italian economist named Weber developed what is known as Weber's Law. Putting this in my own words it goes like this:

"To increase output arithmetically, you must change the input geometrically."

In other words, to get twice the output, it requires four times the input.

I was giving a talk to a group of supervisors in a paper mill when I was on a consulting assignment. I talked about Weber's Law and then added, "To get any real action you have to blast!" The next day as I went around the plant, I got feedback like "What did you say to the bosses last

night? They are raising particular hell to-day!” Perhaps “blast” was not the appropriate term from a human relations point of view but things were getting done.

To apply this to one's life, what is the message? Well, to make a significant change in your life, it is not enough to just try harder, you must change the method. And change it significantly. The same story.

Let's put it this way. If we are not happy or satisfied in life and need a change, stop and think. Real change requires real effort - and as we have seen, trying harder is not enough. New methods, new approaches are required. You can't keep on doing things in the same old way.

If you really want to change, make some basic change in the way you are doing things! Find a new way and make sure that it is a fundamental change. Maybe you will have to blast!

But watch out - the consequences might surprise you.

Chapter 11

KEEPING FIT



We would eat better, or more wisely, if every time we ate something that was not good for us, a loud bell would ring! Did you see the Farside cartoon of the man coming out of the restaurant washroom and above him over the door was a flashing sign with loud bells ringing? The sign screamed

“Didn’t wash hands!”

We need the same thing for the food we eat. Right? In the average restaurant you will see people with a full plate of eggs, french fried potatoes and sausages, washed down with several cups of coffee. How do they manage? Perhaps they don’t feel it until it catches up with them as they get on in years.

I was working in Toronto as the industrial engineer of a food company and was assigned to a candy plant in Montreal. Since I was away from home I frequently worked through the evening meal. The company's products included prepared and packaged peanuts. I would grab a handful of freshly oiled peanuts and get a coke from the soft drink machine, and maybe a chocolate bar and kept on working. Then sometime later my dentist put a scare into me by describing the damage that

could be done to my teeth with eating too much sugar - like soft drinks and chocolate bars! So after that I went light on the sweets. But what chances we do take with our health!

There are two health trends in the developed countries these days, each the opposite of the other. One is towards overweight, which one can observe any day on the streets and in the urban areas. The other is towards health care, exercise and fitness.

The aim of eating is, of course, twofold - pleasure, and sustenance. Hopefully we can balance these towards the pleasure of feeling fit. After all, we want to not just live longer, but better still, live well.

There are so many books on healthy diets that it is not necessary to add to them here. Most of them favour dropping meat and possibly dairy products from the menu. They emphasize grains, vegetables and fruit.

In Canada the government published a list of recommended foods recently which excluded meat products. There was such a commotion generated by the meat industry and meat lovers, that they withdrew the list and re-issued it adding meat. Such is the nature of democracy!

There is so much we can do for ourselves to keep healthy. Probably next to diet comes exercise. I understand that if astronauts went on the nine-month journey to Mars in a gravity-free

environment, they would risk breaking their bones when they got out of the spacecraft. The absence of gravity, as we know it on Earth, depletes the calcium from the bones over a long period. Gravity on the spacecraft would then have to be induced by spinning the ship. What this means to me is that a daily exercise of walking (on Earth!) keeps the bones healthy, just by the force of gravity loading the muscles and bones of our bodies. Good for gravity!

Self-healing is an essential aspect of keeping healthy. Self-healing includes first, a healthy diet; secondly exercise. But more than that, the mind can be used to help keep us healthy. Affirmations, telling our bodies to heal, can be helpful. Visioning a healthy body is constructive. I can still remember my father saying to himself every morning:

“Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better!”
Such affirmations can create a zest for life that is a great way to live. Do you wake up in the morning sort of drugged? Or do you waken with a zest for life, looking forward to the events of the day?

Avoiding medicinal drugs wherever possible is also a healthy move. When you need them, you need them, but so many ailments can cure themselves with the observation of simple health rules.

I had a “trigger finger” recently and went to the doctor, and then surgeon to see what I might do about it. The surgeon suggested that it is easy to fix. But I don’t like to cut the body more than necessary so I put it off. Then in a few months, with a bit of massage and talking to it, it cured itself. The body does have a lot of healing power of its own. Give it a chance.

There are three things to look after to ensure the good life:

1. Diet
2. Exercise
3. Attitude

The most important of the three is Attitude. If it is appropriate then it will take care of the diet and exercise.

As we said, what you believe is what you are. So believe that you must be fit; then commit to practice the healthy diet; then add the exercise program; and what you believe will come to pass.

There are many courses, books, experts and equipment in the field of keeping fit that the way to go is easily found. What is missing is the motivation and commitment.

I have developed my own set of morning exercises which I have put in the Appendix. Please note that it is my own set, self-designed for me and may not be for everybody. However I thought it would be interesting for you to scan and compare with your own program - if you do indeed have one!!

If both our minds and bodies are fit, then we
are FIT-WITS! This little piece then is to encour-
age us all to be FIT-WITS.

So, let's go for it! I

*"Better to hunt in fields, for health unbought,
Than fee the doctor for nauseous draught,
The wise, for cure, on exercise depend,
God never made his work for man to mend."*

John Dryden, 1631 - 1700

*"Great deeds are usually wrought
at great risk"*
Herodotus, c. 485 - 425 B.C.

Chapter 12

HUMOUR IN LIFE



I heard one comic say “If I am not funny, people won’t take me seriously.”

Norman Cousins was in the hospital with a degenerative disease. The doctors said he had a slim chance of recovery - 1 in 500. Cousins knew that a negative attitude had a damaging effect on one’s health and reasoned that a positive attitude must have a positive effect. So if “laughter is the best medicine” then he would try that. He describes in his book "The Anatomy of an Illness"⁽²⁾ how the hospital was, for him, a depressing and disturbing environment, so he took a room in a hotel and got funny movies and read funny books. Much to his delight he found that after a good laughter session the medical tests showed definite and immediate improvement. So he kept on with the “treatment.” He laughed himself into recovery!

Several thousand years ago the Bible seems to agree with this.

*“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine;
but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”*

Proverbs 17:22

I wanted to write a book called “Management is a Joke!”, and maybe I will someday. The ultimate bad joke is the man who gives his all for the company for all of his working life, then is fired just before retirement. Or why work so hard, at the sacrifice to yourself and your family, then a comet hits the earth!

The reason I wanted to write about “Management is a Joke”, was because of two experiences I had.

I worked for a food company as their industrial engineer and was invited to a meeting in the Board Room to get an update on company activities. During the meeting the President called for a taste session for a new product - a new kind of pie. When the white-coated staff from the lab brought in the pie, one piece to each at the meeting, we all started eating pie. What were we supposed to do, laugh or cry? I found it hilarious to watch all the executives eating pie with serious looks on their faces. What if somebody really didn't like it -and! Oh, no!

Then I read an excellent book that should be taught in every management course. It was called “One Upmanship”⁽³⁾ and showed how to get "one up" on your associates. When you know the game, it is quite amusing to watch it being played out. It makes you take less seriously the politics of the business environment. It helps to reduce your own stress when you see it as a funny game. You

can even play it yourself, as long as you see the funny side.

Laughter is the antidote to disease, and the world's best medicine. I sat through a session at a conference where the leader was a professional in training business people in the art of laughter. He had us all lie on the floor and start to laugh. The more you laugh, and hear others doing the same, well, the more you laugh! It was fun to experience belly laughs in a group of otherwise serious people.

Teri-E Belf is a consultant I know⁽⁴⁾ who trains business people in stress reduction and has developed the expression "Plurking." It means to combine "play" with "work". In her first job they told her that work "..was serious business, not a place to play." People in her immediate environment did not connect play and work, but she wanted people to relate to each other with more fun. She found in her later work that the values which executives espoused were different than those in actual practice. They believed in having fun at work, but did not practice it.

As some people have said: "Live on the earth lightly." and I believe that is a good rule by which to live.

Humour is seeing things differently than what is normally expected. If you see the funny side of the situation it is because you see it through new eyes.

Cartoons and the comics are fun because in many cases they see ordinary things in a fresh light and then you see how funny you, or they, are. Notice how many secretaries and junior staff post cartoons about their management or their company to make light of the otherwise serious nature of their environment. The trick of the senior manager is to be light hearted and still maintain the respect of associates. Try it!

As you get older, how can you see the funny side of aging? The actor Danny Kaye in his prime would do take-offs of an aging person conducting an orchestra, or other antics and be hilariously funny.

In my survey of older people I was looking for advice or observations that would be helpful to those in similar circumstances. Notable was the fact that none of them mentioned the value of a sense of humour. What I have noticed in groups of older people is the many who have sad looks about them. Why? Have they lost interest in life? Or maybe they are in pain, or have run out of energy.. Let us not forget the value of seeing the funny side of things. Like Norman Cousins, read funny books, see funny movies. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Spread the cheer.

See the funny side of the physical limitations that come upon us and find the burden easier to bear.

Chapter 13

CONTINUOUS LEARNING



Do you want to be BORING? Then talk about your past life and achievements, tell and re-tell the same stories of when you were young, and don't learn anything new for yourself.

An octogenarian friend of mine keeps telling stories of his cherished past, and everytime you start to tell him something, it reminds him of some past event when he was younger and you get that story (again). Should I tell him, or is it too late?

If you want to be vital and interesting, mix with vital and interesting people, and keep on learning, gaining new experiences, improving yourself, keeping up a sense of wonder and curiosity.

I am an enthusiastic computer user and have been for over 20 years, which in the personal computer field is a long time! I tried for many years to get my best friend, also a senior, to get a computer. And he always said "What would I DO with it?" Finally his wife went out and bought him one for Christmas. He was caught then; he had to learn it. And he did, and loved it. Now he is on it all the time. I asked him, after he had had it for a year, what would he do if he didn't have the computer. He replied immediately, "I would be

dead!” He works on family history, he has learned programming and creates his own programs; he wrote a small book on his faith to pass on to his kids. His life, for him has focus. And incidentally, he is strong and vigorous at 80! Way to go!

I was interviewed by a freelance journalist recently, as a senior, on my use of the computer, and the article appeared in the local newspaper. It said that I taught the computer to executives, and also to seniors. What surprised me was how many seniors read the article and phoned to see if I could be of help to them in learning more about the computer. They didn’t want to be left behind in this new technology. Those that came to the introductory courses I offered were pretty keen to learn, and did quite well.

FreeNet is an electronic communications service that operates in about 15 cities of North America. It can be accessed by anyone with a computer equipped with a modem. There is a special section in the Ottawa FreeNet for seniors, for exchange of information, news of relevant events, and just chatting. And it is encouraging to see how many seniors are really learning to communicate this way, and enjoying it. I discovered a pen pal section on FreeNet and saw enquiries from different countries of the world. Three teachers in School No. 5, Rostov-on-the-Don in Russia wrote looking for pen pals. A teacher in

California asked her pupils to contact another student by electronic mail in another country, then write an essay on a day in the life of the other student; and add background information on the country. FreeNet was early in the game, now there are many "service providers" to access the ever more popular Internet. Yes, the Internet, which is like a global library, worldwide in scope is growing so fast that whatever I say to-day will be out of date tomorrow. There are infinite possibilities for the use of the computer. As I would say to my students when I taught the computer: "New tools create new uses." So, get connected and once you discover its potential, then you have no worries as to what to do with it.

When Carnegie funded public libraries all over North America, it was a great boon to the people. Now the Internet in a similar way is a quantum leap ahead. We now have the tools for infinite learning.

Elder Hostel is a program enjoyed by some quarter of a million people each year in many countries of the world. It was started in Sweden and spread to other countries. It is essentially a series of educational courses for people over 60, held in some university, college or conference centre. The typical course is 6 days long, living dormitory style on campus. The modest registration cost includes accommodation and meals, but

participants pay their own transportation to and from the course location. Course content covers subjects of geography, environment, crafts and skills; non-degree, with no homework or examinations or diplomas. Many people like to travel to some distant spot to see that particular area and take an Elder Hostel course at the same time.

Many universities welcome seniors to their degree courses. The University of Phoenix conducts a degree course by computer - on line - and many universities in the world are now providing "distance learning degrees".

Being busy for the sake of being busy is just passing time. How many times have you heard recent retirees saying "Oh, I've never been so busy!" As if being busy is a virtue. Let's go one step further and be busy with a purpose, project or special focus.

One of the most common pieces of advice that I received in my survey of seniors was to keep up an interest in new initiatives. Here is what they said:

"Keep seeking new perspectives."

"Keep mentally active, by whatever means."

"Most important; keep your mind active, no matter how."

Progress is measured by some in terms of accumulated wealth; by others in new learning; or in new experiences; or in improved health and strength.

Chapter 14

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS



Too much care can make an "oldie" get older. The social expectation is that a senior is "over the hill" and not worthy of serious attention. It is better to be a feisty fighter than the quiet old man or woman who meekly accepts the care that is dispensed. Families can be the worst enemy to one who refuses to get old. They expect grandpa and grandma to be out of the mainstream, living in yesterday's world.

I have a friend where the members of the family are virtually waiting for him to get Alzheimer's disease. Every time he forgets something they patronize him and remind him he is getting older. Whenever a friend suggests a new activity or interest for him, the family say he is too old, and he accepts it. Hey, friend, how about fighting back!

Families put labels on people like "grandma" or "wife" when they should see them as individuals in their own right, not just role players. It is appropriate for little kids to use "grandma" or "uncle" but when they get older these labels become self-limiting and outdated. Call them by their proper name, which recognizes them as individuals in their own right. If adult

children call you by your first name, they can relate to you as an equal and avoid the "critical parent" role. However it is important if this relationship is to exist that activities and interests be kept up so you can relate as an equal person. By keeping active in business, in continual learning, or some professional activity, you can relate to people of any age on an equal basis. Your friends and associates become ageless. And life is so much more interesting.

Agism is like racism, full of prejudice. It is just as important to fight against agism as it is racism. Don't let people put the older person in a box - if it is undeserved. Because so many seniors decline substantially after they retire, it is a popular image that an old person is finished and no longer interesting or fun. They are boring, tell and retell stories of past adventures and achievements. With this image it is harder to assert oneself and be the person that is vital and fully alive.

When I go to a cocktail party of people active in business, they often ask me "Are you retired?" because people want to know what you are up to. They assume that if you have the appearance of an older person you are by definition "retired." I am pleased to reply "No, no. I am self-employed as a consultant and author." Then if the discussion gets around to anything technological, like computers, we get on common ground and the age

image drops away. And I become accepted as an equal member of the group.

Society expects that old people should look old, and not try to be or act young. I learned this when I tried to dye my hair to be more attractive to my new friend. She didn't seem to be able to cope with white hair. So next time I met her she looked at my hair and said "Fred, your hair is turning green!" I confessed what I had done, and we had a good laugh. When she really got to know me the issue of white hair vanished, and I was accepted for what I really was. (Thank goodness.)

It is important therefore to be yourself; then keep fit and interested and active in new things and risking new adventures. Break the patterns that could be thrust upon you. Create new myths, and new social expectations.

To be socially mobile and interesting one ninety year old man told me: "Keep up to date on the world with active reading every day." So he put forth the effort to make himself interesting. And he was too.

"The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed"

Carl Gustav Jung 1875 -

1961

Chapter 15

RELATIONSHIPS AND INTIMACIES



What is it that defines or describes a friend? Is it just someone you have known for a long time? Surely not; it has to be more than that. It is someone with whom you have shared some experiences, or some feelings. I mean “shared.” Sharing means two-way communication. You tell him things, and he listens; he tells you things and you listen. That must be the real definition of a friend. You share thoughts, feelings, and both time and attention. Perhaps you can add other things to help define a friend. I can hear you say, yes we share a lawnmower! Again, it has to be more than that.

As we get on in years friends become more precious. And friends need not be just the ones you have related to in the past. You can, and indeed must, make new friends as your environment changes and as you explore new adventures.

Making new friends takes effort and a little risk. It may mean joining a new group, and that takes energy and the courage to explore the new. This is particularly true of one who has recently lost a partner. There is a tendency when one is alone, to stay in the security and comfort of one’s

own home in familiar surroundings.

When I was just separated and on my own, I knew I must get out and meet people so I joined some new groups. But then when I started out to go to a meeting it seemed so painful and all I wanted to do was to stay home and enjoy my own peaceful privacy. But as the salesman said “If you want to get results, you have to make calls.”

Let me quote from some older people I interviewed while researching for this book:

“Personally I hate TV except for some sports and special events; I need to be more proactive in meeting people my own age around my home.”

and again:

“..while it is easier to watch TV or play with the computer it pays to get out and about. You just never know whom you might meet or what you might learn.”

Then there is the issue of getting very close to people and sharing intimacies. Even including the sharing of intimacies with your lifelong partner! As we get older some of the old charge is gone and the desire for sex declines. But as one senior lady in my survey reported:

“At a deeper level there is a need as we get older to maintain an active intimate or sexual involvement. There is a biological and emotional need for this. But again many deny the need out of fear of their own perceived inadequacy.”

This lady goes on to say more about this matter of feeling unsure of one's self and its effect on relationships:

“One of the greatest inhibitors of older people in doing new things is their feelings of inadequacy and insecurity in respect to their relationships to others around them.”

The cult of youth which we encounter everywhere every day in the media and on the street may discourage older people in seeking new relationships and even thinking of sexual relations. Many youth think “at their age, are they still doing it?” Yes they are, and enjoying it!

Many people have fantasies about sex but never realize them. Now is the time! Either DO it or FORGET about it. We get into ruts in our habits and practices, but maybe it is time to try new things. For well married people it can be harmless fun to get some adult movies and get some excitement in your life. We are brought up to be proper and observe certain protocols, but now that we are of an age, it is time to break into some new patterns. In the privacy of your own home, why not? Time is moving on.

My mother lived by her own choice in a retirement home for quite a number of years before she passed on. She told us about a couple of older residents who struck up a friendship which developed into their marriage. She thought that was terrible, at their age! But what is life all about if it can't be shared in all respects with an

intimate partner? Mother missed the fun that can come to older people if they have the wit and courage to venture into new territory. God bless them. As Robert Browning in Rabbi Ben Ezra (1864) said:

“Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life,
for which the first was made.”

And as I said in an earlier chapter:

“Awareness plus risk, equals growth.”

Go for it, and God bless!

Chapter 16

GREG'S STORY



G. I. Gurdjieff wrote a book “Meetings with Remarkable Men”⁽⁵⁾. Well, you do meet some people in your lifetime that are in some sense “remarkable”. My friend

Greg was one of these men.

His attitude was so positive and uplifting that I thought it would be good to recount briefly the story of Greg and how he went about life.

When Greg was young and looking for a career he did not know in what direction his future lay. He had no strong and clear vision of what he wanted to do with his life. He thought that he must do SOMETHING and pick some direction to go. Since he had some interest in cost accounting and how it worked, he decided to take a night course at the University. That course was over-crowded and he had to share a desk with another man. What seemed like a problem, turned out to be a key to his future. They hit it off right away and then began to study together, and this soon developed into a lifelong friendship.

At the end of the course Greg found a job in the cost accounting field. His friend meanwhile became a plant manager at a local firm and after Greg had gained some good experience in his work, his friend invited him to come to work for

him. Together they worked their way to the top management of the company. They got along exceedingly well and the firm prospered, all the while both gaining valuable experience.

Then one day Greg said to his friend Ian, why don't we start up a business of our own? Well, they did and they went through the financing issues, solving the problems as they went along with that positive attitude that was characteristic of the way they looked at life.

One year, as Greg relates the story, the company lost money so they sat down and tried to figure out what was wrong. They had the sales volume but they did not end up with the anticipated profit. So Greg said to Ian, let's take the positive approach, and Greg wrote up on the meeting room's blackboard. "The goal for next year — profit \$50,000".

They looked at this goal every day; it figured in every decision they made. At the end of the year they made \$55,000. So, then they wrote up on the board: "Goal for next year -\$100,000". And at the end of that year they posted a profit of \$107,000.

Maybe that sounds too simple but that was the way they worked - as a team and with totally positive attitudes and the belief that if you fix an image in your mind, and continually refer to it, it will indeed come to pass.

Well, since I hadn't seen Greg for a number of years I thought it would be a good idea to chat with him and ask him about some of his beliefs. For one thing he strongly believed in the power of the subconscious. Here are some of the things he said:

- write out what you want to be, or achieve, and read it every day. You will realize that thought in about 3 months. This way you implant the image in your subconscious, and eventually it will come true.

- appreciate the power of the subconscious. It works when your conscious mind is asleep, or busy. Tell it to do something, and it will surely work for you.

Then I asked him what advice would he give to those about to retire:

- always do SOMETHING; never do nothing.
- look after your health; watch your diet, get plenty of exercise.

- keep a positive outlook; if a negative thought enters your mind, don't nourish it, replace it right away with a positive thought.

- if you think about someone "I hate that person" it does no harm to anyone except yourself. And if you believe in re-incarnation, as I do, then that person will re-appear in your

next life, so you can hate him again!"

Then I asked him, what is your advice to the young people of to-day? He replied:

-try to have an objective, some kind of goal.
-practice persistence; never, NEVER give up.

But here I must qualify Greg's statement of "NEVER" giving up. I think he must have meant that if something does not succeed don't give up, *but do it in a different way.*

Then I asked Greg what was his favourite book. He responded that the one that helped him most was U. S. Andersen's "Three Magic Words"⁽⁶⁾. So I went to the bookstore, found the book, read it, and discovered why Greg loved it. It described the positive attitude and the power of the subconscious that Greg followed all his life.

And that's Greg's story.

*One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never*

Shakespeare, King Henry V

Chapter 17

FOCUS or FRITTER



Another personal experience: I woke up one morning and said to myself, "I don't seem to be getting anywhere. The days are frittering away and nothing meaningful seems to be getting done."

I'm into a number of projects and have many interests, but none of which seem to be moving ahead. What am I? A consultant, an entrepreneur, an author, a retiree? "Que sera, sera?" as the song goes.

I could spend all day on the computer, what with Internet and all the software and multimedia available. And the time would pass quickly. But the day would disappear and get lost in the swamp of yesterdays.

It is interesting and even exciting to have a lot of interests and things demanding of your attention. Then I remembered what my father quoted to me from the Bible when he was asked to take on the presidency of a large city Kiwanis Club:

"This one thing I do...."

He was president of his own publishing business, and it required his full attention to keep it in the

black.

“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark...”

Philemon 3:13, King James version Bible

Being president of the big city Kiwanis Club was a distinct honor, but he turned it down.

On the other hand, my mother was offered leadership in her church work, where she devoted a lot of her time, and she also turned it down - but for different reasons. She should have accepted!

When I look back on the last few years, the things I remember are the “lumps of accomplishment” and they are the things that took dedicated time and focus.

So, the morning I became aware of the way time was slipping by with no distinct things accomplished, I decided that what was necessary was the trimming of the ship, and the focus on “this one thing I do.” As soon as that decision was reached I felt a real surge of energy.

Timing is also important. There is a time when doing nothing is appropriate - but not all the time!

In the Bible, in the book of Ecclesiastes is a statement of this philosophy that puts it very well.

“To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven.....a time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pick up that which is planted....”

Ecclesiastes 3:1, King James version, Bible.

Now a lot of people are quite happy spending their time in doing a lot of different things. They don't need a specific project, or focus. But there are others that feel aimless without a focus, and I am one! Focus gives energy and meaning to life. Surely that is why so many older people are in positions of note in the world. Their lives have purpose and challenge, and although life might be a bit frantic at times, they seem to prosper at it.

So what is the message? Focus or fritter?

*Focus or fritter,
What does it matter?
But focus for me
Is significantly better.*

So there you are, another issue to ponder.

"If I can in any way contribute to the . . . improvement of the country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret satisfaction of thinking I have not lived in vain."

Joseph Addison 1672 - 1719

Chapter 18

LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION



I found Sundays boring when I was young. There was so little I could do. I still have difficulty when I have “nothing to do.” After I left family life and was struggling to adjust to living alone, a friend said to me “You have to find new ways to structure your time.” True.

Remember the song “Saturday night is the loneliest night of the week”? Well, what do we have to do to lead a life we would call satisfactory? Life is more than just “activity” to be satisfying. What does make life satisfactory? or challenging?

One way to measure the satisfaction one gets out of life is to see what progress is being made. Progress could be in money and assets accumulated, in new knowledge, in new experiences or skills. Whatever the measure it must show some form of growth and improvement.

I have tried to put this in graphic form. If you look at Chart 3 (over the page), you will see the factors in life that tend to govern satisfaction.

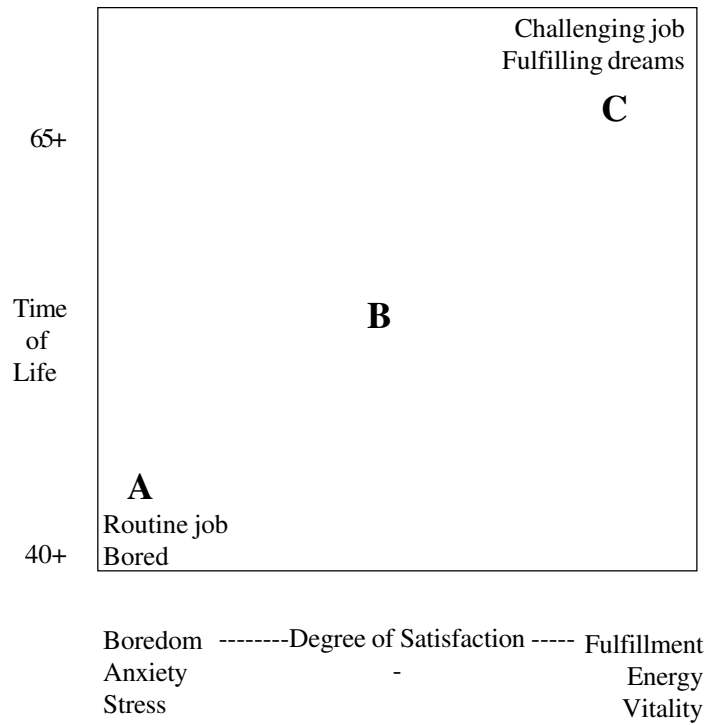
The left side of the chart shows the age of the person, or time of life. It starts in the forty year old

age group and goes to sixty-five and over.

The bottom line shows the degree of satisfaction in life. It moves from a “low” on the left in terms of boredom, anxiety or illness, to a “high” on the right of fulfillment, energy and vitality.

Inside the chart is shown the status of the person. We consider three cases. Take Mr. “A” for example. He is in his forties; he has a routine 9-5 job of no great challenge and would fall on the low side of the chart. Now Ms. “B” is in her early fifties and reasonably satisfied with her life. And according to the chart has not reached her full potential. However, Mr. “C” is actively challenged and an early senior. He is self-employed and for the first time in his life he is able to be fully creative, and therefore enjoys his work, and life. You may have to put in your own criteria depending on your own definitions of what you use to assess quality of life. Such measurements of quality of life are not scientific, but they do stimulate thinking and are sort of fun. Try this one out on yourself and friends.

Chart 2
LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION



*"For of those to whom much is given,
much is required."*
John F. Kennedy 1917 - 1963

Chapter 19

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Babies are on the receiving end of all the goodies of life. As we get older then we begin to contribute to the society or family or social group to which we belong. Children in the days of the early pioneers and farmers had duties to perform as a natural part of their life. As we became urbanized these duties became less and less, and now, in most cases young people are total consumers until they get on their own. As teen agers they get a part-time job at the local restaurant or supermarket and spend all the money on their own activities. Probably most do not contribute a share of their earnings to the family expenses - room and board so to speak.

At a conference I attended recently there was a seminar on the future of society and we noticed a young person standing at the back of the room. So we asked her what are the main interests and aims of young people to-day. The clear response was: get a job and buy a car.

Are we training people to be consumers only; and to act in self-interest to the point that they don't see the reason for paying taxes or contributing to community?

To take and not to give is amoral.

Amitai Etzioni has coined the word “communitarian” as one acting for the betterment of the moral, social and political environment. When he asked young people to say what was special about the United States they said “individualism and the fact that it is a democracy and you can do whatever you want.” In his book "The Spirit of Community"⁽⁸⁾ he shows how wrong that is, and how we all must bear some responsibility for the community of which we are a part. (See the next Chapter: True Community)

So what is the response of the senior in retirement years?

Is it sufficient to say that we have paid our dues, we have worked all our lives, and now we are entitled to enjoy leisure and do what we please? I don't think so; there is more to it than that. Now it may be time to return some of that hard-earned knowledge and experience to society.

Just how could this be done? A lot depends on one's talents. Some have a lot they could contribute. I have a friend that has great talents in the communications field; in fact he had an international reputation before retirement. Now he is spending most of his time on hobbies, fixing up the house, travel, and some volunteer work in the community. I tell him he could be a powerful force in the communications field, but he turns down speaking requests and takes no interest in

updating his knowledge in the field. He is happy in what he is doing, but he has so much more potential to contribute to society.

There are three ways for a retiree to contribute to community:

- first, look after one's own health to reduce the future social burden of personal upkeep;
- secondly, spend some time to contribute to society (more as a producer, than a consumer)
- and thirdly, help people enrich their lives and reach their own potential.

By giving of one's talents to society then the negative image of an ineffective old person would be replaced by one of respect for sharing the value of the experience and knowledge gained over the years.

As we move into the next few decades the number of working adults supporting the number of non-working members of society will be getting less and less. The pension funds will be stretched pretty thin. Interestingly, generational stress may also increase as the proportion of seniors in the population rises. Seniors may HAVE to work and be self-reliant. But that's not all bad.

For seniors to continue to work, as employees, consultants, entrepreneurs, or as volunteers; or to contribute to society or the economy in any way, has two benefits: it adds something to society; and at the same time, it is personally rewarding.

*"A community is like a ship, everyone
ought to be prepared to take the helm."*

Henrick Ibsen - 1828 - 1906

Chapter 20



TRUE COMMUNITY

True Community is where a group of people help each other, sharing the burdens and sharing the joys. It is more than just a neighbourhood, or a housing development. True Community may take different forms; a network of people not living close to one another, like a church, club, or an association; or people living close together as in a small village, or urban enclave, or in a self-created community.

Care is so often now given by an institution, instead of a close-knit community. We are all too familiar with the moving out of older parents into a nursing home or some form of total care. The trick is to find a way for older people to live in a community that cares.

Creating community is not easy. When people live in each others' pockets conflict is frequent. Methods of reconciling differences are necessarily developed or the community splits apart. However the rewards outdo the pain. Living in community, in comparison with living alone, is good for your health, as described by the authors of "Creating Community Anywhere."⁽⁹⁾ And the authors outline many alternatives to living in the retirement home, including shared housing, multi-generational living, and getting a

group together to build their own intimate community.

Then there are the so-called “intentional communities.” These are where people of like-mind get together and create a community by buying land and building houses for each member family, with a common house for eating, recreation, child care, laundry, and other services. They all share in the democratic operation of the group, including the cooking, cleaning and maintenance. Some take the responsibility of using their special skills like gardening or maintenance, others work on a rotational basis for the cooking, child care and whatever. "The Directory of Intentional Communities"⁽¹⁰⁾ lists some 400 of these intentional communities in North America. See also "Builders of the Dawn" for intentional communities' descriptions.⁽¹²⁾ These are not the “communes” of the 60s.

“Co-housing” (or Cohousing) is another form of living in community.⁽¹¹⁾ This is a form of intentional community that started in Denmark and is spreading throughout North America. It has four basic characteristics:

- designed by its future residents; pedestrian friendly
- offers many amenities shared by all residents (e.g. kitchen, garden, laundry)
- private homes supplemented by common facilities

- resident management; non-heirarchical structure; consensus decisions

There are many references to co-housing on the Internet.¹³ The Cohousing Association of the United States lists about 150 co-housing enterprises in various stages of completion. California alone has 28, Colorado 12 and so on.

In Canada there is the Canadian Cohousing Network the website of which shows the following co-housing activities again in various stages of completion:

B.C.- 12; Alberta - 2; Saskatchewan - 1; Manitoba - 2 and Ontario 5. For some reason there are none listed in Quebec or the Maritimes. They will probably catch on later!

Co-housing is not based on a particular ideology or dogma and encourages a mix of demographics. Housing units are often arranged around a courtyard where children are free to play without the presence of roads and cars. Thus retirees can keep an eye on the children of those who must work outside the home.

One group developed a values statement which included “where each person feels accepted and valued as they are.”

In the normal urban environment you do not have the option of choosing your neighbours. However, in co-housing or intentional communities, the membership of like-minded people is set

up in the beginning.

Some will not want to live in such close proximity to others, and will need their privacy. However, the satisfaction of mutual support, both psychological and economic, will for some outweigh the desire for being totally independent. This is especially true when one moves from a stressful, unsafe urban environment into the protection and mutual support of a “true community.”

For seniors it is important to seek the optimum living conditions among the many alternatives, rather than hanging on until no choice is left. It is better to be in a like-minded group where each is responsible for the other, than in a home or institution with “total care.” Someday we might HAVE to accept total care, but in the meantime, as long as we are at all mobile, it is important to retain some decision making, even over what to eat, and what to do to-day, and whether to look after Mrs. Smith down the hall, or in the next house. Total care sounds nice; you have no responsibilities, but this can be debilitating.

Look for a way to live in community, whether an extended family, or a self-reliant community of some kind. We might have to create our own! Why not?

Chapter 21

TO MOVE OR STAY PUT

**\$ALE
PRICE**

When you read the real estate section of the daily paper you see many advertisements appealing to seniors to buy into their residential facility. Everything is provided - one to three bedroom accommodation, recreational facilities, on site medical or nursing care, and a community of like-minded residents like yourself.

This presents a temptation to sell your long-occupied family home, when the birds have flown the nest, and move into a more-easily managed residence. And possibly, in a more compatible climate. For most this is a difficult decision - should we go, or stay?

An older couple I know cannot be budged from their huge family home and it is only they who occupy it. Their children have grown up and moved out. As they get less and less mobile, they are still determined to stay put. The reasons are clear: they are comfortable in their familiar environment; the garden and work around the house keep them active; their friends are in the community; and they want to keep the place as one the family can come home to. So, why move? And besides it would be a fearsome effort to clear out the attic!

In a recent visit to Florida, my wife Ann and I camped in a 1,000 site RV (Recreational Vehicle), trailer and mobile home community, peopled mostly by retirees. Over half of the people there, were permanent residents. The community provided recreation, both facilities and an active well-organized program. Every night there was something going on - bingo, dancing, or whatever. They had tennis courts, shuffle board, miniature golf and swimming pools. We noticed the friendly nature of the people and the contentment and even joy they expressed. This isn't the life for everybody, especially singles. Sounds good, but what's wrong with it? For one thing, it represents the leisure or consumer society, and as such will not appeal to those wanting to keep involved in more productive pursuits. Some people are happy spending summers in the north, where they grew up, and the rest of the year travelling, or just going south and staying put for colder months. There are many opportunities and different life-styles for people who do not want to stay put 12 months in the year in the same old house.

The one thing to avoid, as Betty Friedan reports in her book "The Fountain of Age"⁽⁷⁾ is total care. As people get less and less mobile they look with interest at the possibility of a nursing home or full-time care facility. They do not want to be a burden to their children and they cannot maintain their own home any longer. So they

consider moving into a home where they have a room or two for themselves and with meals and all other services provided. There is no worry about anything anymore, except paying the bill. What is missing is the freedom of making your own decisions about anything - even about what you will eat! Everything is done for you. This can be debilitating to the point where you rapidly go downhill. Mental and physical effort has been reduced to the minimum, and it is not good for you! It is important therefore to plan far enough ahead to find alternate living conditions that give you the challenge of fending for yourself - until of course, you cannot manage alone.

In some communities there are groups of seniors living together, providing each other with mutual care. They all have their own separate independent quarters but they work together as a team to help each other when the need arises. When one fails in health, the others pitch in to help. This gives the more able ones something significant to do, and provides a common bond among them. At the same time it avoids the “total care” function that is provided in the nursing home. There is a role here for the government.

A government agency could well provide a service to help seniors organize themselves into self-help communities. This would relieve pressure on social funding and at the same time provide a better environment and therefore better health

for the members of such a community.

There are many existing forms of community that would be better for the older person than total care. Intentional communities, as described in the chapter on True Community, can act as an extended family. The older members provide services for the group because they are more likely to be at home during the day.

If some form of caring community cannot be found it may be that you will have to do some creating on your own. Work at it. Find others of like mind and create your own community. Provide “mutual care” rather than total care. Like medicines, total care is for when you REALLY need it, but not for the person in any kind of reasonable health.

To move, or stay put, that is the question. Explore the alternatives before it is too late and circumstances make up your mind for you. Then, as one friend told me:

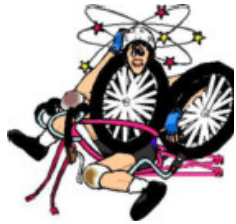
“Think it through. Then don’t fantasize.
Either DO it, or forget it.”

"We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft."

Mark Twain, 1835 - 1910

Chapter 22

Rating the Quality of Experience



There are two formulae that I have developed that help to better understand life's activities and to assess the risk before embarking on an adventure. The first one deals with experiences and helps to enhance and better understand them, either in advance or after the event on reflection.

In the first case, suppose you attend a play that your friends have raved about and you go and are disappointed. The first time I went to Tampa, Florida I expected a great thrill seeing all the new things but discovered that it was just like Buffalo with palm trees! On trying to explain this kind of let down, I realized that the realization was *less* than the expectation. On the other hand, if you go to see a ball game and your side isn't expected to win, but it does, then that is where the realization is *greater* than the expectation. So I put this into a formula like this:

For a good experience, Realization must be greater than the Expectation, or expressed as a formula it becomes;

Quality of Experience is enhanced when Realization over Expectation is greater than one.
Or, $R \text{ over } E > 1$

Or again: $R/E > 1$

So now when you read that a movie is spectacular you prepare yourself so that when you go your expectations are held in check so that the realization is not a let-down. And therefore your enjoyment should be enhanced!

The second formula concerns the evaluation of the risk in advance of a new adventure and relates the consequences of things going wrong to the probability of this happening. For example, you are going to take a plane to a destination in some distant city. The consequences of a crash are disastrous; yet the probability is so low that you normally don't worry about it. You consider the risk low - very low.

However, if you decide to cross a city street at a very busy intersection, the consequences of things going wrong are quite serious. The probability could well be over 50% that this might happen, so you would be foolish to take such a risk.

Now, expressing this situation of consequences and probability as a formula goes something like this:

Consequences (on a scale of one to ten) multiplied by probability (on a scale of one to ten) gives a number from one to a hundred.

Rating the plane trip where Consequences (C) = 10 and Probability (P) = 0.01 shows a risk

of 0.1 gives a result quite low and therefore safe risk to take. Restating: $C \times P = 0.1$

Rating the risk of crossing the busy street would be: Consequences (C) = 9 and Probability (P) = 5 (or 50%). Restating: $C \times P = 45$.

Summing this up: When $C \times P > 25$, don't take the risk!

Test this formula out for yourself on some adventure you are about to embark on - or would like to embark on.

Then don't hold me responsible if you take a risk and my formula didn't apply!

*"If life had a second edition, how I would
correct the proofs."*

John Clare 1793 - 1864

Chapter 23

THE NEXT TIME AROUND



Do you believe in re-incarnation? Many people do. Whether you return as a human, male or female, or indeed as another species, or at all, no one can say. But what if you were to come back as another human, what would you want to do this next time around?

Ask yourself, "What would I do differently if I had my life to live over?"

Now there is a question, and answering it provides some interesting guide lines, or even challenges for what remains of this time around.

I have asked a number of people that question; What would YOU do if you had your life to live over? The response in a number of cases was simply, "Nothing special. I have been pretty well satisfied this time around." Well good for you; but that does not inspire me. I would think there would be a lot of things, if you really think about it. Let's speculate: What would you like to do differently the next time around?

- take more risks
- take more time to smell the roses
- not work so hard at what at the time seems so important
- distinguish between what is important and what is just inconvenient

- eat more ice cream and less vegetables
- budget, but don't take it too seriously
- if you set goals, keep pushing them ahead
- see the funny side of life
- let your spouse decide all the important things -- if any ever turn up
- spend more time with your kids
- be less careful; stop going back to see if you turned out the lights and locked up
- get into debt for things worthwhile
- enjoy life to-day, NOW
- do more things worth remembering

To sum it up, perhaps you could just say: be more adventurous! And if you can't start over, then there would be some satisfaction in helping others do what you are not able to do in the time you have left. Hmm!

"In all things of nature there is something marvelous."

Aristotle 384 - 322 B.C.

Chapter 24

SEEK THE MAGIC!



Children seek the magic in Santa Claus, in the tooth fairy, in the adventures of little ones in books. As we get older the magic dims. Wordsworth expresses this in his poem “Intimations of Immortality”

"The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

So, look for the beauty that surrounds us, somewhere, somehow every day. Seek adventure, be attentive to the little things and find magic everywhere.

One January recently I flew from winter in Ottawa to an even deeper winter in Edmonton. It was COLD. But just as I was getting used to it, and seeing the beauty in the bright sun and clean white snow everywhere, we flew on to Vancouver in a brief hour. We landed in Vancouver in a totally different climate - the grass was green, there was a warmth in the air, and here and there were blossoms. What a sudden change, yet we

were in the same country and only a province away. I experienced a culture shock! It took a day to get over it and accept that it was real. To me it was like a dream. It was like in The Wizard of Oz where Dorothy was blown from her home in Kansas to the Land of Oz. It was magic.

With international air travel this experience is a fairly common one, going from one climate to another, and one culture to another. But do we see it as just jet lag, or as a kind of magic.

Travel certainly opens up new worlds. How often you do get to some new place and wonder if it is really you being in this exotic place. But it is.

Walt Disney was a master in presenting the world of magic. He was a master in stirring the imagination, and seeing things in an exciting way.

Seeing a majestic view of mountains, or great waterfalls or waving fields of grain is indeed magic. But there is also the micro world of magic that is often missed - the magic in a single flower, or dew on the grass, or an insect on a leaf.

There is magic in the world of new learning - through friends, in books, at conferences, on the computer network. But see it as wonderful, as a child sees magic in a flower, or in a drop of morning dew. Or as one newly in love sees the trees, the sky, the whole world in a whole new and exciting way.

Seek the magic!

Chapter 25

EPILOGUE



Although the style of the writing of VIBRANT LIVING may seem overly aggressive and overly positive and optimistic, it is presented with a certain degree of humility. I encourage seniors, in fact all ages, to be active, contributing to the community and to be in charge of one's own health. However, I am well aware, as I get on with my own aging, that we can be struck down any time; that our will is powerful but sometimes not quite enough.

Some of our genes are designed to repair damaged body parts and diseases, and some are designed (unfortunately) to wear out. Scientists are working on increasing the number of healing genes, but still we must be aware of the reality of life and the inevitable aging process. The point of many of my remarks in VIBRANT LIVING is not just to stay the process of aging, but while we can, to live fully with the time that we have.

Fred G. Thompson
Ottawa, Canada
September, 2004

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APPENDIX

EXERCISE PROGRAM



An exercise program should be designed according to the needs of the specific person using it. I have presented here the program that I have worked out over the years as fitting my needs. It is, therefore, not necessarily the right program for the reader. However, it may present some useful ideas, or may even be inspirational! It is in the form of an actual letter I sent to my friend for his consideration.

Dear Don:

The idea of documenting my exercise program came to me while sunning in Cancun, Mexico!

As I mentioned to you the other day, you might benefit from setting up some Yoga exercises for yourself, and perhaps add some Do-In* procedures. The stiffness you are experiencing, and the limitations of the aerobic exercises that you have been doing, suggest to me that you should look into a special program which you design for your own special needs. This is what I did some years ago when I had a sore back, and have continued ever since (without the sore back). However I have added some and modified others

* Kushi, Michio "The Book of Do-In" Japan Publications, New York, 1979

as I progressed and learned more of available exercises and my own changing needs. I will describe in detail what I do although you must not think that they are necessarily the right ones for you. They suit me, but in any case you would be interested in my program, I am sure.

First let me say that Yoga often includes a series of stretching exercises. Do-In consists of tapping the body with your fingers to stimulate the circulation and focus attention on the parts of the body as you move through the motions. In addition to these I do a few aerobic and muscle building exercises, to complete the package. I do this program every morning (almost) and spend just under half an hour doing it.

The program begins with stretching the calf muscles and hamstrings of the leg by standing and leaning against a wall or firm object. The position looks like you are trying to push the wall over, legs straight, feet flat on the floor, and leaning forward until you feel the leg muscles straining. Do each leg separately, then together. I don't count the times, just 2 or 3 good stretches, while you hold the position 5 or 10 seconds at a time.

Next, while still standing, swing the arms around freely in a variety of directions just to stimulate the circulation and loosen up. Then rotate the head slowly in a big circle to loosen up the top of the spine; first one direction then the other. Also move the head way forward and way

back. Now rotate the trunk, first one way as far as you can go, hold it a few seconds, then the other direction. While you do this, look around as far as you can so both the trunk and head move and stretch. Now while in this position I look at the facing wall and move my eyes, rapidly, up and down 30 times; then from side to side 30 times; finally in circles 15 times. This to stretch eye muscles and improve vision.

Sitting on the floor in a cross-legged position, start a special kind of massage that I learned from the Do-In procedures. With your finger tips of both hands start tapping the top of your head, and move on down the back of your neck. Move then to your eyes, holding the heel of your hand gently but firmly in the eye sockets and talking to your eyes to relax, to heal and restore original clarity.

This idea of talking to yourself as you do the exercises is an important part of the whole program. Your sub-conscious is a powerful agent in whatever you do. It controls your involuntary movement and, I believe, listens to your conscious mind as it instructs it. So tell it to heal any of your weaknesses as you move through the exercises. In my case, the optometrist tells me that I have an incipient cataract condition so when I am holding the heels of my hands on my eyes, I tell my sub-conscious to heal and restore to natural health.

Massage the ears to stimulate the circula-

tion. Also around the ears, while telling your subconscious to improve your hearing (I need this!). I am told that it is possible for the sensitive hairs in your ear to grow healthier to improve your hearing. As you know I worked underground in the mines years ago, at times near the rock drills, and I am sure this didn't do my hearing any good. Continue to tap all over your face, around your lips and down your neck. I am trying to improve the quality of the skin around my neck to avoid that loose neck that is such a sign of aging.

Tap your chest bone at the bottom of your neck which is intended to stimulate the thymus which is intended to strengthen the immune system. Go over the body to the legs. Down the legs, and while doing this massage the knee caps. I do this believing that the elbows and knees are complicated joints that can stiffen up easily, so I give these special attention. When you come to the feet massage the bottoms, pushing fingers into the flesh. There is a special program called Reflexology that involves pushing the fingers deep into the flesh of the soles of the feet. Each part of the sole relates somehow to another part of the body, so this procedure in effect massages the other body parts in an indirect but healthy fashion.

Now do the arms. Tap under the arms to stimulate the lymphatic system. Then down the arms. My elbow bone was sore, or just tender to

the touch one time, but I found that it healed gradually after regular massaging during the finger massaging. When tapping the flesh around the forearm, I tell my mind to build up the subcutaneous fat which, as you grow older tends to dry up and cause wrinkled skin. Also I rub the back of my hands to also encourage subcutaneous fat to avoid the parchment like skin that comes with aging, and to hopefully minimize those annoying dark “liver spots.”

Having done the light massage exercises, now do the Yoga series. While still sitting in the lotus position, legs tucked in, start bending at the waist, bending forward as far as is comfortable (or just a little more). Hold it for a few seconds, but do not strain and damage the muscles. Straighten up and repeat but over to the right knee, then again over the left knee. Repeat the series three or four times as long as it feels good. Some people can touch their nose to the floor when bending forward, or at least to their knees during the sideways bending (I can do the knee ones). However, I have found that if I breathe deeply and exhale slowly I can bend further each breath cycle. Try it.

Now while in the sitting position, stretch the right leg out to the right and, bending over, reach for the right foot, bending over as far as you can comfortably. While doing this the left leg is tucked in to your hips. Now repeat with the left leg and left arm. For each cycle, reach first with the one

hand, then with both. This completes the exercises in the seated position.

Next, we will do exercises that stretch the leg and stomach muscles. Lie flat on the floor face up. Lift the both legs while bending the knees (to avoid trying to lift the legs straight out, as this is too strenuous for me), while at the same time lifting the head. Hold for 2 or 3 seconds, and lower the legs and head. Repeat for 5 cycles. This prepares the body for the more active series that follow.

Lying flat on the floor, face up, head and arms also resting flat on the floor, start cycling, counting as you go. I started at 40 and now are up to 100 or more depending on how I feel that day.

Turn over, lying on your stomach, do push-ups from the knees up. That is you don't try to lift the whole body, just the front half, from the knees up. I started at 5, but now do 18. My record on a good day is 20, but that's it!

Still lying flat on your stomach, arms at your side, lift your head up as far as you can, while at the same time lifting your feet. You assume an arc position, which is also the position you try to hold while swimming the crawl. Do about 5 of them, or whatever is comfortable. Hold this position for 5 seconds each.

Now if you have any breath left, stand up (slowly?) and with hands on hips, bend at the knees and lower the body as far as you can

keeping the trunk of the body vertical. The tendency is to lean over because it is easier. However try to keep your balance while bending the knees right down, with a straight back, usually with arms extended to the front for better balance. Your knees might crack, but hopefully not much.

Then finally I take a piece of bungee cord, about 2 feet long and stretch the arms wide as far as I can go in various positions.

That's it.

Now hit the shower, you will need it, and you will feel good all over.

The most difficult part of this program of exercises is the commitment to do them every day. I take Sundays off! So, try all this out, develop your own variations and innovations and see how it goes. The benefits will not be apparent at first but it can't help but pay off in the long run.

And speaking of run, plan also on doing a brisk walk - running is a bit much - at least three days a week for one or two miles.

Wishing you the best of health,

Your friend
Fred.