

Living longer is the new normal, it's true.



But what good is more years without more
enjoyment and good health — mind and body?

These **9 tips** will help you maintain — or regain — not just health and wellbeing, but your zest for life; the inner spark that keeps you going.

*Life can be enjoyable at **any** age and let's not kid ourselves, there will be hurdles and challenges.*

Keep these handy when those times come, or any day you need a reminder that your mindset, the thoughts you think about your situation, has the power to change your experience of the moment.

1 Learn to Embrace Change

You know the old saying, **the only thing that's certain is change**. Yet, even in our second half of life or later, it can be hard to accept; especially when we don't instigate the change.

Over the years we've survived many events that signal a new chapter in our lives. Graduation, marriage, the birth of children, promotions, retirement, death of a spouse, and illness, to name a few of the big ones.

These milestones serve as chapters in our life story. With each new milestone, we must look at starting a new chapter, whether intended or not, whether pleasant or not, and whether liberating or not.

Situations like downsizing to a smaller home, a divorce, giving up the car keys, having a stroke or heart attack, or experiencing the death of a spouse require us to start a new chapter in our story.

How do you go on after losing our spouse of 25, 30, or even 55 years?

For some it will feel too painful to go on, and too dark to face the future alone. Yes, you must take time to grieve and mourn.

When the time is right, you **start a new chapter** as someone who took an unexpected sharp turn and survived to live longer and stay positive even in the face of challenge and loss.

The same process applies to someone whose stroke left him unable to use his left arm and leg. The task is to redefine himself as someone whose body is not cooperating but whose mind, or consciousness if you will, is just as strong and vibrant as ever. In that light he is still able to have a fulfilling life.

The beauty is that **we write the script**. We take on a new role in this next act, and create the character we want to play.



Living longer is about attitude, outlook and staying positive even when things get in the way.

2

Control Your Thoughts and Feelings

The Roman philosopher, Epictetus, said,
“We are disturbed not by events, but by the views we take of these events.”

I’m not telling you anything you don’t already know, but I’ll say it anyway; **there are things we cannot control**: the weather, when the sun sets, or other people. (The sooner you master this one the better every relationship gets. More on this later)

In large part, we can’t control climate change or whether politicians reach across the aisle.

It’s pointless spending any mental energy on things outside of our control.

There is one area of life that we have complete control over: **our thoughts**. And our thoughts determine our values and principles, and the goals we set.

This is where we should be spending our precious mental energy. Our thoughts and our dreams. Although one part of brains is a danger detector which leads us to have thousands of negative thoughts per day, we are not at the mercy of this old part of our brain. We get to

smile when it's all going south or frown and dissolve into a mess of stress

Speaking of smiles, **smiling can lead to a longer life.** A study of professional baseball players who began their careers before 1950, found that, after rating the intensity of players' smiles in a sample of 230 photos, those with bigger smiles in their photos lived an average of 7 years longer than those with no smiles (see Life span may be as wide as your smile).

Be aware of your thoughts and feeling, those things that you can control, and let go of worry or stressing over those things you can't.

Pick your battles. Spend your energy where you can shape and influence the outcome. There will always be negative, unpleasant events, some totally out of your control.



Figuring out the difference leaves us with the energy to win the battles we do take on.

3

See the Setbacks with Compassion

I am, you and we are aging, every day.

As we age, we face challenges that are both normal and age-related as well as unexpected.

How we view the future has a major impact on how well we manage these challenges.

We can label a setback as an expected sign that we're getting older, or we can say, *"Another bump in the road, and I can get around this one, too"*.

There will always be bumps – no road is paved smooth all the way. When we interpret these as part of the journey and see ourselves as capable and determined to move on, we find a way and we move on.

Rather than resignation and despair, how about **compassion**?

The body is aging. Life deals us an unexpected hand now and then. None of it is the result of us being inadequate or "old." Most of the time it's just "what is."

On the other hand, if we say...

“Oh, another setback, another surgery, another friend’s death, another broken water pipe, I don’t think I can handle another one”,

...that’s when we **lose our momentum and slow down**, and maybe stop engaging all together.

Said another way: four ounces of water in an eight-ounce glass is the same no matter what we call it – half full or half empty.

Same glass of water.



*How we interpret
or explain an
event to ourselves
will color how
successfully we
adapt to it.*

4

You Are Resilient. You Are Strong.

I believe we each have a vast reservoir of energy and creative spirit inside of us.

When we dig deep to tap this reservoir of energy, we can re-define ourselves as **strong, resilient, and capable**.

No matter what.

Every time we've had to dig deep and accomplish something we didn't think we were capable of — *and I know you've been there* — it builds our confidence and carries us through.

Sometimes, we're really stunned with our success.

See if you recognize one of these resilient moments in this list.

- I never thought I could take 10 steps after my stroke, but I did.
- I never thought I could finish writing that chapter, it was the hardest one yet.

- I never thought I could make that phone call to my daughter, after not talking for so many months.
- I never thought I could give up my car keys – driving always was my lifeline – after getting lost too many times.
- I never thought I would get through chemo, it was the worst experience of my life

The first step is so hard, but we take one, then another. And at some point, we've crossed a finish line.

We *succeed*.

Whatever it took to take those extra steps, or make that call, or change an opinion, there's more of that determination and fire inside us, to take on more battles.



*And the best part
is that there's
more where that
came from.*

5

Find the Good Stuff, the Things that Go *Right*

Depression is common.

It affects people differently.

One thing it does in most people is narrow our perspective. When someone is depressed, all he sees are the wrongs, the failures, and the disappointments.

Depression is like wearing blinders. It limits us from seeing the whole picture. It's acts as a filter that only lets in the bad and screens out the good.

To remove the filter, **find the exceptions.**

Find *even* one exception to all the bad you see – **the one thing** – that has gone right.

If you are feeling that *“The food tastes terrible here in this facility, the nurses don't take care of me, there's nothing good about this place.”*

Can you find one exception? Is there one nurse or worker who is different from the rest? One meal that you do look forward to? One thing you like about being there?

Once you've got the exception, you've got something to build on.

The exceptions that *can* be identified can lead the way to a change in our perception. They aid in removing the negative filters so we can see a more complete picture. And this exercise can help you from falling into depression.

Depression can feel like a vacuum, pulling us down into a deep hole of darkness and no matter how hard we try to hold on, we fall back into the same hole.

Resisting that backward pull takes a conscious decision and looking for the positives that lie ahead. They are up there waiting for you.

Setting a goal, like looking for that bit of blue sky behind dark clouds, can pull you forward and make all the difference.



Eventually our depression will break up, like dark clouds after a storm, and the exception of blue sky is all we see.

6

Don't Let Physical Challenges Limit Your Spirit

This one can be hard, I'll admit.

But stay with me here.

You are the captain of your ship. Your body is the ship. When you try to steer, sometimes the ship cooperates and sometimes it doesn't.

As the captain, you have value and worth, despite how sick you are or how limited you might be from chronic illness, a stroke, an amputation, or mental decline.

You are not defined by your body.

I once had a client I called "Captain" while working to help her feel more in control after a stroke. And I gave her the metaphor of the captain and the ship.

One day I asked her how her week was. She replied, *"My ship has run aground. I fell while trying to walk. So, I turned the ship around and tried again."*

And she was back on track rebuilding her body with physical therapy.

It is easy to tie our value and our worth to our wellbeing or our health. Because of this, when something isn't working as we'd planned or as fast, or we experience a sharp physical decline, our worth goes with it.

Our worth is intrinsic to being a living being. It is not based on what we *can* or *can't* do, or what we *have* and do *not* have.

We don't lose all self-esteem when we fail a class or get passed over for that promotion. It's easier to bounce back from those things in our prime.

But we must always remember that **our worth and value as a person are not diminished by external events or by internal events.**



Do this and you will possess an inner reserve of positivity to draw on. We can even help others believe the same about their self.

7

Open Up, Step Out of Your Comfort Zone

Being unpredictable adds excitement.

It can also be a bit scary.

And, for some, as we age, the brain resists taking risks and being open to exploring new ideas and adventures.

In his book, *“Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself”*, Dr. Joe Dispenza explains how **shifting away from our usual behavior patterns into unknown territory creates new and exciting opportunities in our life.**

If we develop new relationships, or enjoy new experiences, new doors will open to us.

You already know that your *comfort zone* is that familiar place where we feel safe and secure. When we hang out there, others see us in a consistent and predictable way. For those of us who don't like conflict, this is a good place to be.

Trying on a style of clothing or exploring a new group of people can trigger comments, like *“Why is he acting so strange – is he on something?”* Or, *“Who does she think she is?.”*

Being predictable keeps the anxiety down for our self and for others around us. Why unnecessarily create uneasiness?

Maybe, like me, you decide to take drum lessons when we never had any musical interest before. Go for it!

Perhaps there are neighbors you’ve never socialized with but want to invite over for a meal. You might even decide to volunteer at a community agency that you never aligned with in your past. All of these options are good for the spirit and literally good for brain health.

Predictable is safe. Routine is safe. **Stepping out of your comfort zone**, however, keeps you alert and open to new possibilities.



And new possibilities provide endless sources of energy, drive, and spirit

8 Live All of Who You Are, Recreate Yourself!

They say **you're never too old to live your dreams.**

But how many of us actually continue to explore the parts of us yet to be expressed?

The reason we don't is that we have *stories* about who we are now.

"Too old, not smart enough, not enough tech knowledge, not enough money, never had an aptitude for that."

And **they stop us in our tracks.**

Our self-definition is a mental construction, and like any construction, it can be remodeled.

Steve Jobs, the creator of Apple, was given up for adoption by his birth parents. When he discovered this fact, he felt totally worthless. He was sure he would never accomplish anything because he was unwanted by his biological mother and father.

His adoptive parents told him that he was the most beautiful and smartest person in the world, even as a child, and that was why they adopted him.

He became convinced that he was lovable and had value. Because of that conversation with his adoptive parents, Steve Jobs redefined himself.

The definition was new, but he was the same young adult who had once had such a negative self-image and now had turned this image into a positive one.

Did anything change?

Only the *self-talk* going on in his head.

How's your self-talk?

Is it pessimistic, or as aspirational as Steve Jobs' became after his heart-to-heart with his parents?

We are not defined by who we were in the past.

If you are discouraged by failure and disappointment in the past, put those in perspective.

You did the best you could at the time.

Don't let yesterday define who you are today.

So much that goes on in our head can have a negative influence on how we face the future.

And how much of the life ahead we will *enjoy*.

Think of your years to come as a blank canvas with all the colors of the rainbow at your disposal and create a new identity.

Add all the features, new attitudes, and character you want.



Create from the positive spirit, optimism, and energy that lives within you just waiting to be tapped.

9

Don't Let Worry Prevent Hope

Worry can feel like an old, familiar friend. We like to keep it around.

Some believe it helps to cope with problems and can help us prepare for the worst. ***Worry is also “borrowing trouble from the future”.***

“What if ... happens?” we think about all sorts of scenarios.

We *like* predictability.

But can we predict what's going to happen in the future?

No, not even in the next few moments.

For some people, not knowing leads to predicting something awful and then dwelling on it as a way to feel in control.

“I've had a series of mini strokes: I know I'll have another, I might as well accept it and get prepared for it.”

Awfulizing is another way to describe this pattern.

We don't know for sure what's going to happen, but we have a habit of imagining the worst, predicting calamity or catastrophe. This mindset generally results in a reduced quality of life.

Despite how soothing it can be, **worrying helps no one**. It drains energy away from our productivity, and enjoyment of life. Not to mention it interferes with planning for our tomorrows.

Life is uncertain. Ambiguity is a part of life.

Explore a book or article online about the Law of Attraction. One of its tenets is, *"What we think about, we bring about."* Or pick up a book on how to reduce worry.

It *is* possible.



Recognize the importance of being in the moment. Trust in the goodness of life. There are no crystal balls and things might just turn out better than you think.



I hope these tips help you on your journey to a **long and healthy life**. If you feel you could use some support in shifting your mindset around aging, getting out of worry, or exploring what's possible for you, [click this link](#) and send me an email. I read all of my email and will get back to you with next steps.

To your health and longevity,

Dr. Joe

The Living to 100 Club is a community of everyone interested in embracing the reality that we will, on whole, live longer and better than any generation in history. 80s, 90s, and yes, even 100 is becoming commonplace and our 40s, 50s and 60s are prime years of our lives.

It was founded by me, Joseph Casciani Ph.D.



Visit the Living to 100 Club for resources, podcasts, and articles to help you turn aging on its head.

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