

cognitive decline and can present a bigger health risk than obesity or smoking.

I'm no Pollyanna. I will acknowledge that aging is accompanied by sometimes difficult challenges. Bodily aches and pains become more prevalent. Stamina decreases. Eyes dim and hearing can be a challenge. Medications may be required and visits to the doctor may become more frequent.

There are also losses that accompany aging. Friends and family move on, move away, or die. Abilities I have always had may diminish or disappear. I may be living on reduced financial resources. Some of my dreams may no longer be feasible. Despite these losses and challenges, life is good.

As long as I am on this side of the grass, I will live with a grateful heart, a curious mind, a twinkling eye, and a chuckle waiting to come forth. I will live this one sweet life to the fullest and give thanks for each day's dawning.

It is proven that the longer you live, the longer you live. If you are currently 65, you'll likely live to 84. If you're 84, you'll probably see 92. If you're 92, you've already beaten the odds. The number of elders is growing as 10,000 people will turn 75 every day for the next 16 years. We are not alone!

Are you your body's own worst enemy?

By Nicky Snazel
Correspondent

If we neglect our bodies, misuse them, or otherwise fail to treat them with proper respect, they have an effective means of expressing their dissatisfaction.

We feel pain – in our joints, in our muscles, in our backs; pretty much any place where there exists a nerve that can fire off an urgent distress signal to the brain.

And as we age, those distress signals seem to become more frequent, with the simplest of movements, such as bending over to pick up a fallen object, creating anguish and instant regret.

"Unfortunately, pain and aging are facts of life," says Nicky Snazel (www.painreliefclinic.co.uk), a physiotherapist, expert in pain management, and author of "The 4 Keys to Health" and other books.

"The good news is that, ultimately, our quality of life doesn't have to be ruled by age and pain themselves, no matter what we might think. Instead, our quality of life is determined by how we handle age and pain."

In many ways, we're our bodies' own worst enemies. But Snazel says those who want to treat their bodies the right way can accomplish that by making changes in four key areas:

- **Mindset.** Your mindset affects all aspects of your health, Snazel says.

"Without a positive, long-term commitment to health, you will not eat and drink well, you will not get regular and adequate exercise, and you will not be able to control your stress," she says. "Without first getting your head in the right place, how can you expect to make all of these changes to your life?"

- **Nutrition and hydration.** "It's no secret that most of us don't have the best diets," Snazel says.

"We eat too much of the food that enhances pain," she says, "and too little that reduces pain."

"Our ancient ancestors had the right idea," she says. "They ate fresh meat, berries, roots, and fruit and vegetables high in antioxidants, and they had no processed foods. Perhaps more surprising," Snazel says, "is that many people also aren't properly hydrated."

"Water is necessary for mental agility, the immune system, healing, cleansing, and detoxing," she says, "so it is definitely not something we should ignore."

- **Fitness.** Televisions, computers and smartphones helped turn us into a sedentary society self-imprisoned on our sofas.

"The lack of physical activity causes emotional and physiological imbalances," Snazel says. "Improving your fitness changes your chemistry, acts as a powerful antidepressant, promotes mental clarity, and

reduces the likelihood of cancer."

Being disciplined about getting exercise is your key to longevity, she says, so exercise regularly and effectively. Running, for example, helps you lose dangerous belly fat that causes inflammation and aids stress. If running proves too difficult or isn't your thing, there are plenty of other aerobic exercises, such as golf, walking, swimming, rowing and cross-country skiing, among others.

- **Lifestyle.** "If you want to start changing your lifestyle right now to improve your mental and physical health, there are several small, simple things you can do to get headed in the right direction," Snazel says.

Here are just some of them: Get a regular massage; meditate daily; set purposeful goals; do something nice for a stranger; watch less TV; study something every day; spend time with inspiring and funny people; sing in the shower.

"As we age, we need to put even more care into our diet, our exercise, and our workload," Snazel says. "It sounds simple, but many of us fail to even acknowledge that we have to change the way we use our bodies as we get older."

"We need to remember that so much of this is a choice. We have the power to change ourselves by transforming the way we think, what we eat, how we move, and what kind of lifestyle we choose to lead."



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