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Aging is Optional.

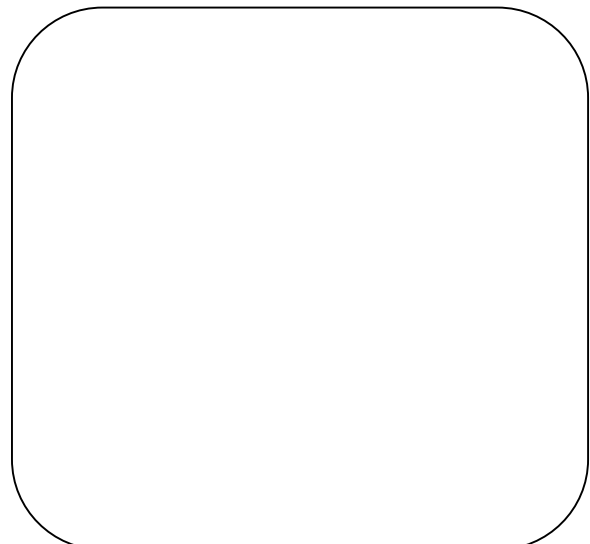
I remember reading somewhere about a Pope who commented on the relative youth of a newly elected Superior General of the Jesuits. The young Superior General had the wits to reply that he himself was aware of this apparent shortcoming, and he promised the Pope that he would “work at it every day, even while I am sleeping”.

We can't help growing old. With every passing minute, every second, awake or sleeping, we grow older.

However, while dying remains compulsory, it is the now the latest medical wisdom that *aging is optional*.

We grow old chronologically, yes, but we do not have to physically age. Modern research and medicine have more than enough evidence that with proper diet, adequate exercise, the right state of mind, and the support of good social relationships, we need not suffer the functional ailments of age.

My wife and I were in Las Vegas recently. There we stood in queue with people weighing 400 pounds (200KG) for “eat- all-you-can” buffet dinners at US\$38 ++ per mouth. Big people piled their dinner plates high with Alaskan crab legs, roast beef, dunked them into clarified butter, gobbled them down between swigs of sweet soda pop, then went back for their 3rd and 4th helpings. Then, 2 helpings of dessert.



We sat at a side walk cafe and watched people pass. More than 50% of those over 40 years old were seriously over-weight. Perhaps half of these are chronically obese. A good number of those older than 50 were too heavy to walk and were riding electric carts.

All of us know that we have to eat a balanced diet. That is a diet comprising of reasonable amounts of the various groups of food. Greens and plant food are preferred over animal meats. For those people who want more detailed instructions there are many good books and advice on what constitutes a reasonable, sensible, balanced diet. In a place like Singapore anyone sincere in wanting to eat a balanced diet will have no difficulty doing it. In addition to a balanced diet, we have been taught to eat enough, only to achieve about 70% satiety for each meal time. One ardent advocate of this life-style habit is our current Minister Mentor.

As for exercise, the latest wisdom is that there are 3 groups of exercises which can slow, and (if adopted early enough in life) can even reverse physical deterioration.

First, there is the weight lifting/resistance type of exercises which build muscular strength and maintains joint flexibility and bone density. Then there is the aerobic/cardiovascular type of exercise which keeps the heart and circulation systems running cleanly and smoothly. Third, there are exercises which help ensure that a person retains his largely subconscious sense of balance.

The state of mind of a person also determines the rate in which he ages. Those people with an active mind, those always willing to take on and apply themselves to new mental tasks, will slow down the deterioration of the minds as they get older. Mental exercises are proven to have regenerated brains damaged by Alzheimer's disease. Traditionally, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, memorising friend's phone numbers, grocery shopping lists, mentally toting up costs of groceries, etc. have kept the minds of past generations remain in shape into old age. Today learning to use a new cell phone, an iPod, a new program, or that intimidating 30 button remote control, result in keeping the brains functioning effectively. To put it simply, learning new things keeps you young.

There is the other easier option taken by many older people, - claiming that they are old and entitled to be forgetful, and always using age as the excuse, to take the easy way out, and to refuse to learn new things. This is the surest way to a steep mental decline.

An old person could also mope around all day, be irascible, and be negative in everything believing that he is just "waiting to die". Or, one could be pleasant to the people around him and get reciprocal goodwill, be positive in everything, take an interest in the people and the events around him, eager to learn new things, and have a happy positive outlook of life.

Maintaining a good network of social relationships also prevents a person from aging. To voluntarily maintain a network of relationships with large and usually disparate groups of various kinds of people is hard work. When we are working, we can have a group of people

of different ages, with whom we are forced to interact and spend a lot of time. It is easy to keep some social relationship going. But when we retire, keeping in touch with friends could really be “an effort”, but it is a rewarding effort. Maintaining and working at good relationships with spouse, with children, and grandchildren, also help in more ways than one. Be involved in church and community, believe in the goodness of a loving God and learn to see goodness in the people around you. Be His instrument.

So, with this knowledge, we can opt to live a healthy old age by opting to eat a balance diet, opt to exercise and keep active, opt to have a happy outlook, and opt to keep good social relationships. We therefore opt not to age.

Or, one can opt for ill health and all the ailments of ageing by opting not to control one’s food intake and indiscriminately eat large volumes of whatever food that we like. We can opt to laze around with minimum physical activity, to become nasty, irascible old people, unwilling to try anything new, or mentally difficult.

We were recently informed that studies have indicated that most Singaporeans would spend an average of the last 8 years of their life in relatively poor health. This means that if you continue with your present way of life, after about 70 years of age you will spend the last 8 years of life, miserable, sick, and generally having a poor quality of life. It would probably be more than the average of 8 years of sickness and suffering, because there are lots of people who will have opted for not ageing, and living a healthier and happier life. While they will be the ones who are having 1-3 years of ill health and a poor quality of life, you are the ones having 12-15 years of sickness, infirmity, and suffering, before we all die. That is how the average of “8 years of relative poor health” is derived.

They say “strive to live a rectangular life” ie. to maintain a high level of fitness and quality of life into old age and when the time comes, to drop dead quickly - this, in preference to a prolonged decline of dying agonisingly slowly, and hopefully not so painfully.

Finally, we have to continue to learn, think, to discern, grow and mature, to teach, and become better Christians, better human beings. Otherwise we will just be a huge crowd of healthy old fools.

.....article by.... mark

Quote:

“Every degenerative disease – including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and Alzheimer’s – exist in a tangled, complex web that involves each person’s unique biochemistry, genetic makeup, immunity, psyche, health, habits and environment.”

.....From the book Brain Longevity,

by Dharma Singh Khalsa, M.D.