

# Five X Five: The Keys to Successful Aging

## Number 1

**Exercise Mentally** – Chose something mentally challenging and appealing such as book club discussion groups, writing groups, art programs and/or community education courses.

**Exercise Physically** – Physical exercise boosts brain power, especially aerobic exercise. Do the exercises that involve the large muscle groups in a continuous, rhythmic exercise. This causes an increased flow of blood to the brain, produces endorphins, allows for better filtration in the brain of waste products and increases oxygen levels in the brain.

**Pick Challenging Leisure Activities** – And what you pick makes a difference! The more challenging an activity, the greater reserves of dendrites and synapses are built up!

**Achieve Mastery** – A sense of control and mastery in a field or topic leads to greater mental and physical health. Developing mastery in any topic comes only in the second half of life and produces feelings of empowerment. There is no quick way to substitute acquired learning in fields such as editing, law, medicine, coaching, teaching, etc. **Age trumps youth!**

**Establish Strong Social Networks** – Friends, family and active social engagements are associated with better mental and physical health and lower death rates. An active social life also reduces blood pressure, which in turn reduces the risk of stroke.

**Cohen, M.D.**

## Number 2

**Social Life** – A well-balanced and engaging social life, including family and friends is a key component for positive aging.

**Spiritual Life** – A need for persons to have a belief system that includes a higher power and the promise of an afterlife have been determined to be the foundation for dealing with life.

**Financial Life** – Security and reduced stress come from the knowledge of a safety zone present when costs for medication or physicians or the costs of daily living or vacations are not a great concern.

**Physical Life** – A healthy physical life is demonstrated in the “use it or lose it” theory. Staying fit can begin at any time in life.

**Mental Life** – Humans have a need to be challenged mentally and also to give back to other living creatures, be it human or pet or plant. Mental challenges and nurturing others is necessary to continuing to have a feeling of contribution and being needed.

**Gerontology**

## Number 3

**Promote Healthy Weight** – About two-thirds of adults are overweight and one-third is obese. But losing as little as 10 pounds can lower heart risk.

**Healthy Fats** – Look for extra-virgin olive, canola, peanut or sunflower oils for cooking. Add avocados, seeds and nuts to round out your intake of healthy fats. Fatty fish, walnuts and flax have great benefits for the body. Limit your intake of meats, dairy products, tropical oils and fast or processed foods.

**Power of Plants** -- Try a diet rich in whole grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts.

**Exercise Essentials** – Physical exercise doesn't have to be strenuous to have heart-health benefits. Start with gardening or walking for five or 10 minutes and build up to 30 minutes five days a week. Use your social support group to assist you with exercise. They'll help keep you on track.

**Curbing Stress** -- Managing stress and providing social support is powerful in fighting against heart disease. And it works.

**Palmer, R.D.**

## Number 4

**Diet** – What we feed the brain is a significant factor in its well-being.

**Exercise** – Daily exercise that applies for the brain and the body. Exercising the total body helps maintain a healthy brain.

**Challenge** – The brain gets bored and needs a challenge or challenges to keep it working.

**Newness** – We need newness: new pursuits, new ideas, new activities, new friends in our lives.

**Human Love** – We must nurture ourselves and each other and the things around us. It is a basic human need to care for others or other things.

**Diamond, Ph.D.**

## Number 5

**Have Goals and a Positive Attitude** – People with lots of hobbies, activities, projects, etc., and a positive disposition are happy people. It is the mental exercise they do, they are driven by purpose and their time is occupied by a goal.

**A Good Night's Sleep** – Age changes our hormones, including the sleep hormones. Insomnia can be present or just a notable change in sleep patterns. Failure to get a full night's rest can lead to serious health problems.

**Optimum Nutrition** – The best diet is a low calorie, high fiber diet rich in fruits and vegetables with all the food groups represented.

**Exercise** – People who exercise daily ease into old age with hormone levels balanced. Start now, it's the best buy in health.

**Stress Management** – Stress releases high levels of adrenaline and cortisone, a unhealthy mix for the brain and body. A life of relative calm, an orderly home and financial fitness secure positive aging for people.

**Anonymous**

## **Four Facts about the Brain**

- \*The brain is continually resculpting itself in response to experience and learning.
- \*New brain cells do form throughout life.
- \*The brain's emotional circuitry matures and becomes more balanced with age.
- \*The brain's two hemispheres are more equally used by older adults.

**The Myths of Aging** – To be old is to be sick -- You can't teach a old dog new tricks --The horse is out of the barn -- The secret to successful aging is to choose your parents wisely --The lights may be on, but the voltage is low -- The elderly don't pull their own weight -- Everyone develops the Old Timer's Disease -- Older people are Doddering, Slow, Mean, Cranky, suffer from Depression, Buffoons, Non-Sexual, Not Sexy, Mentally-Declining.

**More Myths** – Older people are sick, frail, irreversibly ill, disabled, weak, demented, alone, unhappy, passive, unable to learn, unable to recover lost functioning, doomed to their genetic makeup, inadequate mental, physical and sexual ability, unproductive, a burden, hold society back and are needy.

**The real culprits of aging** are stress, excessive alcohol and drug use, inactivity, smoking, obesity, malnourishment and social isolation, all of which weaken the brain's neural superstructure.

### **Reality:**

- \*More than 95 percent of older people live independently in the community.
- \*Of all the human beings who have ever lived to be 65 years or older, half are currently alive.
- \*There will be more than 600,000 centenarians in America by 2050.
- \*Life expectancy at age 65 for the average American is now 17 years.
- \*About 215 people reach the age of 100 every day in the United States, that's nine persons each hour.
- \*Four out of five centenarians are female.
- \*Most people do not get dementia or have memory problems.

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