



**Forget about magical elixirs - studies show that the 5 main contributors to living a longer healthier life are well within your control...**

### **1. A positive attitude**

### **2. Staying socially connected**

### **3. Being productive and maintaining control over one's life**

### **4.A healthy diet and exercise regime**

### **5. Maintaining memory**

#### **1. Cultivating A Positive Attitude...**

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#### **1. Cultivating A Positive Attitude**

Recent studies have indicated a correlation between having an optimistic attitude and living longer. Optimism was linked to longevity in a study conducted by the Mayo Clinic; they also found that pessimists had a risk of death that was 19% greater than that of a person with an "average" outlook.

It is true that we cannot avoid stressful events, but if we can examine the situation calmly, then we do have a better chance of identifying options and making sound decisions.

Our mental outlook affects the way we see the world. For instance, hatred, jealousy and anger are harmful, negative states of mind which destroy mental happiness; once we harbor feelings

of hatred or negative emotion towards someone or something then other people and events are seen through that hostile lens. This in turn results in fear, loneliness and more anger. On the other hand, mental states which include kindness and compassion tend to foster an environment of communicative openness in which warmth and understanding can develop.

How can we develop and maintain a positive outlook? We can try to stay aware of conditions that will tend to create suffering or those that will result in happiness and make our choices accordingly. We can also control the way we chose to interpret an event or experience a situation: have we examined different points of view; might there be another interpretation; and have we verified our assumptions?

Allow yourself the time and opportunity to relax and unwind with things we enjoy, whether its a hobby, reading, music or art.

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## 2. Staying Socially Connected

Human beings are not meant to live solitary lives; studies have shown that people who age well sustain important bonds with family and friends and are active in their communities.

**Many have stated that friendship is a key factor in keeping them active and emotionally secure.** These connections keep them feeling cared for, loved, understood and accepted as a member of a network of mutual obligations. The more often older people participate in social relationships, the better their overall health tends to be. This includes telephone conversations and visits with friends, relatives and neighbors, as well as participation in community or professional organizations. The two strongest predictors of well-being are frequency of visits with friends and frequency of attending organizational meetings. It is not surprising that the more meaningful the contribution, the greater the impact on health and well being.

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## 3. Being Productive and Taking Control

There are some areas where we are more likely to place the locus of control outside of ourselves. Age is a typical example. We expect that when we grow old, our health will

deteriorate, aches and pains will rob us of our motivation to be active, and that we will want for little more than a cup of cocoa and a good book. Age does not have to be about giving up, nor should it.

Growing old is as much an attitude as an inevitability. Older people with a positive attitude to ageing are more active, suffer less illness and make more decisions over their choice of lifestyle.

For this reason, it is particularly important to cultivate a 'can do' attitude within the care home. **A resident who is discharged to a residential care home following a stroke will make a better and quicker recovery if he believes that he can.**

When staff promote positivity, it rubs off on everyone around them. Things get done; people get better; teams cohere. Enhancing residents' perception of influence empowers them and helps them to take stock of their own situation.

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#### 4. Physical Fitness And Diet For Longevity

There has been so much written on this subject let us focus on the basic and most important aspects of fitness, because this is the key to living and functioning independently for as long as possible. As we all know, there is a ill-health epidemic in our country and it is obesity. Obesity is resulting in higher incidence of diabetes, heart attacks and strokes and other life-threatening illnesses. The most effective treatment for obesity is exercise and healthy eating habits.

Exercise is the single most important factor for preventing weight gain or losing weight. It is not only the initial calories you burn while exercising that are significant, but more importantly the alteration effected in your body's metabolism as fat becomes muscle. Muscle burns more calories than fat; exercise is the only way to change your metabolism so that your body converts fewer calories to fat.

In addition to aerobic exercises, weight-bearing exercise is important for developing muscle mass, particularly for women, in order to avoid osteoporosis. Flexibility and balance are often overlooked but are essential in avoiding falls that lead to fractures. Stretching, yoga and Pilates exercises are excellent activities for developing balance and flexibility.

The subject of diet has been well-covered and resources are easily available. The most important advice to keep in mind is the reduction of fats and expansion of servings of vegetables and fruits. Again, a good rule of thumb is to consume seven servings of fruits and/or vegetables a day. A serving constitutes a half cup of cooked fruit or vegetables or a full cup of raw. It is also critical that there is variety in the different types of fruits and vegetables

consumed. A combination of healthy eating and exercise will reduce the likelihood of so many related illnesses in old age, it pays to introduce the concept into your life at any age and in whatever way possible.

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### 5. Maintaining Memory

Scientists have given us the good news that they have demonstrated that though brain activity typically slows with age, large numbers of nerve cells are not lost. With stimulation, at any age new nerve cells and the connections between them can form to improve brain function.

**To maintain cognitive vitality we know that life-long learning which promotes intellectual stimulation is critical.** This means participating in problem-solving activities; it could mean planning a trip or contributing to a community organization or charity. Sleep is an important element of mental fitness; especially the REM type of sleep. There are sleep clinics available at many hospitals to help diagnosis sleep disturbances. (You should be aware that alcohol is not an aid to sleep but actually disrupts sleep.) Emotional stability has an effect on memory, as well. Chronic stress can affect brain function, as does depression, and it is important to seek professional help to treat these conditions.

We know that those individuals who view aging as a positive experience live on average 7.5 years longer than their peers who with negative viewpoints. Older people with a negative view of aging show higher levels of stress, which has a highly negative impact on health.

**In short, people who :**

- **engage in healthy behaviors such as maintaining friendships and other social relations,**
- **maintain their effectiveness in life organization and planning**
- **maintain physical fitness through healthy eating, moderate exercise and adequate sleep**
- **are regularly involved in intellectually stimulating activities**
- **and cultivate a positive outlook on life and living**

**enjoy a greater level of physical and emotional well-being, and are more likely to live a longer and healthier life.**