

AWESOME

Aging

101

Simple Tips For Living Well at
50, 60, 70 and Beyond

RENEE FEATHERSTONE

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First published by Awesome Aging Press 2022

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First edition

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*This book is dedicated to my 93-year-old mother who is still exuding
unconditional love and excitement.*

Mom, thanks for keeping me laughing, even when it isn't funny.

Hi, I'm Renee Featherstone!

I'm an Empowerment Coach and I specialize in helping women over 50 reclaim their inner power and get their sparkle back.

Let me share my pro-aging secrets to help improve your life from the inside out.

"You belong here. Welcome."

RENEE

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Preface

You never really know how you're going to respond to aging until you're up close and personal to it. As I reflect on my birthdays that have passed and my feelings about them, it occurred to me that 50 may have been my most challenging of them all.

I kept thinking, *"Damn, I'm 50! What have I accomplished?"*

The only thing I could take partial credit for was co-parenting an amazing young woman, and there was no doubt I had screwed up that job more than once. But by the grace of God my daughter evolved into the extraordinary woman she is today, despite my shortcomings.

I can truthfully say, in the years following, I continued feeling like I hadn't accomplished enough in life for my age. I would find myself being consoled when I would hear, "Wow, you look great for your age." Or, "I can't believe you're that age." That worked for a while until I started identifying a barrage of new wrinkles and sagging skin on my jawline and all over my body.

I remember looking at my back and butt in a dressing room mirror one day and I had to do a double take at what was reflecting back at me. I thought to myself, "Whose butt is that? That's not my butt! And what is with that skin that's hanging off my back?" I could no longer wear that backless top unless I was willing to embrace the new rolls that had

popped up. I no longer could rely on the thought that at least I “look good for my age.”

That’s when I had to go within and think about what I liked about myself whether I looked good for my age or not. Whether I had a menopausal mid-section, back rolls, cellulite, sagging jowls, flapping arms, fleeting memory, or any of the other crap that was here to remind me that I was no longer a 30, 40 or even 50-something year old woman. Yet there was nothing I could do about the fact that every minute, every hour, and every day I am getting older.

In hindsight, it was actually a bit crazy that I was starting to trip on aging. I had forgotten that I used to have heated discussions about how sad it was that we in America banished our seniors, whereas in other countries, seniors are revered for their wisdom, experience, and knowledge. I felt that we should respect and honor our aging population and here I was feeling some disgust about my own aging body.

Wayne Dyer, one of my mentors, became known for his quote, “*When you change the way you look at things the things you look at change.*” I proved that saying to be true from both a negative and a positive perspective. When I looked at aging from a negative viewpoint, I immediately began fearing the effects of aging. When I shifted it to a positive outlook, I began to love and honor this process of aging. I began to see, feel, and embrace my power, my knowledge, and my beauty.

I firmly believe that what we put our attention on grows. When my focus was on my growing wrinkles and sagging body, not only did I see more wrinkles, I felt more fear, worry and disgust. When I changed the way I viewed myself and the natural and beautiful process that was taking place in my being, I felt unconditional love for myself and others.

I became happier, healthier, stronger, and more powerful.

Don't allow the word 'old' or 'older' to affect you in a negative way. As George Burns said, "*You can't help getting older, but you don't have to get old.*" I now rejoice in this stage of my life. Yes, you are getting older. We are all getting older each day, and if we are so blessed we will continue to age. But you don't ever have to be old. That's a choice you get to make based on the lifestyle choices you make.

In this book are lessons I've learned throughout my life that have helped me look and feel my most awesome self. Sure, I have my challenging days. But by incorporating these lifestyle choices I share in the following pages, I am happy to say I have and continue to age with optimal health, grace, and vitality. And so can you.

By focusing on adding one, a few or all of these lessons into your own life, you will begin to live in the way I call, *Awesome Aging*.

Acknowledgement

Big thanks to my daughter, Chuva Featherstone, for always inspiring me to do and be more and for helping me to remember that I did something right. Chuv, you are my motivation to *Age Awesomely*. And thanks for my grand kids who keep me motivated to hang on to my energy and ability to get on the floor for playtime. Big love to my sister, Brigitte Street. Thank you for being my ride or die, and always supporting me. Naja Hayward, I am so grateful that we ran into each other at Cherie's party. You have been a Godsend. You promised and you delivered. I am so grateful for your support, encouragement, knowledge, and professionalism. And to Daryl Taylor, thank you for being my best friend for 20 years, and for contributing to my *Awesome Aging* journey in so many ways.

WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING...

“Renee has taught me things about life and relationships that have helped change my life.”

“Renee always had the words that could lift me up. She could pull me from the deepest valley.”

“Renee has talked me off of the ledge numerous times.”

“I was insecure and self-loathing and Renee taught me how to move beyond that. I’m a totally different person now.”

**Are you ready to create a new relationship with yourself?
It’s time to be the BEST you can be for yourself.**

To learn how to work with Renee visit:

www.reneefatherstone.com/work-with-me

Introduction

“You can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get old.”

~ George Burns

The fact that you’re reading this book tells me you are feeling some kind of way about aging.

There is something extraordinary about aging. I know for many it’s thought of as a dreaded disease; this thing that haunts you until the end of your life. Carrying that position on aging - that position of dread - can accelerate your journey to the end of your life.

I know what it feels like to wake up one morning to find that so much about yourself has changed. Whether it’s that you can’t remember why you walked into the room, a section of your hair is now completely white, leaning forward makes your décolleté fold like an accordion, or that you now know firsthand what menopausal bloat looks and feels like.

If you are tortured by the thought of aging, I advise you to put this book down now and ask yourself, “What am I afraid of? Am I worried about not being wanted, admired, attractive, loved, significant, seen, or successful?” Are you embarrassed to truthfully acknowledge your age? Keep in mind that though loss of collagen may wrinkle your skin, the loss of optimism will wrinkle your soul. Wrinkles are left over impressions of your experiences. Treasure them. Name them. That deep laugh line on the left side of your mouth can be the mark left there by that person who has always given you something to laugh about. That deep wrinkle in the center of your forehead may be your WTF! impression. You can learn to laugh at that one too. The puffiness under my left eye is my prize for surviving a traumatic experience that had me crying daily for close to a year. It reminds me to celebrate that I made it.

You’re here to be a testament to the power of choice. You can choose to let it take you out or resurge and move forward to live your best life.

As you brainstorm, I encourage you to write your thoughts down so that as your mindset changes and you find your freedom you can look back on your current beliefs and laugh.

Just to be clear, that moment in space and time in which everyone finds you the most beautiful, the smartest, the most talented, or capable *will never happen*. So, drop the perfectionism, and enjoy your evolution process! You are being birthed into a renewed life of freedom. Likened to the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, each step is important and required. Every time you fall, you’ll rise to become bigger and better.

In a realistic world, wrinkles and signs of aging on someone’s body

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would be a testament or a sign of the life they've been blessed to live. Please don't be confused and assume I'm saying we shouldn't care about our appearance. I'm saying we shouldn't judge ourselves or others based on our markers of aging. Although I have stopped judging my physical signs of aging, I still care about how I look. I still moisturize my skin, color my hair, and I do not dress "age appropriate." I am choosing to be me in a way that supports who I am. And you should do the same. I am not trying to erase my age, but wear it in a way that is comfortable for me. If you choose to wear your age with a little Botox, fillers, tummy tuck, breast augmentation, or booty lift, go for it. As long as it's from a mindset of love for yourself and not from a feeling of hate or loathing.

At this stage in our lives, our beauty regime encompasses all that we do to live a healthy lifestyle. In addition to moisturizer and sunscreen, now is an excellent time to consider adding meditation, making sure you get proper sleep, incorporate daily exercise, and eat good, healthy food. And just as important is being conscious of who you socialize with. All of these things play an important role in the whole package called You. That's where ***Awesome Aging 101*** comes in. It's the primer to putting your Freedom Package together.

When you feel great you exude a certain energy that translates as beauty, although it has little to do with your physical appearance. That's your X-Factor. It's the thing that makes you uniquely you. We all have one innate desire, that is to feel and know love. Your X-Factor is the quality you possess that makes you irresistible. Whether you are 50, 60, 70, 80, or 90 and above, it's time to take the lampshade off your Light. Now is your time! If not now, when? I know you've had some wonderful times, but now can be even better.

"You can't start the next chapter of your life if you keep re-reading

the last one.”

~ Unknown author.

One of the biggest keys to Awesome Aging is self acceptance. Accept where you are now. Not where you will be when you're 20 pounds lighter, or when you are in a wonderful relationship, or when you have more money for retirement. Where you are right now is gold.

Accept where you are now, and then map out where you want to go. And if you use GPS, aka **G**od **P**ositioning **S**ystem, you'll be sure to get there.

Mindset

“I believe the second half of one’s life is meant to be better than the first half. The first half is learning how to do it. And the second half is enjoying it.”

~ Frances Lear

Your mindset is everything. Your mindset is formed by the beliefs that influence how you make sense of yourself and everything around you. It dictates how you think, feel, and behave in any given situation. These beliefs are formed based on your past or current experiences, and sometimes based on what you’ve heard about the experience. For example, your mindset about Disneyland could be based on your personal experience of Disneyland. Your mindset could also be influenced by what you’ve heard about it. If you’ve never been to Disneyland and heard it’s the happiest place on earth, your desire to experience it is out of this world. And if you’ve been there and had the time of your life, your mindset about it is excellent. On the other hand, if you’ve been to Disneyland and you found it to be too expensive, too loud, too crowded, and too far you will have

formed a poor mindset about it and probably choose never to return. In fact, you will probably influence the mindset of others by sharing your experience of it.

While these beliefs can be helpful for decision making and managing expectations, they can also be destructive and lead to stifling judgment and feelings of inadequacy and restrictive behavior. It is common to hold onto beliefs that were once helpful in life but have since become limiting beliefs. For example, it might have kept you safe to believe that others cannot be trusted if you were once betrayed. But this belief may have also lead to interpersonal issues later in life. If your mindset about life is “life is hard, and then you die,” you would be holding onto thinking that offers you no support in creating a good life for yourself.

There is a powerful phenomenon in medicine known as the placebo effect, which holds that if someone believes they are going to derive benefits from taking a particular medication, they often do. In fact, regardless of the disease or condition, about 30-40% of people can have significant improvement in their symptoms when taking a placebo (sugar) pill if they believe that the pill is going to be helpful.

What’s really crazy is how your mindset can have a placebo effect on your life experience.

In a 2013 Ted Talk presented by health psychologist, Kelly McGonigal, she references a study done the year prior explaining that participants who experienced high levels of stress had an increased risk of death, but only if they believed stress was detrimental. Those who experienced high stress levels but did not see it as harmful were no more likely to die.

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There is also something called the “nocebo-effect,” which is when a psychological response based on a person’s expectations can trigger side effects. When a physician emphasizes the potential side effects of a medicine, and the patient believes they will develop those symptoms, even if given a sugar pill, these patients can develop the adverse side effects, just based on what their mind expects.

Mindset matters, so it is very important to pay attention to your belief systems - where they come from, how valid they are, and how they impact your quality of life. It’s no wonder that if most of what you’ve seen and heard about getting older includes illness, immobility, loneliness, and lack, then you expect to experience these symptoms.

The good news is that your mindset is changeable and if you are willing, you can defeat your distorted thoughts about aging, and have significantly more happiness and vibrancy as you age.

The power of our perception is fundamental in how we create our reality. We see what we expect to see. Our limitations are mostly self-imposed. It can be as simple as a new piece of information that is more relevant than a previous piece. Look at examples from the past 20 years. Smoking, seat belts and drunk driving.

Embrace your imperfections. If you’re trying to hide from your weaknesses, you’ll never overcome them. Embrace your imperfections, they’re what makes you - you.

It’s not a competition between you and the rest of the world. It’s a competition between the person you are today and the person you were yesterday.

Halloween is one of my least favorite days to celebrate. My mindset about Halloween has always been that it's a waste of time and money, but since my partner and I were invited to a Halloween party by dear friends, I decided to put together a costume and go.

Despite my feelings about Halloween, these were friends I care about and enjoy spending time with. Still, I decided not to spend any extra time or money prepping what I would wear. I planned to pull my costume together with items I already owned and wanted to be comfortable in what I wore. This would be an opportunity to stretch outside of my comfort zone and socialize with new people.

I already owned an old afro wig and gathered together items I found in my closet from costume parties I'd attended almost 20 years before: a mini-skirt, hippie shirt, hoop earrings and platform boots. That seemed like a simple solution until I learned that the mini-skirt was too mini for this 69 year old body, the hoop earrings were rusted and the platform boots were M.I.A. Now it was back to the Halloween costume drawing board.

The morning of the party I googled "female costume with afro wig." The costume that caught my eye was "Domino" from the movie *Deadpool 2*. I knew nothing about Domino or the movie, but I liked what I saw. I owned Domino-style fitted pants, a sexy top and knee-high boots and I still had my afro wig. To complete the look, I bought two play guns for \$8.

I ended up really enjoying dressing up and taking on a new persona, stretching outside of my comfort zone, and meeting our friend's friends. At some point in the evening an announcement was made that there would be a contest for presenting the best costume's character and the

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hosts made it clear that everyone was to participate. Because I had changed my mindset about Halloween and decided to have fun doing something that I would not have normally chosen to do, I went all in and came up with a spiel for my character, made a dramatic entrance and I *became* Domino. I even fired my foam bullets at the ceiling.

The party participants voted and low and behold, I was awarded first place. It was a blast. But even more than having fun, the biggest win for me was moving out of fear and into ownership and confidence. I saw that day how I had grown more confident over the years. To top it all off my partner ran up to hug me and knocked my wig off. It was hilarious. I felt no embarrassment or fear of judgment. I simply put my wig back on and strutted off the stage with my winnings.

The biggest prize that evening was my newly formed confidence. I had a history of getting overly nervous when speaking to a group I didn't know, especially in an intimate setting like this one. In fact, I'd been known to actually freeze up. But that Halloween I saw how I shifted from a mindset that said I get nervous every time I speak to people I don't know to feeling more confident when I interact with strangers. That happened as a result of the time and thought I invested in changing my mindset.

I share this story to help you see how a simple shift in our beliefs can change an entire experience.

I encourage you to open your mind to new experiences and beliefs even if it's only for a few hours to start.

Here are a few ways to change your perspective of things:

Pay Attention to what you're thinking and speaking.

If every time you feel an ache you attribute it to your age, it's likely that you're enforcing a debilitating image of aging. Instead of blaming the ache or discomfort on your age, think about it as a result of not stretching. Think about how you can remedy it. Aging should not get the blame for everything. In fact, stop using your age as an excuse for your deficiencies. Start looking for a solution rather than an excuse.

Cultivate self-acceptance - Self acceptance helps you become more confident and consequently helps you trust yourself more. Start loving yourself unconditionally. You love others unconditionally, and in some cases you still love them no matter what they have done. You have earned the right to love and respect yourself even in your imperfect state. No one is perfect. You are allowed to make mistakes.

Stop seeing everything as black and white. Life is not an all-or-nothing game. There's plenty of room for improvement, nothing can be done perfectly. Just because you or somebody else notices that there's room to improve something doesn't mean you failed. On the contrary! It means that you should work harder to achieve what it is that you want to achieve, which is the very basis of a growth mindset. If it feels black or white, try to add a little color to it.

Stop judging or labeling your life as hard. Start looking at the blessings that came with the hardship and the fact that you survived it. Now you can be an inspiration rather than a downer.

Stop taking yourself too seriously. Loosen up a bit. Be goofy. Don't be afraid to make mistakes in front of other people. The reason for that anxiety is simple: the fear of looking silly or stupid in front of others.

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What if you make a fool of yourself in front of some people? So what?! Did it make the world any worse? Of course not. It's no big deal.

The good thing about mindset is that it can always be reset. It becomes a matter of choice. We can choose who and what we will allow to get us upset or irritated. I find that when I determine my mindset when I start my day, I almost guarantee myself that I'll have a good day. I decided to stop allowing things outside of myself to disturb me. It started with something as simple as a driver cutting me off and almost causing an accident. In the past, I would have gotten so upset. My heart would start racing, my blood pressure would rise, and my attitude would get really nasty. This feeling could continue for more than an hour and follow me into my next encounter that had nothing to do with this one. You know what I'm talking about. You've been there.

Since I've learned to live my best life, I don't have time to allow that kind of senseless agitation to hang out in my consciousness and you shouldn't either. Start your day by pre-setting your mindset. Decide to live in your Light. Take the lampshade off your light as you get your day going.

Remember that you are an Awesome Aging Queen. You've earned your crown. Stand on your pedestal and don't let anyone or anything knock you off. Of course, crazy things may happen throughout your day. This is where you have the choice to stand in your power or step down to their place of misery and pain.

In my work helping patients with their hearing, I encounter grumpy people who are unhappy with their lives and project that unhappiness onto the people around them. I remember getting defensive, on guard, impatient, and reaching for the sage spray to clear the energy. When

they would leave, I'd often feel down, frustrated and sometimes angry. In the meantime they had gone about their day, possibly being nasty to someone else, while I'm still stewing over their bad attitude. I was allowing them to break my day.

You see, when you don't have your mindset together, anyone can come in and hand you theirs. Once I had stepped into my Awesome Aging way of living, it was easy to recognize that that person is very challenged and unhappy in their own life.

I learned to bless them and move on with my day.

SUGGESTION:

What are the things you say about yourself that enforce a negative belief? For example: "I never win anything." "I'm getting so old." "My time is over." Think about it. Is that how you want your life experience to be? Do you even believe that statement is true? Do you have any proof that you can't have a different outcome? If you can find one crack in your belief, it's not true. Now, create a different statement that opens the door for a better scenario. Visualize the experience in a positive way and what it would feel like to have a positive outcome.

Own Your Y.O.U. Zone

“No one can stop you from shining. No one can keep you from radiating. No circumstance, no situation, no person, place, or thing can make you contract. That’s all in your awareness.”

~ Michael Bernard Beckwith

If you’re interested in living a long, healthy life, then you will appreciate learning about the Blue Zones. The Blue Zones are regions throughout the world where the people in these regions live healthier, longer than average lives. Author, Dan Buettner in partnership with National Geographic traveled the world researching and documenting the lifestyle choices these subjects have made that contribute to their longevity. They found that many people in those regions live fulfilled lives well into their 90’s and past the century mark often attributed to the residents’ lifestyle choices: eating plant-based diets, regular exercise, and getting adequate sleep.

Whether your desire is to live longer or to simply enjoy and love your time here as you age, it’s not necessary to move to one of these locations

to experience Awesome Aging. I recommend creating a Y.O.U. ZONE for yourself. Your Own Utopia Zone. Whether you live to 100 and beyond or only 6 more weeks, you can enjoy your life fully.

The first step in creating your Y.O.U. ZONE is to take the time to uncover what makes you feel good, what contributes to your good health, triggers unconditional happiness and can potentially add years to your life.

What can you do to recharge your spirit and find a little peace? Of course, a lovely getaway can always do the trick, but I'm talking about something very simple and free. Something as simple as just sitting in the sun or listening to your favorite song can be the juice that supercharges your inner sanctum and creates a space in your being that you can re-visit whenever you need a supercharge.

Taking time away and being alone can do wonders for your mood and outlook as well as help you re-discover the meaning of true happiness. Here are some things you can do to shift to another zone in minutes if not seconds.

Laughter

When you laugh, you release happy hormones called oxytocin and endorphins. These are the hormones that uplift us as we share experiences with others. Even just making yourself smile will put you in a better place.

Favorite Hobbies

Use this time to do more of the things that make you happy such as

exercise or simple relaxation. Meditation, yoga, writing, crafting, a hot bath, a nap and reading are all activities that can become elements of your Y.O.U. Zone.

Dancing

One of my favorite activities is dancing. I get an indescribable joy when I'm dancing. It's also good for my health and supports my longevity. And to be clear, I am not a trained dancer and possess no special dance skills. It just makes me feel good. You may find that when you do something you really love, your passion will supersede your skill. When you are in your Y.O.U. Zone you dance like no one's watching, sing like no one is listening, and you lose all your inhibitions. That's freedom!

Aroma Therapy

Clementine & vanilla bean have each been scientifically proven to have the most uplifting scents. Find a scent that works best to give your mood and spirits a welcome boost.

Food

Take time to engage and savor your food. Chew it slowly and notice how the taste and consistency changes. Food can be not only nourishing, it can be pleasurable!

SUGGESTION:

Criteria For Creating Your Y.O.U. Zone:

1. It makes you feel good

2. It contributes to your good health
3. It supports your longevity
4. It's easy to access

Make a list of the things you enjoy doing alone. Knitting, singing, walking, dancing, cycling, writing, journaling, painting. Do that often. Where is your happy place? Your home, backyard, beach, park, movie theater, school, work, bed, etc. What color makes you feel good? Tiffany Blue/aqua is my go to color and I feel good every time I see it. I just noticed I have eyeglass frames with aqua on them and these glasses make me happy.

- Listen to happy music
- 30 second dance party
- 60 second meditation
- Read your gratitude journal
- Remind yourself of the last thing you laughed about
- Get creative
- Spend time in nature
- Look through old photos

Identify Your Sheros

“There’s nothing you can’t do.”

~ Tao Porchon-Lynch

One of the reasons aging has a bad rap is because we often associate aging with illness, lack of mobility, and death. Now, dementia has been added to that list of the dreaded effects of aging.

When you think of getting older, what comes to mind? Perhaps alienation, forgetfulness, wrinkles, sagging skin, immobility and thinning hair to name a few. And yet there are so many extraordinary women who are accomplishing big things at 70, 80, 90 and beyond.

When you think of these ages, do you think of sex? Come on, take that incredulous look off of your face. Do you think of completing a marathon, writing a book, weight-lifting, long-distance swimming or teaching judo & self-defense?

Unfortunately, out of sight can be out of mind. We generally think more about what is right in front of our eyes than we consider what could be. We often see and hear more about people becoming ill and dying in painful and unpleasant ways than uplifting stories of people aging beautifully. Therefore, our vision of aging is often sad and bleak rather than inspiring and hopeful.

What we need to do is look to the Sheros in our lives. We all have at least one - A woman of age who inspires us to be a better us. Mine is my mother, Dorothy Armalin. 'Dot', as she's been called for most of my life, is 93 at the writing of this book. She is one of the most beautiful women I've ever known, inside and out. Even with a bit of dementia, she is one of the happiest and most loving beings I know. The patients and staff at her nursing home love her. Put on a little Zydeco music and you can't keep my mom still. That's where my love of dance comes from.

Who is your Shero? What inspires you about her? Thanks to the internet, we can now get to know many remarkable aging women who are actively living their best lives and not allowing a little thing like age to interfere with their goals and visions. This is a great way to change your vision of aging to something to aspire to and celebrate.

The following are a few glimpses into the vibrant lives of some of my SHEROS. Feel free to adopt them for yourself.

Ida Keeling

Although Ida Keeling had been active most of her life, she didn't take up organized running until she was 67 when her daughter tricked her into following along in a 5K event in Harlem. Ida had been severely

IDENTIFY YOUR SHEROS

depressed after losing her husband to a heart attack and later her two sons to gun violence. Ida's daughter shared that she enjoyed the run so much that "she felt like she was running up and out of a hole, like someone had watered a plant that had not been watered in a long time."

Ida kept running for several years. In 2008, at age 92, Ida set her first world record at the World Athletic Veterans' Association in France. She continued to set records in the 95-99 and 100-104 age categories. She even fractured her femur in 2017 and, after surgery, rehab and recovery, Ida came back to set another 60-meter record in 2018, at age 102. Ida Keeling died in 2021 at the age of 106.

Audrey Crabtree

In 1932, Audrey Crabtree sustained an injury that caused her to leave high school just a credit shy of graduation. Taking care of her sick grandmother and later getting married kept Audrey from returning to school. Even though she went on to own a successful business and to have a large family, Ida's one big regret was never graduating. But at age 99 - 80 years later - Audrey was awarded an honorary diploma. Ida's story goes to show that we are never too old to achieve something meaningful in your life.

Melissa Freeman

Dr. Melissa Freeman is still seeing patients in her private clinic at age 96. Working with two other physicians, she developed the use of methadone to treat heroin addiction. She was one of the first doctors to treat women addicts using methadone maintenance. She set up her own internal medicine practice in Harlem in 1981 and as of 2022, has no retirement plans.

Marla Gibbs

In 2020 I had the honor of being in the music video of Ms. Marla Gibbs for her album titled “It’s Never Too Late.” You may know Ms. Gibbs from the roles she became famous for in “The Jeffersons” and “227.” But what you may not know is she is also a singer, comedian, writer, producer, and entrepreneur. At 91, Ms. Gibbs’ career spans over 5 decades. In addition to a lucrative acting career, Marla owned an iconic Jazz Club, Marla’s Memory Lane in Los Angeles in the 80’s and 90’s as well as Crossroads Arts Academy and Theatre in the Leimert Park district. At 90, Marla received her well-earned star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Marla is not slowing up. Her recent projects include Grey’s Anatomy, Days of Our Lives, and a film with Snoop Dogg.

Tao Porchon-Lynch

Tao Porchon-Lynch - lifelong yoga enthusiast - fell and broke her hip when she was 87 and had to have hip replacement surgery. When Tao’s doctor told her she needed to slow down, she did just the opposite. A month after surgery, Tao began ballroom dance lessons and by the time she turned 93 was winning dancing competitions while still teaching yoga classes during the week. Tao sent her doctor a photo of herself lifting herself off of the ground with her legs crossed and balancing on both hands. She attached a note saying, “I just wanted to show you that there’s nothing you can’t do.”

Ernestine Shepherd

Of course, I couldn’t leave out Ernestine Shepherd. “Miss Ernie” as she is known in the world of competitive bodybuilding, began training at the tender age of 71. (So I still have time.) At her current age of 86,

IDENTIFY YOUR SHEROS

Miss Ernie no longer competes, but leads exercise classes for seniors and works as a personal trainer.

How can you not be inspired by these women? In the words of Tao Porchon-Lynch, “There is nothing you can’t do.” Don’t let anything stop you from being who you want to be. Let’s change the face of aging, and I don’t mean the wrinkles. You can be an inspiration for many. Let’s paint a new picture of older women. Let these Sheros be the norm.

SUGGESTION:

Identify your Shero’s. Review their stories and determine what inspires you about them and can help motivate you to find your groove on your own Awesome Aging path. Feel free to adopt one of the Sheroes above, or model the life of someone you know and admire personally.

Have More Sex

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing.”

~ George Bernard Shaw

If you think you shouldn’t be “doing it” that much as you get older, it’s time to rethink that thought. The fact is, you can and should be having more sex. And to motivate you, I’m going to give you some good and healthy reasons to get back in bed - or wherever you prefer it - immediately.

Generally speaking, society has a limited view of sex over 50, especially for women. We tend to keep it quiet. We don’t want our grown kids to know we’re having sex. We rarely talk about it with our girlfriends. And unfortunately, sometimes we hardly discuss it with our partner.

There seems to be a belief that as you get older the desire wanes and there is no longer a need for it. Whoa! Not true. Actually, the opposite is true. As you get older, sex is so much more enjoyable, especially if

you have changed your mindset to freedom without judgment. At the very least you know what you don't want, and it's even better if you know what you do want.

Sex can be thought of as taboo for a few reasons. Oftentimes we don't talk about sex because of the stigma that has been placed on it. For some reason we're trying to keep our sexual desire a secret so no one will judge us. Can you imagine denying yourself pleasure because that's what is accepted? This happens far too often.

There are several reasons women slow down their interest in sex as they age. As our hormones decline, so can our libido. Many women experience vaginal dryness and thinning of their vaginal walls, which results in painful intercourse. We also suffer from emotional and psychological concerns about sexual intimacy. Unfortunately, many women have experienced traumatic sexual violations, which understandably can result in physical and emotional challenges.

Your satisfaction is not your partner's sole responsibility. It should certainly be their desire to please you, but rarely are they mind readers to know just what it is that pleases you. Far too often we as women don't even know ourselves what we need to feel pleased. When you begin to make it a religious experience and explore your own body and allow your partner to explore with you, you will soon learn what you like and don't like. Do what you have to do to be satisfied. That's where discovery and foreplay come in. Enjoying sex begins with knowing yourself.

Throughout time, girls have generally been taught that it is our job to please a man. Consequently, far too many women today have never experienced an orgasm with their partner. That's easy to understand

if your objective of sex is to please the other person. If your partner was a selfish man, you may not have had the forum to explore your possibilities.

Another obstacle that can slow your sexual roll is menopause. Vaginal dryness and loss of elasticity can definitely have you re-thinking wanting to play with your partner. There are many options on the market today that can help with menopausal symptoms. I'm happy to say that bio-identical hormones saved my sex-life. I have said if I had to choose between paying my light bill or getting my hormones, I'll have to buy some candles.

Study after study has shown the many benefits of sex as you age. Here are some that accompany sexual activity as we age:

Sex Keeps You Healthy

Sex increases testosterone in both men and women. For women, testosterone prevents chronic cystitis, eventual prolapse, and incontinence.

Sex is Exercise

The older we get, the more important it is for us to stay active. But not everybody likes to hit the gym or do yoga three times a week. Sex is an enjoyable way to work up a sweat and get your heart pumping and body moving.

Sex Enhances Self-Esteem

We all want to feel desirable. Having a partner who wants to be with you in such an intimate way is an esteem boost at any age. And,

according to studies, feelings of self-worth are the basis of psychological health. Sexual behavior has been associated with fewer and less frequent symptoms of depression, both in women and in men.

Sex Makes You Feel Great

And not just in the obvious way. There is also an emotional and spiritual benefit. Certain hormones like dopamine and oxytocin are released during sex and orgasm, leading to an overall improvement in our daily mood, attitude, and life outlook. These hormones make us feel fantastic and can promote feelings of positive attachment to our partners.

Many of us that enjoy good orgasms today, experienced it first from our self-pleasure and have had the courage to insist on them with a partner. I hope you are having outrageous orgasms.

If you're not, I share the following to encourage you:

SUGGESTION:

Take some time to think about your first sexual encounters and make a list of those that stand out in your mind. Now take a look at your current state of sexual expression. If you're not currently sexually active, look at your last encounters and recall what's worth repeating and why. If you are not having great orgasms, here's the place to devise a plan to turn that experience around. You should be having the best orgasms of your life now. You don't have to worry about getting pregnant. You no longer need to be concerned about what others think of you.

It's your time to be free and uninhibited.

6

Sleep

“Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together.”

~ Thomas Dekker

I must admit that managing my sleep habits is the most challenging part of my Awesome Aging plan. I’m hoping this information will help you as much as I need it to help me.

What is your sleep challenge? Do you have trouble falling asleep? Staying asleep? Night sweats? My problem is that I have a habit of staying up late to accomplish the things I don’t have time to do during the day. And then I have to get up early to do all the things I didn’t get done the day before. I know I’m not the only one who is spread a little too thin.

You would think with all the data and documentation that I read about the benefits of sleep, that I would be about it. The info is finally starting to have some effect on me and getting me to make a conscious effort to clock in more sleep time. If you are a night owl like me and burning the

SLEEP

candle at both ends, I hope the information in this chapter will inspire you to commit to a healthy sleep regimen.

This is truly one of the keys to Awesome Aging.

The reason this information really grabbed my attention is because both of my parents have battled dementia. After learning that one of the toxins being cleared from our brain during sleep is thought to be responsible for preventing Alzheimer's disease, I thought, I'm all in.

Can you imagine the long-term benefit if proper sleep can rid your brain of one of the toxins that invites Alzheimer's into your brain? According to a study out of the University of Rochester Medical Center, "Sleep is critical to the function of the brain's waste removal system... These findings also add to the increasingly clear evidence that quality of sleep or sleep deprivation can predict the onset of Alzheimer's and dementia." You might want to read that statement again.

A University of California, Los Angeles research team found that one night of partial sleep deprivation activates genes related to biological aging in older adults. They observed 29 older adults between ages 61 and 86 and had them spend four nights in a sleep laboratory. Following two uninterrupted nights of sleep, participants were not allowed to sleep between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. and later awakened at 7 a.m. Researchers monitored their sleep and drew blood daily.

After a night partially deprived of sleep, participants' blood showed signs of deterioration in the cell's growth and division cycle. The researchers reported that these findings "causally link sleep deprivation to the molecular processes associated with biological aging," suggesting that insufficient sleep may increase the risk of chronic disease by "activating

the molecular pathways that drive biological aging.”

They suggest that sleep impairment is both “a consequence and cause of the progression of Alzheimer’s disease; one that is modifiable, offering preventative and therapeutic treatment potential.” *Dementia-related brain changes may be linked to regularly sleeping less than six hours per night and may begin in middle age.* So can you see why this got my attention. I hope it has your attention too. Dementia is increasing every year and is becoming the most dreaded disease. In case you’re interested in reading this article, here’s the link to it.

<https://www.prb.org/resources/new-evidence-on-sleeps-role-in-aging-and-chronic-disease>

Now that you are aware of some of the bad things that lack of sleep can contribute to, let’s look at some of the advantages of a proper night’s sleep.

5 Sleep Benefits for Seniors

1. A good night’s sleep boosts your mood.

Sleep and mental health are closely related. In many ways, both impact each other. Not getting enough sleep can lead to mental health issues like depression and anxiety, while mental health conditions can, in turn, lower your sleep quality. A good night’s sleep is crucial for your mental well-being.

2. Quality sleep lowers your risk of diseases.

Lack of sleep increases your risk of serious health conditions like high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Studies show that insufficient sleep puts added stress on the body, leading to inflammation and a weakened immune system. During sleep, our bodies undergo restorative functions like muscle growth, protein synthesis and tissue repair – all of which are needed to keep your immune system

strong.

3. Restful sleep maintains your weight and supports metabolism.

Getting enough sleep is key to weight maintenance and keeping your metabolism moving at a healthy rate. Anytime the word “weight” enters into the picture, it usually grabs our attention. Sufficient sleep also regulates ghrelin, a hormone that stimulates your appetite. If you’re sleep deprived, your metabolism slows down which can lead to weight gain.

4. Good sleep improves concentration and memory.

A good night’s rest keeps your brain healthy and your memory sharp. It’s well known that sleep deprivation has a negative impact on your attention span and short-term memory. Lack of sleep also weakens your decision-making ability and your long-term memory as well. Over time, too little sleep can even contribute to cognitive decline, memory loss and increase your risk for developing dementia.

5. Bedtime is when your brain clears harmful toxins.

These are the toxins I was mentioning earlier. Contrary to popular belief, our brains don’t slow down while we’re sleeping. Scientists are learning more about the glymphatic system, which serves as a waste disposal system in our bodies and clears harmful toxins and debris from our brains. The glymphatic system is almost 10 times more active during sleep than it is during wakefulness. Let the toxins be gone.

SUGGESTION:

Here are a few suggestions that can aid you in getting your 7 to 8 hours in.

- **Make your bedroom inviting for sleep.** That means taking all electronic screens out. Yes, that includes your cell phone. Blue light from your TV, computer, tablet, and cell phone blocks melatonin,

the hormone that makes you sleepy.

- **Consistency is valuable.** Try to go to bed and get up at the same time. This will help set your circadian rhythm for a good night's rest.
- **Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol near bedtime.** All can affect your sleep quality. In addition, alcohol is known to increase the symptoms of sleep apnea, snoring, and disrupted sleep patterns.
- **Relax and clear your mind before bed.** A hot bath, relaxing music, meditation, deep breathing, and visualization are all helpful tools that can be added to your sleep prep.

You Are What You Eat

“Be good to yourself. If you don’t take care of your body, where will you live?”

~ Kobi Yamada

This is the chapter that many of us don’t like to discuss. In fact, if I was the reader of this book and not the author, I may have skipped reading this chapter myself because sometimes I just don’t want to be reminded of what I know I should be doing when I’m not doing it.

But because I love you (and I love myself) and want you to experience the full effects of Awesome Aging, let’s talk about one of the most important parts of being our healthiest selves. What we eat.

There is so much chatter out there about what’s the best way to eat. There’s Keto, Dash, Mediterranean, pescatarian, flexitarian, vegetarian, and vegan to name a few.

I think the best place to start is with what is going to get you healthy.

The statement, “you are what you eat” has truth in it. The nutrients or lack of nutrients that come from the foods we digest, play a big role in building us up or tearing us down.

If you are dealing with any of the health issues that are so common today: obesity, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, our number one goal is getting you healthy. Once that has been accomplished, then we can begin to look at reshaping your body if that’s your goal.

Yes, it’s lovely to look good on the outside, but it serves little purpose if you are sick on the inside. Unfortunately, sometimes we don’t even know how ill we are internally. I’m sure you know of at least one person who appeared to be healthy and either died suddenly from an unsuspected illness or was diagnosed with a debilitating or life-threatening illness.

Food can be medicine or poison. I believe to a certain extent we all have some form of a food addiction. It’s no surprise given the society we live in. Salt and sugar are added to most foods we eat beginning in childhood. Too much sugar can cause insulin resistance, obesity, and diabetes. Salt can contribute to water retention, which can lead to heart attack and stroke.

I - like so many around the world - am a sugar addict. The amount of information available documenting sugar as an addictive drug is astounding. I won’t get into the specifics but if you’re interested, Google “sugar as a drug.” There is actually a study that concluded that sugar is more addictive than cocaine. With lots of conscious attention to it, my sugar addiction has subsided, but continues to tap me on my shoulder

intermittently.

I had an addiction to See's Candies that caused me to salivate anytime I was near a See's Candies store. Crazy, right? At least three times a week, I would drive five miles to a See's Candies store and buy 5 pieces of candy. It would have been much easier to buy a 1-pound box and save myself the trips. However, I had proven to myself in the past that I did not have the self-control to not eat the entire box in one or two sittings. So I had to monitor myself with just a few pieces at a time. Like with most recovering addicts, it took me getting tired of the adverse effects to stop. When you truly love yourself, you stop doing things that hurt or shorten your lifespan.

What are you eating that is delicious but is hurting your quality of life? Is it sugar that's compromising your propensity to heart disease, your weight or your glucose levels? Is it the fat that's dripping from your pizza or enchiladas? Whatever it is, it is conquerable. Make it your mission to find things you love that support your healthy living.

As you get deeper into your Awesomeness, you will find that it becomes easier to step away from those things that don't serve you. And when you are full of love for yourself, it will become difficult to eat those things that don't benefit you.

STAY HYDRATED

One of the easiest ways to remain youthful is to sip from nature's elixir, and by that I mean drink plenty of water. Simple H2O will prevent dry skin, wrinkles, and ensure your hair, nails, and skin remain soft and supple, in addition to keeping your organs and digestive system running efficiently. Plus, those who sip water or herbal teas regularly flush their

bodies of stressful, age-causing toxins. When you stay hydrated on the inside you're moisturized on the outside.

SUGGESTION:

List two things you eat that are questionable. Make two columns for each. On one side list the benefits you get from eating it. On the other side list the deficits you get from eating it. Once you've evaluated the two, decide on where this food item fits in your life. Will you take it out of your diet or find a limited place for it?

Movement

“If you rest, you rust.”

~ (Old saying)

The wonderful thing about exercise is that it benefits everyone who partakes in it. It doesn't matter if you are underweight, overweight, or anywhere in between, the benefits of body movement are always waiting to serve you. I know at times exercise can sound like a bad word, but in truth, it is one of the most vibrant words in our language. And yet it is clear that not everyone has that view of exercise.

Statistically, 28% of Americans over 50 are inactive beyond the basic movements needed for daily life. The CDC has lots of information about the effects of inactivity. However, I am most struck by the report that more adults with at least one chronic disease were inactive 31% compared with adults with no chronic disease at 19%.

Physical activity reduces the risk of premature death and can delay or

prevent many chronic diseases. Being physically active helps older folks maintain the ability to live independently and reduces the risk of falling and fracturing bones. Active older adults also have a reduced risk of moderate or severe limitations and are less likely to suffer from falls.

As we age, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent or delay many of the health problems that seem to come with age. It also helps your muscles grow stronger so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities without becoming dependent on others.

Whatever movement you are doing now, whether it's walking to and from the refrigerator or running marathons, there is always room to move a little more, unless you are over taxing your body.

One study found that “Exercisers were more satisfied with their life and happier than non-exercisers at all ages.” And the good news is that it takes as little as 30 minutes to gain the amazing benefits of exercise. There are so many ways to support your body's need for movement.

Yoga has become one of the most popular forms of exercise. I was in my 20's when I was initially introduced to yoga. I didn't like it at all. My group exercise came from aerobics and dancing, so yoga felt too slow and I felt embarrassed that I couldn't keep up because of my lack of flexibility.

That's how we often think when we're in our 20's – judged. That's just one aspect of the glory of the age we are now, we don't have to move through life carrying the shackles of judgment.

I have much more respect and appreciation of yoga now, and I'm still

MOVEMENT

not very flexible. I'm still one of the least flexible in the group, but it doesn't matter anymore because now I'm more interested in the value I can get from it, rather than if I look like a klutz, which I do. It just doesn't matter now.

I've come to learn that yoga can be a multi-dimensional exercise. Depending on the type of yoga you do, it can engage your cardio, strengthen your muscles, count as weight training and of course, it can increase your flexibility. With the emphasis on breath work and the power of your thoughts, it can be a moving meditation. Yoga can also improve your balance.

Studies have also linked yoga with a healthier heart rate pattern, less atrial fibrillation, and lower blood pressure. If you are interested in giving yoga a try, or like me, giving it a second try, I recommend starting with a beginner's class or finding one on YouTube. Even yoga once a week for 15 or 20 minutes offers flexibility, mental focus, and relaxation.

I would be remiss if I did not mention a common risk we face as women over 50. Osteoporosis and osteopenia occur in significant numbers in these categories. Women over the age of 50 or postmenopausal women have the greatest risk of developing osteoporosis.

Approximately 1 in 10 women over the age of 60 are affected by osteoporosis worldwide. One in two postmenopausal women will have osteoporosis, and most will suffer a fracture during their lifetime. The disease is responsible for an estimated two million broken bones per year. One in two women over age 50 will break a bone due to osteoporosis. If diagnosed with osteoporosis or osteopenia there are several drugs that can be prescribed. However, research indicates that many have unwanted side effects.

After I was diagnosed with osteoporosis in 2022, I began taking a natural supplement to help increase my bone mass density. A couple of months ago I was introduced to www.osteoststrong.me and learned that their protocol has scientific backing to the claims of providing great benefit to women and men with osteopenia and osteoporosis. I'm looking forward to my next DEXA scan to see the improvement in my bone density. However, in the meantime I am experiencing great benefits in other areas of my body. Osteoststrong has become a part of my Awesome Aging protocol. As a woman over 50, what they offer may be of interest to you.

What can you do today to increase your movement?

SUGGESTION:

- Find creative ways to incorporate exercise into your schedule if time is your excuse. If you watch TV, alternate each commercial break with jumping jacks, push-ups, crunches, dumbbell overhead raises, triceps dips, lunges, squats, and repeat, for a full-body interval workout. Get more out of your commercial breaks.
- Track your steps and keep stretching your goal.
- Park as far from your destination as possible. It will also protect your car from dings in the parking lot.

Conclusion

I hope you gained value from these simple introductory tips to Awesome Aging. I promise that if you start implementing these tools into your regular routine, you will begin celebrating your existence in a very fulfilling way no matter your age.

This is the time when life becomes really exciting. But here's a little warning. You will find that as you begin to experience the benefits of Awesome Aging, you will feel happier and become healthier. At some point you may not even remember what it felt like to be challenged by your aging process.

I encourage you to journal about your feelings of aging after each chapter. In 6 months, take inventory of where you are at that time.

As you begin to:

1. Manage your Mindset
2. Find your Y.O.U. Zone
3. Identify your Shero's
4. Enjoy more Sex
5. Sleep better
6. Eat to Live
7. Keep Moving

You will notice a significant difference in the way you feel now.

Jim Kwik - world leader in speed-reading, memory improvement and brain performance - often says, "Life is the C between B and D." B is birth; D is death; and C are the choices you make between the two.

We have all made some choices in life that we are not proud of. The wonderful thing about choices is that every day, every hour, and every minute, you can make a new choice that can change your life for the better, forever.

If you are ready to choose YOU, then I encourage you to learn how I can help support you on this Awesome Aging journey.

Reach out to me at <https://reneefeatherstone.com/work-with-me>.

Let's have some fun together!

To Aging Awesomely.

Love,

Renee



About the Author

RANDOM FACTS ABOUT RENEE FEATHERSTONE

She is a danceaholic & won the first Los Angeles Soul Train dance contest.

She has been coaching for over 15 years.

She is a doting grandmother of a 2 year old who lives with his parents in Denmark.

She became a Licensed Hearing Provider at 63.

She has had several careers, including personal assistant to Michael Douglas.

She enjoys walking, hiking, bike riding, tai chi, and dancing, of course.

She walked the LA Marathon.

She is a contributing author for 2 bestselling self-help books, “I Choose Me,” by Cynthia James and “Living Proof,” by Lisa Nichols.

Renee is a first-time solo author.

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