Aging Gracefully
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EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Aging Gracefully

Secrets from India on Soaring Spiritually through Your Precious Senior Years on Planet Earth

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder of Hinduism Today

Growing old. Let's talk about it. There is a false concept that stops people from living the long, full life described in the Vedas. Old age is as much a state of mind as of body. Today young people are taught that when you become old and gray, you are in the way. Not a nice thought! It is the older folk, the wiser folk, the experienced elders, who have lived longer and therefore can see further, to whom youth should be listening. But in our present times, young people have become the spokesmen, and they are allowed to learn by their own mistakes. What a perverted way to learn! They should be learning, if they ever become open to it, from the mistakes of their elders, that is if elders are willing to admit them. There is no excuse for ignorance. Yet, looking around, we find it to be all pervasive, like the Hindu God, equally distributed all over the world.

We are not getting old. True, the physical body does change. It has done so from birth, but it has a future. It really does. We live in it like we walk in our shoes. My satguru said, "Live in your body as loosely as your wear your sandals." It is not wise to accept the forebodings that we are headed toward a doomsday, end of the world, end of the physical body, absolute, total oblivion, and that is that; think no more about it.

Aging is an interesting process. Even though we are told that all the cells in the body change and renew themselves every three or four years, aging can be really scary, especially for those who identify themselves as their body. But not for those

of us who know that we are not the body, we only live in it. It is our Earth suit in which to function on this planet. In fact, we don't live in it twenty-four hours a day. At least eight hours, while we are sleeping, we are living in our astral suit, traveling here and there in the Devaloka.

When we correctly look at aged people, we look at minds that have been developed year after year after year. We look at souls that have matured because of their sojourn on Earth. We see them having gone through many birth karmas, prarabdha karmas--those we bring with us to live through--and prevailed. We look upon their situation as wonderful and enlightening, their wisdom as useful and worthy to make part of our lives. After all, if we hear from them, it is in our prarabdha karmas to have had that knowledge passed on to us. Only the ignorant would object. And they usually do.

The mind never gets old, though the brain may. The mind never deteriorates. Consciousness was never born and never dies. The mental body, which works through the astral body and the Earth suit, does not age, does not get weak, as modern people think of aging, as weakness, disability. It becomes stronger and stronger, more mature and more expansive, as do the emotions if they are understood and controlled from stage to stage. Age is not an obstacle; it is a legacy. The most senior among us should have faith in the future, not be led to think that turning fifty or sixty or eighty is some morbid milestone. It's not. Take heart. When I met Satguru Yogaswami, spiritual king of Jaffna, he was seventy-seven, still walking twenty miles a day, still meditating hours a day, and he would go on dynamically for another fifteen years.

Some die young, of course. Shankara was just thirty-two and Vivekananda thirty-nine. Others die old. Sri Chandrasekharendra passed on in his hundredth year, and we recently read of the passing of a 116-year-old yogi. The US Census Bureau reported that from 1900 to 2000, the number of people in the United States 85 and over grew tenfold, to four million, while the overall population grew less than fourfold. The bureau projects that the 85-and-over population will exceed 13 million by 2040. The number of centenarians is expected to grow to more than 834,000, from just 63,000 in 1900. And many live surprisingly active and healthy lives, even remaining in their careers after age 100.

1. Secrets to Longevity

There is no requirement to die at any established time, even if your doctor tells you that you have only two years to live, even if your astrologer predicts it, even if your enemies hope for your early demise. I was told that in Africa if a powerful medicine man tells a person he is going to die, the fear and belief are so strong that within hours he succumbs. Mind over matter? It's not much different when everyone around us is chanting the senility mantra--when your wife, kids, friends and boss keep saying, "You're not getting any younger, you know."

There are high laws to invoke, as age advances, to sustain the pranas, to strengthen the force of life within. Those who know wisdom's ways have overcome the "I'm getting old " syndrome, a mantra no one should ever repeat, even once. They know how the mind works, and by applying the laws, they have lived long, useful, happy and healthy lives. The redundancy system of one part of the body failing and another part taking over, especially within the brain, should be understood by the aging person, to know that all is not lost. If memory loss is experienced, things can often be memorized again and shifted over to another part of the brain. These are simple techniques that are based on the truth that the mind is constantly maturing; so are the emotions, and so is the intelligence and accumulated knowledge. Most importantly, the wisdom of how to use the knowledge and to judge whether it is worthwhile at all--that, too, is maturing from decade to decade and life to life.

The psychological secret is to have a goal, actually many goals, in service to humanity to accomplish. People helping people, people serving people, that is what the Hindu Dharma is and has been proclaiming for some 8,000 years or more. Good goals and a will to live prolong life. It is even more life giving when the goal of human existence, in helping people to fulfill dharma, is strengthened by daily sadhana. When pre-dawn morning pujas, scriptural reading, devotionals to the guru and meditation are performed without fail, the deeper side of ourselves is cultivated, and that in itself softens our karmas and prolongs life.

Life is eternal on the inner planes, in the refined bodies of the soul. But a physical body these days is hard to obtain. We have to go though the embarrassment of birth, being slapped on the bottom, talked to in baby talk, and learning to walk, read and write all over again. It takes years and years before we get back to, if we ever do in the new life, the wisdom years that we attained in the previous birth.

So, take care of your physical body. No need to know too much about it, for it knows

what it needs. Listen to its messages, respond quickly, find an ayurvedic doctor who can help you through the many changes the body will naturally go through, and face each one positively. This body is impermanent, true, but it is the only one you have, so make the best use of it. You have good work to do, and knowledge born of experience to pass along to the coming generation.

The older you get, the more disciplined you should get, the more sadhana you should perform as you drop off the extraneous things of the world. If your children leave home and cultivate other interests, find new eager children to teach, new ways to serve. Be useful to others. Keep planting the seeds of dharma. Maybe they will be annuals instead of perennials, but keep planting for the future. Others might be saying, "old and gray and in the way, " but we say, "old and gray and here to stay."

2. Renewing Life's Plans

When the body reaches middle age, a change of pace occurs. One feels like sitting rather than walking, sleeping more than one did before, and it is more difficult to make long-term plans, ten, twenty, thirty years ahead. At middle age, the question "What am I going to do with my life?" has long been answered but still should be asked, because at middle age, around forty, there is still a long life ahead. It should be planned out as carefully as the life span that has already been lived, based on the experiences gained from it. Many people plan out their lives at eighteen or twenty, and others don't.

Nevertheless, when the change of life at middle age comes, both for men and women, it is only wise to regroup one's thoughts, analyze one's desires, motivations and educational skills, physical, mental and emotional abilities. It is time to plan another forty years ahead with as much enthusiasm and dynamism as can be mustered up. After all, they say life begins at forty. A lot of people die at fifty or shortly afterwards because they feel that everything is breaking down. That is because they misinterpret what is happening. They think the death experience is coming, whereas only a change of life, of life experience, has occurred, which began at forty. If they took it as a new passage in life, they could be on smooth sailing until eighty.

Forty years of age is well known as a change of life. Seventy years of age is the prime of life. Eighty is the fulfillment of that prime. An eighty-year-old person, who has fulfilled the prime of life, holding a new-born infant makes a complete circle of life. As one nears eighty years of age, this is again time to revamp one's life, motivations, desires, and to plan for the next forty years, which recognizes a natural life span of 120 years. It is interesting to note that the muscular structure of the physical body does not start to deteriorate until after age seventy-two, and then only slightly, unless one neglects to exercise. Mystics say that eighty years of age is a difficult time to get through psychologically, physically and emotionally, because it is definite that your are old when you are eighty. Therefore, a new plan for motivation for the future should be made well in advance, at least at age seventy-two, so that when eighty rolls around it is well impressed in the subconscious mind that, this might be time to start slowing down and preparing for life after the life of the physical body.

It is at this juncture that one should give one's wisdom to the younger generation, be dedicated to and interested in children and their welfare, manage orphanages, set up endowments and scholarships for educating the young, see into the lives of promising people and encourage them to greater heights. This is the time also to perform sadhana and intense tapas. This is where the yoga marga naturally comes in a lifetime. The physical forces are fading, the muscular structure diminishing. Great spiritual progress in burning out the last prarabdha karmas, even those that did not manifest in this life, can be accomplished at this time. If retirement is thought of, it should be at eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four, around that time. This should be the slowing-down period, yet still being active in the mental, emotional, sociological, political, ecological arenas. Here, now, is a time to practice hatha yoga and pay close attention to ayurveda.

There is another forty years before the natural life span of 120 is reached, plenty of time to fulfill the Sanatana Dharma, to get out there and give of the wisdom that has been accumulated through the past eighty years. This is the real fulfillment of a life well lived. Or if your life was not well lived, you can teach people, from experience, what they should not do, and explain if they don't follow that advice, things won't work out right. If you did do what you should, you can teach people that you did and how it worked out well. Nine times nine is eighty-one; eight and one are nine. This is the beginning of the final cycle toward the fulfillment of the Sanatana Dharma--toward mukti.

3. Mentalities On Aging

Society in the Western world has no tolerance for the aged, only for the young. Therefore, the aged and the aging must look out for themselves and guide society into a new and mature outlook as to their value to society as senior citizens within society. In the Western world, the elderly are not respected. They are shoved aside, considered useless, as they interfere with the pursuit of the life and liberty of the younger people by giving advice and direction based on their experience. That's why Western people have to learn by their own experiences, because they have relegated the older generation to obscurity. It has become part of the culture. Not so in Asia. In Asian cultures traditionally the aged are venerated more and more each year for their knowledge, their guidance, their wisdom, their compassion, their existence. So much are they venerated in life, that when they have given up their Earth suit they are still venerated and invoked for their guidance, because of their accumulated wisdom and their new-found powers in the inner world, so that the family, which makes up society, moves forward uninterrupted by chaos or contention, wars and famine. These ancestors in the inner world guide and correct and hopefully are born again into the same family as a fresh, knowledgeable influence. This is how Asian families progress as institutions from one stage of development to another because of ancestor worship.

It might not surprise you to hear this, but everyone is getting older. A three-year-old will soon be a six-year-old; a twelve-year-old will soon be eighteen. There is a great difference between the eighteen-year-old and the six-year-old, and it all happened in twelve years. Society and parents are adjusted to the differences between a six-year-old and an eighteen-year-old. But Western society, and even modern Asian society, is dearth in adjustments to understand the differences between the forty-year-old and the eighty-year-old, their needs, their wants and their desires.

Western psychology says the older you get, the less planning you should do for the future; you should make short-term plans. This philosophy does not take into account that no one is ever too young to die, no matter how long-term his plans have been. "Agedness " is a state of consciousness of settling down, giving up and having nothing ahead in the future more than six months or one year. At seventy-five, I myself have a ten-year plan. I'm going to have another ten-year plan, then another one and still another one. Life is willpower. Life is not only physical. Death can be foreseen as an astrological time of trauma, and if given into, hey, you lose your Earth suit--no doubt about it! But if anticipated and known about, that and other lows in the cycles of the energies of life can be overcome with a strong mind and indomitable will, both of which never age, never weaken and are constantly, day by day, month by month, year by year, accumulating in strength and power.

Anyone who passively gives in to old age simply does not understand the process. He looks at his physical body and it looks different. But the twenty-year old looks different than he did when he was ten, and that was only ten years ago, and he is happy to look different. If the twenty-year-old is aloof from the world, having fun, and is frivolous and absents himself from the responsibility of the reality of the material world, he is forgiven, coached along. If the seventy-year-old were to be frivolous and absent himself from the realities of the world, he'd be dubbed senile. That would be the end of him.

3. Fears and Preparations

Society does not adequately explain the transitions that one goes through in life. Children are smart at the age of four, five or ten, and should be told what will happen through their whole life, as a picture book. When they are going through adolescence, the changes they experience should be explained to them. When they are forty and are experiencing the withdrawal of the vitality of the physical forces into a keenness of mind and shorter-term physical goals, this should also be explained.

Before fifty your goals are simply for the future, not knowing what that is. When the forces turn around at fifty, you start to withdraw. The body does not throw off the toxins like it used to. It does not heal itself like it used to. It does not regenerate itself like it used to. Then at sixty the forces tend to even out.

Two things people are often worried about and need to firm their minds against are the youthful fear "Who is going to take care of me?" and the aged fear "Who is going to take care of me?" These fears are very similar. The truth is, if you are not driven to fulfill dharma, you get old. You get old attitudes. You get set in your ways--bigoted, opinionated, communal, divisive. You seek division rather than amalgamation, become racist, basically self-centered and old by clinging onto your old ideas and not keeping up with the changing times. And, having perfected grossness and subtlety of selfishness, you become ignorantly dominant as an elder, manipulating sons, daughters and relatives for travel, comforts and other kinds of considerations. This is not the Sanatana Dharma. This is the "asanatana dharma " of the lower nature. Elders beware! You cannot hide behind your old age. The mind does not get old. Nor do the emotions. The astral body does not deteriorate. Neither does the body of the purusha, the soul. It is only the physical body that is slowly dissolving into the essences from which it came.

It is well known that even certain advanced souls on the planet may do well when they are young but at their still unperfected stage of evolution have the propensity of deterioration in spirit, mind, emotions as the body sinks, through age, into the substances from which it is created. This is not Sanatana Dharma as emulated by spiritual, devotional, happy, religious men and women who have experienced the frailties of the physique and added greater zeal, power and joy to the now dominant energies of the intellect and the soul. Let there be no mistake that admittance to old age is to admit failure on the path to enlightenment. Admittance to old age is to invoke another birth. Admittance to old age means being set in one's ways, not wanting to be interfered with by the young, unable to learn anything more or new, holding an inflexibility that cannot be challenged.

In the West, growing old is something people take for granted, something they do not look forward to, and yet it happens. And since it does happen and they don't look forward to it, they try to squeeze everything out of what presents itself to them. In the East they look at growing old in a different way, more in the line of becoming full, becoming mature, becoming satisfied.

But very few people become satisfied in the West. They are too self-centered. And the balance between husband and wife is reversed. The woman is trying to live the part of a man and the poor man, he doesn't have a chance. Consequently, old age sets in very quickly, and nothing is left to do but sit and grumble about the instinctive nature: "She didn't bring my food in on time. Somebody made a noise and I couldn't sleep, " and all the various things that people, as they get older and older, find to complain about. There is nothing profound, which is too bad, because each and every one has profundity within them.

4. Growing Old Gracefully

A short while ago I had the privilege of visiting a rest home for elderly ladies. Being experienced in looking at people and discerning the type of lives they had lived, seeing these ladies who sat grumbling, I could see the types of lives they lived in their marriages. I would say that all but two in the entire group had hung divorce over their husband's head all through life. That is how they got their way: "If you don't give me what I want, I will divorce you!"

But there were two souls sitting there who were also suffering, but they were happy. They had an inner joy. The conditions weren't too good--they never are in such places--but these two souls sat happily observing, and I could see that they were understanding what they observed. That is the secret of growing old, being able to understand what you observe.

To grow old gracefully--and to get away from the habit of just growing old naturally and thus physically and emotionally losing the spirit entirely--you have to plan ahead. You have to know where you are going. Everyone who goes on in life is going to get old, believe it or not. But we can pass through those years beautifully, providing the balance is right. You get that right balance by following good advice and conquering the mistakes that you have made in the past and making them right.

When we are selfish, self-centered and flare up and lose control of ourselves, we are like animals. When we reflect understanding, have control of ourselves and use our will to conquer our lower nature, we are using the Godly part of our mind. That's why I say people do just exactly what they want to do. It is either the spiritual being that is stronger, or the animal within them that is stronger. If they control the animal nature, then what happens? The spiritual being automatically takes over.

If they live according to the rules of the animal nature, then what happens? They snuff out the spirit, they snuff out life, and they decay. Decay immediately sets in. It is terrible to think about, but that's the rule. That's what happens. That's why we have basic laws and basic principles to live by. If we live by them, automatically good things will happen. You don't even have to wish or hope. Good things will just automatically come along. And if you don't live by the laws, automatically things that aren't too palatable present themselves before you, and you get entangled in them quite automatically.

So, let's think about the years to come. Let's see if we are laying the foundation for our mature years to rot away, or to become beautiful and content and happy with ourselves. Look into your home right now. Look at your life. What are you doing now? What have you done? What are you going to do? Do you have a foundation for a future that is real and permanent and full and joyous and happy? Or is your life like a child's sandbox? These are the things we have to face as we look ahead to our own advanced age.

5. Real Security Lies Within

It is a fast-moving age. Many people are now either on tranquilizers, alcohol, anti-depressants, nicotine, stimulants or high-powered vitamins of one kind or another to stabilize their emotions enough to get by, just to get by, to get through all the various things that present themselves that they can't cope with due to the rickety foundations that they have in their home. What they really want and need is to get within, to get quiet enough to get an answer within themselves that will give them a little security.

But there is no narcotic, no stimulant, no tranquilizer, no high-powered vitamin that is going to take you within. The only way is to sit down and become quiet, and not throw your energy into concentrating on how you are going to out-do or out-smart somebody else, get a little bit better control over your husband's finances or anything like that. That is not going to do it. That will bring sure misery, a fine hell on Earth, really. That's where the only hell is anyway. No, the way to true security is getting in touch with the divine spirit within you.

Try to feel it permeating you. Find out what life is. You are going to give up this physical body someday. Find out what's going to happen to you when you die. You can find out. Find out whether you are immortal or not. You will be able to go within yourself and find that out if you become quiet enough. Then you will not fear death. Then you will be somebody within yourself. A great new life force will permeate you. At first you won't know where it comes from or where it's going, but it will be there, and you won't have to try to be positive or think positively or make affirmations about this and that. You will be Mr. or Mrs. Positive. That is spiritual life.

There comes a time when you have to buckle down and do the right thing, because we are all faced with growing old. Growing old can be decay or it can be full, joyous and beautiful. Think about that. Where are you headed? Are you headed for decay and misery, to drop back into the animal mind and complain about how little the five senses have to offer when you get old? Are you headed for complaints, suffering over old memories that pop up through the subconscious mind that you no longer have the will to even try to penetrate and understand but still have to live with? Or are you going to become full and beautiful by adjusting your life right now so that you will have an alive, alert mind to the end? The choice is yours. You must start now.

Aging is inevitable. The years go by. They go by so quickly, we hardly notice them. We can go on in our old habit patterns, becoming stronger and stronger in the negative ones; and the positive ones eventually will turn to negative ones, too. That's a certainty of evolution we don't want to look forward to. But there is another way. Become a spiritual being. That is your goal, your liberation, for as the years go by you can live in heaven, or you can live in your own self-created hell, and you don't want to do that. Think about it and create a heaven right now.

Yoga and Aging

by B.K.S. Iyengar - adapted from The Tree of Yoga

It is never too late in life to practice yoga. If it were, then I should have stopped my practice long ago. Why should I do so now? Many Indian yogis reach a certain point in their lives and say they have reached samadhi, so they don't need to practice anymore. But I have not said that up to now. Why not? Learning is a delight, and there are many delights to be obtained through the practice of yoga. But I am not doing it for delight! In the early days delight was the aim, but now it is a by product. The sensitivity of intelligence which has been developed should not be lost. That is why the practice has to continue.

If you have a knife which you do not use, what happens to it? It gets rusted, does it not? If you want to go on using it, you have to sharpen it regularly. With regular sharpening, you can keep it sharp forever. Similarly, having experienced samadhi once, how do you know that you are going to remain alert and aware forever? How can you say that you can maintain it without practice? You may forget, and go back to enjoying your life in the same way as you did before. Can a dancer or concert performer give a fine performance if they have not practiced for a year? It is the same for a yogi. Though one may have reached the highest level, the moment one thinks one has reached the goal and that no practice is required, one becomes unstable. In order to maintain stability, practice has to continue. Sensitivity requires stability. It has to be maintained by regular practice.

You may be fifty years old, or sixty years old, and ask yourself whether it is too late in life to take up yoga practice. One part of the mind says, "I want to go ahead, " and another part of the mind is hesitating. What is that part of the mind which is hesitating? Perhaps it is fear. What produces that fear? The mind is playing three tricks. One part wants to go ahead, one wants to hesitate, and one creates fear. The same mind is causing all three states. The trunk is the same, but the tree has many

branches. The mind is the same, but the contents of the mind are contradictory. And your memory also plays tricks, strongly reacting without giving a chance to your intelligence to think.

Life is swimming, and death is sinking. If you know these two, then there is no fear. Because we don't want to know them, fear comes. But why should I not face death happily? Fear says that as you get older, diseases and suffering increase. Your mind says you should have done yoga earlier, or you should have continued and not stopped in your youth. Now you say you are very old and perhaps it is too late, so you hesitate. It is better just to start, and when you have started, maintain a regular rhythm of practice.

At a certain age the body does decay, and if you do not do anything, you are not even supplying blood to those areas where it was being supplied before. By performing asanas we allow the blood to nourish the extremities and the depths of the body, so that the cells remain healthy. But if you say, "No, I am old, " naturally the blood circulation recedes. If the rains don't come, there is drought and famine, and if you don't do yoga--if you don't irrigate the body--then when you get drought or famine in the body as incurable diseases; you just accept them and prepare to die.

Why should you allow the drought to come when you can irrigate the body? If you could not irrigate it at all, it would be a different matter. But when it is possible to irrigate, you should surely do so. Not to do so allows the offensive forces to increase and the defensive forces to decrease. Disease is an offensive force; inner energy is a defensive force. As we grow, the defensive strength gets less and the offensive strength increases. That is how diseases enter into our system. A body which carries out yogic practice is like a fort which keeps up its defensive strength so that the offensive strength in the form of diseases will not enter into it through the skin. Which do you prefer? Yoga helps to maintain the defensive strength at an optimum level, and that is what is known as health.

Much has been said by certain people about the dangers of yoga, and the risk of injury. But if you walk in the street carelessly, you can have an accident. So do you advise people not to walk? People die when they are in bed. So is it dangerous to sleep on a bed?

I have been doing yoga for over fifty years, and have taught many thousands of students in the five continents of this globe. Sadly, there are teachers of yoga who know very little and claim to teach. The problem comes not from the art of yoga, but from the inexperience of the teachers, and also from the impatience of the pupils. If a person who cannot stand tries to walk, he will break his legs, and so it is in yoga. In Western countries particularly, people want above all to do padmasana, the lotus pose. They say, "I think I can do it!" Unfortunately, the thinking is in the head, but the doing is in the knee! If you do not understand the intelligence of the knee and you force it to follow your brain, then the knee will break. But if you understand the stiffness as well as the mobility of the knee, and go step by step to remove the stiffness and increase the range of mobility, then there is no danger at all. If there are accidents in yoga, it is not the fault of yoga, but of the aggressiveness of the pupil who does it.

So you can all do yoga. The queen of Belgium started doing head-balance at the age of eighty-six. Nothing happened to her. I hope there will be no confusion about what I am saying. You can do it, but do it judiciously, knowing your capacity. If you try to imitate me, naturally you will suffer, because I have been doing it for half a century. You have to wait to reach that level. Yoga cannot be rushed.

From The Tree of Yoga, by B. K. S. Iyengar, Â© 1988. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications Inc., Boston, MA. www.shambhala.com

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Hatha Yoga's Effects on Aging

Live longer. Yoga affects all the important determinants of a long life: the brain, glands, spine and internal organs.

Increased resistance to disease. Yoga produces a healthy strong body with increased immunity. This increased resistance extends from the common cold to

serious diseases like cancer.

Increased vitality. Increased vitality due to yoga's effect on the brain and glands.

Rejuvenation of the glands. Yoga has a marked effect on the pituitary, thyroid, adrenal and sex glands. This produces a feeling of well-being, prevents premature aging and extends vitality and virility well into old age.

Look and feel younger. Yoga reduces facial wrinkles and produces a natural 'face-lift'. This is mainly due to the inverted postures. By doing the inverted postures for a few minutes each day, we reverse the effect of gravity and use it to our advantage.

Vision and hearing improve. Normal vision and hearing depend to a large extent on the eyes and ears receiving a good nerve and blood supply. The nerves and blood vessels which supply the eyes and ears have to pass through the neck. As we get older, the neck becomes less flexible. Yoga postures and yoga neck exercises improve the condition of the neck, resulting in better eyesight and improved hearing.

Mental/emotional benefits. Because of yoga's rejuvenation effects on the glands and nervous system, including the brain, yoga results in a positive mental/emotional state.

From Reversing Aging, by Dr. Paul Galbraith

Tips for Longevity
by Karunakar Shukla

Ayurvedic Medicine has delineated rasayana, rejuvenation and virility, as a branch

of medicine where the main purpose is to maintain health as age advances, and to keep the body healthy, avoiding the transfer of disease to our offspring. Let's face it, we all age, but we don't need a life style of diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, hypertension, auto-immune diseases, obesity, and cancer etc. We can all age gracefully without these horrible diseases.

Dinacharya, Daily Routine

1. Wake up early, before sunrise. The sun activates the pineal gland to send messages to the pituitary gland, which in turn massages the adrenal glands to release adrenal cortisol, which wakes us up from deep sleep.

2. Drink 1-3 glasses of warm water. This helps the peristalsis to begin and helps bowel evacuation.

3. Oral hygiene is of utmost importance for healthy gums, digestive health and healthy heart.

4. Get in touch with your senses by massaging your body with oil customized for your body type (or sesame as a default oil). To sharpen your sense of smell, put few drops in your nose, for eyes wash your eyes with water. Similarly, put a couple drops of olive oil or vegetable glycerine in your ear, you can also dip the Q-tip in olive oil and lubricate your ears.

5. Walk for 30 to 45 minutes, depending upon your schedule, and meditate regularly.

6. Eat a healthy breakfast according to your constitution.

7. Fried, processed and artificially sweetened foods, white sugar and white flour

should be avoided at all times as they weaken digestion and deplete the body's nutrition.

8. Finish your day by mediating, exercising pranayama (breathing exercises) and quieting your mind.

Ritucharya, Seasonal Routine

Use a common sense approach to seasons. During the summer, dress light, eat fruits and vegetables and drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration. During winter, dress warm; keep your vital organs, like heart and lungs, warm. Add more nuts and seeds to get extra oils and energy for winter, and lubricate your skin with oils or cold creams. In spring dress not too light or heavy. It is the seasons for allergies, so avoid mucous-producing foods like excessive sugar, dairy products, fried and heavy foods. Also, fasting on vegetables, fruits and rice proteins can be very helpful. The autumn season is considered best for cleansing.

Pancha Karma

Over time, we accumulate toxic materials in our bodies that lead to diseases. We may eat healthy, do our yoga, exercises and meditation, but mind may play a bigger role in a disease process. This is why pancha karma is advised. These treatments mimic the body's natural ways of detoxification. It has been divided into three phases: purva karma, preparation for detoxification. Next is pancha karma, which involves five methods of cleansing, followed by pashchtya karma (post pancha karma) to help restore the function of the body to its natural state with rejuvenating ayurvedic herbs called rasayanas.

The Science of Rasayana

by Dr. M.V. Subramanyam

One among the eight branches of ayurveda is rasayana [rejuvenation, literally, "augmentation of rasa, " the vital fluid produced by the digestion of food]. It roots out morbidity and destructive diseases, checks disease processes, corrects the various body channels, restores nourishing and promotes health. Rasayana not only alleviates or cures diseases but also maintains the intactness of body components and enhances life expectancy. It provides optimum quality of the bodily tissues thus increasing mental and physical health, thus enabling one to live for a longer period of youthfulness.

Chyavanprash

by Tripti Sharma

For centuries, the ayurvedic herbal formula chyavanprash has been hailed as the ultimate anti-aging tonic. Long before there were vitamins, minerals and antioxidant supplements, there was chyavanprash, one of ayurveda's most respected anti-aging foods. Chyavanprash is in the ayurvedic category of rasayana, or rejuvenation. It is a super-concentrated mixture of vitamin-rich herbs and minerals designed to restore spent reserves of vital energy (ojas) and revitalize normal body functions. For centuries, it has been used to maintain youth and optimal health; its adaptogenic properties make it an excellent anti-aging and anti-stress tonic.