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Text A & Translation

Unit 1

Longevity: A Manual

Alina Tugend

Aside from factors outside of your control like genes and luck, your behavior plays a substantial part in determining whether you will live a long and healthy life. Some examples are simple like exercising more, not smoking and eating less fatty, sweet food. However, the trick is motivating people to act and become more disciplined.

1 Back in 1946, when the first baby boomers were born, it was easy to imagine some sort of magic pill that would promise, if not immortality, at least a very long, happy, and healthy life.

2 Darn, another hope dashed. We are living longer, but not always healthier and happier. Given that the ranks of Americans aged 65 and older are soon to swell — from 13 percent to 18 percent by 2030 — geneticists, physicians, and psychologists are hard at work figuring out what it takes to thrive into old age.

3 Maybe the wisest thing you can do is choose your parents — be born into a long-living family. That helps, especially if you hope to live past 100, a happy achievement that seems to run in families. Paola Sebastiani, a professor of biostatistics at Boston University, says that researchers have found that centenarians “seem to have something in their genes” that allows them to live long and to stay relatively healthy until nearly the end. Centenarians present “an extremely complex problem involving many genes,” she said. By studying these survivors’ biology, scientists are trying to develop drugs to delay conditions that plague people in old age, such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and arthritis. The goal is to help people age in a healthier way.

4 However, don’ t get your hopes up about living past 100, should you lack the right genes. Demographic experts had predicted that the proportion of U.S. centenarians would grow over the past decade, but they were wrong. Instead, from 2000 to 2010, the figure held steady: Only about one in 5,000 Americans reached age 100 or above.

5 For the other 99-plus percent of us, even the best genes will get you only so far. “Genes account for one-fourth to one-third of longevity,” estimated Howard Friedman, a professor of psychology at the University of California (Riverside). “That leaves well over half not accounted for.”

6 Most of the rest, for better or worse, is up to you. “The choices people make are in so many ways responsible for the quality of life in old age,” said Charles Reynolds III, a professor of neuroscience at the University of Pittsburgh. “Many people think they should be entitled to a good-quality 25 years after age 60. Well, they’ re not necessarily entitled, but they can put the odds in their favor.”

7 One way — “the least speculative and the most obvious” — is with exercise, according to Simon Melov, a Buck Institute biochemist. “More activity is better than no activity, and most people are not doing anything. They’ re just sitting there.” Exercise, he said, reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and perhaps even a decline in cognition. One needn’ t run a marathon.

Gardening, walking, swimming, woodworking — all of these are more active than just sitting.

8 OK, what else? “If people live in a healthy way, they can extend [their lives into] the late 80s,” Sebastiani said. This includes a familiar list of don’ ts — notably tobacco, fatty foods, and sweets. Indeed, “some have suggested that diet can be helpful” in avoiding a deterioration in memory due to vascular disease, said Marie Bernard, deputy director of the National Institute on Aging.

9 This Institute is also exploring the possible benefits of a radically reduced intake of calories, which research has shown to cause many animals to live longer; a long-term research project has 218 human volunteers ingesting 25 percent fewer calories a day than usual for two years to study the impact on longevity.

10 Everyone is aware that they’ ll probably live longer if they exercise, eat right, and don’ t smoke. The trick is to get people to do what they know they should. Melov at Buck suggests mounting a government-sponsored campaign to get the message across. This could include subsidies for gym memberships and certain types of healthy food as well as a publicity campaign similar to one that Australia waged in the 1970s. With heart disease rampant, its government plastered the country with the slogan “Don’ t be a Norm,” using a cartoon showing an Aussie watching TV while balancing a beer on his belly. “There was saturation — television, radio,” Melov recounted. “It was akin to launching a war on a lifestyle. And the country saw a dramatic reversal of fitness over 10 years.”

11 Although physical fitness is important, so is psychological fitness. “The word I like to describe successful aging is active aging,” said geriatric psychiatrist Reynolds. “That means socially, intellectually, and spiritually.” Research has shown that people who maintain connections to others — whether through family, friends, or work — remain healthier in old age. A study of centenarians found that they had a purpose to their lives — volunteer work or taking care of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

12 But these rules aren’ t universal. “Everyone ages differently,” the National Institute on Aging’ s Bernard pointed out. “If people who have been lonely and isolated their whole lives, and we say they need to be out and socializing — but it’ s not in their nature — it could be more stress than benefit.”

13 She touts the advantage of preventive care as a larger part of the U.S. medical system, noting studies that show a greater incidence of cancer, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, and lung disease in older Americans compared with Europeans. Preventive care can even ease depression, a serious problem among the elderly, albeit one that medical professionals often dismiss as natural and not worth treating. Not so, according to Reynolds. Depression can be treated with medication or psychotherapy, thereby improving a patient’ s physical health. The benefits — and the downsides — flow in both directions. “Disability can beget depression,” Reynolds said, “and depression can beget disability.”

14 But depression should be distinguished from garden-variety worrying — and here’ s a provocative finding: People who fret about things may live longer. “A moderate amount of worrying can be good,” particularly for men, said Leslie Martin, a psychology professor at La Sierra University in Riverside, Calif. Research has shown that men who think ahead and plan — and, yes, worry — tend to fare better after their wives die. In fact, men who were worriers faced a 50 percent lower risk of dying within the next few years after becoming widowers than men who weren’ t worriers, Martin reported.

15 Possibly the reason is that, in many marriages, “the wife is the protector — telling the husband to get the doctor’s checkup, to eat healthier, to wear a seat belt,” she explained. “If a guy does more on his own, it may serve him well.” This could also explain why men who are happily married tend to live longer than men who aren’t, while wedded bliss seems to have no effect on women’s longevity.

16 It’s good news, then, that whether people will age with grace lies in many ways within their control. Of course, one always has the chance of getting hit by a truck. The role of dumb luck inspires experts to counsel: Don’t be too hard on yourself. As federal administrator Bernard put it, “People shouldn’t blame themselves if their aging isn’t going exactly as they want.”

17 Hey, relax (but not too much). Maybe you’ll live longer.

Culture Notes

1. About the author

Alina Tugend is an award-winning *New York Times* columnist and author of the book *Better by Mistake: The Unexpected Benefits of Being Wrong*.

2. baby boomer (Para. 1)

Baby boomer is a term used to describe a person who was born between 1946 and 1964. The baby boomer generation makes up a substantial portion of the world’s population, especially in developed nations.

3. “Don’t be a Norm” (Para. 10)

“Don’t be a Norm” was a slogan in the Australian government-sponsored campaign in the 1970s. It started in 1975 as an Australian government program and advertising campaign encouraging people to be more active and participate in recreational sports or other physical activities. The television advertisements for the program were cartoons featuring people doing a wide range of activities. The main character was Norm, a middle-aged man with a prominent beer belly, meant to represent a “normal” Australian man.

Translation of the text

长寿手册

阿丽娜·图根德

除了基因、运气等无法掌控的因素外，行为对于你是否能够健康长寿也起着至关重要的作用。这些行为可以很简单，比如多锻炼、不要抽烟、少吃高脂高糖的食物等。但关键是如何激励人们采取行动，让他们更为自律。

1 回到1946年，第一批婴儿潮出生时，人们憧憬有种神奇药丸能让人永生，或者至少可以长寿、快乐、健康地生活。

2 该死，又一个希望破灭了。我们现在确实活得更久，但未必更健康、更快乐。鉴于65岁及以上的美国人口很快就会增加——到2030年，美国这个年龄段的人口将从13%增加到18%——遗传学家、医生以及心理学家正在努力研究怎样才能健康地活到高龄。

3 也许你能做的最明智的事情就是选对父母：投胎到一个长寿家庭。这很有用，特别是如果你希望达成活过100岁这项似乎在家族中世代相传的快乐成就。波士顿大学的生物统计学教授保拉·塞巴斯蒂亚尼说，研究者已经发现百岁老人“基因中似乎有某种因素”让他们长寿并保持相

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