

"I'm Younger than That Now..."  
By Patricia Spataro

Perhaps you remember the lyrics of the Bob Dylan song... "Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now". Lately I am really into the wisdom of Bob Dylan. Bob Dylan is perhaps one of the most famous singer/song writers of the Baby Boomer Generation. In 2006, Baby Boomers will begin turning 60. Regardless of what generation you belong to or how old you are it's never soon enough to think about ways to age gracefully.

Without a doubt I feel better and have more energy than I did when I was twenty-something. I wasn't very conscientious about my health then. Today I don't drink or smoke, I watch what I eat, I exercise regularly, and I practice yoga daily... I hope to live long; some think it will *just* seem long. Many think I compromise fun and freedom to engage in a lifestyle that involves a certain level of self-discipline. I suppose this would be true if I viewed a healthy lifestyle as one of depriving myself instead of providing the means to enjoy life through good health. Of course, there are no guarantees because how long a person lives is determined by many factors. I invite you to go to [www.realage.com](http://www.realage.com) and take the "real age" test to see how you're doing so far.

The question explored here is - How do we stack the odds in our favor to live long and healthy? Researchers have found many correlations between good living and longevity. One of my favorite quotes from my predecessor, Ray Lopez, is "where will you live if your body falls apart?"

Though we don't have total control over how long we will live the experts do concur that the right lifestyle can add up to ten years to your life expectancy. At a time when many of you are formulating New Year's resolutions that involve taking better care of yourself, I am here to say congratulations and give you some ideas on how to accomplish your goal.

Luci Baines Johnson whose mother, Lady Bird, is in her 90s said ... "Getting old is not for the faint of heart. It takes extraordinary stamina to do it with exceptional grace." How can we rally the stamina for aging with exceptional grace?

In November's issue of National Geographic the cover story was entitled "The Secrets of Long Life". The article examined the habits of "super seniors" and found, worldwide, that people who lived healthy lives well into their 90s and beyond do the following:

- Honor Family – People who stay involved with and live near family tend to live longer.
- Stay Active – Many believe this to be the "fountain of youth". I line dance at a local community center and last week the DJ announced birthday wishes in honor of a few of the dancers. I made a point to extend a personal birthday wish to one of the women and she proudly said in response "I turned 86 on December 26". She said to me she loves dancing because - "You have to keep moving in order to stay one step ahead" she didn't say what she had to stay ahead of ... it goes without saying.
- Find Purpose – Everyone needs a reason to get out of bed and get going, but having a purpose goes beyond having reason to get out of bed. Purpose is found in the way we add to the lives of others, where we contribute to what is good and positive in this world.
- Keep Friends – Staying socially connected to others is so very important because we truly can't get by without a little help from our friends.

- Eat Vegetables – See! Mom was right about this all along. We just have to hope the age-old wisdom of Mom's saying "finish your peas" isn't being replaced with "finish your Happy Meal"
- Have Faith – Those who believe and trust in God usually experience less fear and therefore less stress which leads to better physical and emotional health. According to the article, churchgoers live at least two years longer than non-churchgoers.
- Take Time Off – Playtime is so important to re-energizing the mind, body, and spirit. Everyday take time off or time out; do this with friends, with music, with prayer, with walking, with whatever lifts your spirits and revitalizes your soul.
- Celebrate Life – The Aunt of one of my childhood friends is in her late 80s and has outlived all three of her children. A son died of cancer in his 20s, her younger daughter died of cancer in her 30s, her older daughter died in an automobile accident when she was in her 50s. Aunt Connie has been an inspiration to so many. My friend says that when she spends time with her Aunt Connie she is such a positive person to be with. You'd think by the way she enjoys people and life that so much joy could not come from a person who has experienced so much sadness, but it can and does.
- Drink Red Wine – given my knowledge of addictions I believe this may provide wonderful antioxidants for some but for others grape juice or blueberries may serve the same purpose. Either way it's as important to eat fruit as it is to eat vegetables.

All and all I hope you find these suggestions for obtaining life-long health to be among the many you are already practicing. If not I hope this provides you some food for thought. The senior generation right now is pioneering the aging gracefully territory for us. Many are showing us the consequences for living a lifetime of neglect and many are role models for doing it up right. The generations to follow can learn from those who have gone before us and from the researchers who have been able to provide us with a road map. Happy traveling... zoom, zoom, zoom!