

GROWING **BOLDER'S**  
**ROCK**  
**STARS**  
OF AGING®

ACTIVE AGING  
SECRETS FROM  
THOSE WHO  
HAVE DONE IT.

*Mark  
Middleton*





# **ROCK STARS OF AGING®**

**The Secrets of Living to 100 From Those Who  
Have Done it.**

Marc Middleton

G R O W I N G  
**BOLDER**

Growing Bolder Publishing

Rock Stars of Aging  
The Secrets to Living to 100 From Those Who Have Done It.

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*"The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." --  
-- William James, philosopher (Jan. 11, 1842 – Aug. 26, 1910)*

For my colleagues at Growing Bolder who work hard every day to build a business that matters and leave a legacy that endures.

For Joe Lee who taught us that the only way to build a sustainable business is to do the right thing every day.

For the three women in my life who have inspired me to want to make a difference: Jill, Kelsey and Quinn.

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## Introduction

*“How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you was?”  
Satchel Paige, Major League baseball player*

Denied the opportunity to play in the major leagues because of the color of his skin, Satchel Paige never gave up on his dream. In 1948, at the age of 42, Paige became the oldest rookie in Major League History. In 1965, at the age of 59 he became the oldest pitcher to ever play in the Major League Baseball.

The uneducated grandson of slaves, Paige was eventually celebrated worldwide not just for his talent on the field but also for his uncommon wit and wisdom.

Like many who achieve later-in-life success, Paige was somehow able to overcome the incessant ageist messaging that tells us dreams have an expiration date. He refused to believe that he was too old to play in the major leagues and when someone reminded him of his age he famously responded, *“How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you was?”*

We have all been brainwashed about both the process and the possibility of aging. The effects of this brainwashing are devastating on both a personal and societal level because what the mind believes the body embraces. We are literally killing ourselves with our belief systems, robbing ourselves not only of years of life but quality of life, and adding billions of dollars to our national healthcare costs.

Growing Bolder is not about denying aging or pretending that we don’t all go through significant changes as we age. Growing Bolder is not about defeating aging and becoming ageless.

Growing Bolder is about overcoming the dangerous and debilitating stereotypes of age and embracing the nearly limitless opportunities of age. But how do we do that? One way is to look to those who have developed immunity to the anti-aging virus that plagues our society – the rapidly increasing number of active centenarians.



## Chapter ONE

### Why This Book is Different

*“To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

At Growing Bolder, we’re rebranding aging® and deprogramming the world from the cult of youth by sharing the stories of ordinary people living extraordinary lives. We’re committed to smashing the demeaning and disabling stereotypes of age.

We’ve been told for so long, by so many, what’s *not* possible as we age that few of us know what’s really possible. Growing Bolder’s mission is to inspire men and women of all ages to realize that it’s never too late to improve their lives and never too late to make a difference in the lives of others. It’s never too late to chase your dreams and pursue your passions. It’s never too late to make the rest of your life the best of your life.

We have found that one of the most powerful ways to illustrate what’s possible is to share the stories of the Rock Stars of Aging -- anyone who is 90 or older with an enviable quality of life. What makes these active agers so unique, so fascinating and so worth studying is the fact that they are not simply 80-year-olds who have endured 20 more years of physical and mental decline. Most centenarians don’t suffer the chronic illnesses associated with advanced age until shortly before dying. Somehow they have managed to maintain a quality of life that makes life worth living until the very end. They’ve lengthened their life and compressed the period of decline at the end of their life. But how have they done it and why don’t more of us know about it?

This book is not based upon any surveys, scientific research or the opinions of scholars, although it occasionally refers to all. This book is based solely upon our extensive, first-hand experience interviewing and observing active nonagenarians and centenarians.

What are our credentials? We were there when 110-year-old Onie Ponder voted in the presidential election, when 109-year-old Ruth Hamilton became the world's oldest blogger, when Wilhelmina Hoorn danced on her 107th birthday, when Frances Shevenaugh blew out 105 candles with a single breath and when 103-year-old artist Harold Rotenberg flirted with the ladies while being honored at a major museum.

We interviewed 108-year-old Bill Hargrove between games at his local bowling alley, 103-year-old Bill Tapia between practice sessions for an upcoming ukulele concert, 96-year-old Nola Ochs after becoming the oldest person in the world to graduate from college, 93-year-old Mae Laborde after moving to Hollywood to pursue her dream of becoming an actress, 97-year-old Frankie Manning after dancing with 97 different women to celebrate his birthday, 91-year-old Bernice Bates after being named the world's oldest yoga instructor and 99-year-old Orville Rogers after publishing his first book and smashing several world track and field records.

I could go on and on. If they hold a record as the world's oldest anything, chances are we've interviewed them. The world's oldest woman to reach the North Pole? Check. The world's oldest NASCAR driver? Got him. The world's oldest showgirl, oldest teacher, oldest mayor, oldest college baseball player, oldest female Olympian and oldest motivational speaker? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. And Yes. We've chatted with them all, and we've thoroughly enjoyed every conversation.

We have interviewed hundreds of men and women who are or were too busy living to pay attention to society telling them that they're supposed to be dying. These were not academic, research-oriented, survey-type interviews because, frankly, active centenarians don't like those kinds of interviews and neither do we. Surveys are flawed. Research is biased. These were chats between friends; conversations that were allowed to wander where the interviewees wanted to take them. These were conversations that followed passions and revealed personality.

These *Rock Stars of Aging* are as diverse as any group could be but as we talked and as we listened, we learned. Many common

denominators were revealed. This book is about those common threads. Threads that when woven together help create not only a long life but also, far more importantly, a life filled with passion and joy; a life without fear and regret.

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*"Come to the edge, Life said. They said: We are afraid. Come to the edge, Life said. They came. It pushed them. And they flew."*

-- Guillaume Apollinaire

## Chapter TWO

### Ruth 1898

*“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of the people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will have truly defeated age.”*  
-- Sophia Loren, actress

We are at the beginning of a longevity revolution that will change everything we know about life after 70. And 80. And 90. And 100. To many of us, the idea of living to 100 isn't all that appealing. Let's face it, no one wants to become a centenarian if all it means is another 20 years of living alone in a small room, bedridden, “medicated,” semi-vegetative and in pain while being looked after by strangers who might *provide* care but really don't care about you.

Without quality of life, longevity quickly loses its appeal. It's more punishment than opportunity. The goal of living to 100 is only worthwhile if we can get there in a physical, mental and emotional state that allows us to enjoy it. But what if we can remain active into our 100s? What if we can continue growing, laughing, learning, loving, sharing and giving back into our 100s? Modern medicine, genetic research and most importantly, lifestyle changes are now collaborating to provide that opportunity to just about everyone.

And what if they're right -- the growing number of scientists and researchers who predict that living to 120 *and enjoying it* will soon be commonplace? What if tomorrow's 120-year-olds are not warehoused like many 80-year-olds today? What if they are not a drain on their families and society as a whole? What if they require far less healthcare than the average 40-year-old today? What if they are working, dancing, swimming, driving, volunteering, living alone and enjoying good meals and great vacations? Suddenly longevity is a great thing.

This much is certain -- everything we thought we knew about aging is changing and changing rapidly. Just a few decades ago, the really old

were little more than wrinkled oddities rolled out once a year for a photo-op at an uneasy birthday celebration that usually left us with a sense of sadness and the thought that there was no good reason to live that long.

There now exists an entirely new life stage -- a two, three or even four-decade opportunity for meaningful, fulfilling life beyond what has been considered normal retirement age. This is a life stage that can be enjoyed and used to accomplish just about anything by just about anyone. Men and women are starting new businesses in their 70s, taking up new hobbies in their 80s, becoming first-time authors in their 90s, and competing in sporting events in their 100s.

Where are these amazing men and women? They are everywhere. And there will soon be many more of them. Ruth Hamilton was one of them.

When Ruth Hamilton celebrated her 109th birthday, she told Growing Bolder's Bill Shafer, "I keep asking, 'Dear God, why am I living?' And all I hear is, 'Shut up!'" Ruth, like many centenarians, wanted to believe that she had a divine purpose for living so long; a special mission from God. What she came to understand is that she was not meant to question her longevity but to simply enjoy every moment of her life for as long as she was able.

Equally anxious to learn and to teach, Ruth was fascinated by the power and possibility of the Internet. We introduced Ruth to the concept of video blogging when we showed her how to use a laptop with a video camera. At the age of 109, Ruth effortlessly and enthusiastically became the world's oldest blogger. She filed dozens of video blogs at GrowingBolder.com under the name of Ruth1898 (her birth year), sharing her thoughts on everything from the meaning of life to Brittany Spears' personal troubles, to the power of simple curiosity.

Ruth laughed in amazement and beamed with pride when people actually watched and commented on her videos. This former teacher who had outlived all of her family and friends was suddenly able to connect with people on the other side of the world from her

wheelchair on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of an assisted living facility in Orlando, Florida.

That new reach, that new connection with humanity, recharged Ruth's longevity battery. It gave her purpose and passion — two of the most important ingredients in a longevity lifestyle. It made her feel useful and important again. It gave her a reason to get up every morning. Ruth passed away shortly before her 110<sup>th</sup> birthday, but she maintained a quick wit, a sharp mind and a *joie de vivre* until the very end.

Ruth represents the new face of the ultra elderly and demonstrates what life can be like with a little luck and a lot of passion for living.

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*"The tragedy of life is not that it ends so soon, but that we wait so long to begin it. "-- Anonymous*

## Chapter THREE

### The Centenarian Tsunami

*“Centenarians disprove the perception that the older you get, the sicker you get. They teach us that the older you get, the healthier you’ve been.” – Dr. Thomas Perls, Director of the New England Centenarian Study*

Throughout 99 percent of human history, the average life expectancy was less than 18 years. In 1900, the average life expectancy in the U.S. was 47. Today that will barely get you a midlife crisis. Yesterday your chances of living to 100 were 1 in 4,000. Tomorrow they could be 1 in 2. That’s the flip of a coin.

Ready or not, the age of the active centenarian is here. Centenarians are now the second fastest growing segment of our population. In fact, the only group that’s growing more rapidly is super centenarians -- those at least 110 years old. How big of a phenomenon is this? Hallmark is now printing "Happy 100th Birthday" cards, and a cake with 100 candles has become so commonplace that it no longer guarantees a photo in the local newspaper.

While centenarians will become increasingly common, some will become international celebrities, not just for what they do but what they represent. Unlike others of extreme age, they will not be simply tolerated or ridiculed. They will be revered -- traveling the world, speaking, entertaining, educating and adding true value to society. They are the first true *Rock Stars of Aging*, disproving the myth that the really old are always frail, feeble and forgetful.

Julia “Hurricane” Hawkins is one of these Rock Stars of Aging. While she never allowed herself to get too out of shape, she never started running until she was 100 and since she was 100 she loved the idea of running the 100 meters. Within months she set the world record in the women’s 100-104 age group. We interviewed Julia when she was 103 at the National Senior Games and became the oldest competitor in the history of track and field.

What we learned is that Julia runs not to set records but to destroy stereotypes. She runs to make a statement about what's possible as we age. "I'm willing to do it," she told me. "I Want to do it. Got to do it. That's what's keeping me going, actually. I'm proud to be an example for others." Julia is the oldest female competitor ever in organized track and field competition and every time she competes, her legend grows and her message spreads. Hundreds of media outlets worldwide reported on her record run at the National Senior Games. Shortly after winning gold in the women's 100-104 year old age group I asked Julia for the moral of her story. "Just keep moving and doing. Always have something ahead of you that you're looking forward to that you need to be ready for whatever it is. Life at my age can be wonderful. I've just had a good time. I've got hearing aids. I have trouble seeing but I have a talking book. There's something out there for every problem you have. And the doctors can keep you healthy, thank goodness. So don't fall over. Don't gain weight. Just keep moving That's it."

It's the simple secret to active longevity that nearly every researcher and health professional in the world prescribes and most of us ignore. It's only when we see it that we begin to believe it.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the centenarians club could reach six million worldwide by the year 2050 with nearly 1 million living in the U.S. And here's the really good news – many of us won't just be just living longer, we'll be living better.

For a rapidly growing number of Americans, life expectancy is increasing without a corresponding increase in the length of disease, disability or morbidity. In other words, we're not just adding years, we're adding active years. This provides unprecedented opportunity for personal enrichment along with emotional and spiritual growth. We should all aspire to live to become *Rock Stars of Aging*.

---

*"Anything you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it." -- Goethe*



## Chapter FOUR

### Life Span vs. Life Expectancy

*"The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes." -- Frank Lloyd Wright, architect (June 8, 1867 – April 9, 1959)*

Life span and life expectancy are two very different things. Life expectancy is a statistical average. It's the age to which most of us can expect to live. It accounts for everyone who lives to be very old and those who die in childbirth. Life expectancy was very low in the Dark Ages because so many died at birth; there were countless untreatable diseases in addition to very little medicine, no healthcare, accidents, infections, malnutrition and more. And of course, no one swam laps, ran triathlons or worked out at the local gym. Life expectancy has risen dramatically over the past couple hundred years but not because of a change in human genetics or the aging process. It has risen because of improved healthcare and better lifestyle choices.

Life span is defined as the age of the oldest living individual of a species. For humans, it's 122 years, 164 days. That's how old Madame Jeanne Calment was when she died in France in August 1987. Without genetic intervention, it's unlikely life span will increase as dramatically as life expectancy has. Human beings are designed to live only so long. But very few of us even approach that which we are designed for. Centenarians are the exceptions.

Let's get back to genetics for a moment, because science fiction is about to collide with reality. An increasing number of scientists believe there may not be an upper limit to human lifespan and that modifying or even reversing the aging process is only a matter of time. "Researchers are closer than ever before to unlocking the door to life extension," says Dan Perry, Executive Director of the Alliance for Aging Research organization in Washington, D.C. "With genetic intervention, expect to see many more people -- half the population -- with life expectancy to 100."

And that's the conservative view. The wildly outrageous view is now being presented by an increasing number of doctors and researchers. Dr. Terry Grossman, author of *Transcend: Nine Steps to Living Well Forever*, believes that in less than two decades, for each year we live, medical science will add more than a year to our life expectancy.

That's approaching immortality or what British researcher Aubrey de Grey calls *Longevity Escape Velocity*. De Grey says that aging is a disease and that gene therapies will soon "cure" it. He seriously believes that the first human to live to be 1,000 may already be alive.

Simply stated, de Grey's plan involves periodic repairs using stem cells, gene therapy and other technologies that already exist. This longevity "tune-up" will be good enough to add 10 years to our lifespan. During that 10-year period, emerging medical technologies will increase so rapidly that we'll soon be able to get a new "tune-up" that will last another 30 years. And during *that* period, science will once again advance enough so that another tune-up or will essentially postpone death indefinitely.

While this makes for great conversation at the dinner table, not everyone believes this is either possible or desirable. While potential lifespan is a fascinating subject, life expectancy -- the age to which most of us can expect to live -- is far more meaningful. So where do we look in our efforts to discover the prescription for a long life? We look to the living laboratory all around us. We look to active centenarians, the *Rock Stars of Aging*.

## Chapter FIVE

### Why Should I Care About Centenarians?

*“All the studies show that only about 25 percent of the length of life we enjoy is related to genes. In other words, 75 percent of it is up to us or the environment we live in.” -- Dr. Robert Butler*

To write this book, this prescription for a long and fulfilling life, we ignored most of the experts and the research and looked instead to the Rock Stars of Aging® -- to their words and especially to their examples. There are three major reasons why you should care a great deal about these active nonagenarians, centenarians and super centenarians and how they live their lives.

#### **1: They Didn't Win the Genetic Lottery**

Living to 100 is more of a lifestyle choice than a genetic blessing. The National Institute on Aging says that longevity is 70 percent determined by lifestyle and only 30 percent by genes. Other studies are even more pro-lifestyle with many now saying only 10 percent of longevity is dependent on your genes and up to 90 percent on your lifestyle. In the words, there are no excuses. You no longer get a free pass for sitting on the couch.

#### **2: They Make Life Worth Living**

According to multiple studies of centenarians, more than 90 percent were physically and mentally healthy well into their 90s. Many centenarians are still living at home, driving, golfing, traveling, dancing, painting, telling jokes, watching videos on the Internet and listening to music on an iPod.

Most active centenarians don't suffer the chronic illnesses that are typically associated with age -- such as Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular trouble or diabetes -- until shortly before dying. Gerontologists call this “compressed morbidity.” Basically, it means living an active, engaged life the common and steady decline of disease and disability until the very end and then dying quickly, instead of reaching your 60s or 70s and beginning a slow,

progressive, impaired and declining lifestyle for years or even decades. It's common for active nonagenarians and centenarians to go to bed one night and simply not get up the next morning. *Compress my morbidity, please.*

### **3: They Live a Lifestyle That We Can Model**

If centenarians were simply genetic freaks of nature living a lifestyle unobtainable to the rest of us we could look on in amazement, amusement and envy, then go about our days not aspiring to be more like them. But the facts don't lie -- they prove that if we make lifestyle changes, we can be more like these *Rock Stars of Aging*.®

For some this knowledge will be a burden. It's far easier to sit on the couch and pretend that your condition is outside of your control. Just as the certain knowledge that we can lose weight by exercising and eating better fails to motivate many obese people to change their lives, the knowledge that we can dramatically increase the length and quality of our lives will fail to motivate many who are frail, tired, unhappy and unhealthy.

For others, this knowledge will represent life-changing opportunity because the Rock Stars of Aging® are living laboratories, providing not only glimpses into our possible future but also roadmaps on how to get there. We found many common denominators among the very old, and nearly all of them are lifestyle choices that anyone can make at any age.

## Chapter SIX

### How Centenarians Differ

*“Life is like riding a bicycle. You don't fall off unless you stop pedaling.” -- Claude Pepper, politician (September 8, 1900 – May 30, 1989)*

Before we reveal how centenarians are alike, let's look at how they are different, because this really is the best possible news.

#### **Centenarians differ in every way imaginable.**

They vary widely in years of education (no years to post-graduate degrees), socioeconomic status (very poor to very rich), gender, religion, ethnicity and diet (strictly vegetarian to extremely rich in saturated fats).

Why is this good news? Because these differences prove that there is an *opportunity* for just about anyone, living anywhere, to dramatically improve the length and quality of his or her life. While these differences provide the motivation for anyone to realistically believe that living to an active 100 is a very real possibility, it's their similarities that deliver a clear and proven roadmap to vital aging.

Of course, there are always exceptions to every rule and in this case there are exceptions to every lifestyle similarity shared by the vast majority of centenarians. Unfortunately, it's usually the wildest exceptions that get the most press coverage. The media would much rather report on the one centenarian who believes five pounds of sausage and a six-pack of beer every day is the secret to longevity than to report on the 1,000 centenarians who believe pairing a plant-based diet and regular exercise is the key. So don't be fooled by what you occasionally read online or in line at the grocery store; be encouraged that it's not too late for you to make lifestyle changes that can have a major impact on the quality of your life. When it comes to longevity, it's not luck. It's lifestyle!

## Chapter SEVEN

### The Rock Stars of Aging Secrets to Active Longevity

*“One should never count the years--one should instead count one's interests. I have kept young trying never to lose my childhood sense of wonderment.” -- Helen Keller, author and activist (June 27, 1880 – June 1, 1968)*

Our conversations with active centenarians are always in the context of an interview for our radio show, TV program or magazine. We do not speak to someone simply because he or she is 100. That is no longer unusual enough to be of interest to a large audience. We speak to centenarians who are still working, competing in sports, volunteering, traveling the world, teaching yoga classes, writing books, getting college degrees, flying planes, pursuing their art, and more. Strictly from a media perspective, non-active centenarians hold little interest to us. They typically lack the passion and ability to carry on an interesting conversation. While we have compassion for them, they provide little in the way of inspiration or motivation.

Now, if they are very old *and* thoroughly enjoying their lives -- that gets our attention. If they still have a passion for life and the ability to enjoy the kind of activities that we all enjoy, they become great inspiration for our viewers, listeners and readers, and great subjects for our ongoing “study” on the Rock Stars of Aging.®

We are not doing academic research and don't ask all centenarians the same series of questions. Our questions are designed to tap into their passion and personality so that they'll speak about their personal story -- we're looking for that which makes them unique. However, as we speak to centenarians about their individual lifestyles, we continue to hear many of the same things, often told in different ways. To better understand these longevity themes, I've grouped the *50 ways to live to 100* into the eight categories: state of mind; health; fitness and nutrition; mental stimulation; family matters; social connection; spirituality, work and play; and finance.

## 1: STATE OF MIND

### **Have a Positive Attitude and Optimistic Spirit**

*“Our attitudes control our lives. Attitudes are a secret power working twenty-four hours a day, for good or bad. It is of paramount importance that we know how to harness and control this great force.”*  
-- Irving Berlin, composer (May 11, 1888 - September 22, 1989)

Countless studies have proven that what the mind believes, the body embraces. If we see ourselves as old and frail and feeble, that's probably what we are or what we are rapidly becoming. If we think that people in their 80s and 90 are fearful, frail, feeble and forgetful, that's what our lives will become in our 80s and 90s.

Even at 100, most centenarians don't see themselves as old, at least not in the way most in our culture do. Of course, they know their chronological age but they don't visualize themselves as the weak, impotent, bent over elderly people that many in their 70s and 80s see themselves as.

The way we visualize ourselves aging has a direct impact on how we actually age. So every time you think about your future, make sure to see yourself as a vibrant, active, happy person who feels good and looks good. That's not easy because the media, for the most part, views and portrays old age in a very unflattering light.

Forget the stereotype of the crotchety old man or lady screaming, “Get off my lawn.” The first common trait shared by every centenarian we've ever spoken with is immediately apparent. They're easygoing and they're happy. Centenarians have positive, sunny dispositions. They know how to chill.

Not all have always been that way. Occasionally, a daughter or granddaughter will say, “You should have seen her 30 years ago. She was anything but mellow!” But mellow is what every active centenarian eventually becomes.

Doctors have proven that stress leads to disease and a good attitude leads to a healthy life. Happy people have higher levels of endorphins and stronger immune systems. The formula is very simple:

**Stress = sick. Happy = healthy.**

But here's the real mind-blower. The way we live our lives can actually affect us at a genetic level. Dr. Michael Bauerschmidt is an expert on the human genome and says, "How you approach life, your attitude towards life, can manifest as how your genes express themselves." In other words, you may have a family history of cardiac disease, cancer, diabetes or Alzheimer's and how you live your life will determine if these genes express themselves. Almost all researchers now agree that a healthy lifestyle and the right attitude can overcome bad genes.

Active Centenarians are the definitive glass half full people. Life to them is a joy, not a burden. They never imagine the worst that can happen. They tend to look for the good in every situation.

Elsa Bailey celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday by skiing in Colorado and told a local news station, "If you're positive, you can get through anything. When you think negatively, you're putting poison on your body. Just smile."

Thomas Perls, director of the New England Centenarian Study, puts it this way: "If you actually look forward to getting older, your chances of doing so are much better than if you dread aging."

Psychology trumps physiology almost every time. The people that have lived the longest have (or have developed) the best attitudes.

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*"None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.*

*-- Henry David Thoreau, author and poet (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862)*



## STATE OF MIND

### **Have Sense of Purpose -- an Ikigai**

*“When you discover your purpose, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work.” -- W. Clement Stone, author and philanthropist (May 4, 1902 - September 3, 2002)*

The Japanese believe that everyone has an ikigai -- a reason for being; something that makes life worth living.

Discovering your ikigai can take a lifetime of searching. Some never find it but it's not really the finding that's most important. Embracing the search is a key to longevity.

It's common to hear about someone passing away not long after retiring or after his or her spouse passes. In many cases, it's because the job or the relationship provided purpose and without purpose, they lost the desire to live.

A centenarian's purpose doesn't have to be profound as long as it motivates them to want to get out of bed every morning and inspires them to action. Passion and purpose fuel the life-force required for active longevity.

Bel Kaufman, author of *Up the Down Staircase*, was 100 when she spoke at Iona College and said, “I don't care what you're passionate about: maybe saving Dixie cup covers. But if you do it passionately, you're alive.’

We have had centenarians tell us that they don't exactly know why they are still alive, but they believe that there is a reason for their longevity and that it will eventually be revealed. Waiting for the revelation becomes a purpose for living.

## STATE OF MIND

## Live in the Present With A Sense of Wonder

*"I don't dream; I believe in reality. I live one day at a time. I find that's the best way. Worrying one day is enough." -- Onie Ponder, Florida's longest living person (September 3, 1898 – December 31, 2010)*

Nearly every important philosopher in history has underscored the importance of being in the moment; expanding the now. Active Centenarians are all about the here and now.

Unlike many older people, the Rock Stars of Aging®, don't live in the past, which eliminates regret, and they don't worry about the future, which reduces stress.

When Wilhelmina Hoorn turned 107, we asked if she worried about the future. "What is there to worry about? You can't change the future, honey," she answered.

As soon as you believe that your life is behind you, it is. Memories are great comfort for the elderly but living in the present and making new memories is an important key to longevity.

Centenarians walk through life with a sense of wonder and amazement. Masters swimming champion Mary Anne Cooper, 96, told us, "I'm always looking for the little miracles. Not the big things; the little miracles. The nice happy little things that happen are the most wonderful part of life."

Centenarians are enthralled by the things most of us take for granted or don't even notice. On one visit with 109-year-old Ruth Hamilton, she stared at a white cloud in a blue sky for 15 minutes, talking non-stop about it. She commented on the fluffy texture of the cloud, how it was formed, how it was pushed across the sky by the wind, how it filtered the sunlight and wondered aloud when it might fill with moisture and provide rain. Ruth was able to look out her small window and amuse herself and stimulate her mind endlessly.

When we asked 100-year-old Roselio Muniz what he enjoyed the most about mornings, he answered, “The fresh grass and the drops of rain that look like diamonds. It is so beautiful to contemplate what the Lord has done in this world.”

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*“I look for life’s little miracles. They are everywhere if only we take the time to notice.” -- Mary Anne Cooper, 96-year-old swimmer*

## STATE OF MIND

### Wake Up and Get Busy

*"Painting's not important. The important thing is keeping busy." -- Grandma Moses, artist (September 7, 1860 – December 13, 1961)*

Active centenarians are eager. They like to get things done and they like to get them done on a regular schedule. Without exception, every centenarian we have interviewed says he or she can't wait to get up each morning and most still make daily to-do lists.

Sometimes, it seems that a to-do list alone will help keep you alive. When you have nothing left to do, you have nothing left to live for.

The Rock Stars of Aging are creatures of habit. They don't like to shake things up when it comes to their schedule. And their habits are, for the most part, healthy and active. Once up, they tend to follow the same routines every day with rare exceptions. Nearly all: get up, eat, exercise, read, work and go to bed according to a very regular schedule.

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*"How can I die? I'm booked." -- George Burns, comedian (January 20, 1896 – March 9, 1996)*

## STATE OF MIND

### Be Kind and Have Sense of Humor

*"Always keep your smile. That's how I explain my long life. I never wear mascara; I laugh until I cry too often. I think I will die laughing" -- Jeanne Calment, 122, the longest living human (February 21, 1875 – August 4, 1997)*

With respect to Billy Joel, *"only the good die young"* is wrong. Only the really good become Rock Stars of Aging® is more accurate.

Being self-centered might get you to 80 or 90, but it won't get you to an active 100. Centenarians are kind and compassionate. They worry more about others than they do themselves. When asked by which principles they live their lives, the most common response is, "I believe in the Golden Rule."

Isn't this an important and powerful statement about human nature? Wouldn't it be disappointing if only mean, evil, narcissistic con artists lived to be very old? There is some karmic satisfaction in the knowledge that doing the right thing is a proven path to active longevity.

Instead of joking *about* centenarians, someone should compile a book of jokes *by* centenarians. They are funny and sometimes downright hilarious. Every centenarian we have interviewed has a quick wit and the ability to find humor in life's struggles.

One 105-year-old in the New England Centenarian Study told researchers, "The best thing about being over 100 is you no longer have to worry about peer pressure because you have no peers." At a celebration for his 100th birthday, the late entertainer George Burns was asked by a reporter, "What does your doctor think of your smoking?" Burns replied, "I don't know. My doctor is dead." Every time his physical therapist says 'see you tomorrow,' 113-year-old Fred Hale answers: "Perhaps! I'm not making long-term plans!"

On her 120<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jeanne Calment was asked, “What’s it like to be so old and wrinkly?” Within missing a beat Jeanne replied, “Honey I have only one wrinkle and I’m sitting on it.”

It turns out that laughter really is the best medicine. A Norwegian study tracked 54,000 men and women for seven years and discovered that those who found life the funniest lived the longest. Other studies have determined that laughter decreases arterial stiffness, strengthens the immune system, decreases stress, lowers blood sugar levels, increases pain tolerance, reduces depression and improves quality of life.

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*“Humor is a life force. A way of surviving the difficulties of living.”*  
*Bel Kaufman, Author (May 10, 1911 – July 25, 2014)*

## STATE OF MIND

### Be Yourself – Do You!

*“I never give it a thought if I’m too old or not. If I want to do it I just do it. It’s just doing what you want to do and going where you want to go.” -- Virgil Coffman, 102, world’s oldest new car buyer*

Active centenarians don’t tell stories of regret because, for the most part, they have none. They have always been in touch with what they need and able to figure out a way to live the life they want.

Since most Rock Stars of Aging® are content with humble lives and their dreams have rarely been grandiose, they have been able to pursue that which interests them.

When we asked what they regret most about his or her life, no centenarian has ever expressed regrets over a major decision involving career or relationships. They didn’t stay in jobs they hated. They didn’t remain with a spouse who abused them. And they didn’t remain friends with those who wanted to control them. They found a way to live life on their terms.

Although centenarians are extremely social and active in their communities, they are also fiercely independent and self-reliant. In the U.S., almost all of the 700-plus people recruited to the New England Centenarian Study (NECS) since it began in 1994 had lived independently until the age of 90. Seventy percent of centenarians live at home, either alone or with a spouse, and 40 percent of super centenarians (110+) could still look after themselves.

We spoke with 102-year-old Virgil Coffman shortly after he walked into a Chevrolet dealer and plunked down \$38,000 in cash to buy a brand-new, bright yellow Camaro. Virgil specifically wanted the special *Transformers* edition with 426 horsepower, “just like the one in the movie,” he told us. Why did he do it? Because he lives alone, loves cars, likes to take day trips and “the ladies love it.” Virgil told us, “If I get another car, it’ll probably be a Corvette.” Virgil never got his

Corvette. But he did enjoy his Camaro and cruising ' for chicks until his death at 105.

*“To be nobody but yourself in a world doing its best to make you everybody else means to fight the hardest battle any human can ever fight and never stop fighting.” -- e. e. Cumming, author (October 14, 1894 – September 3, 1962)*



## STATE OF MIND

### **Be Fearless and Mourn and Move On**

*"We cannot prevent...the birds of sorrow from flying over our heads...but we can refuse...to let them build nests...in our hair." -- Ron Schreiber, poet, "The Birds of Sorrow"*

The universal centenarian experience is one of continual loss. If we live long enough we lose just about everything: our keys, drivers license, job, spouse, siblings, children, friends, sexuality, hearing, vision, independence and more. It's one loss after another.

The sheer weight of this continual loss is too great for many to deal with and overcome. Active centenarians are the exceptions. They don't spend much time feeling sorry for themselves and they don't fall into states of depression -- both are the beginning of the end for the ultra-elderly.

The Rock Stars of Aging® mourn their latest loss and move one. They let go, adapt, move forward and recapture a joy of life that is able to trump their latest loss.

Reaching 100 is apparently a very liberating experience. We've asked many centenarians what they are most afraid of and the answer is almost always the same: "nothing!"

We've specifically asked many centenarians if they are afraid of not waking up in the morning because the odds that the end is near increase with every passing day. Without exception, they say nearly the same thing. "I don't want to go but I'm ready to go if it's my time. I'm not at all afraid of dying."

As I'll mention a little later, centenarians are innately curious and that includes curiosity about death. Many centenarians have told us they are increasingly curious to know what's next. That's a very positive and healthy coping mechanism. If the odds are increasing every day that this could be your last day, why not become curious about death instead of fearful of it.

Perhaps since they have already lived long and meaningful lives, centenarians aren't afraid of disease, poverty, the loss of loved ones, being robbed, war in the Middle East, a massive earthquake or an invasion of alien beings. Jeanne Calment, the oldest person to ever live put it simply, "I'm not afraid of anything."

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*"The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time." -- Mark Twain, author (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910)*

## 2: HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

### Exercise Regularly (But Not Too Hard)

*"I always keep going. I don't stop. You know, like some of these ladies, they get old, and then they sit down, and then that's it. Well not me. No, not me." -- Frances Shevenaugh (July 16 1901 - June 25 2010)*

Not all centenarians are world champion masters athletes but very few are couch potatoes. Most live surprisingly active lifestyles and many lived vigorously active lifestyles in their 80s and 90s. When asked to list the secrets to their longevity, nearly every centenarian we have ever interviewed says, "I keep moving."

Human beings are hardwired to move. It's in our DNA. When we stop moving we start dying.

We interviewed Bill Hargrove, the world's oldest active bowler, at the alley, in between games -- when he was 106! He told Growing Bolder that he still bowled twice every week, even with failing eyesight and hearing. He had multiple compelling reasons to stay at home but he didn't. He kept moving.

Jean Calment, the oldest living human being of all time, took up fencing at 88 and rode her bike every day until she was 100.

When it comes to exercise, centenarians do a little bit of everything.

- 41 percent of centenarians walk or hike at least once a week
- 31 percent garden
- 6 percent practice Tai Chi or yoga
- 5 percent play basketball, tennis, baseball or soccer

The good news is that you don't have to do much and you can do whatever you enjoy but you need to do it on a regular basis. As the actress Helen Hayes once said, *"If you rest, you rust."*

## HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

### **Eat a Balanced, Consistent Diet and Avoid Excessive Weight**

*“To lengthen your life, shorten your meals.” -- Proverb*

Eating right is aging right. While it's true that some of the Rock Stars of Aging® have rather bizarre diets (116-year-old Maria Esther de Capovilla swore by donkey's milk and 114-year-old Mitoyo Kawate believed sweet custard cakes were responsible for her longevity), three out of four centenarians eat simple and nutritionally balanced meals every day. When 115-year-old Besse Cooper of Monroe, Georgia, was asked to explain her longevity she said, “I mind my own business and I don't eat junk food.”

Most centenarians tell us their diets consist mostly of fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, and nuts. They eat very little processed foods and fatty meats. Many are vegetarians.

Longevity researchers and health advocates have long promoted the so-called Mediterranean Diet, heavy on fruits, vegetables and whole grains that also includes healthy fats and protein from sources like fish and seafood.

Seventh-day Adventists follow a strict vegetarian diet that has led to many in that religious community living into their 90s and longer and to Loma Linda, California -- a community that is predominately Seventh-day Adventists -- being named one of the Blue Zones, or longevity hot spots.

And what's the favorite daily drink of most centenarians? Water, by a landslide. Dr. Leila Denmark, a super centenarian, maintains that she never had anything to drink except water from the time she was seven months old.

Not only do they eat balanced diets, most Rock Stars of Aging® say they haven't changed their diets in decades, so consistency in diet also appears to be a longevity factor.

Have you ever seen an obese centenarian? Don't bother looking. They don't exist. Obesity is one of the most serious threats to increasing lifespan.

Occasionally, a moderate smoker or drinker will make it to 100. Sometimes an inactive couch potato will get there, but never an obese person. Extra weight is one of the archenemies of extra years.

Obesity has been linked to diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and some forms of cancer. Being obese in middle age roughly doubles mortality rates.

At 95 years old, Donald Pellman had just broken his seventh world age group record in track and field when he told us this: "The most important exercise of all is pushing yourself away from the table. I have no special diet, but I try to avoid eating too many calories."

In Okinawa, Japan, home to the world's largest population of super centenarians, there is a cultural habit called *hara hachi bu* which, roughly translated, means eating only until being 80 percent full.

\*Obesity is defined as a body mass index above 30; to measure your BMI, multiply your weight in pounds by 703 and divide the result by the square of your height in inches.

## Don't Smoke and Only Drink Moderately

*"A cigarette is the only consumer product which when used as directed kills its consumer." -- Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Director General, World Health Organization*

We have never interviewed an active centenarian that is a smoker. Some are former smokers who quit long ago. According to a study at the Institute for Aging Research at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Seventy-seven percent of centenarians have never smoked, and on average, those who did smoke quit 41 years ago.

There is one infamous exception to this statistic. Madame Jeanne Calment, the longest living human ever, smoked a single cigarette a day until she was 100.

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion found that cigarette smoke contains over 4,800 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, smoking shortens people's life spans by an average of 13 to 14.5 years. Plus, the chronic diseases caused by smoking seriously impact the quality of life of smokers while they're still alive.

The good news is that it's never too late to quit and make a real difference in the length and quality of your life. A Duke University study found that male smokers who quit by age 35 increased their life spans by 6.9 to 8.5 years, while women who quit boosted theirs by 6.1 to 7.7 years.

There are those who swear by a daily glass of red wine, but, for the most part, centenarians avoid alcohol altogether. And there is no such thing as a centenarian who is a heavy drinker. Multiple research projects confirm that if you drink heavily, your survival rate is greatly reduced and your chances of getting cancer are greatly increased.

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*“Health -- what my friends are always drinking to before they fall down.” -- Phyllis Diller, actress and comedian*

## HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

### **Sleep Soundly and Regularly**

*“That we are not much sicker and much madder than we are is due exclusively to that most blessed and blessing of all natural graces, sleep.” -- Aldous Huxley, writer (July 26, 1894 – November 22, 1963)*

While most Americans don't get enough sleep or don't sleep well, most centenarians have little trouble falling to sleep and getting an average of 7-8 hours every night.

Doctors agree that sleeping soundly and regularly is critical to cell growth and healing and that not getting enough sleep can be the beginning of the end.

New research indicates that poor sleep is not because of aging itself, but mostly because of illnesses or the medications used to treat them. Sonia Ancoli-Israel, a professor of psychiatry and a sleep researcher at the University of California, San Diego, says, “If you look at older adults who are very healthy, they rarely have sleep problems.”

Susannah Mushatt Jones, at the time of her death in May of 2016, was the world's oldest living person at 116 years and 311 days. In an interview with *The Daily News*, Jones declared sleep to be the secret to her longevity before falling asleep in the middle of the interview.



## HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

### Visit the Doctor But Avoid Excessive Medication

*"I've never had anything I had to go to the doctor for, except checkups. That should say something." --Bernice Bates, 91, world's oldest yoga instructor*

When it comes to health issues, it is always better to be preventive rather than reactive, and the Rock Stars of Aging® rarely miss regular checkups with their general practitioners.

Many active centenarians say they never skip an appointment with the doctor because they enjoy experience and don't want to miss out on the continual advances in medical care. Even though they don't obsess about every ache and pain, centenarians are always hopeful that new medical technologies or procedures might make their lives better or help them live longer.

Active centenarians are not hypochondriacs. Ask most elderly people how they're doing and they'll answer with a long list of ailments. Ask one of the Rock Stars of Aging® and you will likely get a description of how busy he or she is.

Trent Lane continued to live alone, fly a plane and break world records until shortly before his death at 101. When we asked Trent his secret, he answered, "Stay busy, keep active mentally and physically and stay away from all drugs."

While centenarians do get regular checkups, they don't come away with a pocketful of prescriptions. In fact, most centenarians take only a medication or two, plus supplements. At 110, Onie Ponder told us, "I take two pills once a day, and that's all I take in the way of medicine."

Helen Boardman, 108, took less than that. "I take an aspirin occasionally for hip pain. That's it." Helen, by the way, became a bride for the second time at age 97, when she married a man 20 years her junior.

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*"Most over-the-counter and almost all prescribed drug treatments merely mask symptoms or control health problems or in some way alter the way organs or systems such as the circulatory system work. Drugs almost never deal with the reasons why these problems exist, while they frequently create new health problems as side effects of their activities." -- John R. Lee, M.D.*

## HEALTH, FITNESS AND NUTRITION

### Get Sunlight, But Not Too Much

*"I think you might dispense with half your doctors if you would only consult Dr. Sun more." -- Henry Ward Beecher, minister (June 24, 1813 – March 8, 1887)*

You probably won't find too many centenarians at the beach in a Speedo or a bikini but you will see them outside in the sun -- and that's important.

While many elderly people rarely or never leave their rooms or homes, centenarians get outside regularly to walk, swim, or garden, where they absorb sunlight in moderate amounts and reap the many benefits -- better absorption of calcium and phosphorus, the growth of bones and teeth, muscle strength, regulation of heartbeats, prevention of breast cancer, colon cancer, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, improved thyroid function, normal blood clotting and more.

Just as too much sun can lead to cancer, too little sun can lead to multiple health issues. Vitamin D is critical to wellbeing and longevity and is one of our most common vitamin deficiencies. Doctors recommend getting 15 minutes of sun every day (or taking 1,000 IU of vitamin D.)

### 3: MENTAL STIMULATION

#### **Be Curious and Never Stop Learning**

*“Curiosity is one of the best qualities a person can have. Flowers, if you don’t water them, they wilt. And a person, if you don’t fill their mind, you’re a goner. I want to see who the next president’s going to be, and what’s going on in schools. Even when I wash dishes, I look at the bottom of the plate, and I see where it came from, and I think, ‘Oh, how wonderful. Where is that place?’” -- Ruth Hamilton, world’s oldest blogger (April 21, 1898 – January 18, 2008)*

Centenarians have nearly insatiable appetites for learning about everything. Almost every time we interview centenarians, they have as many questions for us as we do for them.

As their eyes or ears begin to fail them (and sooner or later they do) centenarians don’t give up their desire to learn. They don’t withdraw like most elderly people do. They don’t shut down. They fight to make whatever accommodations are necessary to continue stimulating their minds and feeding their appetites for knowledge.

At 101, Roselio Muniz still reads every day. “This is my favorite thing to do,” he told us. “Read and read and read and read.” He reads books, magazines and especially loves to research on the computer. “He’s waiting for me every day when I come home from work,” says his daughter, Millie. “He has a list of things he can’t wait to share. Today he said, ‘Guess what I discovered? There is a planet that is made just of diamond! Can you imagine!’ Every day he will tell me new things that I didn’t know about.”

The old adage “use it or lose it” seems to be especially true when it comes to your mind. Rock Stars of Aging® never stop learning. They are always looking for opportunities to learn something new.

Research confirms a positive correlation between the years spent in school and the number of years a person will live. The more

education you have, the greater your chances of living to 100. But here's the good news -- education doesn't have to be formal, it doesn't have to be linear, it doesn't have to be traditional, and it doesn't have to be advanced.

You can go back to school after you have your kids or grandkids. You can enroll in classes while you are working. You can learn how to paint or how to fix appliances. You can study history or photography. Anything is possible, acceptable and beneficial. The secret is simply to keep your mind active learning NEW things.

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*"People die when curiosity goes." -- Graham Swift, author*

## MENTAL STIMULATION

### Stay Interested in The World Around You

When asked who they would most like to have dinner with, 61 percent of centenarians in a UnitedHealth care survey chose Betty White. Queen Elizabeth was second followed by Prince William, Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Sarah Palin.

Rock Stars of Aging® don't live in their own world. They are engaged global citizens who like to keep up with major news events and popular culture. They watch reality TV, drink Starbucks and read daily newspapers. When we asked 109-year-old Ruth Hamilton how long she wanted to live, she said, "At least until the next election. I want to see who the next president is."

Active Centenarians are interested in politics, are familiar with new and popular brands and know who Lady Gaga and Kim Kardashian are.

- 68 percent watch daily news reports on TV
- 40 percent read a newspaper or listen to the radio
- 33 percent watch reality TV
- 27 percent watch MTV or music videos
- 72 percent say they occasionally eat at a fast food restaurant

From texting to watching videos online to playing video games, centenarians smash the stereotype that the ultra-elderly aren't interested in today's new tech toys. While many 80 and 90-year-olds are totally uninterested in the computer and the Internet, we have found that the Rock Stars of Aging® are intrigued, amazed and excited by it.

Those who cling to the belief that computers are tools exclusively for today's generation, haven't met an online centenarian. In fact, we have come to believe that computers and Internet technology will totally transform the lifestyle of the elderly in the next decade.

Video chatting will enable seniors of all ages to stay connected with friends and family all over the world. Computer programs, apps and adaptive technologies will give the elderly a voice and the ability to share their thoughts and feelings, to take virtual trips, read whatever they like and learn whatever they want.

Laptops and iPads specifically designed for arthritic fingers and failing eyes and loaded with special software and games will prove to be an important and indispensable part of the lives of the very old.

Several recent studies, including one by Dr. Shelia Cotton of the University of Alabama, reveal that Internet use is associated with a 30 percent decrease in depression symptoms among older adults who use it regularly.

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*"I'm interested in everything. All the new things are wonderful. In fact, I have a new phone I'm using right now." -- Marianne Crowder at the age of 102*

#### 4: FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

##### **Get and Stay Married**

*“To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.”*  
-- Mark Twain, author (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910)

Numerous studies have indicated that married people live, on average, longer and happier lives than single people. This one is especially interesting because almost every centenarian we have interviewed was married for a long time but hasn't been married for a long time. In other words, their spouses died many years ago after a long and mostly happy marriage.

They enjoyed the benefits of a long successful marriage but didn't then endure the emotional, physical and financial stress of caring for an elderly life partner.

This isn't surprising considering that the stress of caregiving can have serious health consequences. A study by Ohio State University in conjunction with the National Institute on Aging found that long-term caregiving might shorten life up to eight years.

It seems it's important to choose your life partner carefully and then stick together “until death do us part” if you want to live to a really old age.

While we have spoken with many centenarians who were in assisted living homes, most were still cared for by family members and some still lived alone. With only a few exceptions, those who were in assisted living homes had a close relative who lived nearby, visited regularly and made certain that they were receiving good care.



## FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

### Enjoy Physical Intimacy

*“Sex on television can't hurt you unless you fall off.” -- Author Unknown*

A long and active sex life is a pretty good predictor of longevity. To the surprise of many, some centenarians say they still enjoy sexual activity or did well into their 80s and 90s.

A study published the New England Journal of Medicine found that sex with a partner in the previous year was reported by:

- 73 percent of people ages 57 to 64
- 53 percent of those ages 64 to 75
- 26 percent of people 75 to 85

Most of the more than 3,000 respondents said they had sex two or three times a month or more.

Multiple studies indicate that regular sex boosts self-esteem and confidence, increases the production of human growth hormone (which is known to improve muscle tone), boosts the immune system, reduces stress and reduces cardiac disease.

Sex not only helps you feel younger, it actually makes you look younger. A long-term study of 3,500 people between the ages of 30 and 101 found that regular sex might shave between four and seven years off your physical appearance.

## FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

### Engage Socially

*“There are always a couple of parties or luncheons to attend each week or community or charity event. I have lots of friends; we play bridge weekly to keep our minds sharp, and I played golf regularly until just a couple of years ago -- now I play only occasionally, when there is a benefit or something special at the club.” -- Elsa Hoffman, 102*

There are no centenarian hermits. A life of isolation is not a pathway to 100. Most of the centenarians we have interviewed not only thrive on the stimulation of social interaction, they require it. Most say they talk to or communicate with a friend or family member daily. And increasingly those connections are made on the Internet. Believe it or not, many centenarians are now on Facebook, where they share photos and watch videos.

The 74-plus demographic is the fastest growing among social networks, according to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. Social networking among Internet users ages 65 and older grew 100 percent between April 2009 and May 2010 (jumping from 13 percent to 26 percent). Facebook, Twitter, and Skype all show the most growth in the older adult demographic.

Social networking provides a source of instant connection for the elderly, who live increasingly isolated lives in assisted living facilities and away from their families. An upcoming study by Dr. Shelia Cotten, a sociologist and associate professor from the University of Alabama, Birmingham, reveals that Internet use was associated with a 30 percent decrease in depression symptoms among older adults who used it regularly.

"I like it very much, to see my grandchildren and speak to them, but it does waste a lot of time," says 103-year-old Lillian Lowe. "I have a lot of time sitting alone, when you are my age, and it is lovely to use."

The world's oldest regular Twitter user was 104-year-old Ivy Bean. Ivy had more than 57,000 followers when she died in her sleep in July 2010. The news of her death was first shared on Twitter by the manager of her care home in England.

## FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

### **Volunteer**

*"Sometimes you can best take care of yourself by taking care of others." -- Kamada Nakasato, 102, Okinawa*

Centenarians enjoy feeling part of their communities and love to help others. Almost every centenarian we have interviewed either still does volunteer work or did until fairly recently. Their volunteer experiences are as varied as they are. Many help out at churches, historical societies, libraries and senior centers.

At 100, Irene Johnson still volunteers for Meals on Wheels, delivering hot meals to seniors 40 years her junior who are unable to leave home. "I try not to act like it," said Johnston, about being a centenarian. "I'd be in bed most of the time if I acted like it."

Why do they volunteer? Many centenarians have told us that it does more for them than those they serve. They enjoy feeling needed and appreciated. Research confirms that volunteering is good for brain health and the social interaction is good for physical well-being.

## FAMILY, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

### **Associate With Like-Minded People**

*“Look for the positive in every situation. Don’t waste energy on things you can’t change and avoid bearing grudges.” -- Freyda Siega, 100*

You can’t choose your family or your genes, but you can choose your friends. While most of the centenarians we have interviewed have a fairly large social circle, they have little to no tolerance for negativity and typically associate only with others who share the same positive outlook and passion for life.

If you choose to hang out with negative, depressed people chances are you will gradually become more like them.

In addition to hanging out with like-minded people, centenarians hang out with younger people. I know -- that’s pretty much a given because everyone is younger when you’re a centenarian! But centenarians have been hanging out with younger people for decades. When you hang out with younger people, you see yourself as younger. That leads to feeling younger and living longer.

## FAMILY, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

### **Have a Spiritual Foundation**

*“What’s the secret to life? Belief in God. And don’t you forget it.” --  
Harold Rotenberg 104-year-old artist*

Not every centenarian we’ve interviewed was religious but all were spiritual. Spirituality is our relationship with the divine without the middleman. It’s a deeply personal experience with life, existence and consciousness.

We have never met a centenarian atheist and we have interviewed many centenarians who attribute their longevity exclusively to faith. Most centenarians attend church regularly and pray daily. Recent surveys, including one from Evercare, indicate that 62 percent of centenarians surveyed pray, meditate or engage in spiritual activity daily.

“I do a lot of praying,” 109-year-old Ruth Hamilton told us. “I don’t know where Heaven is but there’s something good about praying. Life is a wonderful thing if you know God. If you don’t have God, you got nothing.”

Faith provides relief from stress by relinquishing the pressures of the day to a higher power. It also provides social connection to a community of believers.

## 5: WORK AND PLAY

### Keep Working and Playing

*“My secret to a long, healthy life is to always keep working. It keeps me busy and happy and gives me a reason to stay alive.” -- Johannes Heesters, Dutch actor (December 5, 1903 – December 24, 2011)*

This is a big one. Employment and census data reveals that only 3.5 percent of centenarians retired at 65. They continued to work because they enjoyed it and they found their work meaningful.

We interviewed 102-year-old Sally Gordon shortly after she retired from an 85-year career in the state legislature. She told us she enjoyed working but wanted to retire “while I was still young!”

Since we spend such a large part of our lives working, it’s important to find work that we’re passionate about and find meaningful. If you believe your work adds true value to the world, it will add value and satisfaction to your life. That, in turn, adds years to your life.

Play is serious business. Play is learning, imagining, pretending, competing, discovering and socializing. Play is therapy. Most people become less playful as they grow older. Centenarians seem to retain the capacity for and love of play. In many ways, centenarians are 100-year-old kids. They have the ability to see almost everything as play.

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*“Life must be lived as play.” -- Plato*

## WORK AND PLAY

### Travel Often

*“Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” -- Mark Twain, author and humorist (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910)*

Centenarians love adventure. Many still travel cross-country or even around the world to visit, compete or explore. Even if they are unable to travel as much as they used to, they have reaped the benefits of decades of exploration. Travel is great mental stimulation and seems to bring a perspective to life and an appreciation for others that have immense longevity benefits.

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*“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.” -- Innocents Abroad*



## WORK AND PLAY

### Get a Hobby

*"Most people say that as you get old, you have to give up things. I think you get old because you give up things." -- Theodore Francis Green, politician (October 2, 1867 – May 19, 1966)*

More than one centenarian has told us they don't understand how anyone can ever be bored. Centenarians have passion for their hobbies. It doesn't much matter what the hobby is but having one you are passionate about seems critical to longevity.

Hobbies enhance your creativity, help you think more clearly and sharpen your focus, says Carol Kauffman, a professor at Harvard Medical School. "When you're really engaged in a hobby you love, you lose your sense of time and enter what's called a flow state, and that restores your mind and energy."

Painting is not just Harold Garde's hobby. It's his passion. Garde is an accomplished fine artist who, at 88 years old, begins every day in the studio creating widely collected and highly coveted abstract works. "Creativity is a problem solving process that improves with age," Garde told us. "What makes a painting work? The answers are always different and they never come from critics or collectors. The answers come from the paintings themselves. My paintings will speak to me if I stop long enough to listen."

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"Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint on it you can." -- *Danny Kaye, actor*

## WORK AND PLAY

### Enjoy Music

*"If you keep looking for youth, you're looking for longevity. Just take a dose of rock 'n' roll. It keeps you going just like caffeine in your coffee. Rock 'n' roll is good for your soul, for the well being, for the psyche, for your everything." -- Hank Ballard, singer and songwriter*

They don't all like the same kind of music but we've yet to meet a centenarian who didn't enjoy listening to music on a daily basis. Like most of us, they seem to prefer the music of their youth.

And someone ought to do a research paper on the number of centenarian musicians that reach 100. In our experience, it's a much higher percentage than non-musicians. We did several interviews with Bill Tapia, the world's oldest professional musician. Tapia died a few weeks before his 104<sup>th</sup> birthday and was still booking concerts at the time. And he didn't just play – he put on an amazing show. Tapia would often play the ukulele behind his head, a trick he first learned about 50 years before Jimi Hendrix.

Roger McGuinn, the legendary founder of the Byrds, is still going strong in his 70s and has no plans to ever slow down. Roger told us, "I aspire to be like Andres Segovia. He was in his nineties and booked into Carnegie Hall when he died. Wow, that's really cool. To be able to do it until you die, to die with your boots on."

Research has proven many times over that music is powerful therapy that can improve your mood, boost creativity, enhance sporting performance and lead to longevity. And don't think all centenarians listen to music on an old Victrola.

- 25 percent of centenarians have purchased a music CD
- 12 percent have listened to music on an iPod
- 4 percent download music

## 6: FINANCE

### Live Simply and Avoid Debt

*"Buy everything with cash. For less than seven years, I had a mortgage. I paid everything outright and I've lived that way until today. Not owing any money gave me peace of mind. That is the secret to longevity right there." -- Nicholas Pierro, 102*

Almost every centenarian we interview tells us the same thing, "We never had much." In fact, they had very little and had to work hard for that.

Most centenarians are poor but they don't know it. Sixty-seven percent of 100-year-olds have income below the poverty line but aren't aware of it. They simply perceive themselves as better off than objective resources reveal. It's been said that not wanting something is the same as having it without all the hassles. That is very much the centenarian lifestyle. They don't feel poor because they **don't equate money with riches**. **They** have everything they want.

And if they don't have it, they don't go into debt to get it. One of the secrets to successful aging seems to be staying relatively debt free and avoiding the stress of major financial issues. For the most part, centenarians are financially conservative and have lived within their means for most of their lives.

The trappings of wealth bring with them the burden of maintenance, storage, financing, etc. When it comes to longevity, simple, minimalist lifestyles are best.

## Chapter SIX

### The Take Away

*Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.*  
--Khalil Gibran, poet and writer (January 6, 1883 – April 10, 1931)

So what can we take away from the 50 ways? What is the message these *Rock Stars of Aging* are sharing with us by the way in which they live their lives? My sincere hope is that you take away the same feeling that we take away every time we have the pleasure of meeting and interviewing a centenarian. It's a feeling of hope, encouragement and optimism about the possibilities of age. It's a feeling of excitement about today *and* tomorrow.

Take away that very few who live to 100 have been sentenced to extra years of misery. Beyond a certain age, miserable people die very quickly. It's really that simple. The only way to get to 100 is with a smile on your face, joy in your heart and enthusiasm in your step.

Take away that centenarians are not super beings genetically destined to longevity. And they are not wealthy people who were able to purchase their extra years. They are simple, humble people of all races, religions and nationalities. They are you and I.

Take away the fact that everything you do today will influence the quality of life you lead in the future. The right lifestyle choices make it possible to reach 100 in good enough shape, mentally and physically, to actually enjoy it.

Take away the fact that those same lifestyle choices make it possible to control chronic conditions to the extent that even people with heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure can live to 100.

Take away the knowledge that having more quality years to spend is great but not having enough money to spend can be disastrous. Today's aging baby boomers face unprecedented post-retirement risks. Actuaries are now calculating what they call "longevity risk," the

very real and rising possibility of outliving your money. They suggest increasing your savings and planning on working longer.

As for working longer, it now becomes even more important to keep mentally and physically active. For some, avoiding physical limitations into their 80s will be difficult, if not impossible. This underscores the importance of knowledge-based jobs in our later years. Knowledge-based jobs allow workers to shift more easily from one field to another. There is nothing wrong with jobs that involve physical labor, but as you age, it's more difficult to perform those jobs and therefore more difficult to sustain an income.

Take away the fact that working to improve your overall wellness is the greatest investment you can make -- not because it *might* help you reach 100 but because it *definitely* will help you enjoy the days required to get you there.

And if you don't make it to 100? At least you've enjoyed the ride. As proud as they are of reaching 100, the *Rock Stars of Aging* final takeaway is this -- the destination isn't as important as the journey. Few centenarians set a goal of reaching 100. They were simply enjoying life so much that one day, it happened.

So what are you waiting for? Start Growing Bolder.

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## Acknowledgements

History will record that *Rock Stars of Aging*® is the first book published by Growing Bolder Press. Like everything else we do at Bolder Media, we do it ourselves. In fact, we lead the league in DIY.

Let's start a radio show! OK. Let's build a website! Sure. Let's start a TV show. Done. Let's take the show national. Why not?

Do we make mistakes? Absolutely. Is it sometimes frustrating? And then some. Does it take longer? You bet. We do it ourselves for three reasons:

- 1: It's the best way to truly understand the process.
- 2: It allows us to do more with less, which is important for a small team with a big to-do list.
- 3: It's a step toward not only owning a franchise in the league but owning the game itself.

The only way to DIY to the extent that we do it and with the quality that we do it is to have an incredible team of highly prolific, amazingly versatile superstars. And that's exactly what Growing Bolder is

Thanks to team GB for always being ready, willing and able to chase and capture what's next.

## About the Author

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#### **Marc Middleton**

Marc Middleton, Founder and CEO of Bolder Broadcasting and Growing Bolder, is a media entrepreneur, television journalist, author, film maker, speaker, activist, and consultant who focuses on the changing culture of aging. A multiple Emmy Award-winning broadcaster, Marc is the host of Growing Bolder TV seen on public broadcasting stations nationwide, co-host of Growing Bolder Radio, executive producer of Surviving & Thriving TV, editor of Growing Bolder Magazine, and director of the Emmy Nominated documentary film, Conquering Kilimanjaro. Marc is a 7-time Masters Swimming world record holder and a 10-time U.S. Masters Swimming national champion who His new book, Growing Bolder, Defy the Cult of Youth, Live with Passion and Purpose is available for sale on [GrowingBolder.com](http://GrowingBolder.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)





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