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Be at your best: Live a healthy lifestyle

"The days of our lives, for all of us, are numbered ... We know that. And yes, there are certainly times when we aren't able to muster as much strength and patience as we would like. It's called being human. But I have found that in the simple act of living with hope, and in the daily effort to have a positive impact in the world, the days I do have are made all the more meaningful and precious. And for that I am grateful." — Elizabeth Edwards

This quote is very dear to my heart. Several months ago, one my favorite cousins passed away after not recovering from surgery. We had just visited after not seeing one another for more than 15 years. She looked like the picture of health. We talked, we laughed, looked at old pictures and had a marvelous time. Then, three weeks later, she was dead. And she was just six months older than I. As you might imagine, the whole concept of "my mortality" hit me like a lead pipe.

A gentleman once said, "The poorest person would not part with their health for money, but the richest person would gladly part with all their money for health." So, don't be like the person who said, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." Certainly, we are not guaranteed a disease-free or injury-free life, but the care you give your body today will be reflected in the way you feel and look 20 years from now.

It's not too late, even though at times you may feel like it is.

The question now becomes, what you are going to do to take charge of your wellness and make some healthy lifestyle choices? First of all, when we talk about "wellness," we're suggesting an appreciation of the fact that everything we do, think, feel and believe has an impact on our state of health. Wellness is about us, about the long-term healthy lifestyle choices we make. To assist you in your endeavors, here are three guidelines I encourage you to consider.

1. Set goals for living a healthy lifestyle. I realize this technique is as old as time, but it works. Goals give you a much-needed sense of purpose. Goals give you a vision that keeps you pressing on. Work to set goals that are realistic, specific and measurable. Write down your goals; this helps to crystallize them. Set deadlines for accomplishing your goals. Remember the adage, "By the yard, it's hard; by the inch, it's a cinch." In striving to accomplish your goals, be patient because changes don't happen overnight.

2. Be change-oriented. Rather than being too resistive, too reactive and too closely tied to old habits, like you know we can be; you need to get out of your comfort zone. View change as an exciting challenge, view change as a new opportunity, as a beginning for making today a turning point in your life for choosing wellness. Believe me, it's a decision you won't regret!

3. Be committed. A commitment is a promise to yourself from which you will not back down. Commitment influences behavior and behavior determines results. Keep in mind there is a definite difference between interest and commitment. When you are interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results. When you are committed to living a healthy lifestyle, you exercise, you check your cholesterol, you develop better eating habits, you manage your stress, you limit your alcohol intake, control your blood pressure, get regular medical check-ups and anything else over which you have control will make a difference.

Consider this: six months from now, ask yourself, "What have I been doing to live a healthier lifestyle?" I hope you are able to list a number of wellness activities rather than give yourself a laundry list of excuses. One of our most famous excuses is "I don't have time." It has been my experience that somehow, some way, we always find the time to do those things we really want to do. In this vein, I sincerely encourage you, "Be at your best: Live a healthy lifestyle," and watch both your personal and professional endeavors benefit!

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