





# YOU, IN *Bloom*

It's wonderful to age gracefully. But it's transcendent to become ageless, leaping beyond numbers to cultivate the vitality and joy that will enrich today and all your days. These six principles for a life well lived will help you keep mind, body, and spirit perennially flowering.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GENTL AND HYERS • REPORTED BY KATE ROCKWOOD

STAY

*Strong*



## CROSS-TRAIN *Your Brain*

Just as you'd lift weights and do cardio, you can maximize cognitive fitness with various types of exercise, says Gary Small, MD, director of the UCLA Longevity Center and coauthor of *2 Weeks to a Younger Brain*. Rotate activities that focus on these areas:

### LANGUAGE

Scrabble, word scrambles

**VISUAL-SPATIAL**  
mazes, jigsaws

**PROBLEM SOLVING**  
chess, sudoku, logic games

**MEMORY AND CONCENTRATION**  
Trivial Pursuit, match games like Candy Crush



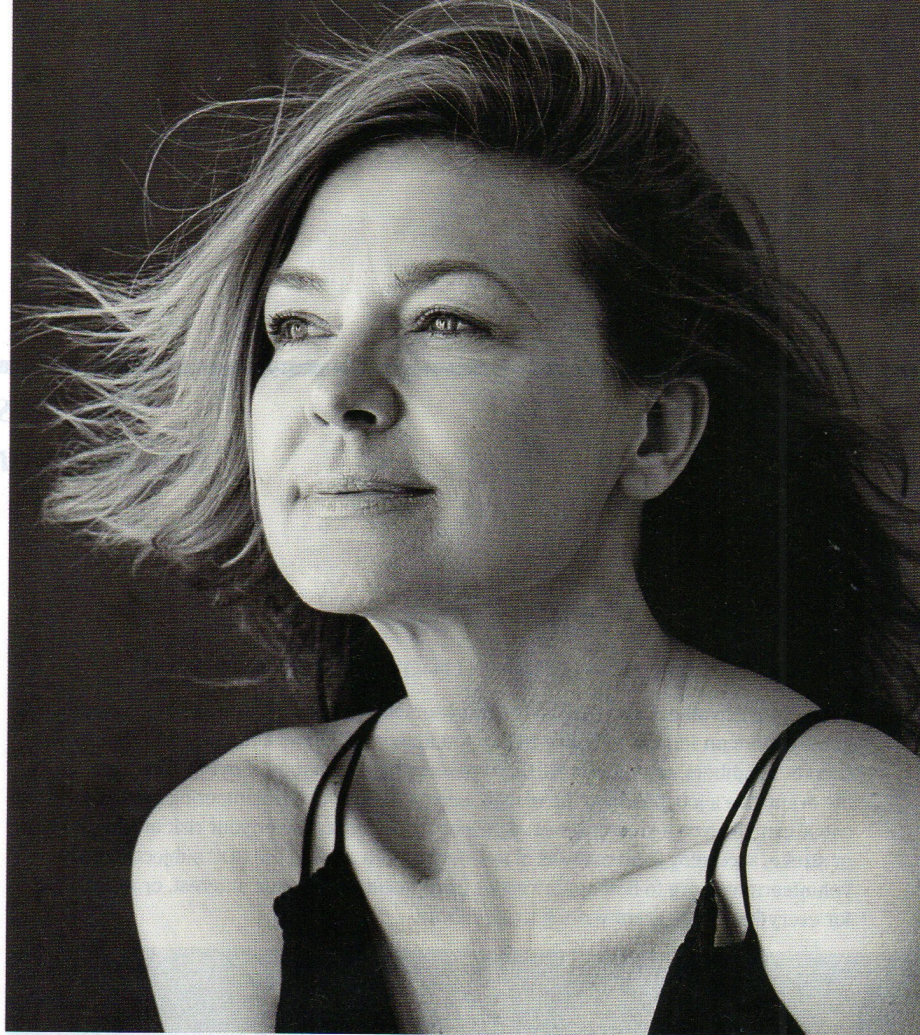
## TAKE CARE OF YOUR *Chromosomes*

When it comes to aging, the date on your driver's license may not mean as much as the condition of your telomeres. These tiny segments of DNA are like caps on the ends of your chromosomes, protecting them from breakdown. The more your cells divide over time, the shorter your telomeres get. When they're critically short, the cells stop dividing; shorter telomeres have been linked to increased cancer risk as well as shorter life-spans. On a happier note, you may be able to slow the hands of telomere time. A few research-based strategies:

**Take up tap dancing, tennis, pickleball, and Zumba.** Fitness dilettantes, rejoice: A 2015 study of 6,500 people at various ages and activity levels suggests that the more types of moderate to vigorous exercise you participate in, the longer your telomeres tend to be. People who stuck to one activity were about 3 percent less likely to have the shortest telomeres than their sedentary counterparts, while those who clocked two types of exercise were 24 percent less likely. For those who did four types, the figure jumped to 52 percent. The associations were strongest for subjects ages 40 to 64, so middle age may be the best time to expand your repertoire.

**Skip the late show.** A 2014 study published in the journal *Sleep* found that adults age 60 and older who slept six hours or more a night had telomeres about as long as (or even longer than) people up to 15 years younger.

**Kick your soda addiction.** According to research from the University of California, San Francisco, drinking a 20-ounce regular soda daily is associated with the equivalent of an additional 4.6 years of biological aging.



## Work Your Weak Spots

Creaky knees don't have to be your destiny, says Jordan Metzl, MD, a sports medicine physician at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City and author of *The Exercise Cure*. Minimize wear and tear on joints and tendons by strengthening the surrounding muscles: "Your body is like one long kinetic chain—every joint and muscle impacts how the surrounding parts move," Metzl says. Fortify these vulnerable places:

### KNEES

"The cartilage in the kneecap wears down naturally, but you can strengthen the knee if you work on your quadriceps and hamstrings."

#### GET STRONGER:

Squats and lunges (3 sets of 10, three times a week)

### ACHILLES TENDONS

"Over time, tendon cells lose their elasticity. In your Achilles tendon, which connects your calf muscle to the heel bone, that can mean less flexibility and more aches and pains—but building up your calf muscles lessens the force on the tendon."

#### GET STRONGER:

Calf raises (3 sets of 15 daily)

### SHOULDERS

"Aging tendons can also cause shoulder problems, especially when you lack upper body strength. Concentrate on the muscles in the front and back of the shoulder."

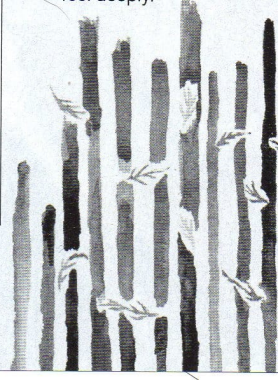
#### GET STRONGER:

Modified push-ups (from knees) and seated rows using 5-pound dumbbells (3 sets of 10 each, three times a week)

### LIVING PROOF **NATALIE GELD** Age 52

Producer of the upcoming PBS series *The Feeling Brain*

"We live in our head, out of touch with our body's wisdom. I believe we need to develop what I call sensual intelligence, being engaged with our body instead of fixated on it. The more viscerally aware we are, the more emotionally fit we are, and the more pleasure we allow ourselves. That is a power you feel deeply."

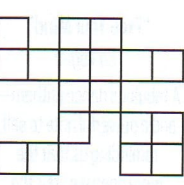


A couple to try:  
**CHANGING WORDS**  
(language)  
Begin with WALL and change one letter at a time until you get to FIRM. Each change has to create an actual word.

### WALL

### FIRM

**COUNTING SQUARES**  
(visual-spatial)  
Count the squares below. (Be sure to count the squares within the squares.)





DON'T STOP THE

# Music

Veronica Chambers knows a good song can keep us connected.

A trainer once gave me some advice: The best money I could spend was \$10 on iTunes every week. Music can be an incentive to exercise, he said. He was right. I'm a slow runner, but when I listen to Nas and Damian Marley's "As We Enter" or Hozier's "Take Me to Church," I feel like my Nikes really do have wings. In fact, I've found that music can incentivize *everything*. Take my family's hellish mornings: Despite our tight schedule, my husband is lost in his computer while my daughter plays on the iPad instead of eating her breakfast empanada. But when I play my "Wake Up Happy!" playlist, I yell less. (If any song can puncture a bad mood, it's Elvis Crespo's sexy "Suavemente.") In my teen years, music was the currency of life: Car rides required it; making out without it was unthinkable. I refuse to give it up. I have playlists for errands, for cleaning, for crying. When I'm stressed, I turn to a calming Wilco mix (my husband, who made it, named it "Chillco"). Everything we feel has already been felt, and music is the eternal reminder of that. Joy, sadness, lust, redemption: We're all living it, beat by stirring beat.

## PLAYLIST FOR A HAPPIER LIFE

1

### "Free"

*Rudimental* featuring Emeli Sandé

All about embracing imperfection. So versatile you can run, cook, drive, or nap to it.

2

### "Wavin' Flag"

K'naan

The chorus says, *When I get older, I will be stronger: True of every one of us.*

3

### "Freedom! '90"

George Michael

It's as though God

(or maybe just George) wrote these lyrics solely to cheer us up.

4

### "Seven Nation Army"

Ben L'Orcle Soul

The French crooner's White Stripes cover makes you feel like someone—a whole army!—has your back.

5

### "Free Your Mind"

En Vogue

A fabulous dance anthem—and a powerful note to self, reminding us that the more open we stay, the better off we'll be.



**"The best mirror is an old friend."** —GEORGE HERBERT

## Lend a Hand

Give your time now, and you may get years in return.

When you help others, you may be helping yourself, especially as you age: A five-year study in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that people 65 and older who didn't assist friends, neighbors, or relatives had a 30 percent higher chance of dying after a stressful life event, like a job loss, than those who were generous. And volunteering for a good cause can give you a greater sense of purpose, which may lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke, according to an analysis of ten studies with around 136,000 subjects. Head to [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org) to find opportunities (searchable by location, interest, or age group) for everything from grant writing to cat rescue.



### LOVE YOUR FRIENDS

The depth and breadth of your connections can have an impact on blood pressure and other key numbers in ways similar to diet and exercise, according to a recent University of North Carolina study of more than 14,000 subjects.

### HONOR YOUR FEELINGS

A study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* found that women who "self-silenced"—held in their thoughts and emotions—during marital conflicts were four times more likely to die over a ten-year period than women who let it rip.

### AND SAY HI TO THE COFFEE GUY

People in one small University of British Columbia study who smiled, made eye contact, or chatted with their barista reported having a more positive mood afterward.



LIVING PROOF

CLAIRE BRACKEN

Age 37

CLARE HUSSAIN

Age 38

Best friends for  
23 years

**Claire Bracken (left):**

"People call us the two Claires. We met in school in Dublin, and fate brought us to New York City. I love her sense of fun and her heart."

**Clare Hussain:**

"We were mischievous in our school days! But though we're parents with responsibilities now, we still find ways to be little minxes now and again."

KEEP IN

Touch

FIND YOUR  
*Equilibrium*



LIVING PROOF  
**NADINE WALLACE**

Age 63

Yogi

"I found yoga 16 years ago after I was diagnosed with stenosis, osteoarthritis, and bulging discs. Now I practice six days a week and stay relatively pain-free with no prescriptions. Being upside down feels amazing for my body and mind because I have to stay focused, balanced, and strong from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. It literally changes my perspective. Yoga and meditation have also helped me become a less judgmental, controlling person and mother—I have four adult children. I'm continually learning to go with the flow."



IMPROVE YOUR  
**Balance**  
Six activities to keep  
you grounded.

“Our balance declines as we age because our muscles become weaker and the inner-ear receptors that sense movement stiffen,” says Daniel Ferris, PhD, a professor of movement science and director of the Human Neuromechanics Laboratory at the University of Michigan. “But everybody can get better with practice.” These moves improve both static balance (holding a steady pose) and dynamic balance (training your brain and muscles to react quickly when you’re in motion). Yes, a few are wacky—but you feel younger when you don’t take yourself so seriously.

**STATIC**

**Brush your teeth  
flamingo-style**

Stand on your right leg one morning, your left leg the next. Once you master that, close your eyes.

**Try tai chi**

One study found that a small group of practitioners in their late 60s scored in the 90th percentile on measures of stability. And research has shown that regular practice can reduce falls by up to 45 percent.

**Do the “kneeling  
Superman”**

To develop core strength—essential for good balance—try this while watching TV: Get on all fours, then extend your left arm in front of you, your right leg behind. Hold for up to 30 seconds, then switch sides.

**DYNAMIC**

**Put it in reverse**

When you’re going to the refrigerator during a commercial break or getting ready for bed, walk backward. (If you have pets running through the house or you’ve just enjoyed a glass of Chardonnay, be careful.)

**Walk a  
“tightrope”**

Follow the edge of a sidewalk, placing one foot in front of the other, and try to make it to the corner without stumbling.

**Take up the  
tango**

It’s a surprisingly effective way to blend dynamic balance with static poses, says Ferris.



**“We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be.”** —JANE AUSTEN, MANSFIELD PARK

**Live It Up!**

Valerie Monroe’s prescription for a youthful soul: supplement responsibility with doses of foolish fun (take as needed).

My back hurts pretty often these days. Actually, since I turned 65, many things do. I’m still active—I ride my bike 20 miles in one shot—but I know that someday things will start coming loose and falling off. (Of the bike, and also me.)

So it was with some trepidation last winter that I joined the hordes of kids sledding down the steep hill in my neighborhood. I hadn’t been on a sled in 25 years. But the sledders—toddlers to teenagers—seemed hysterically happy. I remembered that

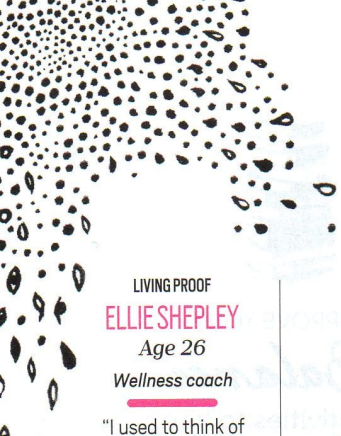
sled-happiness. I wanted it again. The problem was, I had no sled. But I did have the lid of a metal hamper. I went home for it, then hurried back.

I guess I have mild body dysmorphia: When I tried to sit on the lid, I found it was too small for my butt. I was too excited to care, though. *If I fall off, I thought, I’ll be falling into fresh snow, unlikely to break my neck. Works for me!*

I positioned myself at the hill’s peak. “Need a shove?” someone asked. “I do!” I said, and I was off. Off the lid, that is—but not before I’d enjoyed 20 feet of bliss. I was so happy with myself, the kids, the world.

It was good to remember that doing something inadvisable—flying down a hill, eating French fries five nights in a row, strolling alone through the park on a balmy summer night—keeps my outlook fresh, as if I were seeing through the eyes of a child.





LIVING PROOF  
**ELLIE SHEPLEY**  
 Age 26  
 Wellness coach

"I used to think of broccoli as a delivery system for ranch dressing. But then my mom started making small changes to our diet, like almond milk instead of dairy, and over time our family's health was transformed—my allergies even went away. Food is the foundation of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, and what we eat can either build us up or break us down."

## FEED YOUR *Curiosity*

Go to the library, or the Louvre. Older people who had engaged in more mentally stimulating activities during their lives had a slower rate of cognitive decline, says one Rush University study.

## Have Another Apple

*(Or some asparagus, or a glass of wine. Or all three.)*

They're high in quercetin, a flavonoid that may extend your "health span," i.e., years lived free of disease. In a study published in the journal *Aging Cell*, researchers found that in mice quercetin selectively kills off certain senescent cells, which accumulate with age and are believed to accelerate the aging process.



## Play Tricks on Your Memory

How to recall the actress who was in that movie about the thing.

When you hit middle age, it's normal to feel that your memory is turning into—wait, what's that cheese, the one with the holes? Fortunately, memory and aging expert Gary Small, MD, has a few compensation techniques to help you remember what's on the tip of your tongue. "Our memories live in neighborhoods in the brain," he says, "so if you can't recall an author's name, try thinking of her other book titles or the names of your friends in book club. A neighboring memory can sometimes trigger the one you're looking for."

### YOUR GROCERY LIST

Create a mental image that ties everything together. Say you need eggs, pasta, and broccoli: Visualize a cracked egg falling on some pasta wrapped around a broccoli stalk.

### APPOINTMENTS

To help boost your "prospective memory" (i.e., remembering to remember), review your day every morning at the same time and place—say, when you're drinking your coffee. Be as detailed as possible: Do you need important files? Gym clothes? If those things aren't already next to the door, put them there immediately. After a few days, this habit will become second nature.

### THE NAME OF THAT NICE GUY AT THE PARTY

Aging brains are less adept at concentrating in distracting environments, Small says, so if you're directing your attention to a dropped hors d'oeuvre or a new song on the speakers, it's easy to miss someone's name. Try the focus-and-frame technique. When you're introduced to someone, think focus—remind yourself to fight the distraction—and frame: Create a memorable mental image, like Joe drinking coffee or Katie with a cat on her head. "The majority of people with memory problems have a hard time remembering names," Small says. "But if you can make it meaningful, you can make it memorable."

## BUILD A SHRINE *to your past*

It's good for the spirit to make your history part of your home.

The people of Okinawa, Japan—whose life expectancy is one of the longest on the planet—place ancestor altars, which typically showcase photos of deceased loved ones, in a prominent room of their house, says Dan Buettner, a National Geographic fellow and author of *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People*. "It's important to feel connected to something bigger," says Buettner, "and remembering where you came from can bring meaning and joy into your life." In a place you see often, hang family photos and mementos—even little things, like your kid's toothpick art, a postcard from your favorite summer vacation spot, the cartoon your husband doodled on your first date.



FEED  
*Yourself*

LIVING PROOF  
CHIARA D'AGOSTINI  
Age 44

Breast cancer survivor

"In 2014, I was diagnosed with stage II triple-negative breast cancer. I found the lump on the eve of my 43rd birthday, the month after my dad died. I had chemotherapy and two mastectomies. After the first surgery, my boyfriend broke up with me—when I moved out, I still had drains in my side. But I'm even more resilient now. I threw a 'boob-bye' party before each mastectomy, and started a blog ([beautythroughthebe.com](http://beautythroughthebe.com)) for other women going through this. I feel strong these days simply because I'm alive."

ROLL WITH

*The punches*

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END BOV BIO



## FORGET *Regret*

Let it go! In one study, neuroscientists found that healthy older adults showed more activity in the brain's anterior cingulate cortex—which may help regulate regret—than depressed people in the same age group and in younger people. Researchers speculate that when we're young, regret may serve a purpose by spurring us to change, but as we age, it just makes us miserable.

## Give Yourself a Break

When you're faced with a setback, be your own best friend.

If you want to cultivate resilience, self-compassion may be more important than self-esteem, says Kristin Neff, PhD, an associate professor of human development at the University of Texas, Austin. While your self-esteem may hinge on beating the competition, self-compassion is about recognizing that you're suffering just like everyone else, and that you too deserve kindness. "People see it as a weakness, but being warm and supportive to ourselves is one of the greatest strengths we have," says Neff. "Studies show that people with self-compassion cope better when they're going through life's challenges—including divorce, HIV, or cancer." A few of Neff's suggestions for sympathetic self-talk:

**Put your hand on your heart.** "As humans, we respond to warmth and physical touch, and sometimes the body responds before the mind does," says Neff. "A loving gesture can calm you enough to talk yourself through a bad moment."

**Address yourself.** Referring to yourself in the second person—for instance, "You're allowed to be stressed, but you're going to be okay"—helps you step outside the situation, Neff says.

**Try a nickname.** "Call yourself by a term of endearment, like *honey*. Yes, it feels weird at first. But it also evokes the sense that you're being cared for by a loving friend," says Neff. And *honey*, nobody needs to know but you.



**"To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle."**

—WALT WHITMAN, *LEAVES OF GRASS*

## Stay Nimble

To maintain your flexibility, forget toe touches: Get a foam roller (that log-shaped thing sold in the sporting goods section). "Foam rolling is like giving yourself a deep massage," says sports medicine physician Jordan Metz, MD. "It helps musculoskeletal flexibility by loosening the fascia, a connective tissue that spreads over your muscles." He recommends rolling a few times a week (about 30 seconds per exercise).

### CALF ROLL

Sit on the floor and place the roller under your ankles. Put your hands flat on the floor for support and roll your body forward until the roller reaches the back of your right knee. Then roll back to your ankle.

### HAMSTRING ROLL

Sit on the floor and place the roller under your right knee, with your leg straight. Put your hands flat on the floor for support and cross your left leg over your right ankle. Roll your body forward until the roller reaches your glutes, then roll back and forth.

### SHOULDER BLADE ROLL

Lie faceup with a foam roller under your upper back at the top of your shoulder blades. Cross your arms over your chest. Your knees should be bent with your feet flat on the floor. Raise your hips so they're slightly elevated, then roll back and forth.

### HIP ROLL

Lie facedown on the floor, both thighs atop the roller just above your knees, and your torso propped up on your forearms. Roll your body backward until roller reaches the top of your thighs; roll back to starting position.



66

LIVING PROOF

**AMBER OWENS**  
Age 36

Dancer, currently appearing in *Aladdin* on Broadway

"I didn't start dance classes until I was almost 12, which is late for girls. Onstage is where I feel the most beautiful, and as I've gotten older, that confidence has spread into my everyday life. We can all keep dancing, no matter our age! Just about everyone on the planet dances during their most joyous moments. No one is ever too old for pure joy."

**"It is a happy talent to know how to play."** —RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## Get on the Floor

**Kris Crenwelge battles the clock by bustin' a move.**

After my bunion surgery—I'm 49 and wore heels for years—I told my physical therapist I had to be able to return to my hip-hop dance career. (She managed to keep a straight face.)

I did ballet at 4, tap and jazz at 5. I was an officer in my Texas high school's drill team (*Friday Night Lights*? I lived it). Senior year, I learned a routine from *The Wiz*, and as I leapt through the air, arms outstretched, I vowed to dance for the rest of my life.

But I knew nothing about pursuing a dance career. So at 17, instead of going to New York to pas de bourrée for a living, I went to a college that didn't even have a dance program. Life happened, as it does, and one day—

## Take Up the Accordion

Five excellent reasons to keep learning new skills, no matter how old you are.

1

Novel experiences give you a rush of the reward chemical dopamine.

2

Breaking your routine can make time seem to pass more slowly. Repetition puts us on autopilot, and when we're paying less attention, the hours—and years—seem to fly by.

3

Learning something new causes the brain to build connections between neurons, replacing some of those we lose over time.

4

You actually can be bored to death: Researchers at University College London followed roughly 7,500 civil servants for more than 20 years and found that those who reported high levels of boredom early on were more than twice as likely to die of heart disease.

5

You don't have to freak out about failure: Cultivating a growth mind-set ("I'll get better!"), as opposed to a fixed mind-set ("I'm hopeless!"), fosters perseverance and resilience, according to Carol Dweck, PhD, Stanford University professor of psychology and author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. And here's the beauty of getting older: Who cares if someone sees you screw up?

despite years of idly researching how to become a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader or a Rockette—I realized I hadn't danced in a decade.

So I joined a gym that taught hip-hop dance, which I'd never tried. On day one, I took a spot up front. Within minutes, I'd been edged out by dancers straight out of a Missy Elliott video. I ended up next to the emergency exit, smacking my elbow on the fire extinguisher.

Music blared. The studio was dark. I felt lost. I'd thought I was a good dancer. In there, I wasn't. So why did I keep going back?

It took all of my being: If I zoned out, I'd run into the wall. And it forced me to be resourceful: If I couldn't remember the routine, I'd have to find a solution, such as smiling and faking it.

Five months after surgery, I returned to class, and got a high five from a front-rower. That night, I held a recital for my dog and husband. The dog was enthusiastic. The husband pretended to be. I nailed every move. It was *The Wiz* all over again—that same freedom.

## GO FLY A Kite

A 2015 review found that adults who are playful—spontaneous uninhibited, and "fun-seeking"—are better at managing stress and tend to be more motivated.



HAVE  
*Fun*