



BE CAREFUL AS YOU AGE

A letter from a former geriatric hospital director to an old friend...



I don't advocate the determination of bone density anymore, because the elderly will definitely have osteoporosis, and with the increase of age, the degree of osteoporosis will definitely become more and more serious, and the risk of fracture is bound to get bigger.

There is a formula

The risk of fracture = external damage force/ bone density

The elderly are prone to fractures because the denominator value (bone density) is getting smaller and smaller, so the risk of fractures will definitely increase.

Therefore, the most important measure for the elderly to prevent fractures is to do everything possible to prevent accidental injuries.

How to reduce accidental damage

There are some characters of the so-called secret that I summed up, which is:

Be careful, be careful, be careful again!

Specific measures include:

1. Never stand on a chair or stool to get something, even a low stool.
2. Try not to go out on rainy days.
3. Take special care when bathing or using the toilet, to prevent slipping.
4. The most important, especially for women – don't wear underwear in bathroom, taking support of the wall or other things... The commonest cause of slipping and fracture of hip joint... After bath, come back to your changing room. Sit comfortably on either a chair or on your bed and then put on your underwear.
5. While going to the toilet, ensure that the bathroom floor is dry and not slippery. Use only the commode, but

at the same time fix a hand rest to hold it while getting up from the commode seat. The same is true while taking a bath and sitting on the bath stool.

6. Be sure to clean up the floor in the house before going to bed, and take double care when floor is wet.
7. When getting up in the middle of the night, sit on the bed for 3-4 minutes, be sure to turn on the light first, and then get up.
8. At least at night or even during day time (if feasible), please, please do not close the toilet door from inside. If possible, have an alarm bell fitted in the toilet, so it can be used in case of any emergency.
9. Seniors must sit on a chair or a bed and wear pants.
10. In the event of a fall, you must stretch out your hands to support the ground. It is better to fracture the forearm and wrist than to fracture the femoral neck at the hip joint.
11. I strongly advocate exercise, at least walk, to the extent possible for you.
12. Warning for women: be very, very serious to keep your weight within permissible limits. Diet control is the most important key as keeping your weight in control is absolutely in your hands and in your mind. Eating leftovers is a common habit of women. Get away from it, instead feed the leftovers to stray cows. It is always better to stop eating with half stomach full, rather than eat till your stomach is absolutely full.

Regarding increasing the bone mass, I also advocate dietary supplements (dairy products, soy products and seafood, especially small shrimp skins, which are high in calcium) rather than medicinal

supplements.

The other way is to do outdoor activities properly, because sun exposure (under UV light) converts the cholesterol in the skin into vitamin D.

It is beneficial to promote intestinal absorption of calcium and osteoblast activity has the effect of delaying osteoporosis.

Elderly health care

Summary after investigating more than 300 centenarians, I found the data to be astonishing.

1. Almost all centenarians, who have fallen down, die within three months.
2. A fall may not necessarily lead to a fracture, but the vibration and impact force of the fall will make the whole body of the elderly come into a state of disintegration, the meridians and collaterals are blocked, and they cannot become an organic whole to achieve self-balancing regulation, resulting in rapid failure of the functions of the viscera, and thus rapid death.
3. Pay special attention to see that the bathroom is non-slippery. When going up the stairs, pay attention to the handrails and don't fall. Take care.

Therefore, the elderly must pay attention to anti-skid and anti-fall areas. One fall can cost you 10 years of life. Because all the bones and muscles are destroyed. Surgery is useless, and conservative treatment is also a drag. So, be careful.

The message may look long, but it's worth reading especially for the seniors, and those taking care of seniors.

- Dr Ramvilas Malani, Nagpur



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WHAT IS NEUROPLASTICITY?

The human brain's ability to modify

Have you heard of those astonishing stories where stroke patients relearn to read and write and athletes regain their fine motor skills following traumatic brain injuries? These feats are made possible by our nervous system's plasticity. Aspects of our brain are malleable, meaning they are adaptive and can be altered in response to changes in the structure of the brain. Because of the plasticity or the adaptability of the brain, the brain can rewire and reorganise itself after brain damage as new connections can be formed in the neural pathways present in the brain.

Neuroplasticity is a general umbrella term which refers to the brain's ability to modify, change and adapt both structure and function throughout life and in response to experience. It basically means the brain can change according to changing situations and experiences. As we grow older, we learn and understand more and more things, our experiences multiply and brain cells evolve. When we learn something new, we create new connections between our neurons. We rewire our brains to adapt to new circumstances. This happens on a daily basis. But understanding neuroplasticity is important as creating new connections and pathways in the brain can be encouraged and stimulated.

Neuroplasticity is a revolutionary concept, as for many decades it was thought that the brain was a 'non-renewable' organ and that brain cells are bestowed in a finite number which slowly die as we age and new ones cannot be produced or created. But research studies in the last 10 years has found that not only can the brain form new connections and pathways in the brain, but it can also grow or produce new neurons which is a separate phenomenon called 'Neurogenesis'.

In short, the brain is capable of change throughout life. But how do we promote neuroplasticity? We are not guaranteed

vibrant, flexible brains as we age. A lot depends on how we live our lives. The adult brain needs oxygen and stimulation to stay sharp and capable of change.

Researchers have identified three habits as facilitating neuroplasticity as we age...

The first is physical exercise. Research performed over the last 20-30 years shows that regular exercise can increase neuroplasticity of certain structures of the brain. Consequently, exercise can help us maintain and improve our thinking skills as we age. These studies show that regular exercise can help promote a healthy, sharp brain in two ways.

Exercise leads to faster processing of mental tasks and better problem solving skills. These results are very encouraging because problems with speed processing and problem solving are earliest signs of age-related cognitive decline in thinking abilities. Scientific evidence supports that many different types of exercises can contribute to improved thinking abilities. Aerobic exercises, walking, running, cycling, weightlifting, mind-body exercises like yoga, tai-chi, can contribute to improved thinking abilities. Thus, by adopting an active lifestyle, it is possible to remain cognitively alert and active.

The second is paying attention. Older adults can remember and learn new things but this requires relatively more effort. One of the common problems in old age is that we forget simple things like where we have put the keys. Paying attention is a simple (initial) step to remembering information. The key is to ensure that you have created a memory trace. The first step is to focus on what you are doing at the time. If you try to remember where you put the keys, you must first enter the house with the intention of placing the keys in a particular place. Do not multi-task as human attention capacity is a finite resource, so your capacity for remembering where you

put the keys will be diminished if you are thinking about what should be cooked for dinner.

Using multiple modes including visual and verbal cues is the most effective strategy for learning and remembering. For example, talk yourself through the steps or route to where you will put the keys and make a mental picture of the location. This process of paying attention can be applied to many general scenarios to help you remember important information and learn new skills.

The third factor that promotes neuroplasticity is learning new things. Every time you learn or do something new your brain creates a new connection. Repeating that action reinforces such a connection. The relationship between learning and neuroplasticity is two-fold. Learning new things enhances brain plasticity and because of the brain's ability to adapt to change, we are able to learn. In this sense, every time you learn something, you benefit from neuroplasticity and promote it.

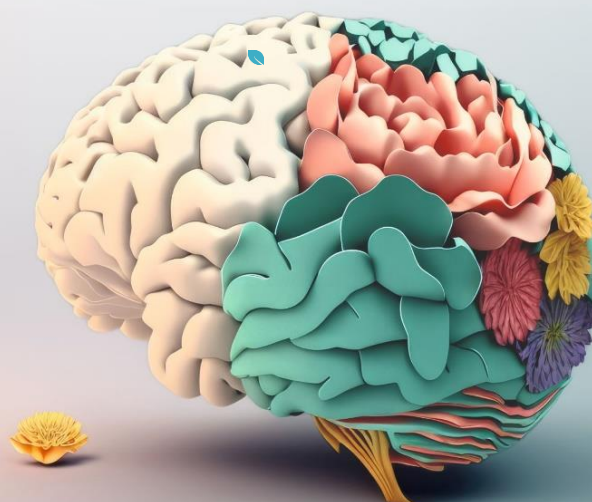
The fact that neuroplasticity can be consciously stimulated is a very encouraging sign that can help us to be mentally and cognitively active for as long as possible. A 2021 study suggests that learning a new skill, such as Braille language can promote neuroplasticity and enhance its benefits. Other examples include learning to use your non-dominant hand, playing an instrument, speaking a new language.

We need to remember that what we do and our behaviour is within our control. By practising the awakening and long-term use of our brain, we can ultimately create new neural pathways in our brain and maintain cognitive functioning as long as possible.



Ms Amruta Lovekar

Gerontologist &
Project Coordinator,
Graceful Living



AN AWAKENING!

"To be calm is the greatest asset in the world"

Ramana Maharshi said to me, "The only spiritual life you need is not to react." To be calm is the greatest asset in the world. It's the greatest *siddhi*, the greatest power you can have. If you can only learn to be calm you will solve every problem. This is something you must remember. When you are perfectly calm, time stops. There is no time, karma stops, *samskaras* stop. Everything becomes null and void.

For when you are calm you are one with the entire energy of the universe and everything will go well with you. To be calm means you are in control. You're not worried about the situation, the outcome. What is going to happen tomorrow. To be calm means everything is all right. There is nothing to worry about, nothing to fret over. This is also the meaning of the biblical saying, "Be still and know that I am God." To be calm is to be still. The Only Spiritual Life You Need Is Not To React!

I want to let you in on a little secret. There are no problems. There are no problems. There never were any problems, there are no problems today, and there will never be any problems. Problems just mean that the world isn't turning the way you want it to. But in truth, there are no problems. Everything is unfolding as it should.

- Robert Adams



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TESTIMONIALS...

- “ **Mehernosh Nariman, senior citizen, Dadar.** We are very grateful to Tulsi Trust for its support towards the physiotherapy treatment for my wife (2022). My wife and I express our sincere gratitude to the managing trustees and supportive staff for their kindness and assistance. Thanks also to Madam Pratha, Madam Rajashree and Madam Neha. God bless you all with cheer, good health, wealth and prosperity.
- “ **Mr Purshottom Patel, Kandivali Senior Association.** Thank you for your meaningful session conducted on REBT - senior citizen problems on April 25. I found the session very useful. I learned many things from this session about how to adjust to different stages in life, diverse situations, circumstances, and challenges in our daily lives. The clarity of the session was excellent.
- “ **Mr Rajan Mahadik, Kandivali Seniors Association.** The meeting held on April 25 on REBT was very relevant. It was also very well conducted. Knowledge of the subject matter was excellent. I learned many aspects of life such as that happiness comes from following positive emotions, relationships, achievements, and helping others. Things I will do differently because of this meeting are: pursue my dreams and goals; be of service to others and keep my family happy; and of course look after my health. Thank you for the wonderful session.
- “ **Mr Shridhar Shelar, Dombivali Senior Association.** The meeting held on 20 March on successful ageing at the Dombivali Senior Association was very well conducted. Clarity of presentation was excellent and it was encouraging for participants. The topic was also relevant for me. Learned new things and gathered novel information from this session.
- “ **Ms Hema Vaidyanathan, Dignity Foundation, Vashi.** Thank you for conducting such an informative meeting on a quiz on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharat* at our Dignity centre. The sessions were good. Unique questions were asked in different ways to make the program enjoyable. Thank you, GL, for creating a good opportunity and enriching the lives of seniors.

★ SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS OF GL

📌 Brain Gym Exercises

Brain Gym Exercises (part one was held at Sahabhaav Home 2, Andheri) on May 15. Ms Amruta talked about the importance of mental health, brain gym exercises, their origin and their benefits. She and Mr Damle demonstrated these exercises, which all attendees enthusiastically performed. The brain gym exercises (part one at Sahabhaav Home 3) was held on May 17. Here too, Ms Amruta talked about the importance of mental health, explained the brain gym exercises, their origin and their benefits. She, along with Ms Akanksha, demonstrated these exercises which created an all-attendees participation. Ms Amruta also told them stories and sang songs with them.

Another session on brain gym exercises with Manav Seva Sangh was held on 26 May. At the start, Ms Amruta took up a cognitive exercise for the senior residents at the home called 'Who am I'. The response to this was very positive. After that, she revised all the brain gym exercises which they had done earlier and also took up some new ones. At the end of the session she related some stories and gave examples of seniors who braved the odds and faced many challenges despite physical limitations.

★ WEBINAR

An online webinar on 'Hypertension in Older Adults' was hosted by Graceful Living on 27 May. Dr Rahul Chhabria (Cardiologist), RD Neha Kava (Nationally Registered Dietician and Nutritionist), and Dr Prem (Geriatric Doctor) were the panellists. Mr Manoj Gursahani moderated the webinar. Dr Chhabria and Dr Prem talked about hypertension being a silent killer and why it should be taken seriously. Dr Chhabria stressed the need to regularly check the blood pressure with a BP monitor. RD Neha Kava talked about how hypertension could be controlled through a proper diet and also spoke about DASH - Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.

★ GUEST LECTURE

Graceful Living hosted an online talk on 24 May by Dr Sudeshna Ray, an obstetrician and senior Gynaecologist practising since the last 24 years. She was recently awarded the Fellow of Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist (FRCOG), London as a member representative. Dr Ray talked about various issues which older women face, one of which is menopause. She also talked about physical and hormonal changes which normally occur in women. She gave tips regarding how women can be more mindful of their health. Some questions were asked which were satisfactorily answered by Dr Ray.



LAUGH ALOUD!

AGEING WITH DIGNITY AND GRACE

Tulsi Trust was established by the Chanrai family in 1975 with an aim to fulfil basic needs of the poor and needy. At a deeper level, it's more than indulging in physical activities. Health care, skills development and education are top priorities. It envisages a fair world for all, working with partners to improve health care and opportunities for livelihood, and education. Add to this, the capacity to understand another's needs and do this with utmost integrity.

Graceful Living (GL) is an arm of Tulsi Trust which came out of a realization of a social need for elderly care. After three active years, GL is now a recognized organization for those in their twilight years and has created an awareness through its activities and talks for senior citizens. GL has a social presence viz. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

ACTIVITIES OF GRACEFUL LIVING

In Partnership...

- Intellectual companionship and special care programs – includes companionship, counselling and care-giving for Dementia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's when required. These services are provided through our partners:

Echoing Healthy Ageing

Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Society (PDMDS)

- Physiotherapy sessions which help the elderly to improve their mobility and become more independent:
PRAJ-The Rehab Sphere with Dr Pratha Mehta and Dr Rajshri Lad

- Training candidates in 'elder care' in order to have professionals for the same:

MMP Shah College – elder companionship course for Sociology students

Aaji Care – Geriatric counselling course for post-graduate Psychology students

- Activities for the elderly :

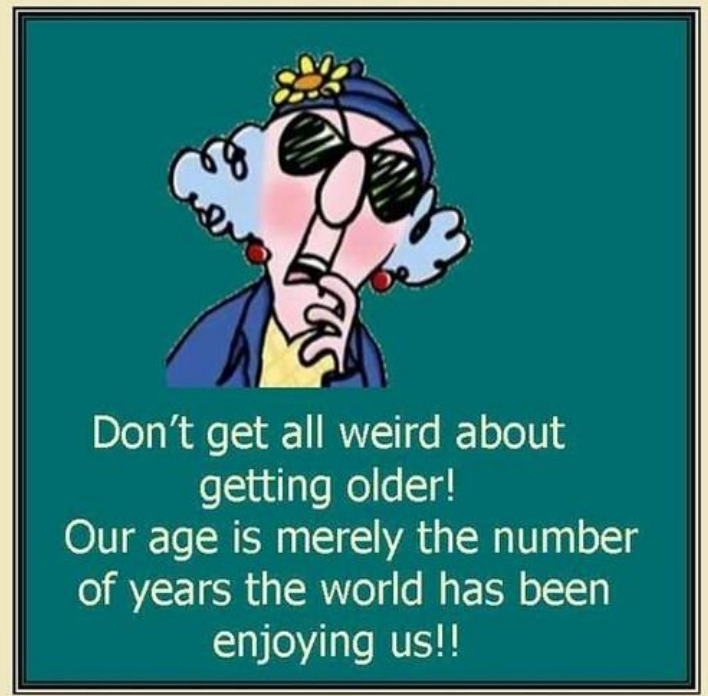
My Safe Place: online activity programs

Mrs Manasi Golwalkar: technology training

- Sensitization programs for school/college students to create an awareness of the needs and issues of the elderly.

Direct Intervention by GL...

- Support Group Meetings
- Webinars (Mr Manoj Gursahani)
- Guest Lectures by professionals/experts – mainly on Zoom
- Graceful Living Monthly Newsletter carrying important information for the elderly plus articles by known doctors and other professionals
- Online interviews with senior achievers called 'Sitare'
- Co-ordination by GL to create platforms for senior citizen organizations in the city.



VIEWPOINT

We are finally feeling a little cool. The rains started sporadically but are now entering the city of Mumbai with a force. In this issue we have put an article by Dr Ram Vilas Malani. Just the kind of reading seniors will appreciate. It is in the form of a letter from a geriatric doctor to his elderly friend. A method to prevent falls and fractures as the elderly must pay attention to anti-skid and anti-fall flooring. One fall can cost you 10 years of life, so says the writer. So please read and be careful and even more careful.

Ms Amruta Lovekar has written an interesting article on Neuroplasticity and what it means. Neuroplasticity, she says, is a general umbrella term which refers to the brain's ability to modify, change and adapt both structure and function throughout life. It basically means the brain can change according to changing situations. Wow, doesn't that sound unbelievable! The wonders of the human body! Researchers have identified three habits as facilitating neuroplasticity as we age... physical exercise, listening and paying attention and thirdly, learning new things.

We have our regular testimonials, people showing appreciation and enjoying the support group meetings. Our guest lecture was conducted on Zoom and this time we had Dr Sudeshna Ray, an obstetrician and senior Gynaecologist practising since the last 24 years. Dr Ray talked about various issues which older women face. The month's webinar was on 'hypertension in older adults'. The panellists included Dr Rahul Chhabria (Cardiologist), RD Neha Kava (Nationally Registered Dietician and Nutritionist), and Dr Prem (Geriatric Doctor). The moderator was Mr Manoj Gursahani.

Note with a spiritual lining: "The only spiritual life you need is not to react." To be calm is the greatest asset in the world. It's the greatest *siddhi*, the greatest power you can have... so said Ramana Maharishi. Make an attempt. I am in the process of working on it and it seems to work. All you have to do is be conscious when you are losing it!

Asha Gurnani Vohra
Editor

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