

Spanda® Yoga for Resilient Aging™: Move!

Our bodies are constantly renewing themselves. For instance, our blood cells are entirely replaced every three months. We get brand new muscles thrice a year. There is research to support the possibility that different aspects of our bodies are designed to fall apart in relatively short intervals to allow us to more readily adapt to change. Old cells are subject to decay and disease. Our bodies may be programmed to prune, just like we do to our rose bushes to get better blooms in the spring.

As with any delicate natural balance—our metabolism, our autonomic controls—it's important to grow back what we prune. And as we age, this becomes an imperative. Good nutrition is one aspect of this; another is movement. I don't really like calling this aspect of our healthy balance "exercise" because to me, as to many others, this conjures some feeling of obligation, discomfort, dread even. There's ways we can move regularly—daily even—that are fun, good stamina builders, engaging, and that set us toward health and long life that don't involve drudgery or flash backs to humiliation in gym class. I like to dance, walk, work in the garden. My husband likes to ride bikes. We both love a good hike. What's important is to find some ways to move that are good exercise, and that you will *want* to do and will enjoy. And even if you don't find enough joyful moving events to fill every week, and have to pop on a treadmill, what's important is to find ways to move everyday if possible—no matter what.

Here's an excerpt from *Younger Next Year*, where gerontologist Henry Lodge, M.D. explains why:

It turns out that your muscles control the chemistry of growth throughout your whole body. The nerve impulse to contract a muscle also sends a tiny signal to build it up, creating a moment-to-moment chemical balance between growth and decay within the muscles. Those two same signals are then sent to the rest of your body. If enough of the growth signals are sent at once, they overwhelm the signals to atrophy, and your body turns on the machinery to build up the muscles, heart, capillaries, tendons, bones, joints, coordination, and so on. So exercise is the master signaler, the agent that sets hundreds of chemical cascades in motion each time you get on that treadmill and start to sweat. It's what sets off the cycles of strengthening and repair within the muscles and joints. It's the foundation of positive brain chemistry. And it leads directly to . . . a heightened immune system, better sleep, weight loss, insulin regulation, fat burning, improved sexuality, resistance to: heart attack, stroke, hypertension, Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, diabetes, high cholesterol and depression.

We do have to age, but we don't have to age poorly! We can age well and slow down the process of physical breakdown. Movement is free, and we can do it any time.

Work toward moving for one hour a day six, or even seven, days a week. This hour of movement doesn't have to be all at once, you can split it up throughout the day. Do something a couple times a week that strengthens your body: lift weights, do Pilates, do strength-oriented yoga postures, buy some hand weights and elastic bands. There are lots of fitness apps these days along with online workouts.

Come to class! ☺