



A HEALTHY LIFE, FUELED BY PURPOSE

Sense of meaning keeps aging adults active, healthy and happy.

What's the key to staying healthy and happy as we age? A purposeful life.

Twenty percent of us will be over 65 years old by 2030. We're living longer and healthier lives. So a sense of meaning and usefulness will be the key to happiness and emotional well-being for many.

Aging boomers and seniors are creating such purpose-driven lives right now. A grandfather in Mokena, Illinois, a personal trainer in Los Angeles and a San Francisco-based software engineer have found and created meaning later in life in ways that they had never planned, or even thought possible.

In 2008, at age 61 and after almost 40 years in financial services, Jim Luchansky lost his job, and he was not optimistic about finding another. At the time, his daughter had 14-month-old twins and was six months pregnant.

"I was there to help out," says Jim. After she gave birth and returned to work, "I just kind of morphed into the babysitter."

For seven years now Jim has diapered, fed and chauffeured his grandchildren, "and I could not be happier," he says. Jim's transition from executive to "Grandpa Jim" - not only to his grandchildren, but to their friends at school and in the neighborhood - was unexpected, but has been rewarding in almost every way. "It's really forced me to become more structured and focus on staying healthy," he says. "I've even said to my wife that I think that's why I lost my job. So I could take care of these kids."

Daughter Gretchen adds, "going to work is so much easier knowing that they are being cared for by someone they love and who loves them."

Over the years Barbara Wade went through periods in which she dieted and exercised intermittently, "but it didn't stick, and I didn't see results because I wasn't consistent," she says. She resolved once and for all to become, and stay, health conscious. She lost 30 pounds and at 59 entered - and won - a bikini competition. At 62 she became a personal trainer and now, with a 72-year-old friend, she co-hosts a radio talk show "Classic Bikini Divas".

"Seeing others work towards their fitness goals encourages me," says Barbara. "There's nothing more important than positive thinking and a healthy lifestyle." Barbara says that her 50s were the first decade of her life in which she did not have a major illness.

Jennie Wrigley, 55, has even bigger plans. An athlete whose childhood was marked by poverty, her track coach bought her hand shoes and eventually helped her get a full scholarship to college. Inspired by him and "people who paid it forward for me, who took me under their wing and mentored me in many, many ways," and her own desire when she was in school to "go somewhere cool over the summer, for free, in exchange for labor," her financial success has made her able to create that opportunity for others.

"I want to retire with people who are socially conscious, kind and pay it forward," she says, so she is developing Sage Citizen Village, an intentional community outside of Taos, New Mexico.

Completely self-sustaining, off the grid and actively promoting social, economic and environmental responsibility, the community will offer college students room and board for the summer in exchange for work in the gardens, construction and general maintenance.

So, what does it really mean to age with purpose? It means to participate and contribute. To use time and talent to create, serve family, help others and develop community. It means seizing and creating opportunities to stay healthy, strong and engaged.