



Healthy Life Styles for Seniors: The M² N² O P= Q Theory⁽¹⁾

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Health

We adopt the operational definition of “Health” as (1) the general condition of the body and mind which includes soundness of body and vigor; (2) that which enables normal personal and social functioning of an individual.⁽³⁾ While the perception and actual status of health is highly personal and individualized, there are common components that will lead to “Healthy Life Styles for Seniors”.

The M² N² O P= Q Theory

M₁= Movement

The key here is to keep moving. Movement includes all forms of exercise such as walking, jogging, swimming, weight training and stretching as well as activities like gardening, cleaning, and sports like tennis, dance and golf. Doctors agree that regular exercise gives many physical and mental benefits to seniors. No age is too old to begin and maintain an exercise program. Even while we are watching T.V. we can move our fingers, toes, neck or any parts of our body. We can even lie on the floor and do hip and back exercises while watching the morning news.

Regular exercise increases both our physical and mental energy levels energy, can ease joint pain, and increase our flexibility and balance. Even a bit of weight training will increase strength and help with daily tasks like carrying groceries and opening jars.

Moreover, exercise also leads to a sense of mental well-being. Long distance runners often talk about the “runners high”, a sense of euphoria that often kicks in during a long run. While most seniors will not compete in a marathon, those who walk regularly talk about how a good walk “clears the head” and helps generate a positive attitude toward the other tasks of the day.



Medical professionals agree that exercise can help prevent some health problems from occurring and can improve many existing conditions. Everyone wants to help keep healthcare costs down. The solution: Get Moving!

M₂= Money

Financial security after retirement is a major concern for seniors. Even one can argue that “Money and Health” are the two major concerns for seniors to lead happy lives. An adequate amount of financial security allows a senior to maintain good health and relieve financial stresses and anxieties which in turn will allow one to pursue more personal and professional interests such as volunteerism, recreational activities, education and traveling. As we are aware, chances of hitting the lotto are slim. In order to live well in retirement requires a long range goals and planning ahead through savings, investments, retirement plan, social security and other financial resources.

N₁=Nutrition

Adequate Nutrition is one of the most important components in maintaining a high quality of life. A balanced “in moderation” meal plan seems to be best for most seniors. Typically it includes vegetables, fruits, protein, and healthy fats. While humans require these nutritional elements for sustenance, each individual has different requirements for maintaining good health through different stages of our life. Obesity and type 2 diabetes remain prevalent among seniors so avoiding for high fat, high sodium, and high sugar foods is essential. Many seniors have been asked to modify their diets due to specific individual health problems so it is important to understand these restrictions and choose and prepare foods accordingly.

N₂=Networks

We learned long years ago that people cannot survive on “Bread Alone” nor can we live well by ourselves alone. As human beings we require socialization and must stay



connected with others. This is especially true in the lives of seniors. It is not an ideal life style to stay home alone and watch TV. After retirement we need to foster close interrelationships among family, relatives, old classmates, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and community people. For example, our role as grandparents can serve to keep us connected with at least two younger generations of the family. Participation in religious groups, sporting clubs, and Senior Centers, keep us in touch with friends throughout the local community. With time on our hands, seniors can give back by volunteering with agencies such as the Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, Food Banks, local libraries, and healthcare facilities, just to mention a few. A variety of interrelationships with others makes a more meaningful daily life for seniors and contributes to the welfare of the community.

O=Optimism

To quote Norman Vincent Peale, “*Stand up to your obstacles and do something about them. You will find that they haven't half the strength you think they have.*”⁽⁴⁾

A human life is characterized by continuous challenges of success and failure, winning and losing. Just like a football team, no matter how excellent the team may be, it is not expected to win all the time. Sometimes they lose. Actually winning and losing are two sides of the same coin in human life. The question is how an individual will perceive and act with a challenging life situation. For some seniors, when they encounter difficulties they are frustrated, disappointed, and discouraged while others might interpret a difficulty as a new challenge and even consider a new opportunity to develop. Typified by the “Glass-Half-Full” attitude, an optimistic outlook is the anticipation of the best situation possible. Maintaining a strong sense of humor may help foster this optimism.

It is suggested that seniors think positively and act accordingly.



P=Proper Habits

Each of us individually has developed one's unique daily life habits as to what one eats, how much, and what kinds. Some of our habits like exercising, volunteering, and eating healthy foods contribute a quality life. Other habits such as smoking, overeating, and over drinking detract from the quality of one's life. It is never too late to adopt proper habits that contribute to our health and happiness and cease those habits that are harmful.

At the community level, a proper habit that enhances senior's healthy life style is to volunteer and be actively connected with all kinds of local community, national and international organizations. When a senior volunteers he or she not only helps the community but is also benefitting and enriching the volunteer's own quality of life by networking and actually engaging with in need of help.

Today, seniors should remind ourselves that over 50 years ago in the U.S. seniors passed away in a few years after they retired. Today, the majority of retirees can live about 25 more years. We are obliged to contribute and to earn our daily meals as long as we possibly can.

Q=Quality of Life

In summary, the product of the six factors, Movement, Money, Nutrition, Networks, Optimism, and Proper Habits result in the Quality of Life for today's senior citizens. Daily attention to each component will certainly enhance our well-being and quality of life.

Thomas A. Edison, one of America's greatest scientists and innovators had a bit of advice that is particularly pertinent to today's seniors: "*Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.*"⁽⁵⁾

Keep moving!



References:

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