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KEYS TO LIVING A LONGER, HAPPIER LIFE

What is the secret to living a longer, healthier, happier life? An article in the *AARP Bulletin* reviews the answers to this question as provided by Robert Butler, M.D., one of the country's foremost experts on aging. The 83 year-old Butler is the founding director of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health. He is a gerontologist, psychiatrist, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. His advice is founded on sound scientific research and a keen understanding of longevity. Dr. Butler asserts that research clearly shows that a healthy lifestyle can make a big difference in helping people live longer and push back or avoid the onset of chronic illness, lack of mobility, and cognitive decline. Dr. Butler's latest book, *The Longevity Prescription: The 8 Proven Keys to a Long, Healthy Life*, serves as a guide to healthy aging designed to assist readers with living longer and better lives. For example, in his book Dr. Butler prescribes "cognitive calisthenics" to maintain a healthy brain, preserve mental sharpness, and stave-off dementia. He recommends engaging in activities that challenge one's brain for at least twenty minutes each day, five days a week, gradually increasing the level of challenge over time. He suggests activities such as learning a word a day, reading a book, learning to play an instrument, learning a new language, or pursuing a passion. He also advises increasing human interactions by volunteering, entertaining, or even playing games. Maintaining a healthy brain is just one key to living a longer, happier life. Dr. Butler stresses that the other seven keys – nurturing relationships, getting regular sleep, reducing stress, varying social connections, exercising more, eating healthier, and receiving preventative medical care – are just as vital. These suggestions seem like common sense to many, but it's putting them into practice that can be difficult. Dr. Butler's book uses easy-to-follow, step-by-step strategies and checklists to assist readers with getting on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

In his interview with the *AARP Bulletin*, Dr. Butler also offers the following interesting facts on health and longevity:

- Genes account for only about 25% of an individual's health and longevity, while our environment and personal behaviors account for the rest.
- The life expectancy today of the average 65 year-old man is 81 years. The life expectancy of the average 65 year-old woman is 85 years. More than 17% of 65 year-old men and 31% of 65 year-old women are expected to live to 90 years or more.
- Within species like dogs and mice, small body size tends to extend life span, and shorter people are relatively resistant to most forms of cancer, compared with taller people. Shorter people may be relatively long-lived or at least resistant to certain major classes of disease.
- Resveratrol, the ingredient found in blueberries, peanuts, and the skin of grapes, may help extend life and is ten times more abundant in red wines than whites.
- Aerobic exercise three times a week can reduce eye pressure – a major risk for glaucoma.
- A thirty minute nap a day may reduce heart disease risk by as much as 30%. Longer naps can interfere with good sleep.
- Old age is now perceived as a “time of continuing vitality.” About 44% of Americans over the age of 65 years describe the present as “the best years of my life.”

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist families with their estate, financial, insurance, long-term care, veterans' benefits, and special needs planning issues.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard about a cat who spends his days in an interesting way. Please tell us about him.

Allie: Sure! Dodger is a 15 year-old ginger tabby who lives with his family in Dorset, England, near a bus station. At first he would hang around the station during the day and visit, but then he started hopping aboard the busses. Apparently the buses are almost like greenhouses when the sun is out, and Dodger likes the warmth. The bus drivers all know Dodger and where he lives, so they make sure they get him back to his bus stop. Dodger visits with the drivers and passengers, and sometimes he sits on the passengers' laps. His family was surprised when they realized that Dodger was riding the bus, and the bus company doesn't mind Dodger riding along. What a great story! I hope all of our readers have a Happy New Year! Time for me to check our party supplies – noisemakers, confetti, kitty champagne (Yea!)...uh oh, what's this? A party hat with my name on it – Yikes! I'd better go and hide it! See you next week!

Speakers

If you are interested in having an Oast & Hook attorney speak at your event, phone Darcee Hale at 757-399-7506. Past topics include estate planning, long-term care planning and veterans benefits.

Distribution of This Newsletter

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