

PRAISES FOR
STAYING HEALTHY, LIVING LONGER!
7 POWERFUL PRINCIPLES FOR
A HEALTHIER YOU!

As a fellow PT and business owner, I am so grateful to Mary for writing this amazing resource. When working with clients to improve their health, success will be extremely limited if we don't address multiple factors. Mary has provided such a thorough guide that discusses genetics, gut health, nutrition, sources of inflammation, stress, and my recent favorite, the extreme power we have to improve our mindset with awareness, gratitude, and going inward to find the strength we all possess inside. When you find someone who helps you tap into your own inner healer, never let them go!

—**Amy Vander Linden**, Owner, and Therapist at
Moment of Truth Physical Therapy

In her book *Staying Healthy, Living Longer! 7 Powerful Principles for a Healthier You!*, author and physical therapist Mary DiCaro, outlines seven timeless pillars of achieving perfect health. Her work is an indispensable exploration into what is needed for living with greater vitality that will be useful both for the general reader as well as any holistic health practitioner.

If you've ever wanted to understand how your mind, body and spirit actually work together, this book will help you make that connection.

By heeding the wisdom in this book, you can feel your best no matter what your age.

—**Catherine Carrigan**, medical intuitive healer,
author and host of the Natural Healing Show
for UK Health Radio

INTRODUCTION

“The journey of self-love and self-acceptance must begin with self-examination. Until you take the journey of self-reflection, it is almost impossible to grow or learn in life.”

—Iyanla Van Zant

THE AWAKENING

I am a Physical Therapist, Personal Trainer, Wellness Coach, and practitioner of Functional Medicine. In this book, I share my own story of struggling with complex, confusing symptoms that for years perplexed even the best of medical practitioners. Through my journey of pain and healing, I transitioned through some much-needed lifestyle and emotional insights. Through these experiences, I was led to help others heal on a deeper level. I felt called to write this book to share the clinical knowledge, wisdom, and personal insights I discovered. In a nutshell, *I decided to write the book I desperately needed to read during this phase of my life.*

What if I told you that pain and sickness are not a normal consequence of aging? What if there was a formula to increase your chances of having health, vitality, and a life of purpose right up until you take your last breath, would you want to hear about it? I know I would, and my guess is you might, too! In

fact, I bet there'd be lines of anxious participants, extending for as far as the eye could see!

Before we embark on a journey of healing, how would you feel if someone asked you to put aside beliefs and practices that no longer serve you and are contributing to aging your body, mind, and spirit? Are you willing to challenge limiting attitudes and habits to embrace new ideas? What if I asked you to peer deeply within yourself to discover the underlying drivers of those habits and to shift how you think about food, exercise, aging, and wellness?

The very first step on any road to transformation begins with self-awareness. Self-awareness, and a willingness to journey inward, are two superpowers we all possess that fuel positive change. As a coach, I understand that even when the rationales and scientific evidence are explained, and we know exactly what we need to do, it is still a painful undertaking for any of us to make the changes we need to make. We know what works, yet we remain stuck in difficult to change patterns. We will explore why this so often the case.

A primary issue creating this difficulty is the fact that we live in a trance of thoughts and behaviors, most of which are conditioned, habitual responses borrowed from the past. Ideas we never question, even when they no longer contribute to the life we want. We live our day-to-day lives never examining the “what” and “why” of our human condition. We are no longer as curious, open-hearted, or imaginative as we once were. We need to break the trance of our beliefs and patterned responses to live the healthier life we all deserve.

If you are ready to control what you can and cooperate with simple, proven, and time-tested principles you can dramatically increase your chances of living with greater health, energy, and purpose. There is not a pill for this, but *it is within your power to make changes that will benefit your health and well-being.*

As long as you awoke this morning, you have a purpose for being here only you can fulfill. All of us need you to show up in your best form, to live the full life you were created to live.

It may seem odd but the first condition to having a truly healthy life is courage: the courage to face what is difficult, the courage to feel your feelings completely, courage to be present in your body, heeding its wisdom and its messages, and finally, courage to withstand the challenges inherent in the transformation. *In other words, it takes courage to unleash the body's innate healing power by doing the inner and outer work that is required.* This is undoubtedly a hero's journey. I believe we can all be the heroes of our story.

If you are not satisfied with your current state of being, if your health, energy levels, and health direction are no longer aligned with your highest good, it may be time to muster some courage and change course. If you are ready, the information contained within these pages will get you started in the right direction.

I realized as a physical therapist, that within the general population, there are far too many people awakening every day with a vague sense of un-wellness; a mixed bag of aches, pains, anxiety, fatigue, loss of passion, brain fog, and lethargy. If I were to take a poll, asking how many people awakened this morning with vitality, energy, and without pain, I am sure that the numbers would be shockingly low. Unfortunately, for those entering middle age and beyond, there is almost an expectation of declining health, energy, motivation, and increasing pain. The encouraging news is this is also the time when we can make the greatest impact on our health outcomes if we learn what works and develop an action plan. It is not enough to gain knowledge; we need to *be intentional* and take decisive action.

This is an invitation to begin right where you are.

We have heard it said before that knowledge is power, but I think a truer statement is knowledge is '*potential power*'.

Knowledge becomes a powerful tool of transformation, but only when applied. If you were to read this book and not change a single thing you are doing, nothing will change for you, I can guarantee that. Any successful business venture requires a plan and inspired deliberate action, and likewise, a healthy life requires the same.

My health crisis and resulting quest for knowledge have given birth to a formula that I feel compelled to share. Learning new information provides us with the tools to look at our situation with a fresh lens, shifting us from feelings of fear and immobilization, to courage and hope.

Some say that the teacher, and likewise the writer, will communicate and teach what they most need to learn themselves. This was true for me.

This book was created to be a beacon of hope, and to create a blueprint for improved health. Most importantly it is to advance a critical conversation about healthy aging to a population caught in the cross-fires of multiple “medical interventions,” a medicine cabinet full of drugs, and an epidemic of escalating chronic disease, because of *no fault of their own*. So many of us are confused where to find answers, bewildered, and dismayed by the current state of healthcare and the various conflicting messages we receive. We realize we do not have a true health promotion system, but rather a disease care system designed to treat the body systems as separate silos, with a specialist for every organ system.

To an increasing degree, pharmaceutical drugs are emphasized for symptom management, with little attention given to root causes, risk reduction, and the natural healing capacity of the body. The practice of medicine in the United States has veered away from whole-person wellness, to controlling escalating disease states through pharmacological medications. While there is a necessity for life-saving medications for certain conditions, science has illustrated that most times, drug

“remedies” are minimally helpful, and can often be harmful, creating additional problems in their wake.

The cure we seek is usually not in the latest pill, supplement, or dietary plan but lies in a deeper understanding of what is needed to restore and maintain a healthy functioning body and mind. In the practice of medicine, we need to always consider the ‘risk to benefit’ ratio of a recommendation and adhere to the Hippocratic Oath and golden rule of health care, “*first do no harm.*”

I feel we need to shift the conversation, energy, and resources toward healing and wellness. *This book is for those who wish to learn, grow, and commit to a few important life-changing principles that can impact their health span.*

Health already exists in every cell of our body, and it is the body’s perfect design and natural inclination to move toward health once we eliminate the obstacles. Many obstacles relate to current choices, but also to past experiences and unacknowledged chronic emotional stressors. We will look specifically at what some of those obstacles are, so we can skillfully remove them.

In my practice, I have witnessed rising disease states, and an overburdened medical system that no longer treats the individual with their unique combination of genetic, physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional challenges.

I feel there is a remedy for this, but it will require upsetting the order of business as usual. It will require us to think outside the box of conventional medicine and be our own advocates. We will need to return to treating the whole person—body, mind, and spirit; a ‘whole health program’ that reunites the physical, mental, and spiritual entities and delivers a value-based *true health care model for everyone.*

This book is a labor of love for the seeker in me and to all those searching for a better way of living as they journey through life. It can serve as an educational tool to start a much

needed conversation about prevention and health, for both the public and those in the field of health care.

Bringing a book into the world is an enlightening and yet painful experience. The process is both therapeutic and cathartic, and like giving birth, it changes you at your core. While completing this book it was common for me to experience varied, and intense emotions including frustration, confusion, tears, sadness, overwhelm, doubt, joy, and exhilaration.

I am blessed to receive continual inspiration from my patients and clients. I feel commissioned to deliver a message that would enlighten the hearts of those feeling helpless or confused, as they go from doctor to doctor with confusing symptoms, declining health, and pain.

I have found that listening to patients is a critical first step toward moving in this direction. *Listening to the patient's story sets the stage for an effective therapeutic encounter and for healing to unfold.* Active listening is a lost art form but is the missing, invaluable key that unlocks the door behind which we can discover true solutions.

In the next chapter and beyond, we will explore the need to honor the story of the patient, *your story*, and I will present actionable advice and groundbreaking research in the field of health and wellness.

This book reflects a desire by the author to spread a message and is an educational tool only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional evaluation and care by a medical doctor or a licensed medical professional. Always seek the advice of a doctor or qualified health provider regarding concerns or questions regarding symptoms or a medical condition.

CHAPTER 1

INTEGRATING THE ART AND SCIENCE OF TIMELESS AGING

Part 1: Listen, the Patient Reveals the Dis-ease

Listening without judgment as an empathetic, compassionate observer opens the door for patients to reveal a story about why they are hurting or experiencing an illness. We are uniquely and miraculously created, with a physical body, a mind and spirit. When we listen to the patient with an intent to learn, a rich interconnected story emerges. The patient, endowed with intuition and internal wisdom, expresses the key points we need to know that will help them heal. It may begin with the current complaint such as, where the symptoms are located, or when they occur, and eventually expands, providing valuable information on triggering mechanisms and underlying issues.

Listening to a patient's story is at the heart of healing and caring for the patient and acknowledges the patient as an equal partner in the healing process. This is at the heart of the practice of **Functional Medicine**, and we refer to the critical parts of the patient's story as *Antecedents and Triggers*.

My passion as a therapist and coach is educating and guiding people back to wholeness, true wellness, and a life that is deeply fulfilling, healthy, and engaging throughout the lifespan.

I have three primary objectives when I work with patients and for those who are reading this book. My first goal is to create a spark that ignites a deep desire within you to actively participate in your well-being, pursuing health intentionally and proactively. Second, to provide the proven tools to address modifiable lifestyle factors at the root of many chronic health conditions; *focusing our energies on what is solvable and what we can control*. Finally, to improve your awareness of the role of nutrition, exercise, the mind and spirit in creating positive health and longevity outcomes. Unlocking the superior healing power of food, simple lifestyle changes, and restoring the resiliency of the human spirit is true, lifesaving Functional Medicine. *I feel the goal of any health program is to instill lifelong principles that promote living younger in mind, body, and spirit for as long and late as we can.*

As a wellness coach, I believe there are two basic, yet particularly important premises that serve as guiding principles when forming a client-practitioner relationship. The first premise is that clients are *naturally creative, resourceful, and lacking in nothing*. They possess all they need to be successful within themselves. They desire healing, wholeness, and a sense of empowerment, yet, because of no fault of their own, have been led astray and are unsure how to get back on track. They may lack the tools and knowledge initially, but they can realize their full health potential if given proper guidance. For those with motivation to change, I aim to create a trusting client-coach relationship in which they can rediscover the connection to themselves that has been lost along the way.

The second premise is although we are different, *we are also similar in that we are created to be active, energized, connected to our values and each other. We desire to be fully*

engaged in life and purposeful. However, how we achieve this is unique and individualized for every person.

I am encouraged by the untiring willingness of the human spirit to look for answers and remain hopeful. I believe the spirit within each of us already knows how to facilitate healing. Too often, we look outside ourselves for the answers when they are within us. I also know that you cannot simultaneously wear the hat of a victor and that of a victim; you must choose. In choosing self-responsibility and avoiding blame, it sets us free to become all we are meant to be. With personal responsibility comes glorious power, just as the reverse is true.

I learned this painful lesson myself, which is why I share my story. During the years of seeking answers through medical practices and searching for the one perfect solution to health, unwittingly I had neglected the internal work I needed to do. Our body sends us messages every day, but we need to tune in to the wisdom of these messages. I have found that the body will always truthfully reflect the subconscious or unconscious mind. We can think of the body as the ‘*container*’ of our emotions. Too often we wish to “numb” the vital, life-giving information the body is trying to share. Like ignoring a smoke detector, or disconnecting it and placing it in a drawer, we often hide from the uncomfortable, painful feelings with a ready arsenal of external props, rationalizations, busyness, numbing agents, and blame.

***“Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
knits up the o’er wrought heart and bids it break.”***

—William Shakespeare

What was most powerful for me to discover during my journey, was I could not heal my body without first respecting and honoring my Spirit. I needed to care more about feeling better and care less about the discomfort and fear of going inward. I believe this is true for all of us. Awareness, not avoidance, is the

key to unraveling some of the physical or outward symptoms we are experiencing and living a life of health and authenticity. This is rarely a comfortable process, in fact, it can be downright painful, but carries lifesaving, true healing potential. Nothing changes on the outside until an internal shift occurs. We first have to recognize when we need an internal shift.

I understand as a coach and therapist that there is no “one size fits all” treatment, dietary plan, or program, and this means we need to understand the deeper needs and differences among people. To recall the words of Margaret Mead, “Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.”

I want you to know that it is possible to move from fear to freedom, confusion to action, and from disease states to dynamic health—but we must act as willing, responsible advocates of our own well-being.

We are called to live with the curious mind and hope-filled heart of a child, understanding that our spirit and soul know the truth to aging gracefully, and we only need to unwrap the gifts they present. Awakening to the child within sets us on the journey back to wholeness, and our authentic self, which is love and light. From here we will discover empowerment and will manifest greater health, purpose, and achievement in our life.

Part 2:

Stay Strong, Wise, and Ahead of the Rising Tide

What if what you've been told about aging is wrong? While getting older is a natural part of life, it is also true that not everyone experiences aging in quite the same way. We will explore some of the reasons why this may be the case.

While conventional, allopathic medicine has brought advanced technologies and innovative diagnostic testing to the mainstream, we have also witnessed a rise in the dependency on pharmaceutical agents to control disease. While many of these

advances are positive and save lives, conventional medicine has a less than favorable track record in addressing the root causes and prevention of *chronic* diseases, which have been steadily trending upward. More importantly, it has had little influence on promoting true health and wellness through the life span.

We find ourselves today in a novel situation from a health perspective. Previously, lifesaving medicine was directed at curing life-threatening infections and healing injuries. Most deaths were because of communicable, infectious diseases, accidents, or injuries.

Today, we find ourselves in an entirely distinct health culture. *At least 70%* of all deaths are from *non-communicable* diseases directly related to food, environment, and modern-age life stressors!

There is a sense of urgency now to understand these factors, as the tsunami of disease, an aging baby-boomer population, and declining health of even younger generations are on a collision course. This will spell disaster unless we pivot to an alternative way of viewing and treating disease.

As a society we have not, even with all our medical advances, discovered the true north of aging well. The current constructs of the disease care model are not working as we continue to see record numbers of preventable lifestyle diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease, stroke, and neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

Before we explore why this is occurring, I would like you to pause and ask yourself a couple of important questions: How do you envision yourself 10, 20, or 30 years from now? What are your current beliefs about getting older and all it entails? Do you experience fear, worry, and dread when considering your life as you age? How would you 'self-rate' your current health? Is the path you are on leading you toward a destination filled with a sense of hope, purpose, contribution, energy, and vitality? Or to the contrary, are you apprehensive of the future

and what it may bring? It is time to explore and reflect on these beliefs and bring them up into conscious awareness. The reason for this self-questioning will become apparent.

If you are in your 20s, 30s or 40s there is a wonderful opportunity to prevent or reverse many potential diseases, if you dare to be intentional and pro-active. Even if you are in your 50s, 60s and beyond, and not feeling as healthy as you would like, you can reverse these trends, and manage the risk of chronic, debilitating conditions.

The field of Functional Medicine, using an individualized approach to restoring normal biology, has successfully shown the capability of reversing chronic disease trends. It is for this reason that I have embraced this model of care in my evaluation and treatment of patients.

What if you could extend your life by 10 years or even 20 or 30? What if, besides extending your life span you could also extend your “*health span*,” those years of your life that you spend free of disease and disability? There are no hopeless cases. There are however, some prerequisites. *You must become vested in improvement, which begins with an internal shift and change of focus; you must also have a vision for a healthy future.*

“Your body is your most faithful friend, one of your most valuable sources, the sacred vessel that holds your spirit. I can think of few things more worthy of your devotion.”

***—Tieraona Low Dog, MD,
Center for Integrative Medicine***

What do you need your health for, anyway? Why is maintaining good health important to you? These questions may seem strange at first, but the answers are unique to you and will determine the future decisions you will make.

There is one more question I pose to my clients before we begin on the health and wellness mission together, “*how big a part of your life is your health and wellbeing?*” Most people would quickly answer, “A great deal!” The next and equally important question is, “what are the ways you show that it is a priority?” Would someone observing, who does not know you, be able to tell you are serious about living a healthy life? Are you truly devoted to understanding all that is in your power to age with grace, health, and vitality? What are you doing to take care of yourself and safeguard a healthy future? How are you showing yourself active self-care and self-love? Let those questions marinate for now, as we move on.

Part 3:
Why You May Need to Pay Attention

*“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one
wild and precious life?”*

—*Mary Oliver*

The reason you picked up this book today may not be fully apparent to you just yet. Perhaps you are experiencing a health problem, a recent diagnosis, illness, or have received some unsettling news from your doctor and are just beginning to seek answers. Maybe you deal with physical pain and feel you can no longer experience life to the fullest and live the life you desire.

Perhaps, it may just be that you are over the age of 40, looking toward your future years and would simply like a way to grow older with vigor, vitality, health, energy, dignity, independence, joy, and purpose. Whatever the reason, you will take away some practical life-changing suggestions if you are willing to do the necessary work. It is not inevitable that we grow old and sick, instead, we can grow old and be well.