

A Different Theory of Aging How To Use It To Our Advantage!

By Lane Sebring, M.D.

Everywhere I put my stethoscope on this guy, all I heard was tight whooshing sounds in his carotid, radial and femoral arteries and even his renal arteries in his lower back. They were as hard as the pipes he fit together as a plumber before he retired two weeks earlier. His blood pressure was running 270/240. I'd never had seen blood pressure that high before, and hadn't seen it that high since. His heart was two thirds the width of his chest. His legs were so swollen from kidney failure, they weeped and his socks were always wet. This guy was mad. "Why do people keep coming in here to see me," he said as he sat on the side of his hospital bed. "I don't get sick, I'm going home, this is stupid." 62 years old and he was done. Multiple organ failure, at this point even his brain didn't seem to work very well. He was a two pack a day smoker and a twelve pack of beer every day after work. He was just 62, but he looked like a high mileage 75 year old.

About that time, his wife walked into the room in her green jogging outfit, carrying a plastic biggie of celery sticks, carrot sticks, and another one with what looked like chicken breasts. She walked over, sat down in a chair and began reading Prevention magazine; in your face. I can only imagine the conversations between these two. She said they were high school sweethearts and he had never missed a day of work. If he had chosen to live his life this way, I could understand it, but I'm not sure that he fully knew what he was doing. Directly across the hall was the reciprocal situation; 67 year old woman, three pack a day smoker. One of the resident physicians I was learning with said, "My gosh, she looks like she's 95, she's so frail." Then in came her husband in his "green jogging outfit." Neither one of these patients ever left the hospital, but about two weeks into their stay one of the girls in my medical group said, "Hey! Guess who I saw having coffee together downstairs in the cafeteria?" That experience never left me and I wondered, what was the difference between the patients and their spouses? Now I believe the answer is organ reserve.

Before a person has any signs or symptoms of kidney failure, they had to have lost over 80% of their original kidney capacity. Before a person has any signs or symptoms of Parkinson's disease, they had to have lost over 80-90% of the *substantia nigra*, the part of the brain involved with Parkinson's.

We have a lot more organ capacity than we need when we are younger and the problem is we think we are getting away with bad habits, but we are not. We're eating up organ reserve. As we age, our total organ capacity falls. This is not a problem initially, because our functionality is not affected until we've lost about 80% of our organ capacity. So time goes on, as we are losing capacity, having less and less, it's not a problem, not a problem, still not a problem. Then one day, uh-oh, we have got a problem because we've gone below the capacity of the organ to handle our daily needs. It makes no sense, either from a design point of view or an evolutionary point of view

that we have a cardiovascular system that's good for 75 years and a central nervous system that's good for 200. We are supposed to hit the wall with all our organ systems at the same time with little loss of functionality until that time.

If we look at wild animals, two weeks before they die of old age, they are 90-95% as fast as they were at their fastest. We all know the 96 year old who was found dead in the garden and he had made his own breakfast that morning.

If you study hunter-gatherers, those people who are still living in the woods, hunting and gathering on a daily basis, they can't handle a downward decline after 30 years old. They can live to be 70 and 80 plus years old. In fact, in the Venezuelan jungle, one of the last five groups of hunter-gatherers remaining on the planet, the young men typically have more than one wife in their lifetime because they get married the first time when they are 13 or 14 and their first wife is usually about 60 years of age. What does that tell you about the health of a 60 year old hunter-gatherer woman?

If you were on a pristine part of the planet, peering through the trees and you saw, in a clearing, a wild animal, one thing you would fully expect is that the animal would be very healthy. If you saw that the animal was suffering from some chronic disease you would say to yourself, "I'm outta here, this is an evil place," yet we expect that after 30, we would begin to decline and eventually develop several chronic diseases. This is typical, but is it natural? Is it inevitable?

There was a doctor who did autopsies on people that lived to be 100 or over and his observations were very astute because he said that these people have all the problems of aging but that everything got old evenly. It seems therefore, to make sense that we should discover if we have any weak systems and support them, so everything gets old evenly. Do everything we can do to prevent eating up organ reserve at an irregular or too rapid of a pace, so that we hit the wall with all of our systems at the same time, maintaining functionality in more of a square wave pattern with a rapid aging at the end rather than a downward decline from 30 years old, saying "you mean tomorrow's gonna be worse than today?"

To maintain your organ reserve, the evidence shows you should eat lean muscle meats, fish, chicken, lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts, reduce or eliminate grains, beans, potatoes, and dairy. (We are not designed for dairy after 3 years old, isolated whey is an exception to this.) Get a good night's rest, drink lots of water, think good thoughts, do that which you truly enjoy doing, discover through testing and family history if you possibly have any weak systems, then do what it takes to support any weak system, so everything gets old evenly.