



beyond surviving *there's thriving*

WHEN IT COMES TO LIFE EXPECTANCY, 30% MAY BE DOWN TO GENETICS, BUT THE OTHER 70% IS DOWN TO US. IT'S EASY TO ENHANCE YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE.

by Colleen Kennedy

If you're interested in enhancing your quality of life as you age, read on.

Energy levels tend to decline as we age. We are effectively slowly deteriorating from youth to old age as we become more susceptible to the negative effects of stress, physically, mentally and emotionally. But don't allow this notion to let you rest on your laurels. It is a fact of life that we age, but we can slow down this process and improve our quality of life by changing how we deal with the stressors.

Why do certain cultures enjoy longer life expectancies than others? Various hotspots around the world have been identified in a worldwide study undertaken by National Geographic and some of the best longevity researchers in the US. These areas have been named

Blue Zones, where it's not uncommon to see people living active healthy lives beyond 100 years. The original zones are the Italian island of Sardinia; the Greek island of Ikaria, known as the island where people forget to die; Loma Linda in California, home to the Seventh-Day Adventists; Okinawa in Japan and Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica.

What do these areas have in common, besides their sandy beaches and turquoise seas of course? People living in these areas experience less stress and more socialising; they put a strong emphasis on family; they eat a fresh natural plant based diet with very little red meat; they exercise daily; and they live their lives with a sense of purpose and a strong spiritual belief system.

In other words, they live a naturopathic life. There's nothing too difficult to achieve here, it's just a balanced way of life which sees people respect themselves and their surroundings.

So, although 30% of our life expectancy is down to genetics, the other 70% is up to us and we can help ourselves slow down the ageing process through good nutrition and the use of plant medicine.

We see from above that a fresh, plant-based diet is the way to go, but why? Plants, as our primary fodder, provide us with numerous phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants; which are top of the list of specific anti-ageing ingredients as they offset free radical damage to the cells. Research now

verifies that plant-based diets reduce our risk of degenerative diseases and provide our cells with fuel for renewal, protection and optimum functioning.

What is of equal importance is the reduction of stress in our daily lives. It is as much a physical metabolic process as it is an emotional one. Stress will basically interfere with how your body metabolises your food into energy. Even if you are eating a great diet, you may not be absorbing all those wonderful nutrients due to the stress levels in your body, leaving you tired and irritable.

So we do need to take the foot off the gas a little, breath and relax, learn to laugh at ourselves and take time out to socialise with others. Herbal medicine has a bounty of plants that help us adapt to the stressors around us. Sometimes we cannot change a situation but we can change our way of dealing with it. Categories that are of importance here include Adaptogens, Nervines and Bitters.

Adaptogens are numerous and help our endocrine systems bring a balance back into our lives, support the adrenal glands and enhance our immune activity, strengthening us from the core.

Ones I use commonly in my clinic are Ashwaganda, Damiana, Siberian Ginseng, Shatavari, Reishi, and Tulsi.

Nervines are a category that support our nervous system, help us to unwind, also relax our musculoskeletal system and our digestion. Some of my favourites are Skullcap, Oats, Passionflower and Valerian.

Bitters These are herbs which stimulate the bitter receptors on the tongue, thereby stimulating a cascade of digestive secretions through the gastro-intestinal tract. Our native Dandelion root is a fine example of this type of herb.

Each herb has an affinity with different aspects and areas of our body. It is short sighted to pin an ailment to a single herb, because that single herb will have numerous actions from the various phytochemicals therein, that will exert some physiological change within the body and may interact positively or negatively with other herbs and/or medications.

Because we all react differently to our various stressors it can be useful to

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get a personalised plan from a Herbalist who will help in deciphering which herbs may suit best for your constitution.

Always check with your Herbalist or GP when on any medications.

This information has been brought to you by CNM Naturopathic Nutritionist and Herbalist Colleen Kennedy. Colleen also lectures at CNM Dublin and Galway based campus. If you would like to find out how you can train at CNM for an exciting new career in Naturopathic Nutrition, Herbal Medicine or Acupuncture, join us at our next free open evening. Reserve your place online at www.naturopathy.ie College locations; Dublin, Cork & Galway

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