
Are You Too Old to Be Well?

You're never too old to be well – regardless of the physical illnesses or limitations you have. You do not have to stop being well, just because your body is sick. In fact, satisfaction, joy and peace of mind can always grow.

Wellness at eighty is different than wellness at eight or eighteen. An elder, whose diabetes and hypertension are under control, can be well and happy. An adult who is dying can be satisfied and content. This book will show you how.

This book can help elders, their families and their aides to be well in mind, body and spirit. When one type of health is afflicted, the others can pull you back to wellness. For example, if you've tried all the strategies in this book but your elder is still bed-bound, the "satisfaction skills" can still put a smile on your faces and a glow in your hearts.

The book provides concrete steps, based on nationally accepted standards for quality care, to deal with twenty common problems of the elderly, such as incontinence and confusion. It will also help you to control diabetes, high blood pressure and depression.

Are You Too Old to Be Well? offers two ideas, lots of well-researched information, and two tools to help the elderly – and yourself.

The ***ideas*** are:

- **Being Your Best** – a care plan system (see pages 10-41) to improve the health of the elderly - as well as your own health and happiness. Just remember a simple rhyme:
 - Remember *goals* and
 - Check your *signs*.
 - Take some *steps* and
 - *Learn* each time.

Being Your Best is a "continuous improvement" plan. It encourages you to adjust your steps based on what you've learned. It will work to improve any aspect of your health: physical, emotional or spiritual.

Being Your Best is a **care plan** that can help you to manage any illness. For example, the management of diabetes and hypertension requires different medicines, but the management steps are always the same:

- Remember your **goals** to motivate yourself.
- Check your blood sugar, blood pressure or other clinical **signs**.
- Take the **steps** (e.g., healthy lifestyle; medications; assistive devices and other resources) recommended by your doctor.
- **Learn** what works by tracking your signs and sharing that information with your doctor and care team.



- The **Satisfaction Skills** (pages 21 – 27) a method to manage stress, improve communication and enhance the love or spirituality you feel. These steps are:
 - Awareness
 - Affirmations
 - Assertiveness
 - Acceptance

These steps can help you solve problems, or find some peace of mind when problems are beyond solving.

Information about the twenty most common health problems of the elderly are in **Warning Signs and BEST Questions** (pages 44-67). These problems include:

- Stress, mood and behavior (e.g., dementia, delirium, stress, moods)
- Social and Spiritual satisfaction (e.g., increasing isolation)
- Physical abilities and problems (e.g., falls, incontinence)



The **tools** in this book will help you combine the “ideas” and the “information.” They are:

- **Plan with a Partner** (pages 12, 42). Even if your elder is miles away, this worksheet can help you understand, support and monitor the plan. It can also help you to motivate the elderly. The “Partnership Planner” should be used for:
 - Motivation
 - Communication with the elder, physician and the care team
 - Weekly or monthly tracking of a few factors
- **Steps and Signs Learning Log** (pages 42-43). This allows “hands-on” caregivers to track daily or hourly changes in any sign or symptom; and assists care team leaders in determining what “steps” work best. The Learning Log should be used for:
 - Daily tracking of many factors
 - Communication with the elder, the physician and care team

Improving the Quality of Life ...and the End of Life

The information and tools presented here will help you to improve the quality of life. However, some components, such as the satisfaction skill and the advance directives information found on page 67, can also help you to enhance peace of mind at the end of life.



Understanding Isn't Enough!

If this was a book about playing the piano, it would only take a few pages of reading for you to “understand” how each note on a music sheet relates to a specific white or black key on a piano. But would that understanding make you a musician? Of course not!

Similarly, you’ll get little benefit from this book if you use it just to *understand* how you or an elder can be well. But if you commit yourself to *practicing* the satisfaction skills plus the other steps each day, you’ll find -- like a musician who practices daily -- that you can create new harmonies in your life.

Work on yourself first. You’ll gain better health of your mind, body and spirit. And your example will be a more powerful motivator than any book.