

JUL/AUG  
2020

# Health

REAL  
WELLNESS

## Jordana Brewster

ON HER HIT MOVIES,  
RAISING A FAMILY, AND  
THE IMPORTANCE  
OF SLOWING DOWN

RUN, BIKE, OR  
LIFT—WHAT'S THE  
RIGHT EXERCISE  
FOR YOU?

BLEND A BETTER  
SMOOTHIE BOWL

SWEAT HAPPENS!  
CARING FOR  
YOUR SKIN WHEN  
IT GLISTENS

HOW LIFE'S  
TOUGHEST  
MOMENTS MAKE  
US STRONGER

**SOAK  
UP  
SUMMER**  
36 WAYS TO ENJOY  
THE SEASON





## HOW TO LIVE LONGER

These six strategies reveal what you can do to enjoy good health for decades.

BY GINNY GRAVES

**WE KNOW THAT** eating a nutritious diet, exercising regularly, and sleeping a solid seven-plus hours a night can add years to your life. But what else can you do? We found six lesser-known, life-lengthening strategies that can help you stay vibrant and active into your 80s and 90s.

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### Turn stress into your ally.

Research shows that stress increases inflammation, a sign of aging. Just as bad: It shortens your telomeres, the longevity-promoting DNA caps that protect the ends of your chromosomes

from deteriorating—much like those little plastic caps on the end of your shoelaces prevent fraying. Chromosomes are DNA molecules tucked inside the nucleus of every cell in your body. But every time chromosomes copy themselves, which they do repeatedly, telomeres shorten naturally—until eventually they're too short to protect your DNA. Stress just accelerates the process. In other words, telomere length is one indication of your biological age.

But what's been lost amid all the scary stress news is something remarkably positive, says Elissa Epel, PhD, the director of the Aging, Metabolism and Emotions Center at the University of California, San Francisco, and coauthor of *The Telomere Effect: A Revolutionary Approach to Living Younger, Healthier, Longer*. "If you change your mindset about stress, it can actually protect your telomeres," she says. It's all about framing stressful situations as challenges instead of threats. "Research shows that stress often evokes a mix of challenge and threat," says Epel, "but those who feel more challenged than threatened tend to have longer telomeres." So next time you start feeling those heart-pounding, high-alert, frantic sensations, tell yourself it's your body gearing up to give you plenty of energy to tackle the challenge you're facing. "You can even say to yourself: 'I'm excited. This is good.'" she says. You may still feel some worry and anxiety, but if you can tip the scales toward a more positive view, you'll benefit.

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### Prevent injuries.

"It's important to [continually] maintain your fitness as you age because it helps you avoid muscle loss. But when people get injured, they stop exercising and never get back into it," says Avram Nemetz, MD, an internist at Elitra Health's Manhattan Center for Life and Longevity in New York City. "Many of the routine body aches we get as we age are due to [muscle]



imbalances, and they put you at risk for injury when you're working out." By age 40, he explains, many people who have spent lots of time sitting at a computer develop neck pain due to disproportionately strong trapezius muscles, which are the ones that start at the base of your skull and run halfway down your back. People also develop lower back pain from weak abs and knee pain from weak quadriceps. "Muscle imbalances like these impair your movement, so they make exercise more painful and injuries more likely," says Dr. Nemetz. To minimize the risks of sitting long hours, Josh Ray, a NASM-certified corrective exercise specialist at the Ranch Malibu, advises working at a standing desk (even a couple of hours can help) or at least swapping your chair for a stability ball, which keeps your core engaged. He also suggests putting a sticky note on your computer screen to remind you to sit up straight, keep your shoulders back, tuck your chin slightly so your neck aligns with your spine, and breathe deeply. Ray also recommends this energizing move adapted from qigong: Every hour or so, stand up straight and inhale deeply into your belly. As you slowly exhale, gently bounce from your knees, shake your wrists, and waggle your arms. The blood pools and the musculoskeletal system becomes tense when you sit too long, he says. Shaking out your body stimulates blood flow and relaxes clenched muscles.

3

### Embrace *ikigai*.

This Japanese term roughly means "reason for being." It's a core trait of people in many Blue Zones, a term made popular by Dan Buettner, author of *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest*, and used to describe geographic regions that are home to some of the longest-living people around the world. "In many Blue Zones," says Buettner, "people's lives are imbued with purpose—and people who have pur-

pose are more likely to take their medications, stay physically fit, eat healthy, and stay engaged mentally and socially." Buettner goes on to say: "A lot of stress comes from being rudderless in life. Having a sense of purpose gives you ballast in hard times, like when a loved one dies or you lose your job." To find your *ikigai*, try this: Divide a sheet of paper into three columns. Devote one column to each of these lists—10 things that describe your values (for example, family first or protecting animals), 10 things you love to do (such as reading or completing triathlons), and 10 things you're good at (like organizing or listening or caring for others). Don't overthink it; just jot stuff down. Then draw circles around the ones that are similar. "Identifying commonalities can point you toward what fulfills you most and how you should be spending your time," he says. "It's nice if you find a sense of *ikigai* in your career, but if you don't, try to find it in your free time." Whether it's by volunteering for an organization you believe in or carving out time for your favorite hobby, "we all do better when our lives are infused with things that light us up," says Buettner.

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### Be kind.

You've probably heard that people who do volunteer work may live longer—evidence that kindness matters. But other research points to its protective effects as well. For instance, University of Michigan researchers found that providing emotional support to a spouse as well as practical support, like running errands and doing other tasks for friends, neighbors, and relatives was associated with a reduced risk of dying—possibly because those acts of kindness increased positive emotions, which are good for heart health. What's more, a 2019 study published in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* found that sending kind thoughts to others can be a boon for longevity, too. They enrolled 142 midlife adults

## THESE WOMEN IN THEIR 80s AND 90s COULD KICK YOUR BUTT

### Molly Hayes, 87, BOZEMAN, MONTANA

Has completed 337 triathlons—mostly Olympic distance (a 1.5K swim, a 25-mile bike, a 10K run)—since her first one at age 54.

**Advice** "Always have a goal—something you can really visualize—and commit to training for it and completing it. You'll be so proud of it you'll be hooked."

### Kathy Bergen, 80, LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE, CALIFORNIA

Has been competing in high jump and sprints in track and field every year since she started at age 54, and still holds the high jump and outdoor 100- and 200-meter records in the 70–74 age group.

**Advice** "When you're hurt, baby yourself. Don't play through the pain. See a good physical therapist, and give your body time to heal. Then get back at it."

### Pat Wiedenmann, 90, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Has competed in the National Women's Tennis Organization tournaments since age 65, and won the Gold Ball (first place) in doubles in 2016.

**Advice** "Keep a positive attitude—say 'I can' instead of 'I can't'—and stay engaged with life. I set up the schedule and organize club tennis games during the season; I play competitive bridge two or three times a week. Your mind needs to be as strong as your body."

### Jean Troy, 92, SUN CITY CENTER, FLORIDA

Has been competing in the U.S. Masters Swimming since 1975, was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 2014, and holds 39 Masters Swimming National Records and three world records.

**Advice** "On days when you don't feel like exercising, remind yourself how great you feel when you're done, not just physically, but mentally. Whatever problems you had seem like something you can cope with and handle."