



The Secret of Long Life

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Dear guests from Europe and Turkey, Dear host, teachers and students of Nazilli Anadolu Lisesi,

Ciao, Hola, Alo, Cześć, Merhaba...

It's a real honor to be here with you. And thank you very much for inviting me to be a part of such an inspiring organization.

When I have been first invited to make a talk on the topic “The secret of long life”, I had concerns since I didn't know anything about it. I should think more before rejecting that request. Then I have started to convince myself with some persuasion sentences. As being a doctor, I know the health hazards that shorten the life duration. As being an enthusiastic listener of my patients, I hear a lot about life and death, health and sickness. As an ordinary life lover, I try hard to find joys of life. So, I might make a talk on “Not adding years into life, but adding life into years” Are you ready to learn my experiences and knowledge that I gained in 50 years, almost the middle of my life...

I want to focus on “healthy, happy, long life”.



First, we ought to avoid the health hazards to live longer, even the longest... You know what the “best killer” is. Yes, smoking... To live a long and healthy life, we have to say “no,” even “never” to smoking and substance abuse. The better is not to start smoking. If one had already started with misfortune, quitting smoking immediately would be the best option. Smoking not only shortens our life by around 10 years, but it also lowers the quality of the life in old age, as smokers are more likely to suffer from debilitating illnesses. The volatile indifference of youth has always a heavy bill for middle ages. Old ages? Those who neglect their health can rarely reach old ages anyway!

For avoiding another risk factor, the “obesity”, to stay physically active would help us besides a healthy diet. Do which exercise makes you happy and eat “rainbow” as many of the centenarians mentioned about. At that point, we’d better talk about the chance of Nazilli. You will appreciate your own daily intake listed among the health foods: fruits and vegetables, olive oil, fresh meat from the animals raised and fed in a natural way, high-fat dairy products include cheese, cream, butter and full-fat yogurt, eggs, nuts and seeds (especially walnuts). It has been suggested frequently to eat them, but stop eating when you feel about 80% satisfied for a healthier meal and to eat your smallest meal in the early evening. Moving naturally throughout the day-walking, gardening, doing housework-is suggested to be a core part of healthy lifestyle.

Young people can be attracted by the too much publicized image of unhealthy foods; they can even consider such kind of consumption as a way to manifest their difference against family culture. Nevertheless these global brands which do not bring anything useful for our body, ruin our metabolism and cause a rapid losing of health in early ages.



For the health of our body, we have to be responsibly prudent, too. Primary prevention is to know the risks (injuries, infections, diseases, disability, and death) and to eliminate them from the life. Secondary prevention can be defined as the action taken prior to the onset of the disease, which removes the possibility that the disease ever occur. Health education, vaccination, nutritional interventions, control of environmental hazards (for example air pollution), safety food and water, life style and behavioral changes (sleeping well, eliminating stress etc.) are some of the methods for secondary prevention. Additionally to get the diagnosis and proper treatment as soon as possible, and for that purpose to be alert about the signs of the diseases and disabilities is included. The last one, third prevention is treatment and rehabilitation for the patients whose diseases and disabilities advanced beyond their early stages.



I had a patient by whom I have changed my life perception. She was 18 years-old when I first made a fatal diagnosis for her and without saying her I knew there was 3 to 5 years life expectancy ahead. After she deceased at 3 and half years of the disease, her mother brought me her poems that she wrote, because I had suggested once.

Here is one of her poems. Says me a lot, and I hope it will pass you those wise advices, too.

I should run
Free as a bird
Know I can't
Anyhow still could tramp

I love walking
But envy other people
When they watch me closely
I decry,
Even get angry.

They stand when can run easily
Don't understand them
Stop walking for empathy
Lose my patience while waiting
The day I run eternally

I have been touched by learning that she couldn't understand healthy people who stopped walking even they could run. But she still had the hope for the days that she could run, and while waiting she didn't give up walking.



RUN WHILE YOU CAN

There are lessons taken from the blue zones' inhabitants, who live longer and healthier, and as an expected consequence happier. One of them, and to me the most important one is to have a purpose, aim, or target, whatever you call it. Knowing why we wake up in the morning makes us healthier, happier, and adds up to seven years of extra life expectancy.

Eubie Blake (a Jazz musician, died at the age of 96) mused “If I would know I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself” Yes, we have to take care of ourselves for the possibility of living the longest. This is an “obligation”. However, according to WHO definition: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

For social well-being, we have to develop good social ties with a supportive community. Having close and strong family connections (with spouses, parents, grandparents, and grandchildren) is common with centenarians. You may think that in our age of information, we have numerous friends. Yet apart of these virtual links we need to establish real human relationships, not only electronic connections! What bounds us to life with enthusiasm is the solidity and strength of our real relationships with those we love and share special moments and feelings.

Are you close with an extended family, or with a volunteer social group or prosocial community? Do you have a worthwhile career or positive educational endeavor? Great. Friends provide emotional support, which helps us deal with stress, and feeling loved boosts production of feel-good chemicals dopamine and oxytocin, which promote brain growth, helping to deal with ageing. “You need to figure out who will be there for you when you have nothing to offer but yourself. That is a friend.”



It is very important to choose our partner wisely, your lifelong partner will mean a lot if you end up needing care of someone or caring to beloved one. We'd better choose a supportive, kind, loving, smart and interesting partner to be in love forever.



There is even also speculations that those famously healthy Mediterranean people healthy not because of their diet, but because they enjoy high level of social interaction, and deep sustaining emotional networks.

The last part is mental well-being. Lifelong learning and also sharing what we had learnt will help us to stay active intellectually, even in the older ages, and it protects our brains from shutting down before the death, literally. The enthusiasm to start learning a new language, or finding a new topic that we hadn't interested in previously, fighting with the barriers of body and brain to open them to new hobbies and studies is the key for mental health and longevity. Old people have a lot to offer to the community, by the way of advice, story-telling, passing on history. People who are thoughtful, detail-focused and like to put everything back in its rightful place tend to live longer! It's a basic rule: What is functioning and working, it shines and survives.

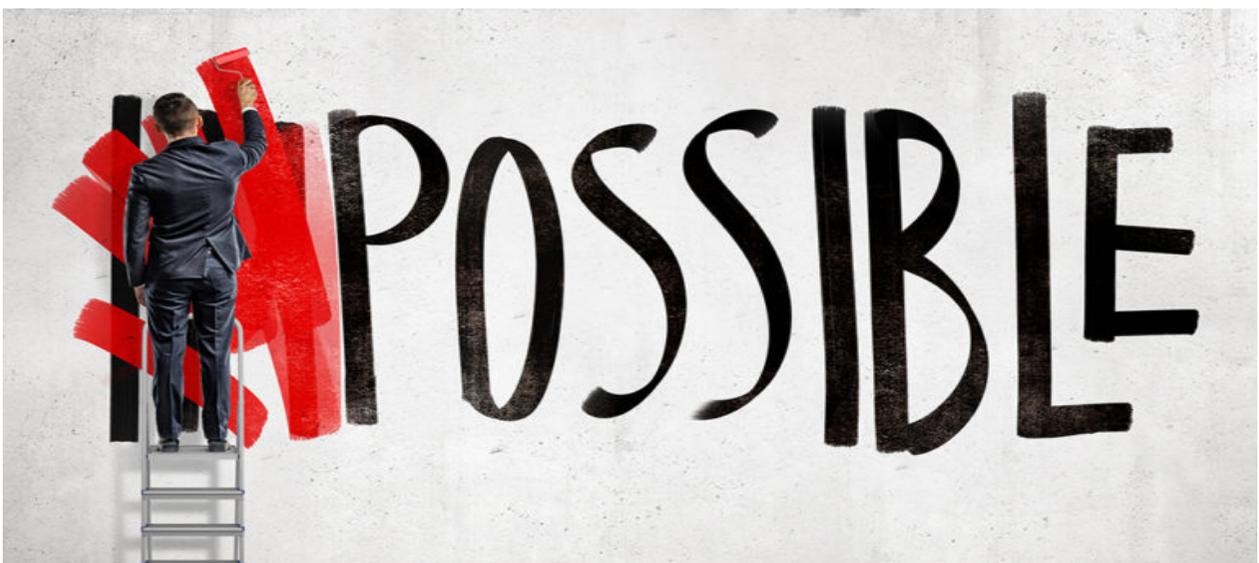


Laughter, being optimistic, stress-free attitudes are all essentials for longer and happier life.

Laughter boosts the immune system, slashes stress hormones and stimulates killer T-cells, which fight cancer. But as adults we only laugh an average of five to fifteen times a day (with an optimistic guess), while children can easily clock up over a hundred daily giggle bouts. Keeping the child in our soul alive might help to use those giggles as a hand to take us among centenarians.

Optimists live 12 years longer than pessimists.

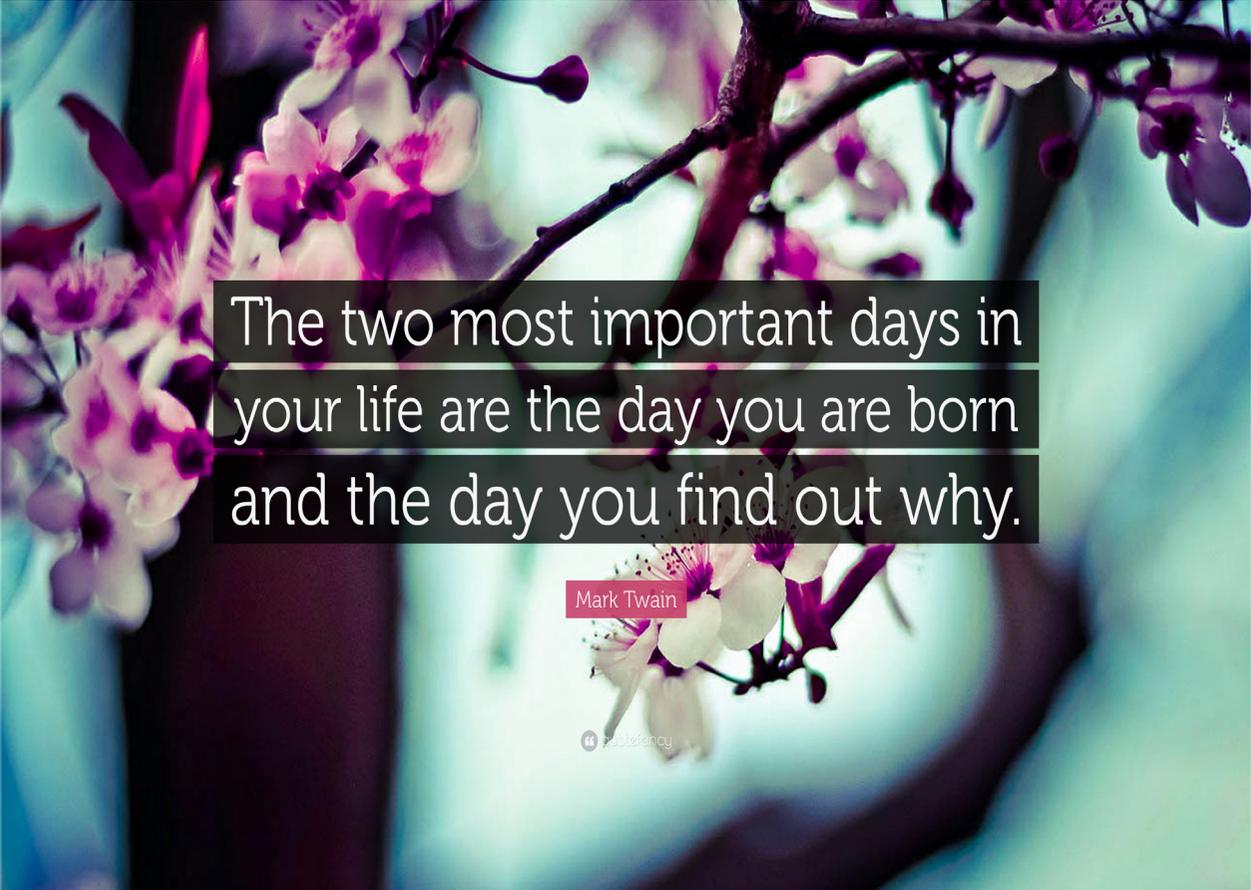
Stress-relieving rituals, whatever works with each of us, should take place in our daily routines.



The life expectancy is increasing years by years, but we have to keep in mind that science cannot extend the beginning part of the life, but the end of it. So we'd better take care of our body, soul and mind to have them accompanying us in their best conditions for a long living. It is all about the difference between “just breathing” and “having a life” ...

I am not saying those suggestions are easy to accomplish. That's why there are winners and losers. It's the pathway we have chosen in the early years of life and we have insisted on walking the rest of it what makes the difference. At least, it seems to me, that you are one of the best placed ones, here in Nazilli, country of plenitude in natural resources.

According to my thoughts shaped by experiences and life lessons, for “adding life to the years” we must add worthwhile or meaningful acts to every moment of it. There is one life, no matter how long, it deserves all the effort we made to say “I lived the life I liked the most!” at the end.



The two most important days in
your life are the day you are born
and the day you find out why.

Mark Twain

quotation

I want to finish my talk with a poem of my patient.

**A butterfly's life
Limited to one day,
But full of moments,
Free as its wings.
A life painless...**



**What if
We also had one-day-life?
Can't think about.
What fits into that day?
Desires, beyond the expectable
Difficulties, easily called as obstacle,
Regrets from what was inevitable.**

**Yes, as my doctor said
«Even it is just one day to live,
It shouldn't be wasted by grief»**



**Life is already short,
Death might be just close.
If I would die tomorrow,
Today was the day bestowed.**

**Vivi molto,
Vive mucho,
Traieste foarte mult,
Żyj duzo,
Çok yaşayın...**