**Five Surprising Health Tips for Women  
(How to Stay Sane in a Stressful World)**

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I’m no expert on women, but I know a thing or two about humans in general. So, I’ve asked my colleague, Danielle Palli, to give me more help than usual to make sure this article meets the reality check for women readers.

We’ve all experienced a lot of change in our lives over the last three or four decades, but women … you have indeed come a long way. And, that’s a good thing, but it’s also associated with huge amounts of stress. So, how to manage all that? Let’s take a closer look at what can calm the storm of change.

**Elements of Health That Men and Women Share**

We know there are basic elements to being healthy that men and women both share. For example, as humans, we know we have an uncompromising need to *move*, and move a lot. This is a beyond-the-gym alone requirement to keep our bodies in motion a good part of the day, activities that hopefully include some cardiovascular exercises, muscle strength and flexibility to keep us limber.

As for dietary similarities, we all need a daily dose of fruits, nuts, vegetables, whole wild grains, fish and some meat. A Mediterranean diet is a good reference for how to eat this way, and it’s what the trillions of cells that make us the magnificent beings we are must have regularly.

Lastly, we know that we all need enough rest; we thrive when we are socially connected, and we must work our brains in the same way that we work our bodies to retain high cognitive function throughout life.

In my recent article, “[5 Surprising Health Tips for Men](http://www.ehow.com/ehow-extras/blog/five-surprising-health-tips-for-men/),” we discussed the benefits of us men building strength of character, being flexible in our thinking, being social, listening more than we talk, and not competing blindly and taking unnecessary risks. But, what about the women in our lives?

**Five Surprising Health Tips for Women**

1. **Explore What Gives You Purpose** (…and delete the word “should” from your vocabulary). While finding meaning and purpose is important for everyone, it’s particularly important for women to ask themselves, “What do I want from life? What brings meaning to my life?” For a large span of our history, many women have had other people’s purpose placed on them. “She *should* go to college. She *should* get married. She *should* work, but just for so long, and then she *should* stop and have babies.” And, after the kids are grown … then, what *should* she do? People are often thrown a curveball as soon as a woman says, “I don’t think I want to get married.” Or, “I don’t plan on having children,” and even, “I work and my husband is a stay-at-home dad.”

Defining what it means for a woman to have purpose in her life translates into a more enriching life. And, those who have purpose tend to have better health outcomes, feel less anxiety and are at a decreased risk for depression. We live in a time where the perceptions of woman’s roles in society are changing. Embrace it, and take time to explore what brings the unique YOU happiness.

1. **Adapt to Your Changing Body** – Women put so much pressure on themselves to have the same body as they did when they were in their twenties. “Muffin tops,” wrinkles and stiff joints were not what they bargained for, and after the age of 40, there’s a tendency to say, “I used to be able to do this, but at my age…” It can be difficult for women who spend their lives trying to continually improve themselves (who are often very sensitive about body image), to realize that improvement is not in their ability to continually run faster, be more flexible and keep getting thinner, but in focusing on whole-body wellness.

“In the fourteen plus years I’ve been teaching yoga and Pilates, I find that women still tend to adopt the ‘all or nothing’ approach to fitness,” instructor Danielle Palli told me. “As we age, the tendency is to either give up if we can’t do what we *could* do twenty years ago. Or, we insist on pushing our limits to the point of injury in order to get back what we think we’ve lost. Whole-person health includes being willing to adapt to our changing bodies instead of fighting against time, which is a losing battle.”

1. **Wherever You Are … Be There –** In *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging* I talk about the peace found in being mindful, or completely in the moment. Artists find this when they get lost in creating a painting and lose all sense of time. Other ways to be mindful include meditation, yoga, tai chi, playing a musical instrument or getting out in nature. The trick is to find ways to quiet the chattering mind.

“Students tell me all the time, ‘I can’t meditate because I just can’t shut my mind off,’” Palli says. “Like anything else that in life that is worthwhile, it takes practice. For those who have trouble shutting their mind off – which, by the way, is all of us – practicing mindfulness activities, or focusing the mind on a specific task or process, can help. There are many ways to be mindful.”

1. **Realize That the Only Person You Can Change is Yourself** – Arguably theworst line in the history of romantic movies was from the movie “Jerry McGuire” where Dorothy says, “I love him for the man he almost is.” Um … Really? I’ve never known any woman who loved “almost a man.” In the history of women trying to change men, I do not believe it’s ever been done. Now, despite popular belief, men DO in fact change, and often WANT to change and grow in the same way that women want to change and grow. However, a man can decide to change; but a woman cannot change him. This is a fruitless attempt that will cause unnecessary stress to you both. As I tell men to “give up the need to be right,” I advise women not to try and change the men in their lives.
2. **Remember That You Are Enough** – Perfection is an illusion. I’ve observed the women in my life work very hard to be and do everything: career-focused, philanthropic, smarter, thinner, best mom of the year, best friend of the year, etc. One thing that I’ve learned from my wife, Paula, and the female friends, family and colleagues I’ve met over the years, is that happiness is found in realizing that you are enough, just as you are.

So there it is… some practical advice you can live with: long and well.