**Go for the RED During Covid**

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Those of us who have a pulse also have risks … risks of bad things happening at anytime, anyplace. Illness, loss, impairment, or accidents can suddenly be a major part of our day or even our life. It’s like we have buzzards circling overhead wherever we go. When we’re young, those buzzards are high above us, rarely a problem, but as we get older those buzzards get much closer.

But now! The Covid 19 virus buzzards are amongst us all and we need some help, not only with the possibility of disease, but also with the remarkable life changes its siege is having on all of us. *We all need to live RED!*

**Resilience. Endurance, and Durability**

*Resilience* in physics is defined as the power or ability to return to the original form, position, etc., after being bent, compressed, or stretched; i.e. elasticity.

In human terms, it’s the ability to recover readily from illness, depression, or adversity. Basically, resilience is the ability to take life’s curve balls … even Covid 19 - related ones, and to keep on truckin’; to take a physical or emotional hit without being knocked out of the game. Resilience is a necessary trait for aging well because the longer we live, the more likely (and more often) it is that we’ll indeed have those buzzards nipping at us, trying to slow us down, get us depressed, or completely sideline us. When this happens we’re in great danger of beginning a process of “circling the drain,” (i.e. having one problem prevent us from doing what we need to do to keep strong, healthy, and happy which then causes more problems, which leads to more decline). With resilience, on the other hand, we basically become ninja warriors for our own health and that includes our immune system.

*Endurance* is the power to weather an unpleasant or difficult situation without giving way.

*Durability* is the trait which empowers us to withstand wear, pressure or even damage.

**Living the RED Way**

So, how do we get resilience, endurance and durability in this historic and shocking assault on human health, well-being and life itself?

Luckily, the answer is not profound nor difficult to find…at least usually. Living RED requires the kind of physical and emotional strength that result from our day to day lifestyle decisions to move, learn, stay connected and have purpose in our lives. BUT, you ask… how do we do that when Covid 19 has our castle gates up and the moat filled? In a word… creatively. Below I’m offering some tips that will hopefully stimulate your own creativity… but first… the basics.

**Lower Your Risks**

The first step in living RED is to *lower your risks* of bad things happening. That’s exactly why we’re hearing about physical distancing. Covid 19 is a highly infectious virus with lethal potential, so reducing the risk of contracting it by limiting the people we’re exposed to makes sense. On the other hand, isolation increases our risk for any illness, so connecting in creative ways such as with video conferencing or cellphone or balcony singing is important not only to keep sane but also to keep healthy.

**Five Tips to Live RED:**

1. ***Keep Moving*.** It’s easy today to spend most of our day sitting. This raises our risks of bad things happening, and makes us less likely to recover from them if they do. We are creatures that are designed to move and require it for all systems to work as advertised. Moving in your home, standing for telephone calls and video conferencing, walking more within the house, taking walks outside (safely and when able to) and tuning in to exercise, yoga and tai chi classes on-line are all creative ways to keep moving. There will be a temptation to sit and do nothing and that’s OK, but schedule this and put a time limit on it. You may also have a desire to sleep more. That too, is OK but limit it to nighttime or short daytime naps. Sleep is therapeutic in the right doses.
2. ***Keep Connected*.** Once again, this is who we are. Like herd animals, we flourish when we are regularly with others. Isolation is a killer. And when we are connected we also have that social support to overcome adversity in our lives. So now, more than ever, we must realize we’re all in this together, but without the usual hugs, touches and handshakes, unless we’re lucky enough to be living with others. This is very difficult for many of us. Your community and Masterpiece have been urging and inspiring you to seek more connection. Well, welcome to the world of creative connection. Your community is offering ways to connect safely and in the Masterpiece Network we’re seeing things like balcony parties, open door concerts and buddy phoning. Once again, the internet is a profound blessing, offering video conferencing opportunities to attend meetings, see the grandkids, attend classes and concerts. The postings also offer the opportunity to laugh… a major health potion for all that ails us.
3. ***Have a Purpose*.** Without purpose we wither. We have trouble getting out of bed in the morning and wander aimlessly, often depressed and without energy. Purpose, whatever it is for each of us, gives us passion and turbo charges all our systems: body, brain, and immune system – making us superheroes. It doesn’t have to be a grand purpose. It only need be meaningful for you. So now your purpose can be to help your friend, your neighbor, your community, your town, or your species. Do you have a skill you can share via telephone or the internet? Can you sew and perhaps make face masks? Can you keep checking in with family, friends, or acquaintances? In times like these, some kindness, empathy and compassion go a long way to heal physical and emotional wounds. Prayer or thoughts of loving kindness for those who are struggling benefit us also. Some believe, as I do, that every crisis presents opportunity to connect with our humanity.
4. ***Shake It Up … With Attitude!*** Try new things. Be a beginner as much as possible. Learning and trying new things is like Miracle-Gro® for our brains and keeps us young in body and mind. Being positive, learning and growing is the most common trait found in vibrant older adults. In this Covid period, learning new things is still very possible. In particular, the internet offers educational classes free (Masterpiece has been providing links to these educational opportunities as well as entertainment). Check out podcasts (including our own Dr. Roger & Friends, The Bright Side of Longevity and Facebook postings under the same heading). Podcasts abound and can be reached easily with your phone. You can emerge from this challenging period like an Einstein or at least a lot more talented than when it began.
5. ***Eat (and Drink) Like an Athlete.*** Yes, be concerned about your weight, but even more importantly, be concerned about your *nutrition*. We are finally tuned machines and when we eat mostly a Mediterranean-type diet (fruits, nuts, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and some meat) and stay well-hydrated with water-based drinks, we have the stamina, energy, and overall ability to live out loud, grabbing at all life has to offer and to resist disease. During times like this there is a tendency for many to seek comfort in eating and with our world being limited to only a few steps from the refrigerator, this becomes more likely. Yes, supply of fresh nutritious food might very well be a challenge, but being mindful of both the quantity and quality of what we eat is a major step forward in keeping both the best they can be.

So, Go For the RED: resilience, endurance and durability, in this time when all humans are vulnerable. These traits will get us through this time and, in fact, will serve us well for life after Covid-19. Stay well, everybody. Roger