

## Active Aging Month: Staying Active in Mind, Body and Spirit

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Imagine the thrill of taking part in a lively discussion about your favorite past time, the satisfaction and meaning that comes from helping a reluctant student discover the value of education, or the exhilaration of a leisurely walk outdoors. There is no doubt such experiences will spice up your life and bring a smile to your face. The good news is these are all hallmarks of an active lifestyle that can benefit the health of your mind, body and spirit.

A healthy mind, body and spirit connection is critical to getting the most out of life at any age. Thanks to a vast array of opportunities available in the world of wellness today, older adults now have the chance to make their later years far more exciting than they ever dreamed possible. This is the foundation that the *LiveWell!* Lifestyle Program is built upon. Maintaining an active lifestyle means your mind will be more stimulated, your body more active and your spirit more fulfilled.

There are many different ways to build your brain and engage your mind when you participate in lifelong learning. Reading a good book, working crossword puzzles, or sitting in on a Mind

Aerobics class are all good ways to engage in lifelong learning. Pioneering brain research has shown that the brain, at any age, can grow new connections and pathways when challenged and stimulated. And a stimulated brain promotes a healthy mind and can help enhance memory.

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Along with keeping the mind alert and stimulated, everyone knows the importance of keeping your body active. Physical activity includes any opportunity that gets your body moving such as walking, tai chi or simple stretching. The actual amount of physical activity you need depends on your fitness goals. In order to maintain your current level of fitness, at least thirty minutes of moderate physical activity almost every day is recommended.

Staying active spiritually includes participation in religious traditions and also encompasses finding meaning and purpose in life. For instance, spirituality can be explored in prayer, attending church services and also in meditation, creative arts, helping others and even being outdoors in nature. A recent study indicated older adults who maintain spiritual wellness through exploring a greater purpose in life live longer and are more satisfied with life. This suggests that positive factors such as being regularly active in the pursuit of meaningful and purposeful endeavors are important contributors to overall well-being and successful aging.

Staying active in mind, body and spirit provides balance in life and when we are well balanced we feel better. And when we feel good we are more likely to continue to stay active and explore more of what life has to offer. This describes the wonderful circle of enhanced wellness and balance that helps create an enriched and happy life. So when you plan your daily schedule, look for opportunities in the *LiveWell!* Program to explore meaningful engagement and a healthy lifestyle as you find ways to stay active in mind, body and spirit.

