

# PERSONALBEST

WELLNESS REINVENTED

## BE YOUR FUTURE



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# Be Your Future

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail”

**Benjamin Franklin**

From an early age, we learn that planning for our future is vital as it will bring us achievement, fulfilment, and satisfaction. Evidence suggests that we need a defined plan or goal. Otherwise, we are less likely to advance in the right direction or manifest the life we want to live.

As much as we should have one eye on our future, at the same time, we are encouraged to live in the present, as this will bring us peace, happiness, and gratitude. Those who dwell on the past or are anxious about their future will miss the life that is happening right in front of them.

But what if your plan and your vision for yourself in the future was so strong and vivid that it had the power to pull you forward and help you realise your dreams and goals?

Based on the findings of Viktor E. Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and professor of neurology and psychiatry, ‘Future Self’ thinking was born. Frankl witnessed first-hand extreme resilience and stories of survival and held to the belief that the most critical freedom is an individual's ability to choose one's attitude. Those with hope and a desire to live life outside terrors of camp remained strong, those without perished.

Beginning with the end in mind is one of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Written by Stephen Covey and first published in 1989, this book and its teachings are still widely referenced and still have relevance today. Covey suggests that by starting things off with a clear idea of what the destination is, the steps you take will always be in the right direction. If you are going to be busy, focus on the things that matter to you and take you towards your goal rather than the distractions that take you away from your goal.

“Future is what drives the present, not the other way around.”

**Dr. Benjamin Hardy**

In his 2022 publication, *Be Your Future Self Now*, Hardy expands on the work of Covey and Frankl, stating that your imagined Future Self is the force that dictates your current life, whether that be how motivated you are or how you truly feel about yourself.

By having a clear and precise picture of how you see yourself in the time to come, your day-to-day decisions become easier to make. By developing the ability to imagine better and more expansive visions of your Future Self, you are less likely to be distracted by social media, less likely to make poor food choices and more focused and goal-orientated.



### **So how do you view your future health?**

When it comes to our body and life choices, how many of us have a true vision of the golden years and how many of us plan ahead? Will you rely on others to look after you, or will you be fit and active into your nineties? Many factors can help promote healthy ageing. Some, such as genetics, are not in our control. Others, like a healthy diet, exercise and taking care of our mental health, are all within our grasp. Research supported by the National Institute of Ageing identifies several measures you can take to help manage your health and maintain your quality of life as you age. These include sleep patterns, diet, stress management, social interactions, taking care of your cognitive health and exercise.

For the purpose of this piece, we will focus on exercise. Whatever physical state you are in right now, be that a regular gym goer or someone who has not exercised since school PE days, remember: Start with the end in mind. How do you see your future physical health? How do you create the blueprint for your Future Self rather than following the outline of your former self?

If it has been a while since you had any regular exercise routine and you would like to return to your younger 'shape' and condition, you may fall into the trap of trying to pick up where you left off. But in this interim period, you can't escape from the fact that you have aged, as have your joints, and chances are you are deconditioned. Hitting the gym hard or pounding the streets is more likely to create pain and risk possible injury than take you closer to your potential self. Consequently, you risk spending more time away and the greater peril of never resuming your fitness quest. Remember, the most important thing is to start where you are and gradually build from there, gradually increasing the intensity and duration of your workout and creating good exercise habits.

If you already train regularly, question what your current fitness goals are. They may be serving you in the short term, but are they creating imbalances that may come back to bite you in later years?

### **So where do you begin?**

Whatever you do, do something. Your time away from training may not have been your choice; work, life, illness, or injuries may have thwarted your plans, but for your Future Self, exercise will become the cornerstone of your healthy lifestyle. Imagine yourself aged 90, still physically active and mentally alert, able to participate in leisure pursuits and enjoy the 'golden' years! Your new potential version of yourself may dictate a radical change in lifestyle choices.

At first, this may appear daunting, but once you set in motion taking responsibility for your health and well-being, the harmful impact that stress, lack of exercise, too much sitting down and poor posture can place upon your body, joints, and overall health are slowly reversed. With a 'bite size'\* approach to mobility and increasing your movement vocabulary, your joints will feel rejuvenated and your aches and pains will start to ease.

\*Bite size – small chunks of exercise, performed throughout the day (a couple of minutes at a time) as opposed to finding longer periods of time to train.

## **Move more**

If you have or feel like you have had a lifetime of inactivity, it can feel hard to get started, but one of the easiest things you can do is try and reduce the amount of time spent sitting every day.

There is no need to worry about which exercise is best; just think about moving more. Choose mobility instead of miles pounded on the treadmill. Elect for flexibility and agility rather than high intensity and burn. Taking part in a yoga class will help you develop strength and flexibility, help improve your balance, and allow you to socialise and create new friendships.



Learn to manage your body weight and improve all of your ranges of movement rather than throwing heavy weights around the gym. Going for a walk will tick many boxes and is attainable for all fitness levels. It provides a cardio workout, supports your immune system, boosts your metabolism and strengthens your joints, muscles, and bones.

No matter what you choose, be balanced, be gentle, listen to your body and remember, the functional health paybacks from starting a regular exercise regime far exceed the sedentary lifestyle choice and can greatly benefit the ageing population.

Creating a positive view of your future and future health is not easy. According to Hardy, the majority have a limited and narrow view of their Future Self. However, he believes those who seek learning, growth, and new experiences can imagine a different and better Future Self.

To help you create a 'future you' mindset, seek out active 'senior' role models and try to emulate their habits and processes. They may be in the media spotlight or people you encounter daily. Whoever they are and whatever they do, they have likely succeeded in changing negative attitudes about ageing!

This article is not about getting older but about your Future Self. We cannot escape the fact that it is the direction we are all heading; it is a natural part of life. Create positive images of how you envisage your future life: The place you live, the people you surround yourself with, the opportunities that will arise and the health and vitality you embody to embrace all of these things.

Reflecting on where you see yourself in the years ahead, be that health, career, family, and personal accomplishments, can change how you see your present life. A clear vision will help you make decisions, identify solutions, and target key issues. You must back up your vision with a strategy; just thinking about it will not make it happen. If you only visualise but never take action, you are only daydreaming.

“Start with what you want and work backward. Think and act from your goal, rather than toward your goal”

**Dr. Benjamin Hardy**