



HEALTH

# Here are some ways to help prevent diabetes

By Courtney Diener-Stokes  
For MediaNews Group

Loren Hall, a certified natural health practitioner and certified nutrition consultant in Chester County, said she has seen an interesting trend that involves people using glucometers to assist them on their weight-loss journey.

Typically used for managing diabetes, glucometers are helping prediabetics be proactive in avoiding a diabetes diagnosis through assisting them with the awareness of changes they need to make to keep a healthy lifestyle.

“Part of their weight-loss plan is they are trying to make sure they have sugar levels within normal range,” Hall said, referring to A1C levels. “They are utilizing and maintaining healthy levels as part of their protocol.”

Prediabetics are using glucometers, which can be purchased over the counter at the pharmacy, at every meal. The test requires a prick of the finger to draw some blood to then place on a testing strip that reads your glucose level.

“You do it right before you consume food and 30 minutes to one hour after every meal to make sure your blood sugar isn’t spiking,” she said. “When it spikes, it’s an indicator that your body is not able to convert your digested food into glucose, therefore it gets stored as fat in the body instead of getting used as fuel.”

The test can be a good indicator of improper diet, improper food combinations and poor digestion and assimilation of nutrients. Hall said it can also mean that your enzymes are not able to do what they are supposed to do: break down the food and turn it into glucose to be used in the body as energy.

“If your blood sugar is consistently within normal range, you have a better shot of losing

weight,” she said.

According to Hall, the information gained from regularly using a glucometer can benefit anyone who is either trying to lose weight or who has been given a prediabetes or diabetes diagnosis.

“They are learning proper food combining, it helps to better tailor a more succinct exercise routine and it gives you a window of what’s going on inside somebody’s body,” Hall said.

Hall said the information enables a nutrition consultant to better guide a person with their food choices, exercise and supplementation.

For those age 50 and older who don’t have the ability to get as much exercise as someone who is younger, Hall offers some advice.

“I would focus more for them on low glycemic choices and food combining and emphasize to them that exercise is the key that puts the whole puzzle together,” she said.

For those who have very limited movement due to their age and/or circumstances, Hall said they don’t have to give up hope in reversing their situation if prediabetic or diabetic.

“I have seen them reverse diabetes with food combining and a low-glycemic diet alone,” Hall said. “I have seen those with type 2 diabetes be able to get off insulin and control their blood sugar naturally.”

Alternatively, for those who are borderline diabetics and aren’t staying clued into their bodies, type 1 or type 2 diabetes could become a reality that would require a much more drastic lifestyle change beyond monitoring your blood sugar every day at mealtimes.

“You are married to insulin to function, you are susceptible to vision loss, paralysis and nerve damage,” Hall said. “Death is po-

**DIABETES » PAGE 2**



FREE USAGE

Non-starchy vegetables that are on the low end of the glycemic index include artichokes, mushrooms, peppers, zucchini and cauliflower.



COURTESY OF VEGHA WELLNESS AND NUTRITION

Loren Hall is a certified natural health practitioner and certified nutrition consultant.

**MORE INFORMATION**

**About monk fruit sweetener**

Loren Hall, owner of Vegha Wellness and Nutrition, recommends monk fruit sweetener as a replacement for refined sugar since using a sugar substitute, such as monk fruit or stevia can help prevent sugar spikes.

Everyday uses for monk fruit sweetener:

- Add it to coffee and tea.
- Substitute it for sugar in baking.
- Sprinkle it on breakfast items like oatmeal or yogurt.
- Whip it into frosting or mousse.

Source: [www.celevelandclinic.org](http://www.celevelandclinic.org)

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# Diabetes

FROM PAGE 1

tentially the greatest consequence — people in my family have died from diabetes. Since your body can't function without proper glucose usage, people can go into a diabetic coma or shock and can die as a result if left untreated."

Hall, who is the owner of Vegha Wellness and Nutrition and is also a nutritional counselor at Solutions 4 Health in Wayne, Chester County, emphasized a concern over the prevalence of diabetes today.

"It's no joke — it's really an epidemic because people are eating so many processed foods that are laden with sugar and high levels of saturated fat," she said. "If your blood glucose levels are consistently high after eating, you are heading in the direction of prediabetes or diabetes unless you make changes."

She pinpointed four ways to keep yourself in check and keep yourself from becoming prediabetic or diabetic.

"Hydration, proper nutrition and food combining, proper exercise for your body type and lifestyle, and supplementation," Hall said.

Food combining involves separating certain macronutrients and food groups that can help with digestion, assist with weight loss and balance sugar levels. Hall recommends waiting 45 mins to an hour before introducing a different combination of foods.

"One example would be combining proteins and vegetables for easy digestion and blood sugar stabilization," she said, adding that starches and vegetables are another ideal combination with the overall idea being to avoid too many food groups at one time. "It's always best to separate your fruits from other foods because it decreases fermentation in the gut, which is important to give your body



FREE USAGE

It is best to eat fruit separate from other foods because it decreases fermentation in the gut, which is important to give your body more efficient digestion.

more efficient digestion."

Hall discussed the importance of getting to know and understand low-glycemic food choices from which to choose. Vegetables to gravitate towards are the non-starchy types that are on the low end of the glycemic index.

"Those would be vegetables like artichokes, mushrooms, peppers, zucchini and cauliflower," she said.

When it comes to fruits, she said that those that have equal amounts of fiber in them as they do natural fructose are ideal choices.

"Those would be all of your berries, cherries, peaches and apricots," she said of some examples. "They balance out their glycemic value because the fiber counteracts the sugar."

She said a diet that consists of a variety of fruits and vegetables can work well, regardless of where they fall on the glycemic index, as long as you practice mod-

eration.

"It really is about moderation and knowing how to combine your food so you aren't eating things that spike your insulin," she said.

With the holidays coming up, a time when sweets tend to come to mind, Hall shared her top two low-glycemic sweetener choices that work well in baking.

"There are health benefits to stevia and monk fruit, and they are going to be your lowest glycemic," she said, referring to two sweetener alternatives that come in granulated and liquid form. "If you decide to go with a raw, local, maple syrup, that is a more nutrient dense natural sweetener, so you have to weigh the quality of the food versus what you are trying to achieve."

"Today we are fortunate to have a lot of healthy options to replace refined sugars, so we don't have to give up our favorite holiday recipes."



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The four ways to keep yourself in check and from becoming prediabetic or diabetic include proper nutrition and food combinations, proper exercise for your body type and lifestyle and supplementation, according to certified natural health practitioner and certified nutrition consultant Loren Hall.

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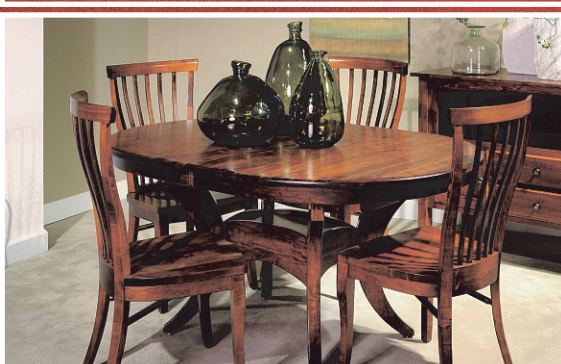
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Enjoy good times and be happy, especially as the holidays approach.

# As the song goes, 'C'mon, Get Happy'

By Terry Alburger

Years ago, one of my favorite shows was "The Partridge Family," and for good reason.

Like most of the shows of its time, it always had a positive message and upbeat music. The theme song alone could put me in a better mood if I was dealing with some aspect of my teenage angst:

... "Hello, world, hear the song that we're singin' C'mon get happy!  
A whole lot of lovin' is what we'll be bringin'  
We'll make you happy!"

... It's interesting how something happy can do so much to lift spirits.

I was reminded of this recently. Brittany Pointe Estates, where I work, hosted perhaps the biggest, most spectacular event in its history.

Acts Retirement Life is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Each of our 26 communities has been hosting smaller fun events all year long to commemorate this, including a time capsule opening, flag raising ceremony and sculpture unveiling, just to name a

few. But by far, the most incredible event was our formal 50th anniversary gala.

Each detail was elaborate, from the ice sculpture to the fresh floral arrangements, from the French culinary choices to the champagne toast, from the hours of dancing to the ambiance of "An Evening in Paris."

I have never seen so many residents come together for such a beautiful tribute. The evening was perfect.

I made a concerted effort to make my way through the crowds that

night, to stop at each table and chat one on one with as many people as I could.

It was then that I was struck by an overwhelming feeling of joy. As I looked around, I noticed one recurring feature — each face was smiling.

Each person attending this gala was immersed in the spirit of celebration. We gave them a reason to "c'mon, get happy."

I know every face that came together that evening. I know who is struggling, who is fighting illness, who lost a dear family member or who is just

having a hard time.

Everyone has struggles of one kind or another, that's just human nature. But bringing everyone together and giving them a reason to celebrate seemed to temporarily erase those hardships.

Smiles, lively conversations, laughter, dancing — those were the order of the day. Sure, it was a temporary respite, but it was indeed a respite.

It was a pleasure to be in the midst so much happiness. And it made me realize the importance of celebrating.

So, as we approach the

holiday season, keep that in mind. I hope your celebrations are many and your stresses are few.

If you hold gatherings, remember to enjoy your guests and not worry so much about the minutia of playing host. Enjoy the good times, and the company of those close to you.

Though not a permanent solution to problems or a cure for what ails you, a celebration is still a temporary escape from what is sometimes a hard reality.

Celebrate often! Enjoy some good times. C'mon, get happy!



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**ASK RUSTY**

# Veteran asks about disability and ex-spouse benefits

By Russell Gloor

**DEAR RUSTY»** I am a military veteran with a total and permanent disability. I was married for over 10 years to a military man who has since honorably separated from military service. I was originally on Social Security disability, which automatically converted to regular Social Security retirement benefits when I turned 65 — with the amount remaining at the disabled level instead of the regular rate based on my Social Security employment contribution record.

Why wasn't my regular Social Security rate used when I turned 65? Also, I contacted Social Security regarding my ex-husband's Social Security since I was married to him for over 10 years but was told I am not entitled to a portion of his Social Security benefit. Why not? I was told the amount I would receive wouldn't subtract from his SS entitlement.

— Signed: Disabled Veteran

**DEAR DISABLED VETERAN»** First, I want to thank you for your service to our country. Your sacrifice is sincerely appreciated, and I'll be honored to answer your Social Security questions.

Regarding your current Social Security amount versus your previous disability amount, the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefit you were receiving was, in fact, the amount you were entitled to at your full retirement age, even though you claimed disability benefits earlier.

Your SSDI benefit, when awarded, was computed using your entire lifetime earnings history



Russell Gloor

up to the point that you became disabled, resulting in you getting your earned full amount as your disability benefit before you reached your full retirement age. And that is why the amount stayed the same when it automatically converted to your normal SS retirement benefit (at your full retirement age which, by the way, was 66 if you were born before 1955).

Said simply, SSDI is the full Social Security amount you have earned up to the point you stopped earning, so it stays the same when you reach your full retirement age.

As for additional benefits from your ex-husband, although you meet the length of marriage rule for ex-spouse benefits, there are additional criteria as well — you must not have remarried and remained so, and your ex-husband must be already receiving his own Social Security benefit (unless you've been divorced at least two years, in which case your ex need only be

eligible to collect).

But you can only get an additional benefit, known as a spousal boost, if you meet all the other criteria and half (50%) of the benefit your ex-husband is/was entitled to at his full retirement age is more than your current Social Security benefit. Since Social Security said you aren't entitled to an ex-spouse benefit, you apparently do not meet all of the eligibility criteria mentioned above.

And to address your last point, if you had met all criteria and been entitled to an ex-spouse benefit it, indeed, would not have affected your ex-husband's benefit in any way.

Again, please accept my sincere gratitude for your military service. You may wish to visit the "For Veterans" section at our [www.amacfoundation.org](http://www.amacfoundation.org) website.

*Russell Gloor is a certified Social Security adviser by the Association of Mature American Citizens: <https://amac.us/social-security-advisor>.*

**PROMOTING SENIOR WELLNESS**

# What you need to know about diabetes

By Jennifer Singley

According to a 2018 report by the CDC, just under a quarter (21.4 %) of Americans aged 65 and older have been diagnosed with diabetes; factor in those with undiagnosed diabetes and that percentage rises to over a quarter (26.8 %) of older adults affected by diabetes.

There are two types of diabetes, type 1 and type 2, and while the former typically begins in childhood or young adulthood, either type can begin in adulthood.

Here we will dive into the details of all that diabetes involves, as well as important health considerations that result from it and ways in which we can adjust our lifestyle to best prevent it from occurring in the first place.

**Diabetes overview**

When we eat food, our bodies turn that food into sugar (glucose) to supply us with energy, but glucose needs the help of the hormone insulin to get into our cells.

Those with type 1 do not make insulin at all, and those with type 2 do not make enough insulin and/or their bodies do not use it properly. As a result, the bloodstream contains an excess of glucose, and over time this causes a variety of other health issues.

Talk to your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms of diabetes:

- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blurred vision
- Bruising easily
- Skin issues, such as cuts that are slow to heal



(COURTESY OF THE BLUE DIAMOND GALLERY)

dividuals might have elevated levels of glucose in their blood, but the levels are not high enough to be considered diabetes; this condition is called prediabetes.

Those with prediabetes can delay or even prevent the onset of full-fledged diabetes with lifestyle changes.

**Health concerns resulting from diabetes**

When diabetes goes untreated, several serious health concerns can arise. Not only does type 2 diabetes increase the risk of developing depression, cancer and Alzheimer's disease, but even when diabetes is being managed properly, special attention should be paid to ongoing monitoring for the following conditions:

- Nerve damage, especially in the legs and feet
- Vision problems
- Kidney disease
- Heart disease
- Stroke

**Prevention**

Several lifestyle modifications can help those with diabetes manage the condition, as well as delay or prevent its onset amongst those with prediabetes.

You should always talk to your doctor first to develop a plan for diabetes prevention, but the following changes have been shown to make a difference:

- Exercising
- Eating a healthy diet
- Quitting smoking
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Getting regular eye exams
- Taking medications as prescribed
- Regularly checking for skin changes

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RETIREMENT

# Reluctant to retire? 3 signs you're ready

By Liz Weston  
NerdWallet

Many people don't have much choice about when they retire. Illness, job loss or caretaking responsibilities push them out of the labor force, ready or not.

But some people have the opposite problem: They do have a choice, and yet they can't quite bring themselves to quit working.

Some love what they do and never want to retire. Others are paralyzed by fear of the unknown, financial planners say. They may worry about living without a paycheck, spending down the money they worked so hard to save or figuring out how to structure their days in the absence of a job.

"A lot of the people I see are financially ready before they're emotionally ready," says Cathy Gearig, a certified financial planner in Rochester Hills, Mich.

If you're struggling, here are three signs you may be ready to retire.

### You've faced your fears

Retirement is often depicted as an endless, stress-free vacation. In reality, retirement requires some potentially stressful "paradigm shifts," or fundamental changes in people's approach to life, says CFP Barbara O'Neill, author of "Flipping a Switch: Your Guide To Happiness and Financial Security in Later Life."

Instead of earning a paycheck, for example, retirees have to create one from their savings and other resources. If something goes wrong - the furnace dies, or their investments don't do well - they can't just earn more money to make up for any shortfall.

Those who have been diligent savers often struggle with the idea of spending their money in retirement.

"It's really emotional for people," says CFP Janice Cackowski of Willoughby, Ohio. "They're so used to seeing their account balances increase over the years and they find it really difficult to pull money out of their accounts."

Other fears - such as being afraid of becoming irrelevant or simply being bored - can cause people to postpone retirement, according to some financial planners. Gearig says some of her most successful clients, including business owners and top executives, have prioritized work to the point where they can't imagine life without it.

"Honestly, the biggest fear I see is, 'What am I going to do with myself if I don't go to work all day?'" Gearig says.

Once you know what frightens you about retirement, you can begin to address those fears, financial planners say.

### Your financial plan has been stress tested

If your fears are financial, you can hire a fee-only financial planner to review your retirement plan. Choose a planner who is a fiduciary, which means they're committed to putting your best interests first.

Getting an expert review is a good idea in any case. The planner can help you maximize Social Security benefits, navigate Medicare or other health insurance options, decide the best way to take a pension, plan for possible long-term care and figure out a sustainable withdrawal rate from your savings.

"This will be your only retirement. It's paramount that you get it right," says Adam Wojtkowski, a CFP in Walpole, Mass.

Using sophisticated planning software, the advisor also can stress test your plan to see how it works in the event of a major market downturn, a surge in inflation, higher tax rates or the premature death of you or your spouse, says CFP Shelly-Ann Eweka, senior director of financial planning strategy for finance company TIAA.

CFP Michelle Gessner of Houston runs her clients' plans through various combinations of events. Then she runs a "maximum spend" test to see how much money they can spend before the plan fails and they run short of money.

"I'm really beating the heck out of these plans and then (clients) can see 'Hey, look, it still works,'" Gessner says. "And if it still works, maybe I don't have to be afraid anymore."

### You know what you're retiring to (not just from)

Many retirees struggle, at least at first, to find a sense of purpose and a structure for their days. Having a plan for how you'll spend your time can help, says CFP Ian Weinberg of Woodbury, N.Y.

That plan might include a bucket list of travel and experiences you can start checking off. Or, you could create a pie chart or schedule of how you want to divide your time among various pursuits: hobbies, volunteering, physical fitness, family time, travel and so on.

Retirement also can be unexpectedly lonely, especially if you're single or your partner is still working. If your primary social



COURTESY OF NERDWALLET

Liz Weston is a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

interactions were with co-workers, you may need to find some new friends, says CFP Patti B. Black of Birmingham, Ala. Black recommends checking

out volunteer groups, clubs and classes.

You may need some time to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for retirement. Just don't let

the preparation continue indefinitely, since the future is never guaranteed, Gearig points out.

"Just jump in and enjoy the ride," Gearig says.



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SENIOR LIVING

# How to use the 6 dimensions of wellness to choose senior living

By BrandPoint

“Life is a great big canvas, and you should throw all the paint on it you can,” wrote Danny Kaye, beloved Hollywood performer.

Kaye’s advice certainly reflected his colorful career. It’s true that the more one expands one’s palette of experiences, the more vibrant life becomes.

As you evaluate senior living communities for the next step in your or a loved one’s life journey, look for environments with an array of resources conducive to flourishing.

The National Wellness Institute defines Six Dimensions of Wellness — physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and environmental — which can serve as a guide to enrichment and growth.

Look for a community fostering physical wellness through excellent health care, nutrition and exercise. Confirm that each resident receives a care plan tailored to individual needs, and that services such as physical, occupational and speech therapy are available onsite. There should be ample access to state-of-the-art fitness equipment designed for older adults and daily group-led exercise programs.

The finest senior living communities offer healthful meals prepared from scratch by professional in-house chefs to meet resi-

dent’s dietary needs. Look for a variety of dining venues, from casual bistros to formal restaurants with gourmet cuisine.

For example, Anthology Senior Living of Clayton View in St. Louis boasts chef Adam Shaw, former head chef for Ritz-Carlton. Anthology of The Plaza in Kansas City, Mo., chef Sam Hudging prepares happy hour appetizers highly enjoyed by residents, and his theme-inspired meals have delighted residents and families alike.

Emotional wellness means having a positive sense of self and feeling connected to others. Consider senior living communities whose staff and environment encourage connectedness.

Do compassionate care providers ensure that each care plan promotes independence? Are staff aware of individual care plans, so they have a holistic understanding of each resident?

Does the community provide opportunities for emotional development, such as intergenerational art therapy for individuals with memory loss, plus pet therapy and music therapy?

Another key to emotional wellness is a sense of fun. At Anthology of Louisville in Kentucky, management and staff lead by example. They turn Kentucky Derby day into a highlight of the year. And when many residents had birthdays the week the

COVID-19 crisis hit, they organized a family parade of cars for a motorized birthday party.

Intellectual wellness is cultivated through stimulating mental activities and access to opportunities to expand and share knowledge and creativity. Look for a senior living option offering opportunities to expand residents’ minds. Learning experiences like language courses, sewing classes and lectures by guest speakers should be listed in their calendar.

For social wellness, residents need to feel connected to family and community, with opportunities to enhance friendships. This has been severely challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior living communities nationwide have had to implement strict safety protocols such as in-room isolating, social distancing, use of personal protective equipment, screening and testing. Inquire if the community you are considering acted quickly to put programs in place to help residents maintain connectedness to loved ones.

Despite difficult circumstances, premium senior living communities still provide creative and engaging socially distanced activities to promote residents’ mental and emotional wellness and use technology to help residents connect with loved ones.

“Our Socially Distanced



When searching for a senior living community, look for welcoming indoor spaces.



Senior living facilities should offer healthful meals to meet residents’ dietary needs.

Engagement Program provides residents with daily activities that focus on the mind, body and spirit to keep them mentally stimulated and physically active,” says Anthology Senior Living president Benjamin Burke. “We continue to look at the best ways to keep lines of communication open, and we encourage residents and loved ones to stay connected through phone calls, video chats and email. The safety and well-being of our residents and team members is always our true north.”

Spiritual wellness encompasses the need for meaning, as expressed in spiritual beliefs and practices. Look for senior liv-

ing communities providing opportunities for spiritual growth, with spiritual gatherings such as non-denominational services, rosary prayer, hymn singing, devotionals and Shabbat celebrations.

Our feeling of wellness is profoundly affected by our environment. Look for a beautifully designed community with welcoming indoor and outdoor spaces. Seek sophisticated accommodations with spacious private suites and a variety of floor plans to meet individual preferences.

The best-designed communities offer well-appointed public spaces such as meeting rooms, land-

scaped courtyards and raised planters for resident gardening.

Keep these Six Dimensions of Wellness in mind as you research your or your loved ones’ next home. All six dimensions should be interconnected, strengthening residents as individuals and the community as a whole. With many senior living options available, thoughtful evaluation will help you find a community that provides the enrichment and care needed for a flourishing lifestyle.

To learn more about independent living, assisted living and memory care, visit AnthologySeniorLiving.com.



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PHOTOGRAPHY

# Photographer produces a rich portrait of aging

By Judith Graham  
Keiser Health News

A dozen years ago, at age 70, Marna Clarke had a dream. She was walking on a sidewalk and rounded a corner. Ahead of her, she saw an end to the path and nothing beyond.

It was a turning point for Clarke.

"I realized, 'Oh my God, I'm nearer the end than the beginning,'" she said.

Soon, she was seized by a desire to examine what she looked like at that time — and to document the results.

Clarke, a professional photographer decades before, picked up a camera and began capturing images of her face, hair, eyes, arms, legs, feet, hands and torso. In many, she was undressed.

"I was exploring the physical part of being older," she said.

It was a radical act: Older women are largely invisible in our culture, and honest and unsentimental portraits of their bodies are almost never seen.

Before long, Clarke, who lives in Inverness, Calif., turned her lens on her partner, Igor Sazevich, a painter and architect 11 years her senior, and began recording scenes of their life together.

Eventually, she realized they were growing visibly older in these photographs. And she understood she was creating a multiyear portrait of aging.

The collection that resulted, which she titled "Time As We Know It," this year won a LensCulture Critics' Choice Award, given to 40 photographers on five continents.

"There is a universality and humility in seeing these images which remind us of the power of love and the fragility of



COURTESY OF MARNA CLARKE

As her partner, Igor Sazevich, lay dying, Marna Clarke says, she "was talking to him and caressing him. Then I sat with him and held his very swollen hands. Over and over again, I told him I loved him. I know he heard me."

**"There is a universality and humility in seeing these images which remind us of the power of love and the fragility of life."**

— Rhea Combs of the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery

life," wrote Rhea Combs of the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery, one of the judges.

Early on, some people were offended by the images Clarke displayed at galleries in the San Francisco Bay Area, near her home.

"I found out there's a taboo about showing older adults' bodies — some people were just aghast," she told me in a phone conversation.

But many people in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s expressed gratitude.

"I learned that older people are dying for some

kind of recognition and acceptance and that they want to feel seen — to feel that they're not invisible," Clarke said.

Art has many benefits in later life, both for creators and for those who enjoy their work. It can improve health by expanding well-being, cultivating a sense of purpose, and countering beliefs such as the assumption that older age is defined almost exclusively by deterioration and decline, Dr. Gene Cohen wrote in "The Creative Age: Awakening Human Potential in the Second Half of Life,"

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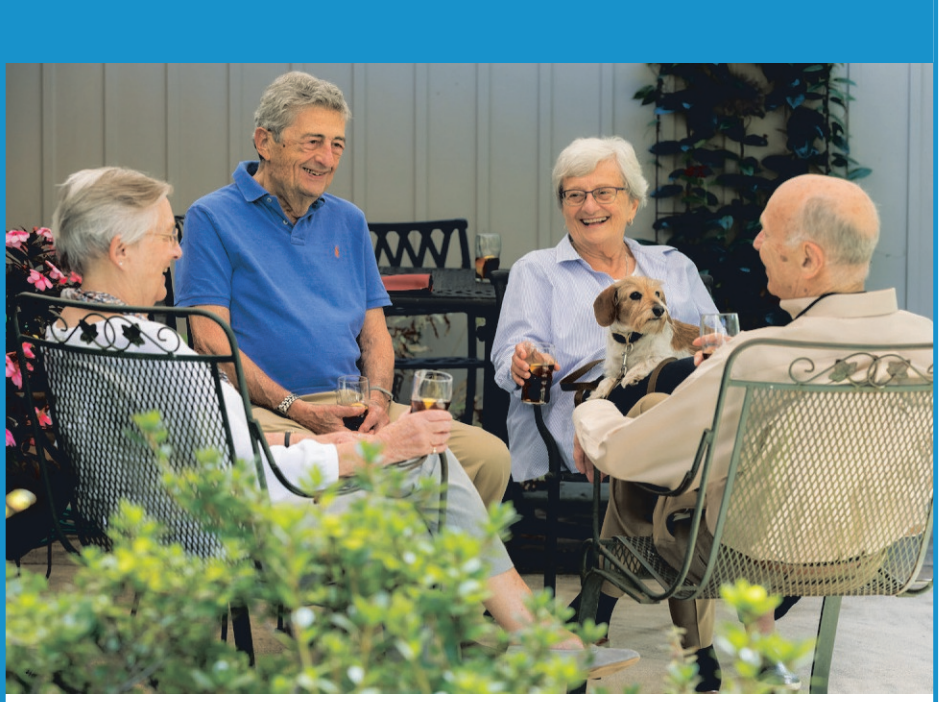
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COURTESY OF MARNA CLARKE

Marna Clarke, who is documenting her aging, says she went to the beach this summer to make herself “one with the world.” This photo “speaks of loss and what I’m going through,” she says.

## Photographer

**FROM PAGE 7**  
published in 2000. Cohen, a psychiatrist, was the first director of the Center for Aging, Health and Humanities at George Washington University and acting director of the National Institute on Aging from 1991 to 1993.

In 2006, Cohen published findings from the Creativity and Aging Study, conducted in San Francisco; Brooklyn, N.Y.; and the Washington, D.C., area. Two groups of older adults were studied: those who participated weekly in arts programs led by professionals and people who went about their usual business. Those in the first group saw doctors less often, used less med-

ication, were more active, and had better physical and mental health overall, the study found. For Clarke, “perspective” and “acceptance of my body as it is” have been benefits of her 12-year project. As a young and middle-aged woman, she said, she was “obsessed” with and anxious about her appearance. “Now, I think there’s a  
**PHOTOGRAPHER » PAGE 9**

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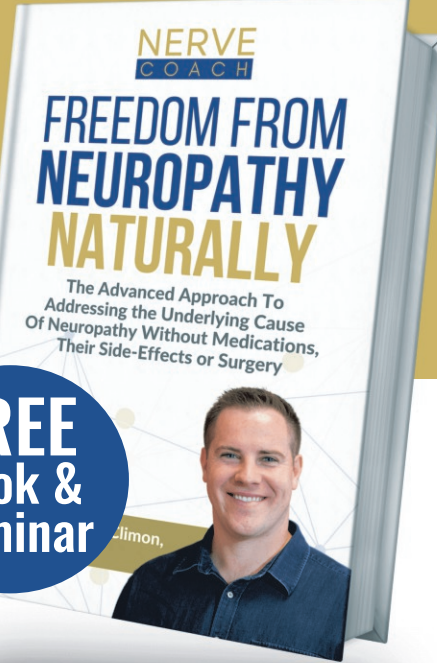
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COURTESY OF MARNA CLARKE

Marna Clarke and Igor Szevich decorated their home last Christmas, when he wasn't feeling too sick. "Igor had an incredibly beautiful home and a knack of making cozy spaces out of rooms with high ceilings," Clarke says.

## Photographer

FROM PAGE 7

beauty that comes out of people when they accept who they are," she said. "It's altered how I look at myself and how I see others."

Shortly after our first conversation, in early August, Clarke, now 82, found herself at another turning point with the death of Szevich, 93, who had lymphoma and refused chemotherapy. The couple had been together since 2003 but hadn't married.

Szevich had fallen three times in the months before, broken his hip, contracted pneumonia in the hospital and returned home on hospice. As he lay in bed on his final day, receiving morphine and surrounded by family, two dogs belonging to one of his daughters came close, checking on him every hour. At the moment of his death, they growled, probably because "they felt a change in the energy," Clarke said.

"It was amazing — I have never been through



COURTESY OF MARNA CLARKE

Marna Clarke photographed her partner Igor Szevich's shirt one morning when "this lovely light" was shining on it. Now, the photo is a symbol of his absence, she says.

an experience like that in my life," she said about Szevich's death. "There was so much love in that room, you could cut it with a knife. I think it's changed me. It's given me a glimpse of what's possible with humans."

Everywhere she goes in Inverness, Clarke runs into people who tell her how sorry they are for her loss and ask if they can help.

"I am overwhelmed by the care pouring over me from my friends and family," she said. "It's like a huge embrace."

It takes a community

to comfort an older adult coping with loss, just as it takes a community to raise a child. Clarke said she is still "up and down emotionally ... questioning what death is" as she processes her loss.

Eventually, Clarke said, she wants to restart work on "Time As We Know It."

"Because it's about aging me," she said. "My aging. And that's what I'm committed to. It's given me a purpose. And when you're growing old, you need to have something you love and makes you feel alive."

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