



30 Health and Fitness Secrets of Senior Athletes

The National Senior Games Association asked its athletes to submit their favorite health tips and motivational expressions to help celebrate the 30th anniversary of The National Senior Games. Here's 30 of their top "secrets" with hope it will inspire others to get active. For more information, visit NSGA.com.



KAY GLYNN, 64, HASTINGS, IOWA
TRACK & FIELD

"My favorite expression is one I heard at the National Senior Games: 'You don't quit playing games when you grow old; you grow old when you quit playing games.' Really, I just go out and play like a kid. When I go out to play with my kids (and now my grandkids) I don't just watch, I play with them."



JOHN TATUM, 96, WASHINGTON DC
SWIMMING

"What I tell people first is to take care of your body. I tell folks to exercise, keep going. I like to swim for exercise mostly but it's been fun to do these races too. I swim three times a week and enjoy competing and the camaraderie of my team. I've also been gardening for probably 50 years now. You have to keep moving. That's what it's all about."



DON HOEPPNER, 85, WHITEWATER, WISCONSIN
BASKETBALL, HORSESHOES, SHUFFLEBOARD, SOFTBALL, SWIMMING, TENNIS, TRACK AND FIELD

"You've got to pray a lot, eat good and exercise daily. But I guess my number one tip is 'Don't eat too much.' When you eat out, they just pile it on you. They want to charge you more for it. So when the meal comes, divide it so you can eat half there, and take home half."



MARY BEGAYE, 66, PHOENIX, ARIZONA
BASKETBALL (CAPTAIN, "ANASAZI" WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM)

"Take care of the Elder that you will become."



TOM LOUGH, 73, ROUND ROCK, TEXAS
TRACK AND FIELD (1968 U.S. OLYMPIAN)

“All anybody needs is some sort of goal or motivation to work towards and to measure incremental progress. Be always curious and don’t abandon your childish nature from earlier years. Just look around, ask questions, and be willing and eager to learn. I believe that just moving more since I became active in the Senior Games has improved and maintained the quality of life for me.”



KAREN NEWMAN, 55, BURLINGTON, VERMONT
TRIATHLON, ROAD RACE

“I ask people, ‘What is your favorite thing? What do you love to do or would like to do?’ There’s swimming, or they may like Zumba. If they say ‘painting’ I say, ‘OK, let’s take a walk and you can paint about what you see.’ If you only have ten minutes you can turn on some music and dance. Do something you love. You can transform yourself faster than you can believe.”



GEORGE FREEMAN, 85, FOLEY, ALABAMA
TRACK AND FIELD, BOWLING, CYCLING (HAS COMPETED IN EVERY NATIONAL SENIOR GAMES SINCE FIRST IN 1987)

“The key motivation for me every day is right when I get up. I sit up, I both feet on the floor and ask, ‘Is there any reason why I can’t run or bike today?’ And I always say ‘No!’ So I get up and I’m gone. I go out for an hour and I feel good about it when I come back in.”



BILL ALTMAN, 86, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
SOFTBALL, TRACK AND FIELD, GOLF

“I want to know who made up ‘The Old Fogey Rule.’ There’s no reason for people in their ‘50s, ‘60s, ‘70s and up to give up sports. There’s always something you can do. I say keep fit and stay active physically and mentally if you want to grow old well. Mental and physical fitness go together. That’s the secret I think.”



JANE KAISER, 67, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
TRACK AND FIELD, BADMINTON, SWIMMING (REGISTERED NURSE)

“Whenever you’re going through a change, it takes 21 to 30 days before your mind and your body even acknowledges that you’ve made a change. It might take you six months to get yourself up and going the way you should be. If you haven’t walked three times a week for three or four weeks your body doesn’t know that’s the new norm. And you have to exercise for the rest of your life, not just for three weeks. Whatever you do to take care of your body, keep doing it.”



DON PHILLIPS, 85, SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA
TRACK AND FIELD

“Outlive some, and outrun the rest!”



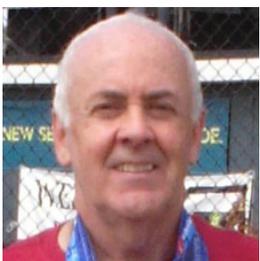
RYAN BEIGHLEY, 91, THE VILLAGES, FLORIDA
TRACK AND FIELD, SWIMMING

“The big thing I tell people is ‘Wait to worry.’ You can’t waste your time with worry. It preys on your body and your capabilities. Worry will kill you. Think about this: most of the things you worry about in your life never come to fruition. Isn’t that true? Just go out and do it. Your body will tell you how you are doing. So pay attention, but wait to worry!”



LARRY JOHNSON, 96, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
CYCLING (HAS MADE 100 MILE-RIDE ON EACH BIRTHDAY SINCE TURNING 90)

“You’ve got to appreciate your body for the wonderful machine that it is. Compare it to your car: you change the oil, get new tires and a battery. You clean the upholstery if you spill something on it. It’s the same way with your body. You’ve got to feed it well, exercise it, work up a sweat and get your heart rate up. Keep your mind going. If you park your car in the garage and don’t run it the first thing you know the tires go flat and the battery is dead.”



BOB O’CONNOR, 71, RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS
TRACK AND FIELD (PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST)

“One of my favorite expressions of Yogi Berra is, ‘90 percent of the game is half mental.’ A lot of times we limit ourselves by saying, ‘I could never do that.’ In that case, you won’t. When I speak to high school students I call my talk ‘Running Stupid.’ Some of the best races I ever ran I didn’t even know what I was doing. The first time I try something athletic has sometimes the best I’ve done because I don’t know my limitations. We need to talk to ourselves positively and not be caught in self-limiting beliefs.”



BARBARA HAGERTY, 57, WASHINGTON, DC
CYCLING

“Senior Games weaves together several threads that make a really great experience in my own midlife. It has brought me new friends. There’s exercise, which is terrific for body and mind. And setting little goals in training to reach every day gives a sense of purpose. It brings me punctuation, providing the commas, periods and paragraphs to help structure my life.”



HOWARD HALL, 95, FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY
TRACK AND FIELD, SWIMMING, BOWLING, HORSESHOES, SHUFFLEBOARD, TABLE TENNIS

“Unless you have actual pain or physical impairment, you should always try to do a little more than what you feel like you want to do. Competing in Senior Games has kept me fit. It’s a means of making me do my exercises. I don’t want to look foolish out there so it drives me to stay in good shape.”



DONNA GONZALES, 74, TERRY, MISSISSIPPI
RACE WALK, TRACK AND FIELD

“It is important for older people to do all kinds of active things so the younger ones coming up can see what you can do all of your life. I remember when my mother was 30 I was thinking, ‘Oh my goodness, she is sooo old!’ but when I got to be 30 I wasn’t old one bit. When I got to 50 I sure didn’t feel like I was old. And I still feel good.”





BRENDA FRELSI, 57, CASPER, WYOMING
TRACK AND FIELD

“I have always scheduled a time to exercise just as if I were scheduling a meeting. When I do this, I keep up my exercise regimen. If I just exercise ‘when I have time,’ I notice I seldom have time. But if I make it a priority by putting it in my schedule, my mind is ready and exercise becomes something that I look forward to. On the other hand, if my day is totally messed up, I don’t beat myself up for missing that day because I have other days planned.”



SHARON HUCZEK, 68, ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN
RACQUETBALL, PICKLEBALL

“You have to do it, walk the talk. I’m not afraid to tell people If you want to reach that goal, you just have to go through the process and do the hard work. There is a price to be paid for increased strength, movement and energy. There are no excuses. It’s a total commitment of body, mind and soul.”



LITTLE BIG EAGLE, 61, MIDLAND, NORTH CAROLINA
ARCHERY

“A wise man will investigate what a fool takes for granted. Now listen: you may not be able to jump two feet, but you can jump a half a foot. You may not be able to run a mile, but you can run a half mile. We are all pushing for our Personal Best. It’s what I’m working toward and see in myself. So it’s much more than a competition thing.”



HELENE HIRSCH, 59, WOODLAND HILLS, CALIFORNIA
SWIMMING

“Stop thinking about all the reasons it won’t work and focus on one reason that it will. Find one SMALL thing you can improve. Focus on that one item and seek to give it everything you’ve got every day for about a week. The results will astound you!”



LEURENE HILDENBRAND, 85, HARTVILLE, OHIO
PICKLEBALL, TABLE TENNIS, CYCLING, BOWLING, HORSESHOES, SHUFFLEBOARD, TENNIS

“I want to be an example for others. For people who don’t think they can do it or are not good enough, I tell them, ‘I was there. I felt that same way. But I found out I am good enough, once I did my research and started practicing and following what others do. You can do it.’”



LUISE EASTON, 78, OLMSTED FALL, OHIO
TRIATHLON

“Show up and put one foot in front of the other. It is that easy. Anytime you get up and do something you’re ahead of all the other people who don’t even get out. It’s never too late to start doing something.”





JOHN C. TAYLOR, 96, ATLANTA, GEORGIA
CYCLING, SWIMMING

“Physical activity is so important. Raising your heartbeat pushes oxygen into every part of your body. That’s why exercise with aerobics in it is so valuable. But also have a balanced lifestyle-nutrition, exercise, stress management, spiritual and social relationships. And stay mentally active. I got a PhD at 75 so I wouldn’t go downhill as rapidly as my peers. I read three to four hours per day. It’s helped me greatly.”



JOHN SHARP, 81, DANVILLE, INDIANA
TRACK AND FIELD

“Always think you are younger than you really are!! I think that I am only 60 or 65 even though I am actually 81, but I am the 2015 National champion pole vaulter and am 2nd in the long jump and 3rd in high jump. So, I really must be only the age I think that I am. Praise God, who keeps me thinking young.”



MARY ZAHLER, 56, NORTH CANTON, OHIO
TENNIS, ROAD RACE

“Everything in moderation. Don’t deny yourself, but also don’t think you have to be perfect all the time either. You will be surprised how much LITTLE positive changes and steps add up. Just do it- because even when you don’t feel like working out or training, you are always glad you did afterwards. ALWAYS!”



WOODY DEITRICH, 63, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
TRACK AND FIELD

“A sports doctor answering a Q&A wrote that you don’t necessarily need to stop a workout if something starts to hurt. It might work itself out. But if it gets worse, then stop for the day. Since I almost always have a kink somewhere, this has kept me from giving up. And they often do disappear.”



HAROLD BACH, 96, BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA
TRACK AND FIELD (RAN FIRST RACE AT AGE 72)

“You can start any time. The main thing is getting started. Do anything you want that you feel comfortable with. Walking is the best exercise there is. But if you don’t do anything at all, you’ll be in trouble. Don’t just sit in the house and watch TV.”



ROBERT O’ROURKE, 73, JACKSON, NEW JERSEY
TRACK AND FIELD (RUNNING BLOGGER)

“I learned to start slowly and avoid injury no matter what activity you choose. Self-inflicted injury is the enemy of progress.”



CAROL DUNCAN, 72, ARLINGTON, TEXAS
BASKETBALL, PICKLEBALL

“My mother told me, from a very young age, to always stay fit and trim because as you get older it is much harder to do. I have heeded her advice and am still enjoying and loving playing basketball and recently, pickleball.”



JAY BORTNER, 71, VALRICO, FLORIDA
TENNIS

“Stay active. Select a sport or activity that provides exercise and cardio results and participate daily, or routinely on a frequent basis. Once the habit is established it becomes so much easier to stay the course. Cross training or a change of activity can often get you through an injury or illness.”



Find more stories and National Senior Games history at www.NSGA.com/30anniversary

About NSGA

The National Senior Games Association (NSGA) is a nonprofit member of the United States Olympic Committee that promotes health and wellness for adults 50 and over through education, fitness and sport. NSGA governs the biennial National Senior Games, the largest qualified multi-sport event in the world for seniors. NSGA sanctions 52 state and affiliate members across the country that host qualifying Senior Games or Senior Olympics competition. The 2017 National Senior Games Presented by Humana will be held June 2 – 15, 2017 in Birmingham, Alabama. For more information, visit www.NSGA.com.

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