



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 104 – What I Learned From My 100-Year-Old Father
January 12, 2022

00:05

Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast. The show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

00:30 Kathy

Hello and welcome to Episode 104. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

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My father was born on January 10, 1922. Two days ago, he turned 100 years old.

When my mother passed a few years back, he decided it was time to sell his home and move into an (un)assisted living facility. Aside from some industrial deafness and impaired sight from macular degeneration, he is remarkably spry in both mind and body and strong in spirit. He can easily pass for someone 20 years his junior.

When the pandemic hit, he was locked down in his studio apartment for the better part of 15 months. We connected by video calls and behind-the-glass visits, him standing inside the facility hallway and me standing on the walkway outside. Homemade food was dropped off for each 2020 holiday that we missed celebrating together, including his 99th birthday.

In those first few scary months, we got the news that he tested positive for the coronavirus, which was raging through assisted living facilities in the New York/New Jersey area. He was further quarantined in the facility's hospital wing, even though he was



completely asymptomatic. Remarkably, he remained that way – not a fever nor cough nor sniffle for the duration of his mandated quarantine. And when they allowed him to return to his apartment, his fellow residents lined the hall and cheered his return. So many others were not so lucky.

How was it possible for a then 98-year-old man to have caught the virus with no ill effects? And how does a now 100-year-old man keep himself looking so young? We can rule out genes. His father died when he was in his 50s and his mother died when she was in her 40s and his two older siblings died in their 80s.

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I'm not a medical doctor, so I can't even venture a guess as to why. But as his daughter and a wellness coach, here's what I've observed that I believe has added to his overall longevity and ongoing vitality:

- **Moderation:** Perhaps it was due to growing up during the depression years, but I cannot recall ever seeing my dad overindulging. He's a three square meals a day kind of guy, favoring whole natural foods and portion sizes from the last century. No supersize or processed fast food for him – ever.

During his working years, this Irishman allowed himself one shot of scotch with water over ice while watching the 10 o'clock news each evening. He lost his taste for most alcohol when he reached his 90s and his vice these days is chocolate. One or two squares a night.

- **Disciplined activity:** Pre-pandemic, my father walked down to his meals three times a day, to his afternoon activities, and welcomed visits from his kids, grandkids and great grandkids. He's a little more sedentary these days, but he's still an early riser and is showered, shaved, his full head of hair combed, and he's dressed in a collared shirt before breakfast. A World War II navy man, his room is always tidy and his bed made.
- **Ease:** My father is a quiet man and allows things to evolve naturally. Whether it's the easy listening music he enjoys, or the grace with which he moved his body – on the



gym mat as a State Champion gymnast in the 1930s, gliding across the floor when he danced with my mom for the better part of their 64 year marriage, doing a backflip off the diving board to impress his grandchildren when they were young, throwing a bowling ball, or spontaneously scaling a rock climbing wall when he was on vacation well into his 80s - twice - just to show he still had it. It's with this same ease that he has settled into his new life when he moved to the retirement home.

- **Listening and engaging:** My dad keeps busy. My sister was able to teach him to video chat while in quarantine so he could keep up with family activities. He reads as much as his ageing eyes will allow. And he recently discovered YouTube and is now a subscriber. He's able to search and watch his favorite big bands from the 1940s, remembering every drummer, guitar player, singer and bandleader. He can recall the places like the Savoy Ballroom and the Paramount Theatre in New York City, where he saw them all. And pre-pandemic, he gave monthly talks to the other residents, playing selections from his large collection of mix CDs on a boombox, while sharing some of the musical history.
- **Reflection and connection:** He's had time to pause in the four plus years since my mom passed, reliving the memories and reflecting back on his life. He's processed regret and felt gratitude, which has led to an increased capacity to express love and appreciation for his kids, extended family and his new friends.

The week before his birthday, I sat down and asked him a series of questions on how he's kept so well. What was the secret to his longevity? He didn't have an answer. He thought that when he retired at 65, he'd have five, maybe 10 years to enjoy his leisure time. *That was 35 years ago...*

I believe that his lifelong habits and mindset put him in the best position to keep his immune system strong, keep himself healthy, and to age with beautiful grace. What an example to set for his kids, grandkids, and great grandkids.

And what a gift he gave to us on his birthday. I'll never forget how thrilled we all were as a family when we gathered on Sunday to enjoy dinner, raise a glass, and celebrate a man we are honored to call our dad.



07:43

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode, or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!