

FITNESS AS A FATHERLY

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Summer months provide many opportunities for fathers of all ages to make lasting memories with their families, as this season provides the best opportunity to schedule a family reunion, go on a vacation, have a cookout, or enjoy time with your children during their school break. Parents great and grand get the chance to share decades of wisdom and folly to their younger generations, and share stories about “the way things were” or “how things used to be,” or to start a dialogue with the words, “when I was your age...” or “kids, these days.” These sage anecdotes are passed down to the younger family members to share when they become the elder members of the family, along with the huge responsibility of telling the perfect dad joke.

Yes, the privilege unknowingly bestowed upon a father when their first child is born eventually becomes the humorous joy to the minds of prepubescent kids and the banal aversion to the intellects of adolescents. This rite of passage is one of many countless attributes that men are able to possess as they become older—just like prostate cancer. My very first job in the public health world was as a research assistant at The University of Texas at Tyler. During my final semester as a graduate student, I was recruited to help increase our community’s knowledge and awareness of prostate health. This was my duty as a 28-year-old young man who did not initially know that I even had a prostate. After four years working on this grant, I vividly remember that family history is one of the strongest risk factors for a man to eventually develop prostate cancer as he ages, and this is true whether you are Caucasian, African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Native American, biracial, multiracial or of any ethnicity.

My family and my wife’s family are each planning to have a family reunion this summer. I am going to ask my male family members they have any aches, pains, nagging injuries or hitches in their get-along, and overall man-to-man questions about their personal health that are usually only asked if each of us are holding our preferred alcoholic beverage (while we make sure we are drinking responsibly). I am not a doctor but having a man-to-man conversation about day-to-day health needs can actually plant the seed for a person to make that appointment that has been neglected, postponed, or intentionally avoided.

There is a Spanish proverb that states “a man that too busy to take care of his health is like a mechanic too busy to take care of his tools.” If you know men who have tools in their garage, then you should quiz them about the condition of their tools. These inquiries could also be asked about their sports car, motorcycle, monster truck, boat, bicycle, lawn mower, or any “toy” that is safely stored within the oversized toy box that is commonly referred to as a garage. I marvel at how a person will ensure their prized vehicle, electronic device, or valued appliance is working very well, yet our body is our most precious possession.

Jim Rohn stated that we all should, “take care of our bodies. It’s the only place you have to live.” Now, I don’t know who Jim Rohn is, but his statement is memorable, just like a dad joke. The World Health Organization defines the concept of health as, “...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This quote is one of



LAUGHING MATTER



many health quotes that usually serve as the beginning or the ending of a speech given by a health professional. Another quote that resonates within my own personal challenge to live a long and fruitful life as a father to my family is that, "Health is hard to gain and harder to maintain, but quick to lose and harder to regain." The essence of that statement is a realization every 40-year old man comprehends when actually having to warm up muscles and joints before exercising. Below are several wisdom reminders for fathers of all ages to "the bro code," the "manthology," and to your family's "mancestry:"

- "If you can't pronounce it, don't eat it." - Unknown
- "The food you eat can either be the safest & most powerful form of medicine...or the slowest form of poison."
- Ann Wigmore
- "Be careful about reading health books You may die of a misprint" - Mark Twain
- "Exercise is king. Nutrition is queen. Put them together and you've got a kingdom." - Jack Lalanne
- "I'm so unfamiliar with the gym, I call it James!"
- Ellen DeGeneres
- "The best advice is found on the pillow."
- Danish proverb
- "Doctors won't make you healthy. Nutritionists won't make you slim. Teachers won't make you smart. Trainers won't make you fit. Ultimately, you have to take responsibility."
- Naval Ravikant
- "If you don't take care of yourself, the undertaker will overtake that responsibility for you" - Carrie Latet

Even if you are 100% healthy, have never been sick, have not missed a day of work in the last year, and your bill of health is as shiny as the coat of paint on your vehicle, still make time to keep yourself in great physical condition. An oil change that is performed on your vehicle every 3,000-5,000 miles will allow a mechanic to view the metallic organs within the engine and to make sure there are no signs of impending problems with the belts, hoses, and fluids that all support the health of your vehicle's engine. Whenever you make that drive to your mechanic to get your vehicle's

oil changed, or even if you change the oil yourself, use that opportunity to also check the health of your human vehicle. Similar to your vehicle, preventative maintenance is less expensive than surgery, and that annual visit to a doctor is an easy way to check the performance of your body's engine parts, such as your heart and your blood vessels.

To all the fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers, and greater grandfathers, enjoy the summertime moments that will become your family's memories, and make the time to schedule that appointment to keep yourself healthy. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that sentence is a dad joke just waiting to be told.

