THE Mediterranean DIET

# 30-DAY CHALLENGE

# BULLETPROOF GUIDE

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**The Mediterranean Diet 30-Day Challenge**

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# Table of Contents


**Chapter 1: You Can Control How Fast (or Slowly) You Age ..... 4**

But How Do You Slow Aging? ..... 6

Mobility ..... 7

Energy ..... 8

Nutrition ..... 9

Toxins, Cell Damage and Heart Problems ..... 9

Brain ..... 10

**Chapter 2: Fine Tuning Your Mental Clarity on a Daily Basis ..... 11**

Cognitive Decline With Old Age ..... 12

Increasing Brain Energy and Mood With Nutrition and Nootropics ..... 14

Mood and Learning ..... 16

Increasing Learning, Interest and Memory With the Right Lifestyle ..... 19

**Chapter 3: Staving Off Depression to Prevent Wrinkles and Disease ..... 22**

How Stress Ages You ..... 24

Introducing: Telomeres. ..... 25

How to Manage Stress ..... 26

**Chapter 4: Keeping Your Body Active and Mobile ..... 29**

One Rule: Move! ..... 31

**Chapter 5: Preventing Your Age From Showing Up on Your Face ..... 33**

Protecting Your Skin With the Right Nutrients ..... 34

The Best Diet for Looking and Feeling Younger ..... 37

Eat a Lot or Eat a Little? ..... 38

Skin Care for Anti-Aging ..... 39

Creams and Other Products ..... 40

**Chapter 6: Helping Your Hair Hang On to Its Youthful Appearance ..... 42**

How to Avoid Aging Hair ..... 44

Combating Grey Hair ..... 44

Fighting Hair Loss ..... 45

**Chapter 7: Keep Your Hands Looking Younger Over Time ..... 48**

Protecting Your Hands ..... 49

**Chapter 8: Treating the Embarrassing Issue of Incontinence ..... 51**

What Causes Incontinence in Old Age ..... 52

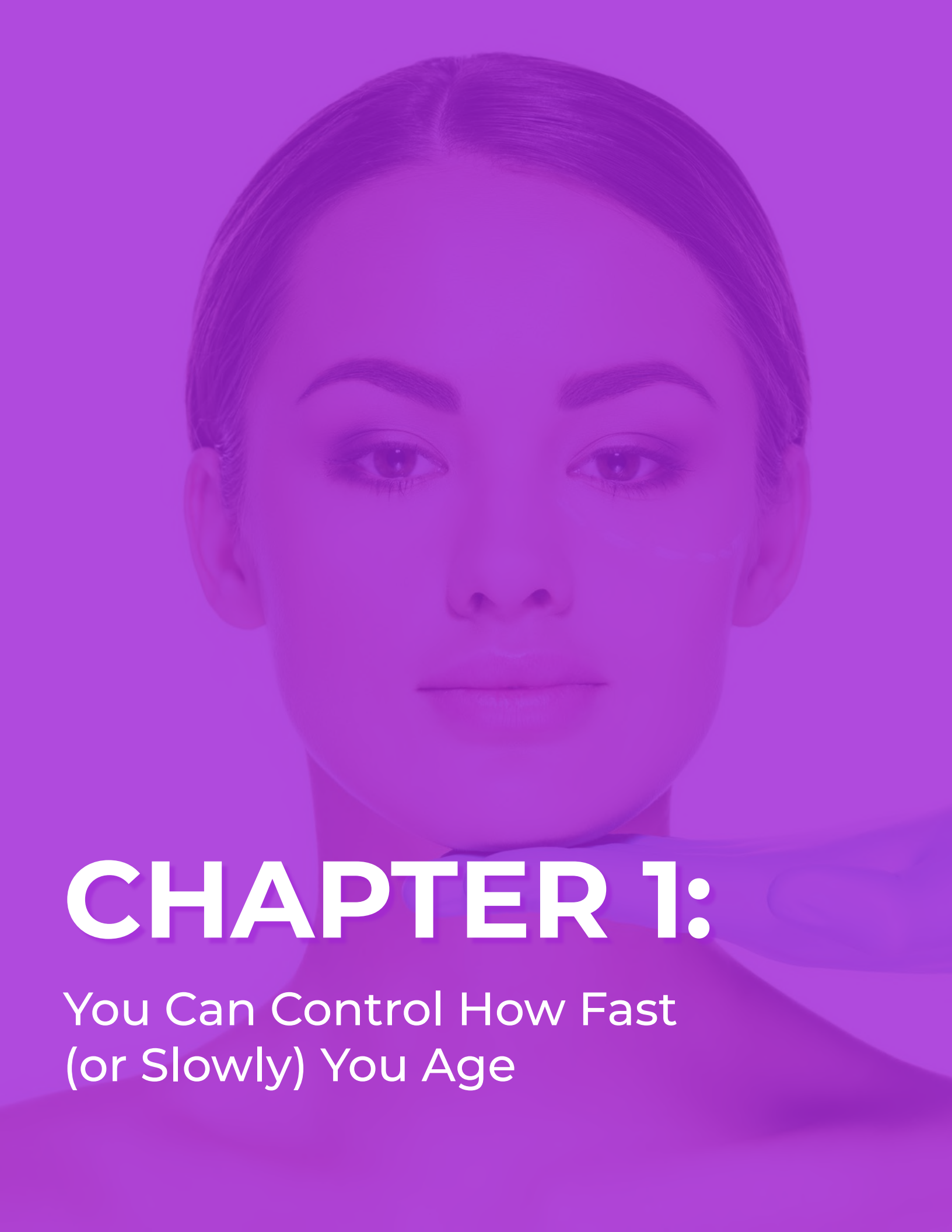
How To Treat It ..... 53

**Chapter 9: Sexual Dysfunction ..... 54**

Hormonal Changes ..... 55

**Chapter 10: Preventing and Treating Other Common Ailments of Aging ..... 56**

**Conclusion and Summary ..... 58**



# CHAPTER 1:

## You Can Control How Fast (or Slowly) You Age

No one wants to get older but unfortunately, until they discover an elixir of youth, it's fairly unavoidable.

But just because you have to get older, no one said you had to do it quickly. And no one said you couldn't age well and keep your youthful good looks, energy and health!

Many of us make the assumption that getting old automatically has to mean getting covered in wrinkles, losing our ability to walk around and eventually developing incontinence and dementia. As it happens though, none of these things are inevitable and most of them are only partially related to age!

And you can see this just by looking around! While some people seem to be struggling to stand up straight and remember their name at age 65, others are still playing sports and writing books well into their 80s and 90s.

Is the difference entirely genetic? Not at all! In fact, there are numerous lifestyle changes that can make all the difference to the way you feel as you age, and many of the problems that are associated with old age can actually be avoided entirely.

So yeah, aging is still inevitable. But the way you age is almost entirely up to you!

The difference comes down to your knowledge - and your ability to apply that knowledge - to make the most of your own body and health. YOU have the choice and the sooner you take action, the more effectively you can stave off the most unappealing aspects of getting older.

Yes, that's right, this isn't just a book for 'old people'. It's for young people too. In fact, it's more aimed at young people because you

are the ones who have the time to ensure you get the utmost out of your body and mind as you get older.

## But How Do You Slow Aging?

Anyone can claim that aging is something you have control over. The hard part is backing that claim up with some hard evidence.

How can you really slow down your aging? And how can your decisions end up putting your body in 'fast forward' mode?

Here are some examples...

# Mobility

A lot of people will tell you that your knees have a finite amount of time before they start to tire out. The same goes for your back.

But more and more, we're discovering that's not true. The 'functional strength' crowd are making it very apparent that you can keep on training into old age and that, in fact, things like running should give you more longevity.

The problem is just the way we're training. And our lack of activity in general.

The way it goes for many people is that they stay very fit and healthy when they're younger because they run around, play sports and generally engage in activity. Once they're middle aged though, they slow down and they start sitting at the computer all day long. Their metabolism slows down, yes, but most of the changes they see in their body are really a result of being constantly stressed and constantly static. This results in muscle imbalances caused by maintaining the same posture for too long, which causes injury when engaging in sudden activity. Don't use your back long enough and it's sure to go when you try and lift that suitcase!

This injury then leads to 'corrective' posture and biomechanics. You have a bad knee or back, so you put more weight on the other leg/you hunch over.

This in turn means that you actually exacerbate the muscle imbalances that you already had. And the longer this goes on, the more of a hunch and a limp you can start to acquire and the more pain you can expect to experience.

The solution is not to be less active but to be more active – while making sure to use the correct technique.

# Energy

Meanwhile, staying active can also boost your energy levels and help you to start feeling better. That means the tiredness and sluggishness that we feel as we get older again isn't inevitable.

Actually, when you combine the right exercise regimen with the right diet, you can increase not only your heart strength and circulation but also the efficiency of your mitochondria. Mitochondria are the small 'energy factories' of your cells. They exist to help you convert glucose into usable energy (ATP) and their number and strength is one of the big determining factors that influences your energy output and the way you feel.

In fact, differences in mitochondria have been suggested to be one of the main differentiating factors between the energy levels of young children and those of older individuals. It's why kids seem to be able to run around and around in circles for hours screaming, without ever tiring out.

# Nutrition

Nutrition is also responsible for a large proportion of the problems you'll struggle with as you get older. Contrary to popular belief, many of the health issues associated with old age are actually cumulative and result from years of poor nutrition. A lack of nutrients can lead to problems with vision, hormone production, bone density and much more. Thus by eating the right diet, you can stave off numerous conditions and stay healthier and stronger into older age.

# Toxins, Cell Damage and Heart Problems

Many of the health complaints associated with old age can also be combated with the right lifestyle. Sure, it's always possible to be unlucky and to suffer from cancer with no 'cause' as such. But this is much less likely if you are able to protect yourself with the very best and healthiest lifestyle choices.

For example, heart disease is one of the leading killers in men by far, but it is very much possible to reduce the risk of this problem by getting plenty of exercise and sticking to a diet designed to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol at the most stable and desirable levels.

## Brain

The same rules apply to your brain as to the rest of your body. In other words, if you keep your nutrition up and actually keep using your brain, it will stay nimble.

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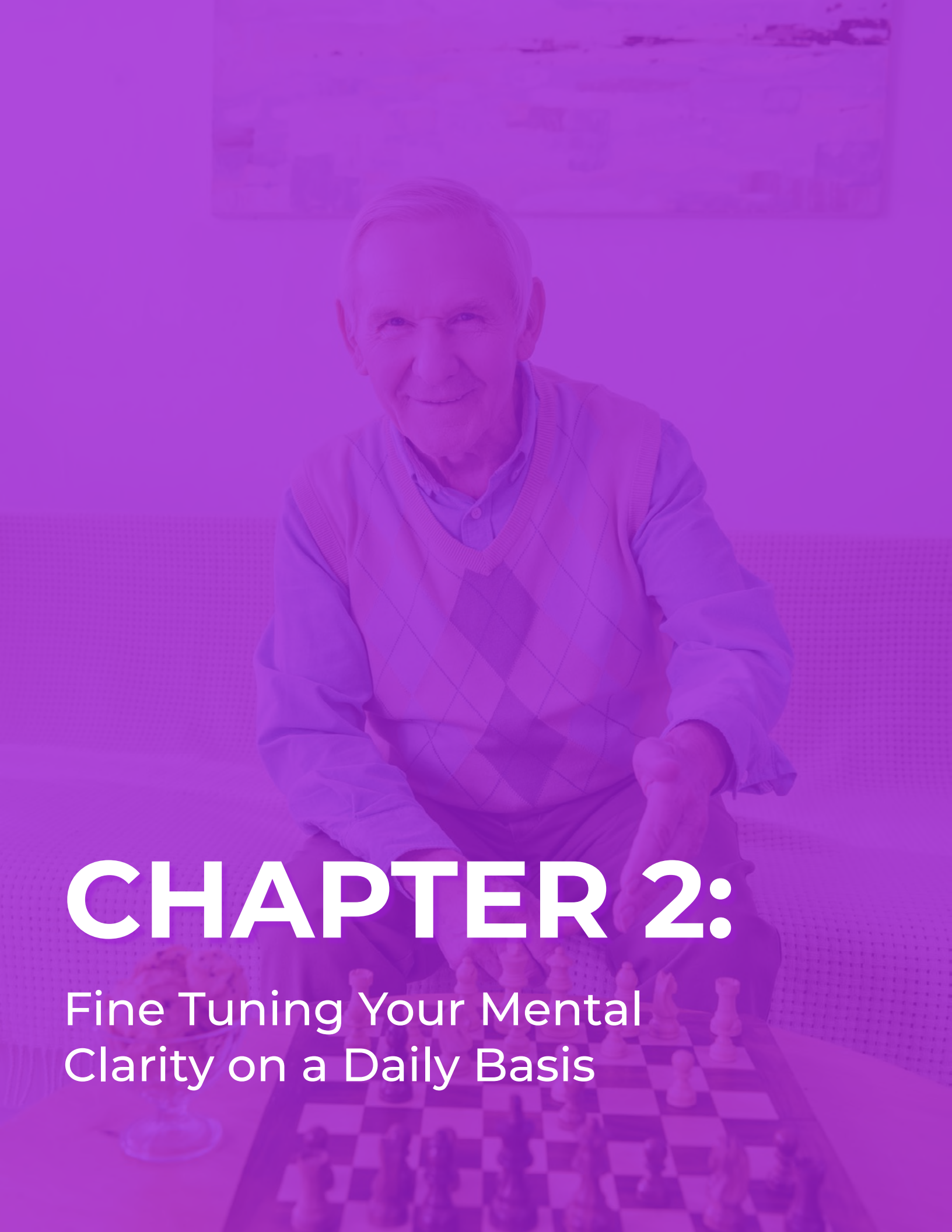
We'll get into all of this and a lot more in greater detail in the subsequent chapters but hopefully this is enough of an explanation to make a believer of you. The point is, you do have control over the way you age and if you take the right precautions then you can stay healthy, mobile and able well into older age.

This book is going to act as your road map and your blueprint to help you do exactly that. Follow these tips and you'll be able to fortify your body against the invading forces of old age!



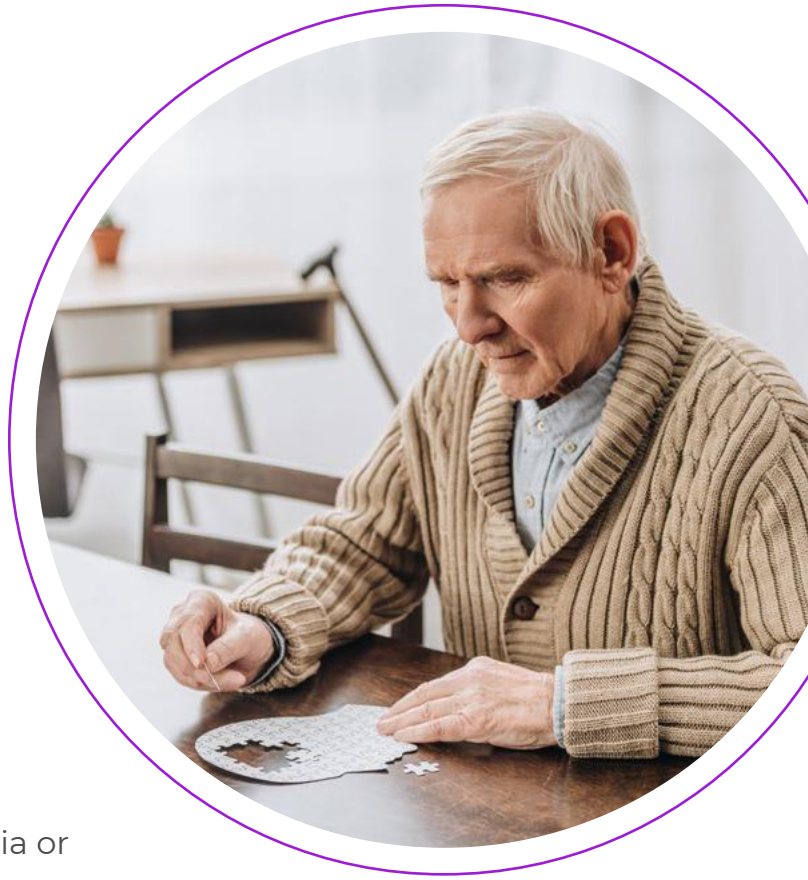
# CHAPTER 2:

## Fine Tuning Your Mental Clarity on a Daily Basis

So where to start? How about with the mind, seeing as the mind leads and the body follows? If you can keep your brain sharp and your mind nimble, then you will be able to enjoy life in at least some capacity and maintain your dignity. What's more though, is that a healthy mind will help to automatically give you a stronger and healthier body. Your mind controls your movements after all, and this is the key to maintaining good biomechanics and muscle control.

So let's take a look at the issues that you might struggle with in this department as you age and how you can keep those problems at bay...

## Cognitive Decline With Old Age



The thing we most often associate with age-related cognitive decline is forgetfulness. When you reach a certain age, you start to forget where you left your keys a little more regularly and eventually you start to forget the names of your family. Just call everyone 'Frank', it's easier.

Some degree of memory loss is fairly normal with age and is referred to as 'age related cognitive decline'. However, in some cases it might take the more serious form of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The latter is caused by amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles, which are caused by a build-up of protein fragments attaching to the cells.

This can lead to confusion and severe memory loss, which we know as dementia or Alzheimer's. In some cases, confusion and memory loss are exacerbated by damage to the brain caused by a stroke or traumatic brain injury.

But long before that come slight tiredness and the brain fog. It's almost imperceptible but it's definitely there. Like a computer that takes just an extra minute or two to

boot up. No one else would notice, but you know it's not running on all cylinders anymore. Not like it used to.

Think back: how much harder is it now to wake up in the morning than it was five years ago? Back then you would likely be out all night drinking with friends and then wake up the next day with energy to spare. It's not your body that's changed at this point: it's your brain.

Or how about you think back even further (memory allowing...) to when you were just a little kid. Back then you could run around in circles for hours without ever tiring out. Likely you know kids who can still do the same thing. These days though, many of us struggle just climbing the stairs!

Constantly feeling tired is no fun and neither is having half the enthusiasm you used to have when you were younger – or half the ability or passion for learning. Notice how young people are always learning new skills, making new friends and changing careers and that gets harder as you age.

Oh and what about mood? Have you noticed how you're much angrier all the time these days? What once wouldn't have made us pause for thought now has us growling under our breaths like mad people. What happened to that youthful optimism? If you understand the 'law of attraction', then you'll know how being angry all the time will only lead to fewer opportunities and less enjoyment. Apparently it's at the age of 60 when these changes really occur.

So what's actually happening inside that cranium of yours to cause these changes?

# Increasing Brain Energy and Mood With Nutrition and Nootropics

There are many things that change in the brain that are responsible for the weakening we see in our abilities and our personalities. Many of these can be somewhat mitigated by the right nutrient and/or supplement regimen, however. When nutrients, herbs or medications are used in this way, they're referred to as 'nootropics' – compounds that can help to enhance brain performance.

Let's start with that low energy – what causes this?

There are a couple of things, but up front is the decrease in mitochondria. As we've already discussed, your mitochondria are the tiny little fuel generators that live in all of your cells. Their job is to take glucose and convert it to ATP, or Adenosine Triphosphate, the 'energy currency of life'.

These mitochondria are found throughout our bodies and that includes the brain, where they live in the brain cells. If you've ever felt too tired or too lazy to complete a sum because it involves holding numbers in your working memory, then your 'brain energy' is letting you down.

And this is what makes it harder to find the enthusiasm to do anything as well. Another night of the same old TV it is then...

If you were to look at the cells of a young kid under the microscope and compare them with those of a middle-aged person, you'd see that the middle-aged person has far fewer mitochondria. Scientists now believe that this is one of the key differences in the energy levels of children versus adults.

As it happens, this is also one of the key things that a lot of nootropics target. Ingredients ranging from L-carnitine and PQQ to lutein and creatine, and even bitter orange, work at least partially this way.

Another thing that affects brain energy as we get older is blood flow. Like every other part of your body, your brain needs a steady supply of blood to provide nutrients and oxygen for healthy functioning. Unfortunately, as your breathlessness on reaching the top step will attest, our blood flow suffers as we age.

This is where vasodilators come in. Things like garlic extract, vinpocetine and ginkgo biloba all offer this increased energy by increasing the diameter of the blood vessels. This can also be very good for those with high blood pressure! These allow more blood, oxygen and nutrients to be directed toward the brain, helping you to feel more alert and more awake. As mentioned, you can also get a lot of benefit from nutrients like iron and vitamin B12, which help the body to create more red blood cells. This very simple change is often enough to increase the amount of oxygen and nutrients making their way around the body to the brain, and once again to supercharge your energy levels.

# Mood and Learning

As we get older, we often start to produce less of the most important neurochemicals – whether it's serotonin or dopamine. Dopamine is one of the neurotransmitters most associated with attention, which also correlates to memory (the more focused you are, the more likely you are to remember something – often the things you've 'forgotten' are things you never listened to in the first place).

Dopamine is also correlated with BDNF – Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor. Along with nerve growth factor, BDNF is one of the key players in neuroplasticity. As we age, the rate at which our brains adapt and grow changes and this results in a poorer ability to learn new skills and ideas, along with a reduced interest in doing so.

Guess what you can consume to increase your dopamine levels, gain focus and enhance learning? Good old caffeine! And perhaps by no coincidence, caffeine consumption is also associated with reduced risk of Alzheimer's. Dopamine is also related to your mood, as are other neurochemicals that decrease as we age – such as serotonin, which is often known as the 'happiness hormone'. Many of these neurochemicals are made from simple amino acids (the building blocks of protein) like tryptophan and L-tyrosine. Eat more eggs (which are also packed with the brain-boosting choline) and your brain will be stronger and you'll be less cranky.

Numerous other nootropic compounds can help to increase brain plasticity. There are some very fascinating studies that have shown we might someday be able to restore our brains to infant-like levels of plasticity (one study demonstrated it could be possible to teach participants perfect pitch with certain nootropics that are not yet commercially available).

This can not only help us to pick up new skills – rather, to teach the old dog new tricks – but also prevent us from falling into old, lazy thinking habits. One of the big issues here is the way we use our brain; as we get older we know more (we form more 'crystalized intelligence'), which results in a reduced need to keep learning. What's more, decades of rehearsing the same thought patterns (and their respective neural pathways) means that certain memories and ideas become deeply ingrained while others are 'cut off' from the brain and left to wither and atrophy. Use it or lose it.

This is why it's so important to keep the brain fueled with the right nutrients and ingredients even later into your life, and to support that growth with the right nutrient or supplement intake.

So how do you do this? The best answer is to eat a nutrient dense diet. This can help to encourage the production of the right neurochemicals, it can help to give you more mental energy and clarity, and it can improve your mood.

Moreover, the right nutrients can also help protect your brain from a lot of the wear and tear that it might be subjected to over time. Your brain is damaged by free radicals just like every other cell in your body. These are molecules that can react with the exterior of cell walls, causing damage and potentially even impacting the nucleus of your brain. Antioxidants like vitamin C can help to prevent this kind of damage.

Meanwhile, omega 3 fatty acid – the oil found in fish – can help to improve communication between cells by enhancing 'cell membrane permeability'. This has also been shown to help stave of age-related cognitive decline in studies.

So if you're starting to feel your grey matter slow down, just start eating more fruits and vegetables, more salads and more meats and oily fish. This alone can make a huge difference, but if you're not seeing results or are struggling to eat healthily, consider creating a nootropic 'stack' for yourself. Make sure it contains the following:

Vitamin C (precursor to serotonin and an antioxidant)

Garlic (a natural vasodilator)

Creatine (boosts cellular energy)

CoQ10 and/or resveratrol (boosts cellular energy)

Vitamin B6 & B12 (for enhanced energy and better nervous system function)

L-Tyrosine & 5HT (a type of tryptophan – any amino acid supplement will work)

Iron, Magnesium, Zinc, Vitamin D (these will also help with testosterone production in men)

Lutein (this will also help with vision)

Omega 3 fatty acid (improves cell-membrane permeability)

Guarana (a slow releasing form of caffeine)

Oh and of course - you should avoid all the things that can actually damage the brain and exacerbate neurochemical imbalances/trigger deterioration.

One of the worst culprits is alcohol, which when consumed regularly can even end up causing a unique type of cognitive decline called 'Korsakoff's syndrome'.

# Increasing Learning, Interest and Memory With the Right Lifestyle

You know what's even more important than all of this though?

Using your brain on a regular basis.

Again, it's a matter of use it or lose it. Part of the reason that we see much of the deterioration we do in our brain is because we stop learning new things and stop subjecting ourselves to new experiences. This is a tragic mistake.

We've already touched on BDNF and brain plasticity, but knowing how this process works is what will really highlight why it's so crucial to keep learning.

Essentially, whenever you use your brain, you are causing specific neurons in your brain to 'fire' (called an action potential). If two neurons fire at the same time, a connection

is sparked and the more often those two neurons fire simultaneously, the stronger that connection becomes. This is how we learn and it's how memories are formed – the more we repeat a task, the more easily one action or one cue will lead to the next. This is reinforced when we think something is important and give it our full attention – this triggers the release of dopamine and other 'excitatory neurotransmitters', which causes the release of BDNF to enhance more synaptic plasticity.

Meanwhile, when a connection isn't used, 'pruning' can occur, which means that the connection gradually deteriorates.

The more you learn and the more you keep forming new connections, the more BDNF and dopamine your brain will produce. But when you stop learning new things, you gradually lose the ability to learn them. Meanwhile, repeating the same actions and the same opinions over and over again will result in it being very hard for your brain to deviate from those set pathways.

This is why it's common to see older people becoming very opinionated and very set in their ways. They've lost the ability to form new connections but their existing connections are absolutely set in stone.

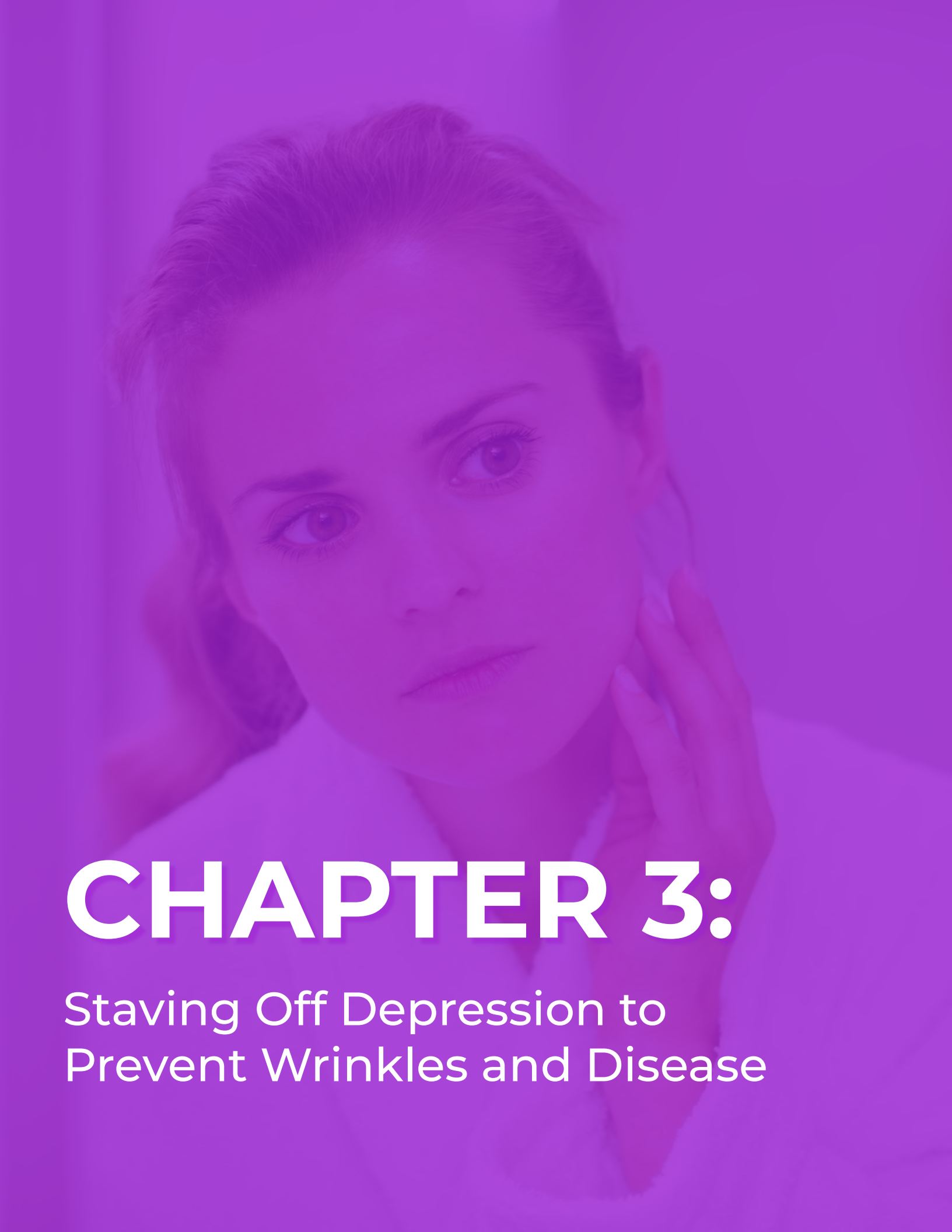
Again, think about how this correlates with changes in our lifestyle. When we are younger, everything is new and we are constantly learning (the brain loves novelty!). This continues when we're at university and it continues further when we start our careers.

But then we fall into a set career path and start to repeat the same tasks every day. Those tasks lose their challenge and we are essentially just going through the motions. Our production of dopamine and our brain plasticity deteriorates. Around this time, we also stop being active.

Then once we retire, we stop being active at all and spend a lot of time doing not a whole lot. We're not using our bodies and not using our brains, so pruning occurs quicker than new connections form. Thus we become forgetful and find it harder to engage or learn new things.

The key then is to keep your brain active. Many articles and blog posts you read online will recommend things like chess and reading to achieve this end, but what's really most important is that you keep learning new things. The brain craves novelty and the more of that you can give it, the better it will remain at growing, learning and adapting.

A great way to do this is actually to play computer games. The reason for this is that every computer game requires a different set of motor skills (owing to different controls), creates unique experiences and offers fresh challenges and puzzles. Online 'social' games are even better.



# CHAPTER 3:

## Staving Off Depression to Prevent Wrinkles and Disease

We've already seen how aging can lead to a reduction in some of the neurotransmitters that make us feel good, and we've seen how this can lead to low mood as well as impaired cognitive function. We've also seen how this can be mitigated both with the right nutrient regime and by constantly learning and trying new things.

As we'll see, hormones also play a big role in this.

But there are other factors at play here too. For example, there are the lifestyle factors that can lead many older people to start feeling more isolated and lonely, and this is further exacerbated by pain, lack of mobility and lack of a 'purpose'.

And sadly, this creates something of a 'vicious cycle'. When we are robbed of our purpose and meaning, it leaves us feeling less motivated and less happy. In turn, this leads to even more indifference, low energy and low mood.

And what you might also not recognize is just what a huge role stress and depression can play in aging. Stress actually wreaks absolute havoc on your body and can be devastating to your mood, your self-esteem and yes, your skin.

This is one of the reasons, along with those mentioned in the last chapter, that retiring from work is often the fastest way to suddenly age. That's when you lose your purpose, it's when you stop being challenged and it's when your social structure breaks down.

So what do you do? Work well into old age? A better alternative is to find something to do instead – something that will give you all that structure and all that confidence but without involving so much stress. In fact, you can look for something that will offer more variety and more challenge.

Some people will volunteer, some people will become active in local communities. Some people might write a book, travel the world, or start their own side business – without the worry that comes from being financially dependent on it.

In other words, keep yourself active, keep challenging yourself to new things and throw yourself out there. Sometimes you may not feel like it – especially if energy levels are starting to wane – but it's when you give up that it all comes collapsing around you.

# How Stress Ages You

Stress is caused by a mild version of the 'fight or flight' response. This is the response that our bodies would have used in the wild in order to prep us for action. This is triggered by a flood of hormones and neurotransmitters, including the likes of dopamine, norepinephrine, epinephrine (adrenaline) and cortisol. In response, our parasympathetic nervous system preps us for battle by making our brain more focused and triggering various physiological changes in our bodies, such as:

- **Increased heart rate**
- **Rapid breathing**
- **Increased blood viscosity (so that our blood would clot in response to an injury)**
- **Muscle contractions**
- **Decreased digestion**
- **Suppressed immune system**

The immune system and digestion are suppressed so that more blood and more resources can be directed to the brain and the muscles. This is a little like Captain Kirk sending all power to thrusters, even if it means diverting it away from the medical bay!

The context this was designed to be used in would always be short and sharp – it would be a sudden release of adrenaline that would allow us to get away from a predator or a forest fire.

But today, stressors tend to last much longer and take the form of work-place pressure, debt, relationship problems, etc. When you go for these long periods with continuous stress, the body takes a beating: blood pressure is raised (because it is thicker and the heartrate is increased), we don't absorb all the nutrients in our food (due to that suppressed digestion) and we become much more prone to illness.

Just as not getting enough nutrients in the diet can lead to cumulative damage that becomes serious over time, so too can continuous chronic stress. This also leads to an increase in oxidative damage to the cells and can even turn you grey! Even just frowning more may be one of the fastest ways to give yourself more wrinkles along the top of your head – right where they don't look so great!

Stress even makes you grind your teeth, making you more inclined to lose them later on.

And stress can cause psychological damage that might end up culminating in more serious damage over time.

Want proof? Just take a look at any president or prime minister and you'll see that they went grey very shortly after being elected!

Now it's time to get a little more scientific and look at some of the real damage that stress may be able to cause.

## Introducing: Telomeres

A telomere is essentially a section of 'empty' DNA that the body doesn't need that is found at the end of your genes. Sometimes this is described as being like the plastic tips at the end of shoelaces – designed to stop the shoelaces from fraying.

What's really going on is that every time your cells divide and reproduce via mitosis, they end up losing a little bit of information from the ends of the DNA. Because telomeres are not needed, they act like a 'buffer'. They are the first things to go and it doesn't matter because they don't contain any information.

But after a while, you'll find your telomeres 'run out' and that's when your actual DNA starts to be degraded.

Guess what? Studies show that the more stressed you are, the shorter the telomeres become. And this is also true when you're suffering from depression. If you are very stressed at work, you will age faster. And if you feel lonely, isolated and frustrated in an old-people's home, you'll feel stressed too.

The good news? As you become less stressed, you can actually end up re-storing and rejuvenating your telomeres to some extent.

## How to Manage Stress

Don't get it confused though: not all stress is bad. 'Eustress' is the term often used to describe the good kind of stress and this is the kind of feeling you get when standing on top of a mountain about to head down on skis, or when you're playing a computer game and you're completely focused because you only have one life left. This is the kind of mild stress that increases dopamine and BDNF.

The key is to keep challenging yourself, keep subjecting yourself to new experiences and to make sure you manage the stress this brings in a healthy manner. The worst thing you can do is to sit in an old-person's home stressing about how lonely you are, or to sit in the same office, doing the same work every single day while being under a lot of stress.

The reality is that while we can't control our circumstances, we can control the way we react to them. When you're lonely or bored, there are things you can do to get more meaning in your life again – even if that just means getting the internet set up or learning a new skill like painting. And if you're stressed at work, consider quitting – after all, your health is the most important thing.

# Stress Management Techniques

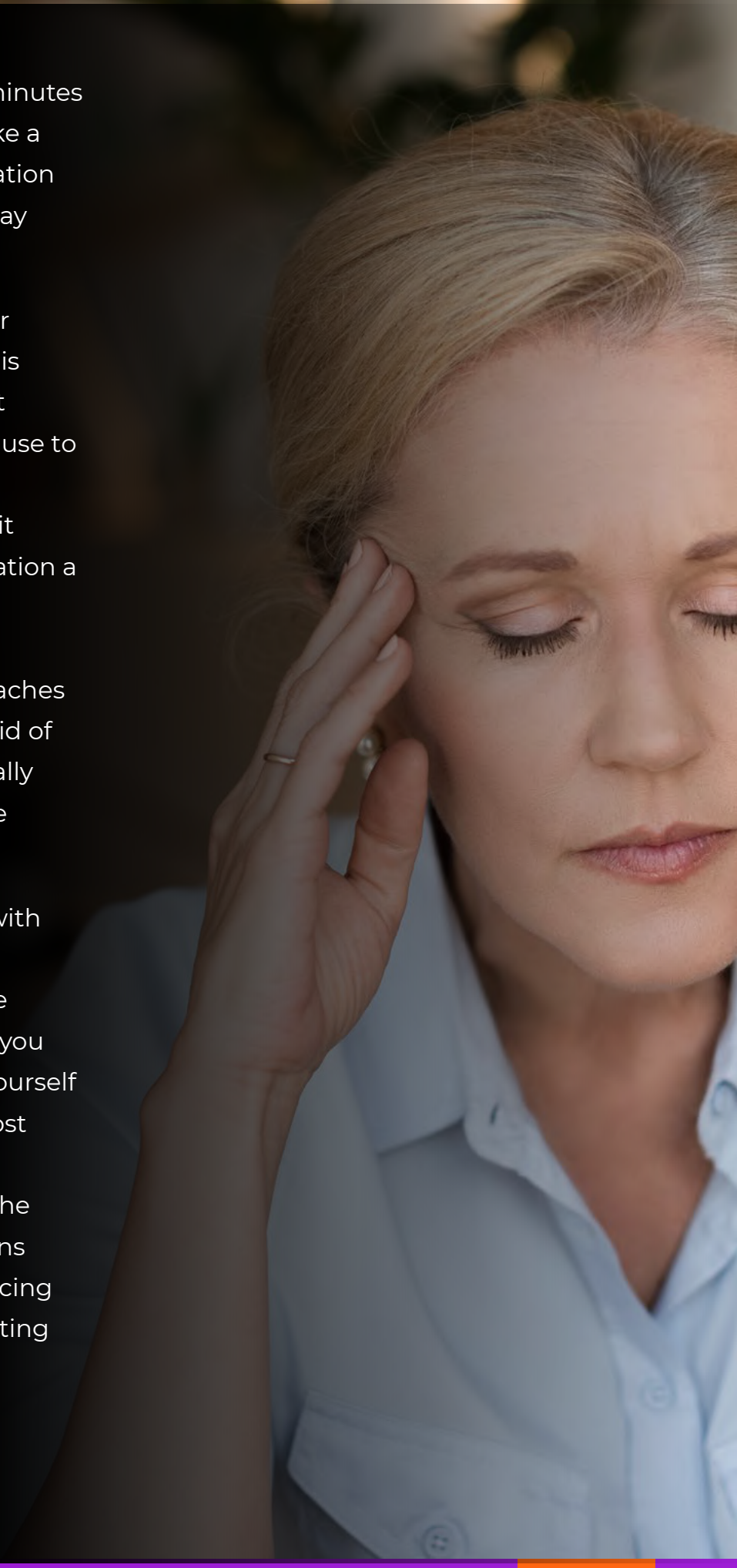
You can also try any number of stress management techniques. Of these, the most successful and popular is probably meditation. It's no coincidence that a lot of Buddhist monks seem to live inordinately long.

To give meditation a shot, you could try downloading the popular mobile app 'Head Space' which will talk you through a few guided meditation sessions. Otherwise, you can try transcendental or mindfulness meditation on your own. The key is to calm the mind and to stop worrying about things. The big mistake we often make is to try and 'force' this to happen when in reality, this defies the point entirely! When you try and 'force' yourself to be calm, you are actually anything but. Instead, you should simply sit somewhere quietly, close your eyes and then see what happens. If your mind wanders, then just make a note of it and focus back on your breathing or on keeping your mind still.

It takes a little practice but just 10 minutes a few times a week can start to make a major difference. Eventually, meditation will become a tool you can use to stay calm under any circumstances.

Another option is to look into CBT or 'Cognitive Behavioral Therapy'. This is a psychotherapeutic technique that teaches methods that patients can use to try and calm their thoughts and overcome a stress response. Often, it simply involves looking at your situation a little differently. For instance, 'thought challenging' is a type of 'cognitive restructuring' and this teaches you to look at the things you're afraid of and then assess whether they're really worth fearing or if perhaps you have blown them out of proportion.

If you are someone who struggles with a lot of stress, then you might consider seeing a professional cognitive behavioral therapist who will teach you these tools that you can then use yourself to overcome stressful situations. Most important of all though is simply to remember that you need to make the best of your situation and that means putting yourself out there, experiencing new things and – crucially – connecting with new people.



# CHAPTER 4:

## Keeping Your Body Active and Mobile

Now perhaps the most important way to protect your body and mind against aging: working out!

That's right: body and mind. Your brain's primary purpose is to move your body, and a huge amount of your grey matter is dedicated to exactly that job. If you want to keep learning and creating new connections in your brain, then nothing will compare to staying active and exercising. What's more, exercise stimulates the release of countless necessary neurochemicals including dopamine and serotonin. It has been shown to greatly improve memory and to boost the IQ too.

Meanwhile, the benefits for the body are huge. Staying active can help to improve heart health and prevent the likelihood of heart disease. It can also improve your looks, combat diabetes, prevent depression, keep your bones stronger (especially if you train outside and get lots of sun) and much more.

More importantly, as we discussed in the introduction, staying active is actually the best way to prevent the loss of mobility that will leave us hunched and in constant pain in old age.

So the question is, how do you stay active in the right way to combat age-related health issues?

# One Rule: Move!

Get up right now and stand with your feet slightly apart and toes facing forward. Now try to squat all the way down with your heels flat on the floor.

Can't do it?

This isn't just a problem for the older population – it's something that 90% of men and women in their 20s and 30s can't do either.

But you should be able to do it. Squatting is one of the 7 primal movements – it's a fundamental ability that we should all have.

How about touching your toes?

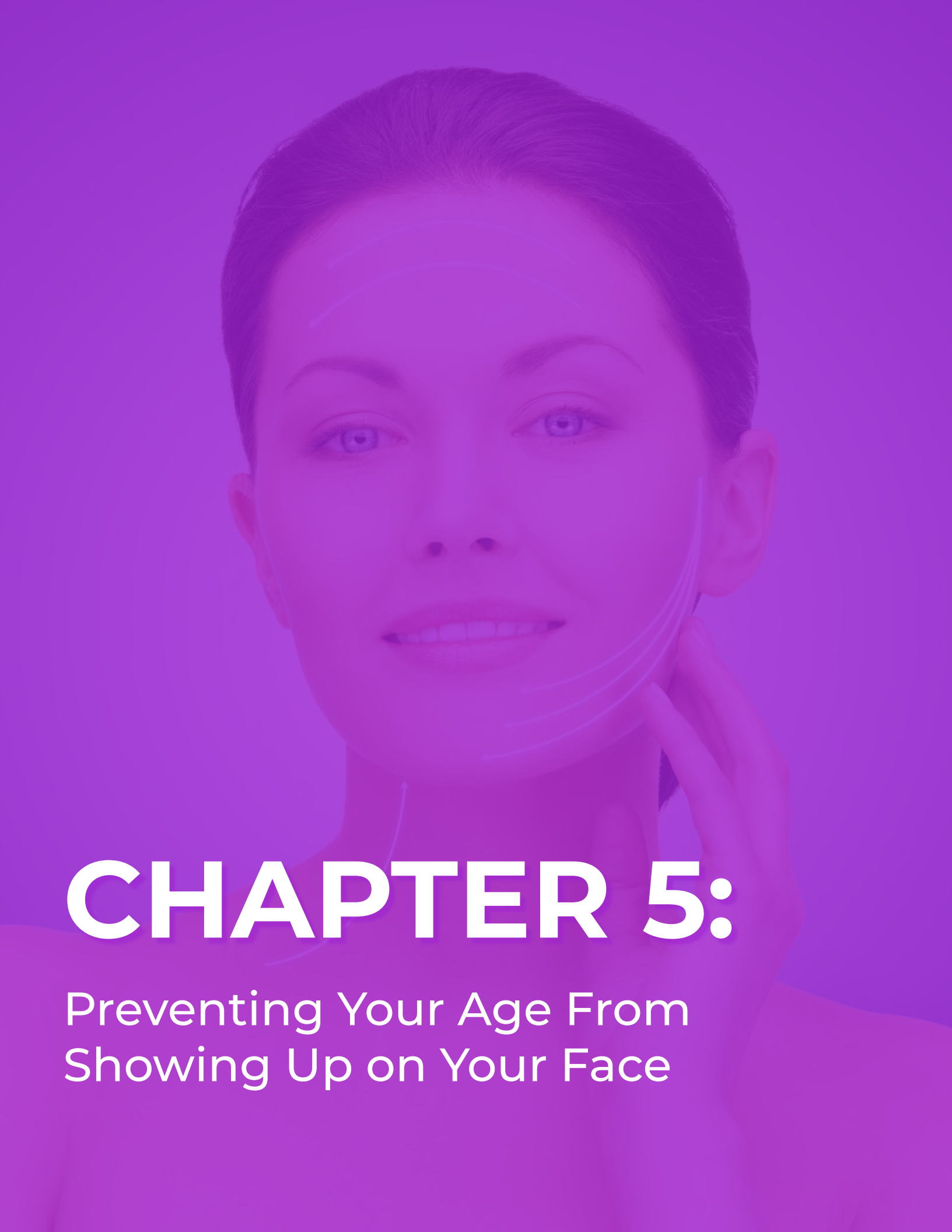
The problem is that most of us spend 8 hours a day sitting in an office in the same position. That position involves having our shoulders hunched forward, neck craned down and legs bent. This causes muscles like the quadriceps and pecs to shorten and tighten, while our hamstrings and glutes become weakened and flattened.

The longer this goes on, the more serious the problem becomes. Eventually we might even develop a pelvic tilt. Is it any wonder that you can't move at all when you're older?

So the key is not to start some 'gentle exercise'. Rather, the key is to get really active and to push your body. It should be able to handle it but you need a trainer who can teach you to get started gently and to gradually increase the difficulty while keeping one eye firmly on mobility. Read books like *Becoming a Supple Leopard* and you'll see that we age best when we use our body through its full range of motion and keep on doing so. Weight-lifting is actually a great choice of exercise for older individuals as it teaches movements like the squat and the deadlift with good technique to ensure that you have full range of motion.

This is even more important if you do have a fall or accident – as this is what will very often serve as the catalyst to many more problems. If that happens, then you should see a chiropractor or physiotherapist and then follow the advice they give you to strengthen the area and prevent knock-on effects throughout your body.

Of course, if you have existing complaints then you may not be up for squatting and lunging just yet. In that case, you may want to start with some gentle cardio in the meantime, which will help to provide those aforementioned health and brain benefits in the short term. Good options include most low-impact forms of exercise, such as swimming, walking (or power walking), the recumbent bike and others that don't involve hitting anything with force. Just make sure that the goal is always to work your way up toward more complex moves.



# CHAPTER 5:

## Preventing Your Age From Showing Up on Your Face

Our skin is one of the most obvious indicators of our age and if you ask someone to predict how old you are, it's your skin that they'll look at to make their estimate. For this reason, anti-aging skin care is one of the surest ways to look younger and healthier to make sure that there are no awkward moments when someone mistakes your sister for your daughter. Using the correct techniques, it's possible to cut up to 25 years off your appearance, maybe more, and not only look better but feel better too.

## Protecting Your Skin With the Right Nutrients

The first facet of anti-aging skin care is in our diet, and the more healthily we eat, the smoother and more radiant our skin will be. This stands to reason when you consider that it's our food that provides our body with the building blocks required to nourish our skin and every other tissue and muscle in the body. You literally are what you eat, and if you want healthy skin you need a healthy diet.

When thinking specifically about trying to look younger, there are three main things we need in our diet – antioxidants, vitamins and fats.

**Antioxidants**

First of all, the antioxidants found in foods such as citrus fruits and fish will help protect our skin cells (and every other cell) from oxidization and attack from free radicals. We've touched on this idea briefly already but to reiterate – every cell in your body is under constant attack from free radicals which damage the cell walls when they come into contact with them. Enough of these bombardments and eventually, that microscopic damage becomes macroscopic and your skin appears tired and wrinkled. Worse is that this damage can eventually penetrate through to your DNA, at which point your cells will become mutated and look damaged when they divide. In the worst case scenarios, this can lead to the formation of cancerous tumors. Antioxidants manage to neutralize these free radicals so that there are less available to attack the skin.

This will mean that the skin cells come under less fire and so appear healthier. At the same time, this will help protect the skin and other cells against cancer by lowering the chance of the DNA behind the cell walls being damaged or mutated.

There are countless sources of antioxidants in your diet but the best way to make sure you're getting plenty is just to consume a lot of fruits and vegetables which tend to be packed with them.

Antioxidants also include things like resveratrol and CoQ10. You may remember from our section on nootropics that these enhance mitochondrial function and this makes sense, seeing as damaging oxygen is a common byproduct of the mitochondria and can otherwise end up damaging the cells and eventually the DNA.

Resveratrol is found in red grapes and red wine and is actually thought to be the reason that people living on a continental diet are so much less likely to suffer from heart disease and other conditions!

### Vitamins

Vitamins meanwhile, particularly vitamin A and E, are used in rebuilding the skin and are a great way to encourage the body to heal both scars and wrinkles. These are used to help encourage the production of collagen and other important substances that give the skin its elasticity and generally, they will keep your skin looking more youthful and healthy. Again, this all comes from eating a diet high in nutrients.

### Fats

Essential fatty acids meanwhile will provide your skin with oil to keep it subtle and prevent it becoming dry and flaky. Omega 3 fatty acid will act as both a source of oil for your skin and a source of antioxidants.

Saturated fats in general are an important part of your diet and will help to keep your skin naturally moisturized while also encouraging the production of hormones that further help to keep your skin glowing.

Fats get a lot of bad rap when it comes to your health but more recent studies show that we have mistakenly made them into scapegoats. Fat does not increase LDL (bad) cholesterol, nor does it make us fat. Fat is actually an important part of our diet!

Oh, and eating lots of protein is also important. Protein provides the body with all the building blocks it needs to create more tissue and that includes the skin (not just muscle!).

# The Best Diet for Looking and Feeling Younger

With all this in mind, what is the best diet for looking and feeling younger?

Well really, there's just one rule. That is: seek out nutrients!

By extension, this also means you're better off avoiding those sugary carbs and processed foods like chips, crisps, cake, chocolate bars, pasta and rice. These foods all spike your blood sugar and lower insulin sensitivity, thereby increasing your risk of diabetes (which you're at increasing risk of as you get older anyway!). Meanwhile, these foods increase your caloric intake without offering any nutrients that would be able to benefit your skin, hair, teeth or nails. So why eat them?

Instead, seek out fruits, vegetables, salads, meats, berries, fish, nuts and all that good stuff you would find in nature. Smoothies are great (although high in sugar). Seek out those superfoods meanwhile! Did you know that bone broth is packed with collagen?

If you're looking for a set diet plan you can follow to make this happen, then there is no shortage of choice. The following will all help put you on the right track:

- The Mediterranean Diet
- The Paleo Diet
- The Slow Carb Diet

And guys, don't start this later after you begin to see the signs of aging creeping up. Start it now and you'll be able to keep those signs at bay. Prevention is much better than cure!

# Eat a Lot or Eat a Little?

Here's another question: should you eat a lot, or eat a little?

This is actually one of the most important questions to ask when looking younger is your aim!

On the one hand, there is a school of thought that says you should eat very little. The latter strategy is what's called 'Calorie Restriction' and does exactly what it says on the tin. The claim here is that by restricting calories, you can actually reduce the rate of your aging and thus look younger for longer.

How does this work? According to proponents, eating less means that your mitochondria work less and thus produce fewer free radicals as a result. The body is forced to rely on ketones and it becomes very energy efficient (eating a low-carb diet could have a similar effect, as could intermittent fasting). Studies show that mice that live on very low calorie diets can extend their lifespan by as much as 30%, and there are plenty of enthusiastic people online trying this strategy right now. Does it work for humans? It's currently too soon to tell.

But with all that said, there are definite drawbacks to this strategy too. For one, it makes malnutrition likely. While proper calorie restriction shouldn't lead to malnutrition, it is of course much harder to get everything your body needs while eating a very low number of calories.

It's also largely unfeasible for a lot of us and not much fun.

And there's another argument too: that having a little puppy fat will actually help to make you look younger as you age. As we age, our skin becomes thinner and we start to carry less subcutaneous fat (fat stored beneath the skin). Thus, we start to look a lot more drawn. Compare a thin old lady to a chubby old lady and you'll find that the latter looks younger because their skin is smoothed out by the layer of fat beneath. Meanwhile, they will usually have more color and actually be healthier. Some

women claim that as they start to approach their 50s and 60s, they are forced to make a choice between 'face' and 'body'.

What should you do? That's entirely your call but just make sure that whatever method you take, you are emphasizing nutrients in your diet!

## Skin Care for Anti-Aging

Anti-aging skin care is also about lifestyle, and how we treat our bodies will be reflected in the appearance of our skin. While soaking up the sun will help us to look bronzed and healthy in the short run, over time it will lead to damaged skin cells which will create more wrinkles in our old age. This can lead to age spots and more problems as the UV waves of the sun damage the cell walls and cause mutations. Using sun block and getting shade can help prevent this to a great degree.

Similarly, it's important that we make sure we get lots of sleep. One of the reasons for this is that sleep is when our body repairs the damage it has endured throughout the day and so can rejuvenate our skin that way. One of the ways in which this works is through the release of growth hormone, or HGH, which is a hormone that encourages anabolism in the body, making it repair wounds, rebuild muscle, replace damaged cells and encourage growth in the muscles and bones (though the bones stop growing after puberty when the 'growth plates' will seal off). In addition to sleep, another way to encourage the natural production of growth hormone is to exercise and to take hot showers, both of which will trigger an anabolic cycle. Synthetic growth hormone is used a lot by bodybuilders and celebrities, but is illegal in most states and countries and very expensive in those where it is legal – it also has a lot of unwanted side effects, some of which are fatal.

HGH is perhaps the closest thing there is to an elixir of youth right now, so anything you can do to stimulate it naturally should definitely be encouraged.

# Creams and Other Products

Then the most obvious aspect of skin care – the use of anti-aging cream and products. These will work in multiple ways, both protecting your skin from outside agents like UV rays and environmental factors, and providing your skin with important nutrients and antioxidants applied topically. They can also hydrate the skin or even tighten it in some cases to provide instant visible benefits.

You should make sure that you follow a routine and apply your face creams in the morning and at night before bed. This routine should begin with an exfoliating cream or face wash, which will remove dead skin cells (that can otherwise interfere with the mechanisms of the moisturizing creams and nutrients). Exfoliating can also make your wrinkles appear shallower by brining your skin down to the same level, and it will give your skin more of a healthy glow (dead skin tends to look a little greyer). All this is instantly going to make you look and feel younger.

(Another way to get more of a glow is to give yourself a bit of a tan and the best way to do this without exposing yourself to sun damage is with a self-tanning moisturizer. This isn't fake tan but rather a product that will increase your production of melanin naturally to give you a more glowing appearance. This can help to prevent that washed out, grey-skinned look that is associated with old age.)

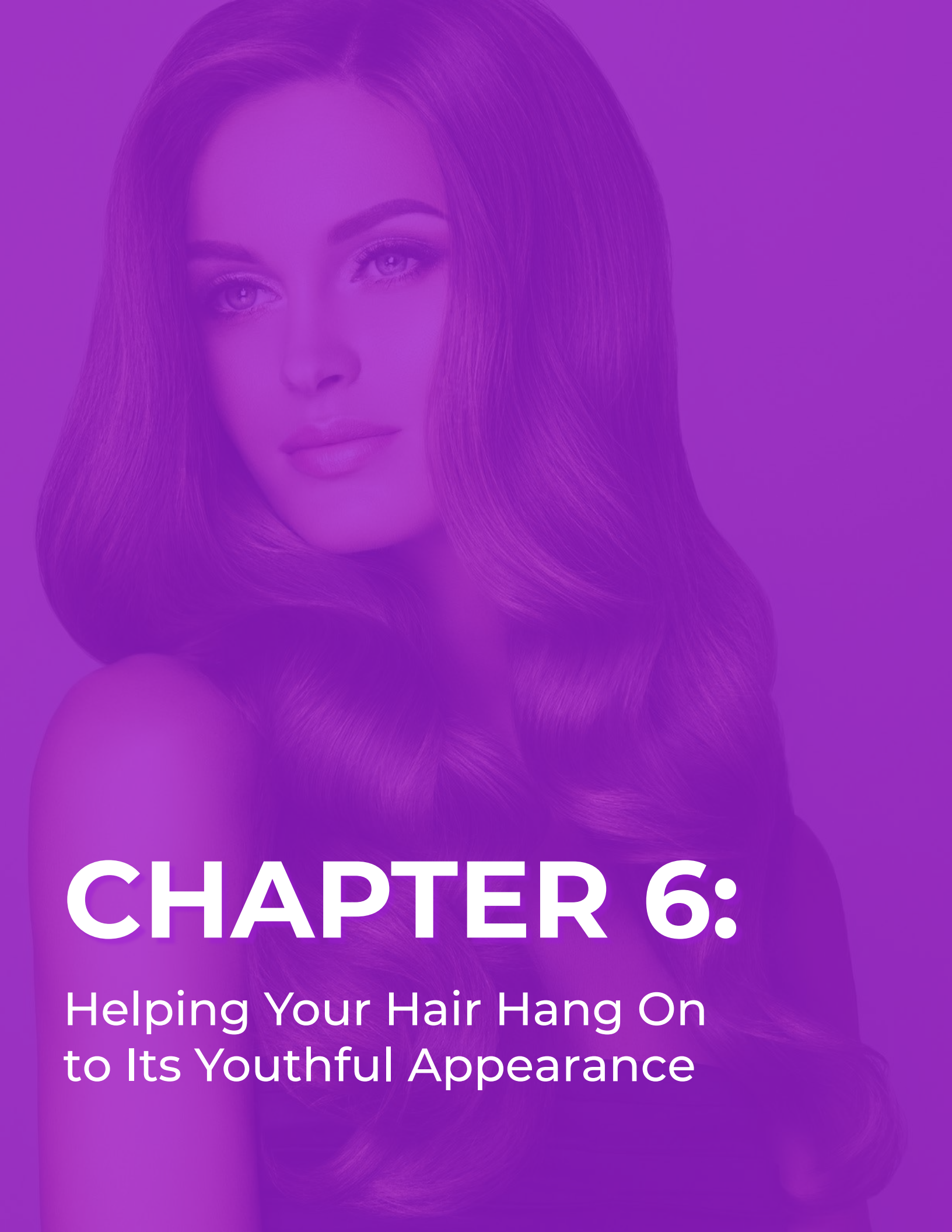
You should then use a protective cream, such as Protect and Perfect from No 7, which will protect your skin from UV rays and oxidative damage. Finally, a rejuvenating moisturizer should be applied which should contain vitamins A and E – both of which are vital in skin repair and collagen production, which will help keep the skin plump and elastic (collagen can be considered 'nature's Botox'). Some creams actually do include collagen but there is some dispute as to whether this can actually penetrate deeply enough into the lower levels of the skin in order to have any benefit. Some products, such as Bio Oil, claim to use carrier molecules and other strategies to get around this limitation.

Take a look at the back of the pack when using any moisturizer and look for things like biotin (vitamin B7), retinol, green tea extract, CoQ10, etc. Be wary of bold claims though and be sure to check reviews before parting with hard-earned cash. There are tons of options out there – including using hemorrhoid cream around the eyes to tighten the skin and remove crows' feet. If you want to experiment with that then go ahead – but for

the most part, there's no reason to spend over the odds. Any healthy moisturizer (ideally something organic, such as a deep sea mud) will do the trick.

The moisturizing element will also help give the skin moisture and keep it subtle and elastic. While you apply these creams, you should use circular motions with the pads of your fingers to massage the skin and encourage blood flow on the surface, which will help provide it with more vital nutrients and keep the skin tone more even. Use concentric circles moving inwards toward the center of the face – it's also very relaxing and will help to keep the skin subtle and soft.

Whatever products you choose, just make sure you are using something to exfoliate, something to protect, and something to rejuvenate and moisturize.



# CHAPTER 6:

## Helping Your Hair Hang On to Its Youthful Appearance

Your skin is only part of the package though! The next question is what you can do about your hair. When you have toned muscle, glowing skin and a happy face, you'll look a lot younger; but if that's topped off by thinning or grey hair, then you'll be letting the team down!

So what can you do to keep your locks looking lustrous?

# How to Avoid Aging Hair

As is so often the case, prevention is definitely better than cure when it comes to protecting your hair against the perils of aging!

In this case, you're going to try and protect your hair through your habits and there are a few things that can help and hinder.

For starters, you need to give it a fighting chance with regard to your current regime. That means that you need to stop straightening it all the time, you need to stay away from harsh dyes that involve bleaching, and you need to try and protect your hair from damaging shampoos and conditioners too – while some of these are designed to be good for your hair, the chemicals they use can actually end up being too harsh and this can lead to your hair and scalp being stripped of their natural oils.

Over-styling your hair will cause it to become thin and brittle over time and if you keep this up, it will eventually stop returning to normal.

If you're on a fast track to thinning hair, then the best thing to do is to take some time out and try to let your hair grow out. Meanwhile, try showering in colder water, which can actually encourage the production of more oils in the scalp (whereas hot water can strip the scalp) and even think about switching to a gentler organic shampoo.

# Combating Grey Hair

This can cause something of a catch-22 for women though. Many women will want to hide grey hairs but the best way to do so it with hair dyes. The problem is that this can then lead to thinned-out, brittle and damaged hair.

So what's the answer?

One answer is to go for highlights. With highlights, you create a more mottled effect in patches of your hair, thereby hiding the grey hairs without having to address every single hair on your head with astringent chemicals. Spending more time in the sun can similarly lighten your hair color naturally to make those grey hairs less noticeable.

There are also products that will work only on your grey hairs. Examples include 'Grey Away Shampoo' from Morgan, which darkens the grey hairs while ignoring the rest. None of these methods are foolproof but they can all work quite well. Henna hair dye is also a popular alternative.

For guys, grey hair is definitely less of an issue and can actually look quite good!

## Fighting Hair Loss

While women will largely worry about their hair thinning out or going grey, men will be more likely to worry about their hair falling out altogether!

It can be a very depressing feeling noticing that you are starting to lose your hair. Hair is a sign of vitality and youth for men and in the media and in many stories this association is strengthened by heroes who like to let their hair blow in the wind or whip it over their shoulder. The myth of Samson, who was claimed to be the strongest mortal in the world, told that the source of his strength was his hair and that if it were cut he would lose his powers. More recently, even Jackie Chan has stated that he believes his hair is a good luck charm and that his stunts only go wrong when his hair is cut short.

Thus it is no surprise that many men have a hard time letting go when they start to face the loss of that hair. Male hair loss is unfortunately a fact of life for many men, especially as they get older, but that doesn't mean that they have to let it happen. The

key distinction to make though is between good ways to try and prevent male hair loss and bad ways – and there is certainly an important difference here.

The problem for many men is that they try to fight hair loss using what they already have and don't think about: a) maintaining what they have currently, or b) adding more hair to replace some of what is lost.

An unsuccessful but unfortunately highly popular way to prevent male hair loss for instance is to try combing your hair over so as to hide the bald patches that you are revealing. This 'comb-over' method works in theory but often fails in practice as the hair that is left over is too thin to cover the area. This then means that the individual actually draws attention to their lack of hair rather than hiding it and may end up looking a lot worse as a result! When you imagine someone with an obvious comb-over, you will tend to think of weak-chinned bad guys from movies. The same goes for toupees.

The art of manliness is in being confident with who you are – at any age. Thus, the best look is very often going to be to just shave your hair off completely. It's a bold step (no pun intended) but it looks a lot better than fighting it. In fact, it can look quite masculine, as characters like Bruce Willis and Dwayne Johnson prove.

A compromise is a haircut such as the 'faux-hawk'. This is a mohawk that makes use of your naturally receding hair line. Several celebrities such as Jude Law have sported this look to good effect in the past.

What many such people forget is hair products for hair growth. These can help to grow back some of the hair that is lost, which makes hairdos such as comb-overs more successful as there is slightly more hair left. The combination of hair products for hair growth and a smart haircut can help considerably to cover up baldness.

At the same time, it is also possible to hair loss fighting products that will strengthen and maintain the hair you do have left. This means that you aren't fighting a losing battle against hair that is continually falling out, but are rather able to maintain the hair you've got and then just decide how you are going to use that. None of these will completely stop the clock but they can help to protect your hair follicles from damage by free radicals and testosterone (if you suffer from male pattern baldness – which is caused by a sensitivity to testosterone).

Another option is to refer to a hair restoration clinic, which uses procedures such as hair implants. A hair implant basically means that you have new hair sewn into your scalp where your old hair once was. This is very effective as it means you are guaranteed a head of hair that won't ever fall out. It is the most effective way to prevent hair loss. This is an extreme option but if you absolutely can't stand the thought of shaving your head, it's one way to go.

But for most guys, shaving off the hair is the best choice. And you can always grow a beard to restore some symmetry...

# CHAPTER 7:

## Keep Your Hands Looking Younger Over Time

We mentioned that the first thing many people will look at when trying to guess our age is our face...

In reality though, this isn't the best choice!

Actually, it's the hands that often hold the key to our age and these can regularly give us away. Many A-list actresses openly admit that they hide their hands in photos! So the question is: how can you keep your hands looking youthful?

## Protecting Your Hands

Again, the key here is to protect the hands rather than try and undo damage once it's already wrought. There are several ways you can accomplish this but the easiest is to once again use a skin care regimen. That will mean using a protective cream as well as a rejuvenating moisturizer. Hydration is very important and drinking lots of water will help too. You can also use an exfoliating soap to try and remove that dead skin. A self-tanning moisturizer can help too.

Yes, moisturizing really is worth your time. Keep a bottle of lotion by your sink and then make sure that you are creaming your hands every time you wash them – as washing removes natural moisture.

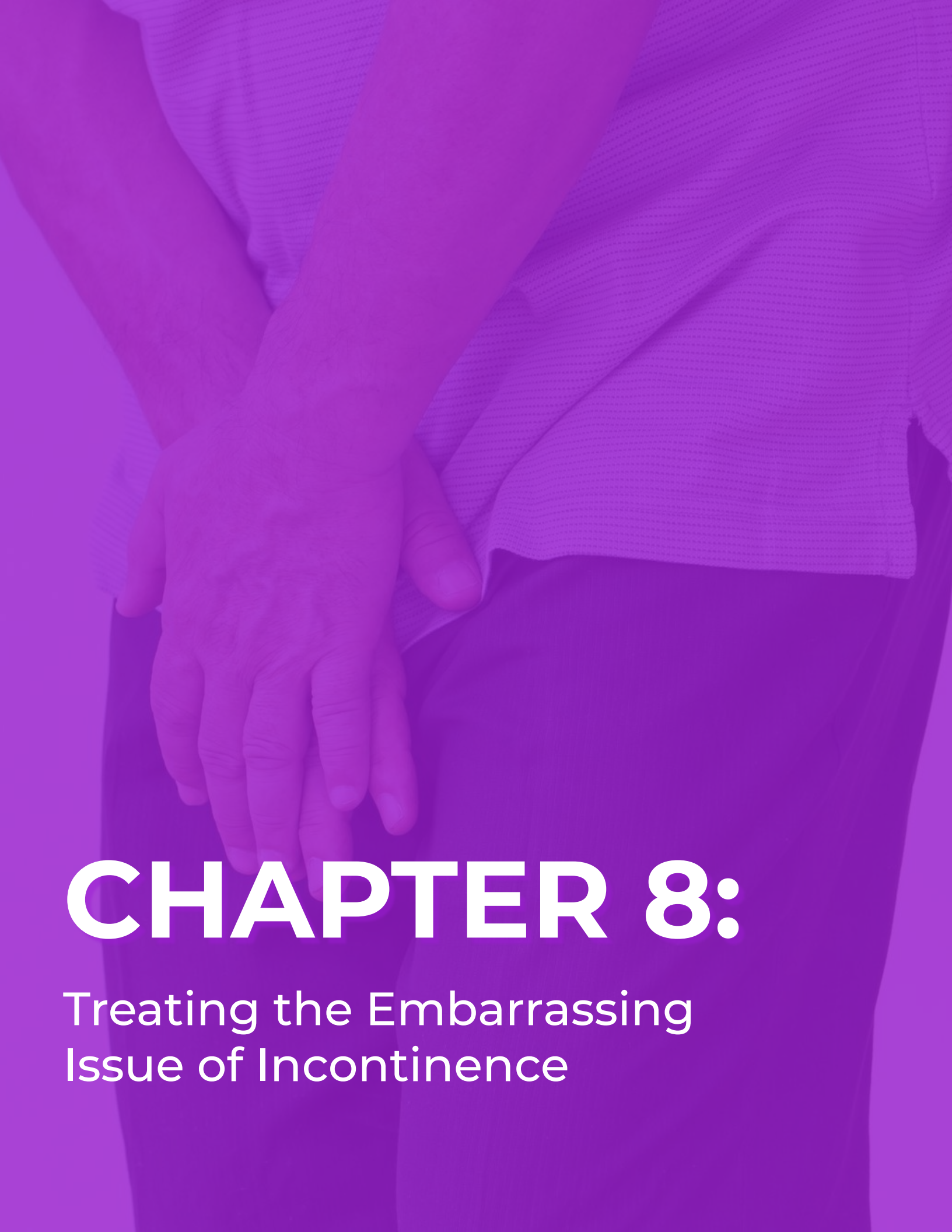
You should also strive to avoid all those things that will make your skin even more dried out. That includes hand sanitizer (you also don't need this – you aren't that prone to germs!) and it definitely means avoiding the hand drier – choose the towel every single time!

For women, using jewelry and possibly wearing a bold nail varnish color can help too. Why? Because it allows you to pull attention away from your skin. And men, there's no reason that you can't do the same thing with a nice watch or a ring.

But at the same time, you also need to think about what you're doing to your hands that is causing more damage.

For example, if you wash up the dishes regularly, then you should be wearing gloves. It's that simple. The perfumes and other chemicals in soaps can otherwise cause eczema and other problems. Gloves are also going to help if you engage in sports or pull up weeds.

But ultimately, the key to making your hands look young is the same as making your facial skin look young. Moisturize, exfoliate and protect. At the same time, eat well, get lots of sleep and make sure your whole body is supported by a healthy diet and lifestyle.



# CHAPTER 8:

## Treating the Embarrassing Issue of Incontinence

Everyone wants to age gracefully but unfortunately, some aspects of getting older are just not that dignified. This is particularly true in the case of incontinence which is sadly one of the more common ailments that you'll need to address as you get older. At this point, we're getting into the more 'specific' problems that only some people will deal with but once you've generally improved your health and well-being, these kinds of problems are what remain.

Incontinence can come in numerous forms but the most common associated with age is 'stress incontinence'. This means that you're more likely to release a little urine when laughing, coughing, sneezing or straining during exercise. It can be very embarrassing in some cases and may even result in having to cut a social engagement short. This embarrassment may even lead some people to avoid visiting a doctor to address their problem.

This is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, it is actually highly common and affects a large number of people as they get older. In fact, most female athletes are expected to encounter some degree of stress incontinence if they are performing at a high level. The good news, though, is that it is very often avoidable depending on your specific cause.

## What Causes Incontinence in Old Age

The most common cause of stress incontinence is that the pelvic floor muscles become too weak. This then means that anything that would cause abdominal pressure can then exert strain on the bladder, causing the urethra (supported by the fascia of the pelvic floor) to drop down, triggering urination.

In women, weakness in the pelvic floor muscles can be a result of pregnancy, childbirth, menopause, the menstrual cycle or reduced estrogen levels (resulting in reduced muscular pressure).

The problem is less common in men and is more likely the result of post-surgical complication following something like a prostatectomy. There are other causes of incontinence in men, such as benign prostate hyperplasia, so it's worth visiting your doctor if you are suffering from it.

# How To Treat It

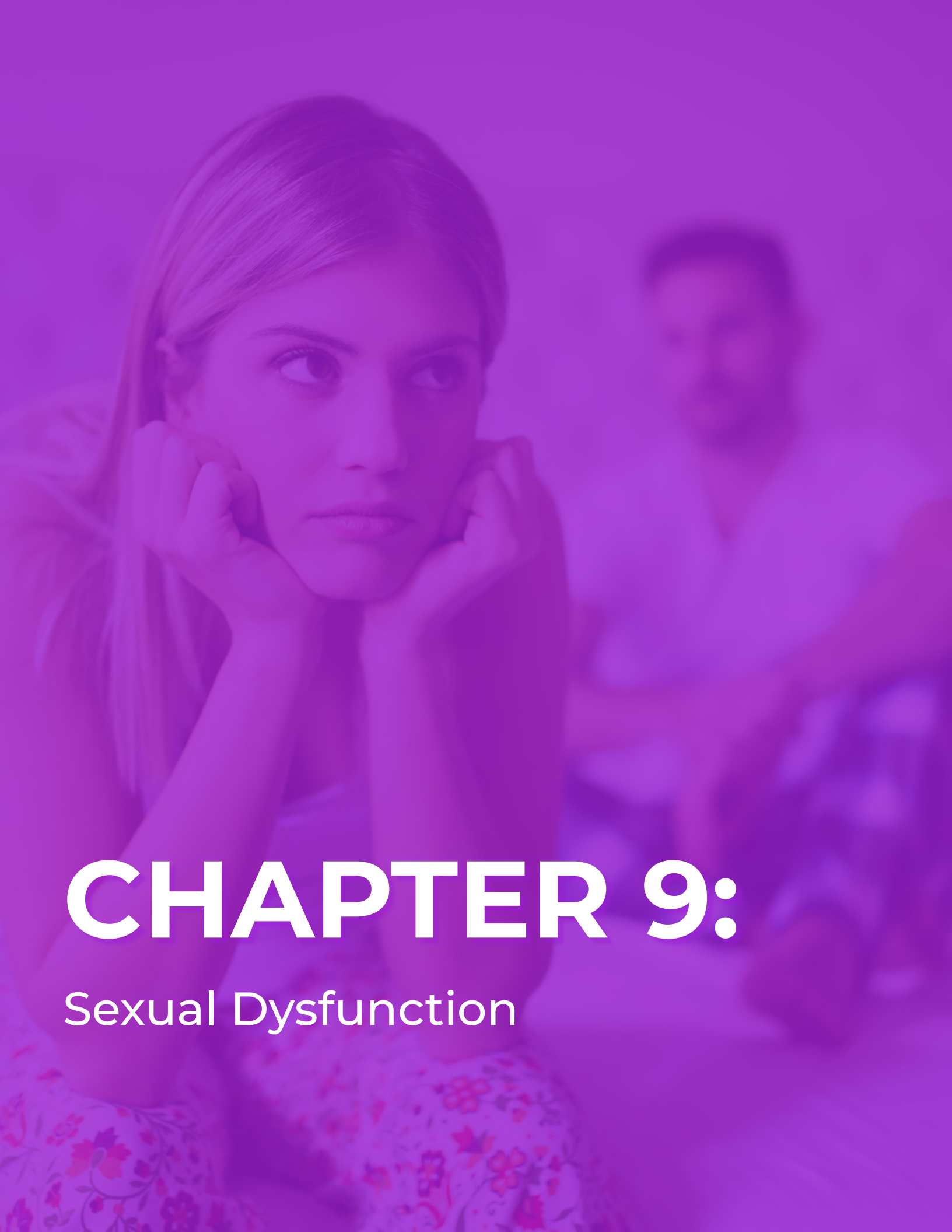
The most common form of treatment for stress incontinence is exercise. You can strengthen the pelvic floor muscles by using kegel exercises (named after Dr. Arnold Kegel). To perform these, all you need to do is contract, hold and then release the pelvic floor muscle – it's so easy you can even do it in bed!

The problem for most people is going to be identifying which muscles to contract. The way that it is usually recommended to find this out, is to stop yourself 'mid flow' when next urinating. You should notice that this uses certain muscles and these are the muscles that you're going to target with the exercises.

Smoking can make incontinence worse, as can being overweight – so these are two things to address. It's also a good idea to avoid any diuretics which might include things like caffeine and alcohol.

If none of this works, then you should seek medical attention and your doctor might recommend surgery. There are various different options available in this case, which include bladder repositioning. Peri/trans urethral injections meanwhile involve injecting materials into the urethra to give it a more fixed and rigid texture. Some medications, such as Alpha-1 adrenergic receptor stimulators, mediate the release of urine – ironic seeing as these are the stress receptors!

Finally, consider management techniques in the interim – avoid drinking lots of water before going out and try to empty your bladder before events. You can also consider the use of liners and other products to help absorb any urine.



# CHAPTER 9:

## Sexual Dysfunction

Seeing as we just tackled one embarrassing topic, how about we dive straight into the next: sexual dysfunction.

This is another common side effect of getting older and can lead to reduced sexual activity, which in turn leads to reduced intimacy. This means you'll lose out on the many health benefits of an active sex life. Sex is great for your body, your mind and your mood and it's one of the best things you can use to feel your best all year around.

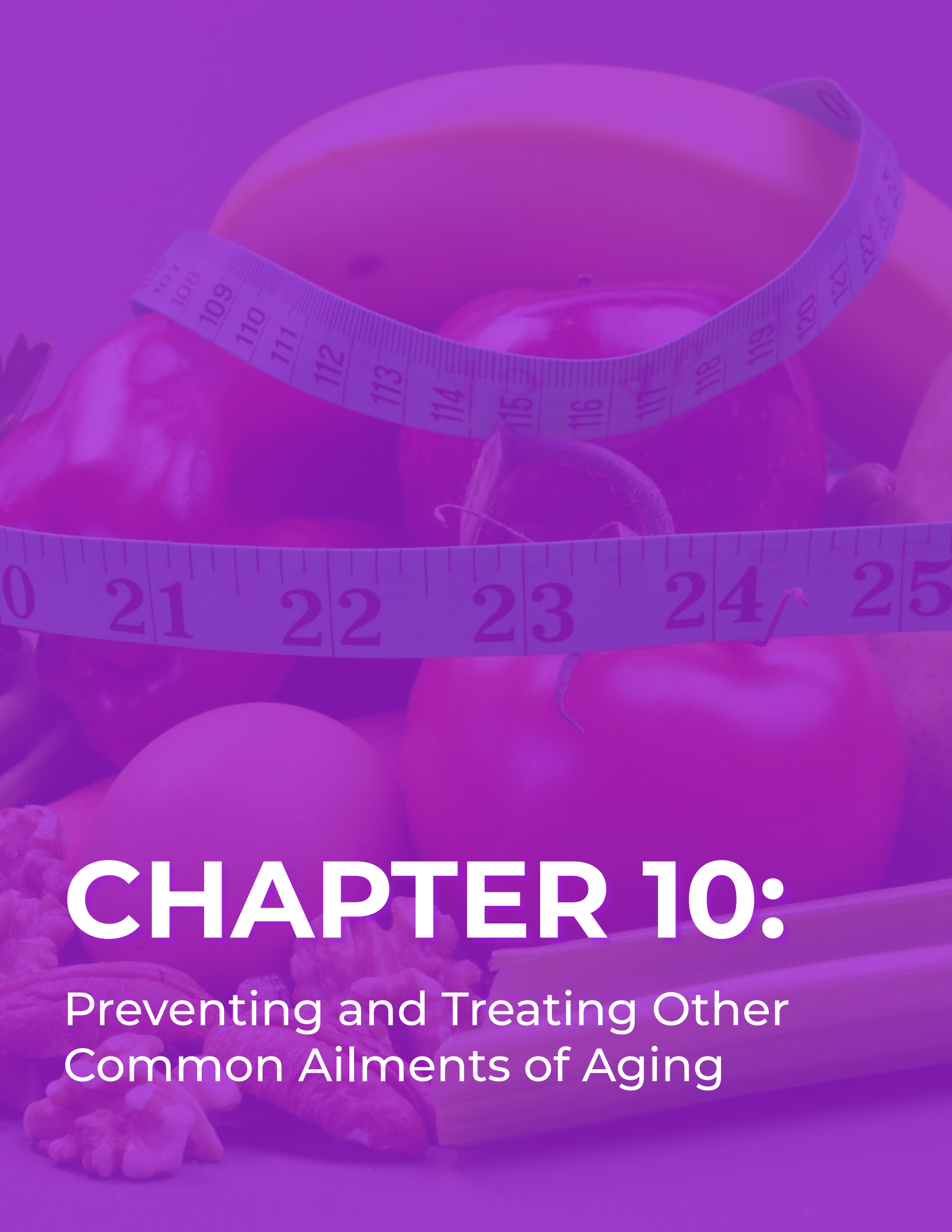
So why do we often lose interest or the ability to perform when we get older?

Again, this is certainly not an inevitable consequence of aging: there are many elderly couples that are still leading active sex lives well into their 80s and even 90s! Let's take a look at what might be responsible and how you can solve the problem.

## Hormonal Changes

Mood and reduced focus can be the result of changes to hormones as well as key neurotransmitters. In older men, a lot of this comes down to a reduction in androgenic hormones like testosterone. Testosterone can increase aggression when it's too high and lead to low mood and grumpiness when it's too low. We produce less testosterone as we age. On the female side of things, we have something else... actual menopause. This causes similar hormonal changes which can lead to dryness and low libido. In this case, it will often be enough to use some form of lubrication to get around the former issue. However, if sex drive has dropped too then women might once again need to speak with their GP about medication. Once again, this can actually be life changing for some women and make them feel much more energetic and youthful again – so it's worth speaking about.

Finally, make sure that you are still injecting the same romance and passion into your relationship that you did in your youth. It's easy to let this fall by the wayside as we get older, especially if we are in pain or if we don't feel as attractive as we once did. Don't be afraid to experiment or to try new things – just have fun and try to make each other feel good!



# CHAPTER 10:

## Preventing and Treating Other Common Ailments of Aging

We've covered a lot of ground over the course of this book and hopefully you now recognize that aging doesn't have to be a prison sentence. You can retain your mobility. You can retain your mental prowess. And you don't have to suffer alone in silence.

The key is to remain active, to fill yourself with the right nutrients and to put your health first. And if you follow the advice in this book, then you should find that many of the issues we didn't get time to cover will also be dealt with. Staying mobile, for example, can help to prevent many forms of arthritis, while a highly nutritious diet should also help to prevent inflammation, further combating this problem. Cancer risk goes down as you fuel your body with more antioxidants and spend less time in direct sunlight without protection. Vision problems will be mitigated by many of the nutrients we've discussed too – in particular lutein and vitamin A are great for fighting glaucoma and cataracts.

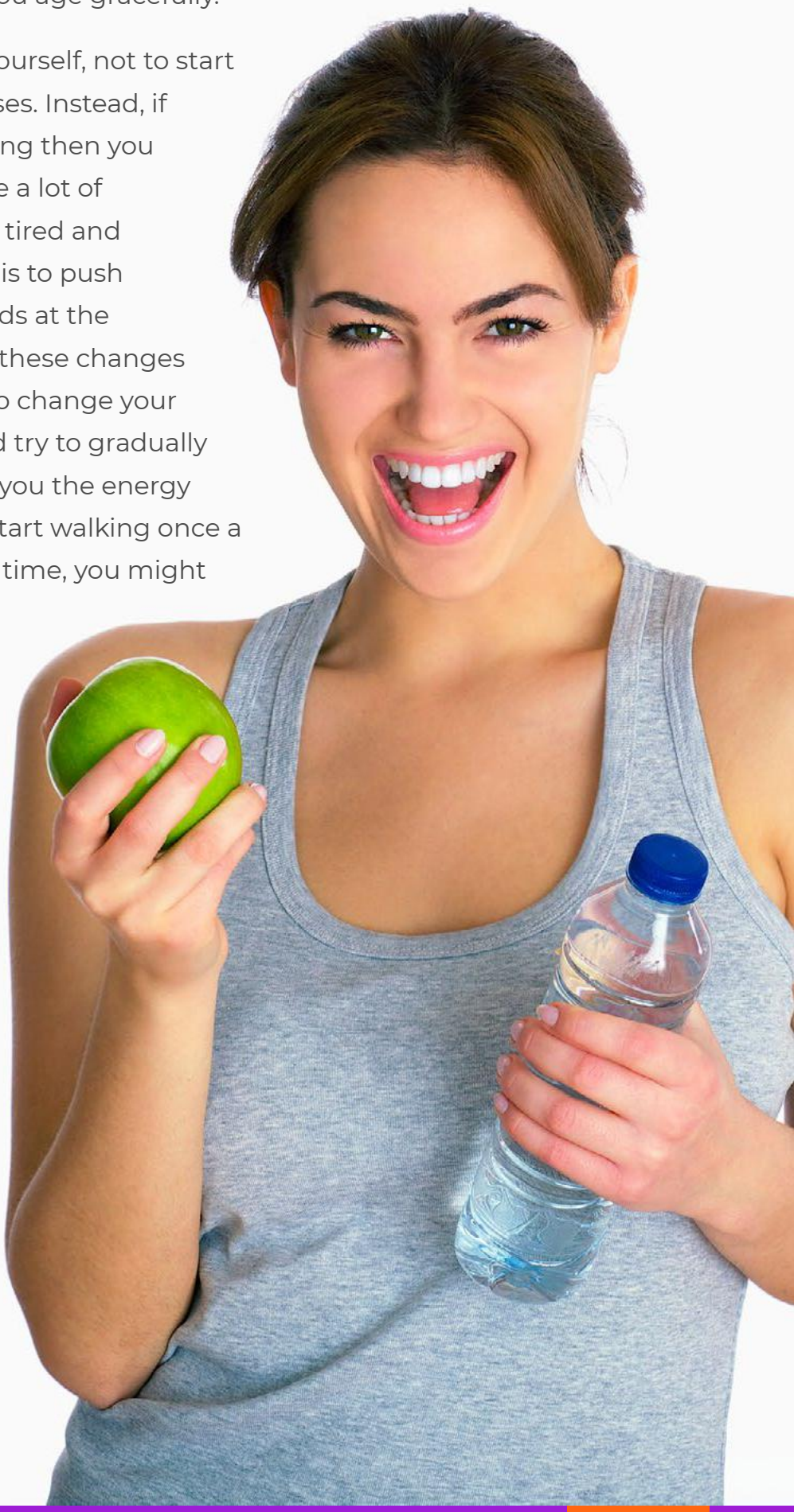
In general, supporting your immune system and providing yourself with antioxidants will help you to combat a lot of the various forms of deterioration that lead to issues like vision problems and hearing trouble in the first place. Avoiding stress, believe it or not, will make you less likely to suffer from tinnitus as well as being less likely to develop any manner of illness because your immune system will be stronger and you'll sleep better.

Oh, and if you are avoiding simple sugars and empty calories, this should also benefit your teeth. So too will getting more vitamin D, magnesium and calcium. You can help this by brushing regularly and not pressing too hard. And as with your hair, try to avoid very chemical-intensive toothpastes. Fluoride, found in most toothpastes, can actually be quite bad for our teeth and damage the enamel. Instead of using this then, think about using something organic or less damaging.

# CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

So there you have it: that's how you age gracefully.

The key is not to take it easy on yourself, not to start doing less and not to make excuses. Instead, if you want to stay healthy and young then you need to act like it. It can seem like a lot of hard work at first if you're feeling tired and lethargic right now – but the key is to push through it and think of the rewards at the end. Meanwhile, try to introduce these changes slowly. Don't think you're going to change your entire lifestyle overnight – instead try to gradually eat a healthier diet. This will give you the energy levels that you need to perhaps start walking once a week a bit more vigorously. With time, you might build up the energy and the courage to go to a gym and speak to a personal trainer about learning to squat and deadlift! And perhaps you'll then have a bit more drive and motivation to take up a new activity, or to inject some more passion into the bedroom.



So don't let age defeat you! Just keep going and give yourself a purpose and a drive and work toward it. Support this mental state with the healthiest regimen and the right, nutritious diet and you should find that you can fend off the worst effects of aging for much longer!