



AGING GRACEFULLY

WORKBOOK

*Aging is inevitable. Aging gracefully is a choice.
Join us for an inspirational, practical and fun way
to add easy does it yoga techniques to your life.
No previous yoga experience, equipment, or
clothes are necessary. If you can breathe, you can
do this yoga.*

Margaret Chester, MPH, RYT
Yoga Lifestyle Coach

A Brief Note Before We Begin

This workbook is NOT a technical, scientific, or scholarly treatise. It is MY interpretation of applying the principles of yoga to the aging process. Please consult a licensed health care practitioner for professional medical advice before making any changes in your routine. This includes seeking financial, legal, and real estate advice from a licensed professional. I trust that you are a responsible adult and if you need professional help, please get assistance ASAP.



Dear Friend:

Welcome and thank you for joining us on the journey of a lifetime.

Sometimes I think it would be nice to just pick up a manual with instructions on how to create the best life ever. But life does not follow a straight line. Life is full of squiggles, jiggles, and roadblocks that seem to appear out of nowhere. A new bruise on our arm, a fall off the curb, a frightening diagnosis, an adult child who needs money, a friend's death, and the list goes on.

Aging is a double-edged sword – we are wiser and yet the body is slowly disintegrating. We look in the mirror and see an older adult, yet the person within is so much younger. In the meantime, we are bombarded by cultural stereotypes on what aging looks like including the media trying to sell us anti-aging products that will not take away the reality of our next birthday.

Aging is inevitable.

Aging gracefully is a choice.

I can honestly say that I like some of the perks of aging, especially the senior discounts and the freedom to not care if anyone likes my clothes or hair. However, I have struggled with the definition of the word *gracefully*. It has always conjured up images of leaping ballet dancers, a graceful Audrey Hepburn, or the acrobats in *Cirque du Soleil*.

By doing the exercises in this workbook I have now made peace with my definition of *gracefully*. I have reframed it into *Gratitude*. My hope for you is that you find some pearls of wisdom in this workbook that will inspire you on your journey of aging.

Namaste,

Margaret Chester, MPH, RYT



Aging Gracefully

Why bother caring about your body, mind, and spirit if you are just going to die? Because life is a precious gift and one of the most beautiful ways, we can say thank you – is to embrace and celebrate the aging process.

The good news is that we do not have to reinvent the wheel. The yogis of ancient India were very much aware that death is inevitable, and that one can practice letting go every day with joy, awareness, and gratitude. They also believed that we are responsible for nurturing our body, mind, and spirit from our heart.

First, let's start by listing all the stereotypes of aging. This may take a few days and/or feel free to ask your friends and family to contribute to your list. The good news is that by reaching out to others, you can start the conversation of why we make fun of seniors and send insulting birthday cards that bring attention to dementia, incontinence, and forgetting where we put our glasses that are sitting on our head. Don't get me wrong, I can laugh at the reality of aging, and I can also bring awareness to my inner dialog.

Make a list of all the stereotypes of old people that you can think of. Remember you don't have to agree with any of them. We are simply looking at our culture.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

- Now go back to your list and circle the top three stereotypes that personally scare you and/or resonate with you.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Notice whatever feelings or emotions are coming up for you as you look at your top three fears of aging.
- You can also choose to skip this part and come back to it later.
- If you are ready to proceed then I want to find your favorite-colored pen or marker and write/draw some ideas on how you can deal with your fears.

For example:

My top three fears as of today are 1) hair loss, 2) going blind, and 3) drying up internally and externally.

- For hair loss, I drew a face and added very short spikey hair, and decided that I am going to very slowly over the next few years so shorter and shorter. And who knows I may even shave my head one of these days!
- For my fear of going blind due to aging and cataract surgery that did not go well, I religiously use my eye drops and see my eye surgeon twice a year to check my eye pressure.
- And as for my irritating dry skin, eyes, and mouth, I am making sure that I have a travel mug of water within arm's reach to remind me to hydrate throughout the day.

Now it's your turn. Remember there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer – just your answer! Be curious! Get creative! And it is ok to get angry too! Remember that aging is inevitable and that you can begin to write a new story on the subject of AGING!



The Joy and Pleasure List

There will always be chores in our life, even getting out of bed in the morning when we've had a rough night can be difficult. Instead of being upset, irritated, and angry; why not shift your energy? Write down ten activities that you love to do. No one pays you to do these things, you do them simply because they give you pleasure and joy.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now look at your list, choose one activity from your list and go do it right now. Remember even a three-minute walk, a cup of tea, or calling a friend can bring joy and pleasure to our body, mind, and spirit. So the next time you are bored, overwhelmed, or irritated – do something from your list above and see what happens.



Creating Energy from Within

Several times a day, simply STOP whatever you are doing and check your posture.

- Stand with your feet several inches apart.
- See if you can feel the top of your head pushing up towards the sky, as you gently roll your shoulders down and away from your ears.
- Feel your rib cage expand and your breath deepen.
- It may take several body scans to check to see if you are getting that delicious taffy pull between your feet pressing into the earth as the top of your head lifts up to the sky.
- Extra credit for smiling!



Looking Inward & Outward

Most of us are washing our hands in the kitchen or the bathroom several times a day. This is a wonderful opportunity to sing, say a prayer, or repeat a mantra. You can always mix it up! Maybe you are tired of singing the happy birthday song, just concentrate on washing your hands – pretend you are being filmed for a YouTube® demonstration on *HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS*.

- If you have a mirror, be sure to take a few seconds to talk to yourself. Find something pleasant to say. You will be surprised how good it feels to compliment your beautiful eyes, great posture, or the reality that you are still alive!
- This is also a good time to break out the *guest soap* – that special soap that someone gifted you years ago. Use it. Don't wait for a special occasion because today is that day!

If you have a mirror, be sure to take a few seconds to look at yourself. This is an opportunity to practice compassion, especially during this pandemic. Many of us are feeling stressed, upset, and unsettled. Take this time to thank yourself for showing up and caring about yourself and everyone in the world by washing your hands.



Breathing Deeply and Fully

For many years I thought that lying down in the middle of the day was either a waste of time or was only for children, sick or old people. Now I think it is one of the best ways to recharge your batteries.

If you have ever been to a yoga class, it usually ends with lying down on the floor in a posture called: *Savasana* – the *corpse* posture. In order not to scare people off with Sanskrit terms or the idea of being a corpse – this posture quickly morphed into the *relaxation* posture.

- Lie down on the floor, couch, or your bed. If lying down on your back is uncomfortable, you may want to put a pillow under your knees or lie on your side.
- Place your hands gently on your belly.
- With each inhale let your belly rise, pause, and then exhale slowly letting your belly soften.
- You may choose to stay here for as long as you like.
- When you are ready to rise, if you are on your back, roll onto your side and stay curled up in a fetal position for at least a minute.
- Wherever you are ready to get up make sure that your head is the last part of your body to come up. Think of a fiddle fern uncurling.
- This is a very soothing practice and can be done in bed as you are falling asleep or if you have insomnia, it may help calm the body and the mind.



Meditation in Motion

Meditation is the new buzzword. It may not cure everything; however, it is a great way to clear the mind, relax the body, and transition into your next activity. The good news is that you do not have to fold yourself into a pretzel and sit two times a day for twenty minutes. If that works for you – great. If not, yoga offers incredible options for practicing meditation.

One of my favorite ways to meditate is to practice mindfully walking from room to room. You can also practice this when you are out and about on your daily walk or walking from the car to your health practitioner's office or even up the stairs!

- Begin by making sure both feet are firmly planted on the floor.
- Inhale as you raise your right foot to take a step, pause, and as you exhale plant that foot firmly on the ground and pause.
- Inhale as you raise your left foot to take a step, pause, and as you exhale plant that foot firmly on the ground and pause.
- Continue paying attention to using your breath to move your feet.
- Don't worry if you just do this for a few steps then totally think of something else. This is the joy of meditation. Just noticing how challenging it is to concentrate and focus on one activity is a step in the right direction. This is a lifetime practice.

Remember if you ever get derailed, lost, unbalanced simply put your hand on your belly and take a few deep breaths. This is incredibly soothing, relaxing, and one of the easiest meditation techniques to practice every day.



The Truth

Whenever & wherever
you get stuck or need a boost
physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually
simply do the following:

Inhale...

Pause...

Exhale...

Inhale...

Pause...

Exhale...

Pause...

Inhale...

Pause...

Exhale...

Continue doing this for the rest of your life!

It is the secret to the universe and
It will give you much health, love, and happiness.

Namaste.



Thank you for joining me on this journey of self-discovery.
I hope you enjoyed some of the exercises and will continue to
nurture your body, mind, and spirit.
Please feel free to forward this PDF to anyone who would enjoy it
If I can be of further assistance,
please contact me at yogaenergysystems@gmail.com

Margaret Chester, MPH, RYT is the author of *Chocolate Yoga: A System of Yoga Techniques for Stress and Weight Management; A Chocolate Yoga Action Workbook*, and her latest: *Yoga for Ageless Seniors – Daily Prescriptions for Increasing Strength, Balance, and Resilience*. She is passionate about finding practical and fun ways to bring yoga techniques to your everyday life. This yoga is not about standing on your head or folding yourself into a pretzel. It's all about living in the body that you have today. We are living in challenging times, and it is often difficult to find the time to take care of ourselves. As Margaret likes to say: “*If you can breathe, you can do this yoga.*”

The books are available on Amazon.com

For more information: www.chocolateyoga.com