



# How Injuries Accelerate Aging

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**Popular beliefs about aging confuse the effects of genes with those of stress and injury. As a result, people associate pains and stiffness directly with aging, and so believe them to be inevitable.**

**“The thousand natural shocks  
flesh is heir to”** leave their mark in memory. Memory largely guides our behaviors in life, doesn't it? The rise and fall of tension and relaxation correspond to our responses to circumstances and also to our memories and imaginings. The impressions of life leave their mark on us as tensions that ebb and flow, but largely accumulate through a lifetime until one day we may suddenly realize we don't have the energy we once did, that we are tired and feel old. Many believe the pain and stiffness of aging is permanent – when it is often reversible.

Muscular tension ages us even more than osteoporosis or other medical conditions. Muscular tension makes us shorter, or pulls us to one side in the limp of injury, or forward in the stoop of aging or into the swayback of endless effort and pride. It compresses joints, makes us stiff, makes us achy, makes movement laborious, uses up our energy.

Life leaves its marks on us – and as much as we seek to overcome them, we also cherish them as a signs of worldliness or badges of courage.

Consider: many consider the wisdom of age to be knowledge about life – which

means the knowledge of what to look out for, how to act, how to react, a state of readiness for life. It's based on memory, not just at the mental or emotional level, but also at the level of the body. Every stressor causes us to cringe, to tense, involuntarily, in readiness to protect ourselves from further stress, insult or injury. That state of readiness is a heightened state of tension, not a state of innocent openness. Feel the stiffness of middle age or see the stoop of old age and you see that tension dragging someone down until, in fear of falling, they stoop further forward to decrease the distance of a feared fall and so become even more prone to falling. And, in nature, that final fall is down into death.

“The thousand natural shocks flesh is heir to” accumulate as nervous tension, changes of movement, and self-limitation. The term, “nervous tension,” has to do with more than psychology; it also has to do with the sales of pain medications and with the aches and pains of aging.

These shocks need not accumulate. Aging need not be what it commonly is.

All memories outlive their usefulness, sooner or later. Many, sooner.

Every injury you have had, every stress period, contributes to your physical aging.

You can prevent the accumulation of injuries and stress from overcoming you by grooming yourself of their effects – something best done on a regular basis.

A way exists, through somatic education.

Most people have what, in real estate, is called, “deferred maintenance” – the accumulation of unrepaired wear and tear.

That wear and tear must first be repaired before self-maintenance is meaningful.

So, with most people, the procedures of somatic education first do the deferred maintenance, the “repairs” you need, then teach you how to maintain yourself in good condition. If you eliminate the accumulated effects of the thousand natural shocks flesh is heir to, you can recover the vitality, freedom, and pleasure in movement that you had when you were younger, that you see most in children at play and young adults..

You’ll never be a child, again, but you will recover the natural pleasure of free movement, of a vital life.

Aging will take a different course, with you, a graceful one.



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