

## What's the Secret?

It is summer! With summer in full swing I imagine you have had many opportunities to be with family. Family gatherings give us all the chance to talk with our eldest relatives and ask them what their secret is. Also, we most likely share with them what we are doing to achieve the same goal. Ah, the secret to long life. I would like to reflect with you on this topic of life and living and this question, *what's the secret?*

Being in the healthcare field for 21 plus years, I have had many conversations with physicians, specialists, staff, patients, and family members about how to stay healthy and live a long life. In fact, there have been people throughout history who have claimed to have discovered the secret of life. It would seem as though it is something we all have in common, a search for the secret to living a long life. I have found there are several ideas about this secret, here are a few I have been introduced to or reminded of recently.

Vinegar. You know, I think vinegar might be the answer. I know people who claim that an ounce of apple cider vinegar daily will cure whatever ails you and for many of those people I believe it does help them feel better. For others the idea of drinking straight vinegar causes them to be ill.

Keifer grains. Keifer grains are used to make a probiotic drink that will keep your gut healthy and I have family members who faithfully drink this beverage daily and it does seem to be providing them with stomach stability. I, on the other hand, cannot get past the thought of drinking a combination of ingredients that includes milk at room temperature for 24 hours (come to think of it though, my stomach is better just resisting the need to drink something like that!).

Vitamin D. Omega 3 and Fish Oil. Lots of water. Whole grains and fiber. It seems as though there are as many ideas about what is best for us as there are people. I recently had a conversation with 2 of my sisters-in-law and they were discussing the approaches they are taking to stay healthy and live a long life. They teased me when I openly resisted all of them. I told them that when people ask me at age 110 what my secret is I will likely declare that it is because I have never taken a supplement for longer than 1 week. We all laughed.

I do not mean to pooh pooh any of this. Clearly there is research and practical application for using many of these healthy lifestyle choices. But it made me think and I wondered if I have ever heard anyone say anything about the benefits of spiritual connectedness in living a long life. Furthermore, is it really a long life we want to live or is a deep, rich life most important?

I love it when a simple conversation that leads to laughter causes me to think deeper about any given topic. Is it what we do for our bodies that is the secret to living or is it what we do for others? Is it rather feeding others that feeds our soul with live giving sustenance? These words from John 6:35, "I am the Bread of Life" and from Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" come to my mind. Words of strength and support nurturing my spirit and assuring me that my spiritual connectedness is a key ingredient to living fully the life I have been given.

I have had to stop and think here about whether I give as much attention to my spiritual food as I do the food for my flesh. I would have to admit that there is not a perfect balance here. I spend far more time thinking about what goes into my mouth than what goes into my heart. Only time with God will fill my heart space and I am with God every time I am with another person for God resides in us all.

Ah ha, there it is! The Secret! Spending time with others, being with others, serving others increases my time with God and deepens my spiritual connectedness. Regardless of the length of my life I will live a deeper richer life if I am in relationship with others. In fact, I am going to claim this as The Secret and try to spend more time in relationship than in the supplement aisle.

May God Bless you,  
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**Enjoy your summer gatherings and the deepening of your life.**