



Human Optimization

Pod Club Discussion Questions



E19 Beyond Lifespan: The Pursuit of Healthspan and Vitality

Guest: Sara L. Bonnes, M.D., M.S., Medical Director, Healthy Longevity Clinic | Mayo Clinic – Rochester, MN

The three big questions explored in the podcast:

Question 1

What is “longevity,” and how does focusing on healthspan differ from simply trying to live longer?

Question 2

What are the main areas in our lives that determine our “healthspan”?

Question 3

How can the average person incorporate practical lifestyle changes to support both a longer life and better quality of life?

Discussion Questions:

1. Dr. Bonnes highlights that while the average lifespan is increasing, our years lived in good health (i.e. healthspan) is shortening, with an average 9.6-year gap between lifespan and healthspan in the US. What are your personal aging goals? What does "living in good health" mean to you?
2. Only about 20% of our longevity is determined by genetics while 80% is influenced by our lifestyle choices. Does this understanding of personal decision-making empower or challenge your current approach to your health?
3. Dr. Bonnes discusses the "Blue Zones" and their common traits (social connections, daily movement, plant-based diet, limited distractions). Which of these Blue Zone traits do you already incorporate into your life? Which feel easiest to add or to strengthen?
4. The episode cautions against "fads" and "magic pills," stressing the importance of evidence-based strategies. What criteria (e.g., human studies, multiple research teams, relevance to your population) do you use to determine the credibility and safety of health trends or supplements? Be honest here!
5. Dr. Bonnes asks, "How old do you feel?" and Dr. Camp mentions "old man noises" (grunting from movement, sighing with mild pain) as a sign of premature aging. Have you noticed signs that you might be aging unhealthily or prematurely? What changes seem doable to you to improve your health as you age?
6. The discussion encourages focusing on short-term, achievable goals that improve your quality of life now, rather than solely on distant longevity targets. What's one small, practical lifestyle

change you could make this week that would bring you immediate benefits and contribute to your long-term healthspan?

7. The podcast lists key areas to eliminate (tobacco, toxins, excessive alcohol, processed foods, over-reliance on electronics) and to add (movement, whole foods, sleep, positive attitude, social connection). Select one item from each list that could bring you the most benefit, and share that with your pod club. Commit to eliminating the item you selected and adding the item you selected. You might note how you feel each day to document any noticeable changes!
8. Dr. Bonnes stresses the importance of dental health and vaccinations as often-overlooked contributors to longevity. How regularly do you prioritize these and other aspects of preventive care? What changes, if any, do you want to make and why?
9. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area. How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).