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PROFILE

One Man's Wake-Up Call

Feeling what it is to be healthy for the first time



For most of his life, Ed Thrall didn't know what it was like to feel good. As a child, he suffered from sleep apnea, snoring so loudly as a 12-year-old that he could wake the entire household—never mind that his own sleep was so erratic that he was perpetually tired. Then there were the allergies—a host of seasonal-related bouts of sneezing and sinus problems that forced him inside when most of his friends were out celebrating the arrival of spring in Northern Maine. And when Ed did join in on the games that were popular at the time, such as riding his bike behind the trucks that sprayed DDT along the backroads to keep mosquitoes at bay, he became plagued by a host of mysterious maladies. Once his tongue even split down the middle. Today, he believes the early exposure to DDT compromised his immune system, making him vulnerable to chronic bouts of strep throat.

Ed, who's now 48 and lives outside Fort Lauderdale, remembers maintaining his sub-par health all through his twenties. By his early thirties, embarked on a career in the life insurance industry, he was at least 40 pounds overweight, and still fatigued enough to need an afternoon nap in order to muster the energy for his evening round of client appointments. Then, at 40, Ed received what he refers to as his "wake-up call" when he was scheduled for surgery to have a painful cyst removed from his groin. At the same time, Ed, who donates blood regularly, was advised to stop the practice because his liver enzymes were so out of balance.

"At that point I met Dr. Lou Jansen who helped me develop a new philosophy to achieve good health," says Ed, who explains that until then, not only had his view of wellness centered on the belief that any physical problem could be fixed surgically, but also that surgery was the only option. After two weeks on a life extension program of vitamins and minerals, Ed's cyst had completely disappeared. "That's when I began reading continuously about alternative medicine."

Ed later began consulting with Dr. Herbert Pardell, Medical Director at Life Extension, who performs periodic blood screens and tests on Ed's hormone levels. Last year, Dr. Pardell suggested that Ed follow Barry Sears' Zone Diet, including greatly increasing his daily water consumption. Soon enough the extra weight was dropping off (he lost a total of 45 pounds in about four months). A series of sleep tests soon revealed that Ed no longer suffered from sleep apnea. He was feeling good for the first time in his life. "You don't fully realize that you aren't healthy until you regain your health," he now says.

His radical new leaf is now his standard lifestyle. There's an exercise component, of course—though Ed says he isn't obsessive about his work-outs. He goes to the gym five or six times a week, using the treadmill or stairmaster for about an hour each time. Then, there's the diet. Ed is practically evangelical in his support for The Zone, which has as its main tenet the belief that wheat is poison. Wheat, as Ed explains, throws a kink into the human metabolism telling the body to store fat, rather than burn it. Wheat is also behind the insulin spikes that leave so many people desperately reaching for a sugar fix, which only perpetuates the vicious cycle. Ed never eats pasta, rice or bread. The only exception he'll make is for bread made from sprouted grain that has no gluten. He also steers clear of saturated fats.

Sears recommends eating several small meals throughout the day, each of which should include protein, carbohydrates (the good kind, such as fruit and vegetables) and fats (again, the good ones, like olive oil and peanut butter). "The good thing about the diet is that you don't feel you are making a big sacrifice," says Ed. "You never go more than four to six hours without a meal or snack, so you're never hungry."



His supplement regime is also a permanent part of his lifestyle. Ed continues to take Life Extension Mix, because its numerous ingredients preclude the need to take many other supplements. He also takes plenty of garlic to help keep the world's toxins and pollutants at bay and methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) to promote joint health. MSM has alleviated the earlier bouts of arthritis that had made it impossible for Ed to play the guitar-something he'd enjoyed since age 12. In addition to curing his joint pain, MSM also had a noticeable effect on the texture of his skin and he finds it helpful in guarding against allergies and combating muscle soreness and stiffness. "It's a general anti-inflammatory," he explains. "So it allows fluid to flow easier through your cell walls and you don't get the kind of swelling associated with inflammation from over use."

Ed has taken COQ10 regularly for the last four or five years because of both its general properties-such as enhancing circulation-and specific attributes, including maintaining good gum health. "I don't really notice a difference in the way I feel," he says about his COQ10 intake. "But the evidence is so overwhelming that I don't want to take any chances." Oil of oregano helps keep him free from Candida and Ed recently started on Human Growth Hormone (HGH) as well, and is anxious to see what the long-term health benefits will be. He already notices that his energy level appears to rise right after ingesting it. "I wouldn't recommend taking HGH without getting a blood test done first though to measure your levels accurately," he advises. "That makes the most sense." (Dr. Sam Snyder, an associate of Dr. Pardell, monitors Ed's hormone levels and his progress on HGH.)

He also takes colloidal minerals, which he says help avoid the kind of muscle cramping often associated with insufficient calcium, magnesium, potassium and other trace minerals. The extra muscle protection also makes him more relaxed about his work-outs. "It's nice to know that I'm not going to get a stiff neck just because I exercise," he says. Ed receives Rolfing therapy also as a way to improve flexibility and muscle tone.

But, even the most careful athlete can still get injured. Ed dislocated his knee (to the extent that his foot was pointing in the wrong direction) five years ago while rollerblading. Three hours of surgery were needed to repair the knee and months of rehabilitation followed. But the pain and swelling continued. Determined not to go under the knife again, Ed decided to heal himself, beginning with massive doses of glucosamine and chondroitin. It worked and within seven months, Ed had regained the use of his knee.



At about the same time, Ed took up the practice of meditation and today finds it key in keeping his mind calm when life gets hectic. He tries to sit on a daily basis, usually listening to tapes from the Monroe Institute designed to enhance the depth of the practice by synchronizing both hemispheres of the brain. "Listening to these tapes while I'm meditating has helped open up a whole new creative bent for me," Ed says. Music is his creative outlet. He now plays his guitar and sings for his friends or at local clubs. He writes much of his own material, while also performing rock and folk standards.

Ed's new philosophy on health has strongly influenced his choice of charities and investments. When he isn't at work-Ed opened his own State Farm Insurance Agency in 1983-he's likely to be engaged in fund-raising efforts or offering logistical support to Visionary Alternatives, Inc., a non-profit organization, founded by Jane Tobal, that pays for alternative medical care for critically ill patients. Ed is also an investor in the Miami-based Healing Visions, Inc., founded by Dr. Deborah Mash, Professor of Neurology at the University of Miami and a Life Extension Scientific Advisory Board member, who is conducting clinical trials on the use of an African plant to help treat drug and alcohol addiction.

"I now believe there is no condition of the human body that cannot be normalized, given the time and effort to find the right therapy," says Ed.

And Ed has every intention of doing what he can to help others find that right therapy. "I feel so good these days and I have so much energy, that I can't conceive of ever retiring."-Twig Mowatt

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