

Getting Back to BASICS

*“What your doctor wanted to tell you...
but didn’t have the time””*

Second Edition

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Introduction

*Getting Back to **BASICS*** is intended as a guide for healthful living. My goal in writing this book was to bring together, under one umbrella, some useful information, which may help you to more thoroughly enjoy your life. The information presented in this book is intended to support the recommendations of your personal physician. It should not be considered a substitute for their sound medical advice.

When the First Edition of *Getting Back to **BASICS*** was completed in 2001 life was very different. Over the past eight years we've witnessed a budget surplus become a crushing deficit and an escalation in world tension materially change our lives. We've also seen a significant increase in health problems, including an unparalleled rise in adult and childhood obesity. It appears we're moving in the wrong direction. Now, more than ever, *'we must focus our attention on making healthy choices to meet the stressful demands of our increasing complex world.'*

To my wonderful wife, Lenore and loving daughters, Deborah and Shana. Their inspiration, support and encouragement made this book a reality. And to Ashley, the best little reader in our family.

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*'I'm not telling you it's going to be easy ...
I'm telling you it's going to be worth it'*

Art Williams



Part 1

A Wake-Up Call

Some Unexpected News

The New Reality

The start of the current recession in December 2007 marked the beginning of a new reality for the majority of Americans. As the economic bubble burst we began to realize that life, as we knew it, was about to change. Up until that date, most Americans believed everything was possible, and that we could live *the good life*, giving little thought to possible consequences.

Today, we live the new reality. Consumers have been forced to cut back on spending. They've stopped buying cars, purchasing homes and have been forced to postpone vacations - as they see their retirement savings decline, home values plummet and unemployment rise. It almost appears as if we awoke from a pleasant dream to a less than pleasant almost *nightmarish* reality.

Let's take a moment to compare life before the recession and life today

| | <u>January 2007</u> (Pre-Recession) | <u>March 2009</u> (Recession) |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Dow Jones Industrial Average | 12,114.10 | 7,170.06 |
| Unemployment rate | 4.6 % | 10.1 % |
| Number of Unemployed | 7 million | 11.6 million |
| People on Food Stamps | 26.3 million | 31.1 million |
| Annual Personal Bankruptcy Filings | 823,405 | 1,504,634 |
| Monthly Home Foreclosures | 148,425 | 274,399 |
| Number of Homes Sold | 7.3 million | 4.8 million |
| Median Home Price | \$211,000 | \$170,300 |
| Value of Americans' 401(k) Savings | \$2.7 trillion | \$2.4 trillion |
| Credit Card Debt | \$902.3 billion | \$994.4 billion |

Data Sources: Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, Mortgage Bankers Association, National Association of Realtors, FDIC, Federal Reserve, Employee Benefit Research Institute, Treasury Department

How Do We Cope With This New Reality? We recognize that the economic conditions today, bring new stressors, which require us to reinforce the foundation upon which we structure our lives. We reflect back to a simpler time, focusing on products and ideas, which have time-tested reliability, as we direct our attention towards ...

Getting Back to BASICS.

Some Unexpected News

You've just completed your annual physical exam and you're sitting in your doctor's office waiting to hear the results. You're a little apprehensive because you've noticed that you haven't been feeling as good as you usually do. You're not sleeping well and your weight has been steadily rising. You're thinking back to the time when your father said, *'as you get older you have to expect those little aches and pains.'* That was three years before his heart attack. As you sit there, you begin to worry that your fate is sealed, that there's nothing you can do to prevent the inevitable.

In walks Dr. Walker. His expression, difficult to read, sends a chill up your spine. That ache in the pit of your stomach tells you that things are not what they should be. The only question that remains is - *how bad are they?* Suddenly that comfortable chair you've been sitting in becomes rock hard. Your body shifts side-to-side, your back straightens as your muscles tighten. You lean forward as you strain to listen to what he has to say.

'Your test results came back normal.'

Immediately the floodgates of emotion burst open as you feel a wave of renewed energy fill your body and soul. Comfortably you settle back into your chair to hear the remainder of his report. Yet, somewhere deep in the recesses of your mind you can't help but feel that once again, *'you've dodged the bullet.'*

As you continue to listen, you find yourself doing what you usually do when the doctor says everything is *'okay.'* The emotion of the moment has you so exhilarated, that your mind wanders and you don't pay close attention to what he's saying.

'Bob, you better listen carefully to this,' he says.

The words jolt your body back to consciousness as if you were abruptly awakened from a pleasant dream.

'What's the problem?' you ask. *'I thought you said the results were normal.'*

'They are, but things can change - and usually do - if you don't begin to get back to basics.'

'What do you mean get back to basics, Dr. Walker?'

'It means learning to make changes in your life that may help you to keep those test results normal.'

'Just tell me what to do and I'll do it,' you say.

'It's not that simple, Bob. It means developing a different lifestyle than the one you're accustomed to.'

'Well, just tell me what to do and I'll do it,' you repeat.

'Unfortunately, it's not that easy. Most doctors, myself included, don't have the time to chat about getting back to basics. We're so busy treating patients and handling our practice that we just don't have the time to properly counsel patients on how to make positive lifestyle changes. While I can tell you what you should and shouldn't be doing, I don't have time to go into lengthy explanations.'

'If you can't give me guidance, then how am I supposed to learn what to do?'

'I have a book I'd like you to read. Many of the things I would say to you, if I had the time, are explained in this book.'

'If you think it will help, I'll read it.'

'Yes I do, Bob. In fact, I think you should read it several times.'

'It's that important?'

'Let's put it this way, Bob. Almost every day we hear about miracle drugs, nutritional supplements and new advances in the field of Anti-Aging Medicine. People have come to expect that they can pop a pill to stay healthy. Honestly speaking, how can someone who smokes, drinks and overeats expect to find the fountain of youth in a pill or an injection? My suggestion to you is to read the book and if you still have questions, I'll be happy to discuss them with you.'

On the way home that day, you feel a sense of peace that the test results came back normal. You remember rushing to tell your wife Audrey the good news only to find her sitting quietly in the living room.

'What's wrong?' you say, sensing that something was terribly amiss.

'The office called,' she said.

'What's wrong?' you repeat.

'They said that Bill had a heart attack at work today.'

'How is he?'

'He didn't make it to the hospital in time.'

You feel the blood drain from your face as your throat tightens. You and Bill had lunch yesterday afternoon in the diner across the street from work. He looked to be in perfect health, no sign of any problem. You remember him saying to you that he intended to stop smoking as you discussed your future retirement plans. After all, you're both baby boomers and nearing retirement age. *How could it be? How could he be gone? ... Why?*

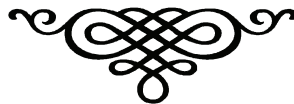
Your knees buckle as you sit down. Your wife comes over to hug you and you both sit quietly for many minutes.

'How did your checkup go?' she finally asked.

'Oh, the results were normal. I'm fine.'

'I'm so happy,' she said.

As you sat there contemplating the untimely death of your colleague and friend, you begin to think about your own mortality. You and Bill had a lot in common - you ate poorly, smoked, hated to exercise and were overweight. At that moment you realized that if you didn't change, you might be next. Dr. Walker was right. You needed to make some serious lifestyle changes right now. If you wanted to continue to stay healthy, you had to learn how to get back to basics.



This story begins on the sidewalks of any town or city in America just at the end of World War II. The climate of the country was changing from the fears, frustrations and uncertainties of a wartime economy, to one based on guarded optimism for the future. No longer were there any doubts in the minds of most Americans that the world they knew was changing, hopefully for the better. This renewed sense of optimism for a bright future, helped fuel the sudden and dramatic increase in childbirths which has come to be known as the baby boomer generation.

It was a cold, windy day in New York when a fragile child was born to a young couple at the Madison Park Hospital in Brooklyn. The date was September 30, 1947. At first everything appeared to be normal, as a healthy baby boy, the newest edition to the baby boomer generation was delivered. Soon after the birth it became apparent that everything was not all right, something was terribly wrong. This tiny infant, unable to feed properly, was choking with every attempt. The diagnosis confirmed the worst fears of those involved. This innocent victim of life, barely one day old, was born with a serious birth defect. His trachea (*windpipe*) and esophagus (*food tube*) were joined. As this tiny newborn attempted to swallow milk, this life giving sustenance was filling his lungs. The very liquid meant to nourish this new life was drowning it.

Time was running out. The only way this baby could survive would be to undergo an extensive operation to separate his trachea and esophagus. To make matters worse, the only hospital that had experience with this new surgical procedure was in Boston, Massachusetts. In spite of the odds, some means were found to have that innocent, helpless victim flown to Boston for surgery the following day at Boston Children's Hospital.

October 1st, 1947 was a tough day for the new arrival as he underwent a lengthy and dangerous operation. Thankfully, that fragile bundle of flesh, completely oblivious to the turmoil surrounding him, survived the surgery and showed the world something that day. He wasn't giving up on life, and that in spite of the staggering odds against him, he had strength, determination - *he was a survivor*.

As the years passed, that fragile newborn grew into a healthy young man, never fully understanding why some people, often people he did not know, would refer to him as the '*miracle baby*.' It took quite some time for that baby boomer to realize how fortunate he truly was.

It boggles the mind to think that in the span of just two days, so many correct decisions had to be made. Dr. Sidney Thier, the family's doctor and personal friend, had to make the correct diagnosis and arrange transportation to Boston Children's Hospital in a timely manner. And, Dr. Paul Lowenstein had to use remarkable skill in performing this radically new surgical procedure. Perhaps most of all, that tiny fragile newborn, the newest member of the baby boomer generation, had to muster all of his strength, determination and '*will-to-live*' in order to beat the odds against him.

All of those things, and so many other pieces of the puzzle, had to blend in perfect harmony in order to bring about a successful conclusion. Yet, in spite of the odds against that happening, no delays took place, no errors were made and the '*miracle baby*' survived and prospered. Only now, after so many years have passed, can one fully understand and appreciate the significance of those first few days of - **MY LIFE**.

That's right, I was (*am*) that fragile '*miracle baby*.' While I have no direct memories of that episode in my life, I bear the extensive scars that remain, as a badge of courage. Over the years, I have come to realize that my life, to this point, has been an experiment, to see what works for me - and what doesn't. Through my studies, personal life and clinical experience, I have come to realize that good health, doesn't just happen. In order to stay healthy, you must make a personal commitment to get back to basics and make healthy lifestyle choices.

Most people consciously or unconsciously wrote me off that fateful day, October 1st 1947. Still others probably never expected me to return to New York six months later. I am certain that many others, who knew me from birth, never expected me to grow up, become happily married and the proud father of two beautiful daughters. Whenever someone referred to me as the '*miracle baby*' while I was growing up, they were probably thinking, '*I never expected that kid to survive*.' Happily, I proved them wrong and as a bona fide member of the baby boomer generation, I intend to continue to prove them wrong for a very long time.

Having given you some insight into the nature of the author, I can say that, in spite of my health problems, or possibly because of them, I have gained a greater appreciation for life, family, friends and good health. I believe that because I have struggled for so long to become healthy, I can say with complete certainty that the old adage is true, '*that one only comes to appreciate their health when he or she loses it.*' But, having lost it, and thereafter regained it - that is a special gift, a second chance to appreciate the most valuable personal asset you will ever have your good health.

While I have been involved in the field of Wellness for more than thirty years, I must admit right up front that the majority of information I write about in this book was not invented or thought up by me. Most of the advice I offer was written about, or presented by others - in some cases long before I or any member of the baby boomer generation was born. So why write the book? Simply, to bring together under one umbrella some valuable ideas that may help you to more fully enjoy your life.

This brings me to a second critically important point. As you read this book, you must understand that *the advice I offer may not be valid for everyone*. While we have a great many similarities anatomically and physiologically, we all have subtle differences that make us who we are. I recognize that the age and current health status of each reader may vary widely. A particular exercise suggestion or food recommendation may be appropriate for one person and not be advisable for another. With this in mind,

I caution all readers to consult with their doctor and have a complete medical examination prior to implementing any suggestion or recommendation made in this book.

As I bring this opening chapter to a close, I would like to relate an interesting story, which makes an appropriate point.

It seems that, almost every morning on my way to work I would drive down a certain street and see a man standing outside of his home either washing or waxing his car. The car wasn't a new car. In fact, it looked to be at least nine or ten years old. As I drove past this man I often marveled at his dedication to keeping his car in such fine condition. Standing outdoors in all types of weather, rag in hand, polishing and grooming this old, but not antique car.

One day I took a closer look at the man. His age appeared to be about fifty, maybe a little older. His head was balding and his stomach was protruding well over the belt buckle of his blue jeans. While he held a rag in one hand, his other hand usually held a lit cigarette. Obviously, this man was not a great physical specimen. I had seen many out-of-shape men just like him. Why then was the picture of this man exhibiting such compulsive behavior troubling me?

Finally, it came to me, and surprisingly, the answer came from the lessons I learned during my earliest days in grammar school. I had always been taught that the human body was like a machine. Treat it right and it would last a long time. Treat it poorly and it would break down. At that moment I realized what was bothering me. As I traveled down that particular street each morning, what I was actually seeing was a snapshot of how many of us treat our health. This vivid picture highlighted the fact that many of us, while neglecting our health, place undo importance on other tasks. This overweight, sedentary, pencil-pushing smoker symbolized in my mind how misplaced our priorities have become. Here was a man, compulsively washing and waxing an old car, who obviously needed to make some serious lifestyle changes, In a sense, he was the one who truly needed the fresh coat of paint with an engine overhaul. It struck me as tragically funny when I finally realized that, an alarming number of us, treat our cars better than we treat our health.

If you're reading this book, you've probably been told to do so by your doctor or on the recommendation of a friend or relative. For whatever reason, they believe that you need to consider making some basic lifestyle adjustments in order to stay healthy. While you might not agree with them, I hope that while you read this book you keep an open mind.

Just because your doctor said that you have to make some lifestyle adjustments, it's not the end of the world. You should think of it as a new beginning. If you're honest with yourself, you know that you haven't exactly been following a healthy lifestyle. Chances are you haven't been feeling good and this should serve as a wake up call for change. So what's the problem? You don't know how to change? No problem that's what this book is all about. Teaching you how to develop a healthy lifestyle by...

Getting Back to BASICS.

You probably should consider yourself very lucky. Most of the time people wait until it's too late. I'm sure you could tell me a story about an acquaintance that didn't make it to the hospital in time. That's because *'the effects of an unhealthy lifestyle are cumulative. Heart attacks and strokes are culminating events that follow years of personal neglect.'*

As I bring this first chapter to a close, I want to remind you of something you already know. The story I mentioned earlier highlights the unfortunate fact that many of us place undo importance on *'things'* at the expense of our health. We all know, maintaining good health is much more important than any physical possession. It sounds so simple, *'yet each day millions of us place our health at great risk as we strive for greater wealth and possessions.'*