My Journey Into the Future of Longevity

5 MIN READ

MAY. 10, 2025

BY CAREN OSTEN GERSZBERG

Turning 60 last summer was a wake-up call. While generally in good health and still physically active, I'd noticed my body becoming increasingly prone to injury and I tired more easily.

Coupled with a family history that includes cardiac disease, cancer, and dementia, it felt like the right time to better understand what's working—and what needs a reset—with the goal of living a healthier, longer life.

It might sound like I was chasing longevity, but there's an important distinction to make when it comes to this uber-trending term—we're living longer than ever, but we're not necessarily living healthier. A recent **study** in *JAMA Network Open* reveals that while life expectancy has increased, many of those added years are spent managing chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes. In the U.S., the gap between how long we live and how long we stay healthy has stretched to an average of 12.4 years. So the real goal now isn't just adding years (lifespan)—it's making sure those years are strong, sharp, and free from the burden of chronic disease (healthspan).

Answering the call for a greater focus on healthspan, the **global wellness economy** has surged into a $6.3 trillion force reshaping how we live, age, and invest in our future. More specifically, the global longevity market alone is expected to hit $610 billion by 2025. So it's no surprise that wellness retreats are sprouting up across the world, drawing Boomers and Gen Xers willing to spend on staying healthy. And

while the price tag can be steep, a retreat isn't just a pricey getaway—it's an investment in a healthier future.

After researching a variety of wellness retreats focused on longevity, I chose the four-day **Longevity8** program at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona. It was the mix of assessments, workshops, and one-on-one sessions with professionals—medical, physical, nutritional and emotional—that drew me in as I searched for actionable tools and insights that could help me optimize my health for the long run.

At Canyon Ranch, the approach to longevity is both science-driven and deeply holistic. It's constructed around eight interconnected principles that target the core pillars of healthspan, working together to fuel strength and lifelong resilience.

The Canyon Ranch 8 Principles of Longevity (and how each one translates to real life.)

1. Integrative Medicine

Prevention is the foundation and is an active investment in your future health. Having a personalized, data-rich strategy—based on genetic insights, bloodwork and full-body diagnostics—means you're not just reacting to problems but staying ahead of them. The Canyon Ranch team of physicians and specialists looks at the full picture using advanced diagnostics to catch issues early and design a plan that's personalized for each guest.

In your life: Annual labs and screenings are a start, but a personalized proactive health strategy is better.

My key takeway: Investing in knowledge and prioritizing prevention changed the game for me—from how I move, to what I eat, to how much time I spend outdoors.

2. Flexibility & Fitness

Movement is non-negotiable—but it's not just about counting reps or increasing cardio. It's about steady movement that enhances balance, mobility, strength and stamina so you can move well and keep doing what you love for years to come.

In your life: It's not about pushing harder — it's about building strength that lasts. Think preservation, not punishment.

My key takeway: As a post-menopausal woman with borderline osteopenia, strength training is now a non-negotiable part of my fitness routine for building strength and stability.

3. Mental & Emotional Health

Long life without mental clarity and emotional resilience falls short of what thriving looks like. Building skills to manage stress, regulate emotions, and promote purpose is foundational for a long, fulfilling life. If you're not already meditating, mindfulness meditation is one of the most powerful tools you can cultivate.

In your life: Your emotional fitness is just as critical as your cholesterol numbers.

My key takeway: I've been meditating for over ten years and it's reshaped how I move through the world—lowering stress, strengthening resilience, and deepening my ability to find joy in everyday moments.

4. Spiritual Wellness

This is about clarity, purpose, and emotional resilience. A spiritual wellness expert can help you tune in to what really matters—what brings you joy and meaning—allowing you to explore your best self.

In your life: Living longer isn't just about managing risk—it's about building a life that feels worth extending.

My key takeway: I am spiritual. I'm deeply connected to what brings me joy, and believe in a higher power beyond what we know.

5. Strength & Endurance

Regular strength training is protective—it's your body's defense system against chronic conditions like arthritis, back pain, depression, diabetes, and more. From increasing muscle mass to improving bone density and boosting your metabolic function, it's directly tied to how well—and how long—you'll be able to move, think, and live as you age.

In your life: Strong muscles. Stronger future. Strength is a long-term investment in your vitality and resilience.

My key takeway: Now that I understand the importance of **Zone 2**, I prioritize an exercise regimen focused on low-intensity cardio for heart health and strength training to keep my body resilient for the long run.

6. Nutrition

Nutrition isn't just about managing weight or counting calories—it's a long-term strategy for energy. A nutritionist will help you fine-tune your daily habits and learn that every meal is a chance to lower inflammation, support cognition, and fuel the processes that keep your body resilient over time. It's about making dietary choices

that power a longer, clearer, more vibrant life.

In your life: Eat like your future depends on it—because it does. Longevity begins in the kitchen and it's about nourishment, not restriction.

My key takeway: While I typically make healthy eating choices, I need to cut back on chocolate and increase my protein intake. To avoid spikes in my blood sugar level, I need to eat protein before digging into carbs and sugar.

7. Sleep

Sleep isn't a luxury—it's your body's nightly repair cycle. Prioritizing restorative sleep is critical to brain health, metabolic balance, and disease prevention, essentially protecting every system in your body. With the results of your own sleep study and discussion of your wind-down routines, you will learn how to optimize this key element of your health.

In your life: Consistent, quality sleep plays a critical role in how well we age.

My key takeway: The good news: I don't have sleep apnea. The less good news: I snore at a higher decibel level than I thought!

8. Outdoor Experiences

True longevity isn't built in a lab—or in a gym. **Research** shows that spending time in nature reduces stress hormones, lowers blood pressure, boosts immune function, and even improves mood and cognitive performance. But it's not just the physical benefits. Moving your body outdoors clears the mental static so what matters can surface— it's where strength, clarity, and connection all start to regenerate.

In your life: Nature is therapy. Movement is medicine. Connection is fuel. Step outside, move your body, and reconnect with what keeps you human.**My key**

takeway: I need to keep making time to move outdoors and soak in nature. Leaving my phone behind makes everything feel more vivid, more real—it pulls me deeper into the present moment.

The Days at a Longevity8 Retreat are Packed

Between lectures, medical assessments, one-on-one meetings, and group meals with the other retreatants, there's not much downtime for lingering in the sauna. During the four days, I met with more than a dozen specialists, including a doctor, nutritionist, performance scientist, wellness experts, mental health professional and spiritual wellness guide. While each specialist brought insights regarding my health and habits, some of my sessions resonated more than others.

"Spirituality can be a direct experience in connection to self, a source, such as God or a higher power, other people, or mother nature," said the spiritual wellness guide during our session. A former hospital chaplain, she explained that spirituality isn't necessarily tied to a specific religion as many people believe but focuses on the internal experience of connection and meaning.

Our retreat's cohort of 14 guests, ranging in age from 40s to 80s, had an ideal chance to turn inward during an early morning two-mile mindful walk. An outdoor guide instructed us to leave our phones behind, and once on the trail—winding along the desert property at the foot of the Santa Catalina Mountains—she spoke about mindfulness and how, without talking, we were going to take each step mindfully highlighting one sense at a time. As we moved slowly kicking up dust, one guest paused to look at a hummingbird. Another stopped to savor the sun on her face. Others stopped to sniff leaves and desert flowers.

This tech-free experience was a stark contrast from the rest of our stay. With a glucose

monitor patch stuck to our arm, most of us checked the app after every bite and sip to track how our body was responding. It was a fascinating exercise for me, to see how my body reacted to a carb-rich dish or mocktail (While there is alcohol available at Canyon Ranch, most retreat guests chose to remain sober.) When asked about the best foods for longevity, the team's nutritionist responded, "Beans, beans, beans…whole grains and vegetables."

During a few moments of free time, I visited the new Canyon Ranch experience area. Eight private rooms house different biohacking tools—from red light beds and compression boots to an infrared sauna pod and a Shiftwave chair that stimulates the vagus nerve. I found the intermittent pressure of the compression healing, and preferred the sauna pod experience to the light bed.

Beyond the powerful conversations, Longevity8 gave me a complete snapshot of where my health stands today. It wasn't just about numbers—it was applying insights in real time: in the gym, on the cushion, along the trail. Through 15 assessments, I got a revealing look at how I'm aging—and how I can age better.

The assessments at a Longevity8 retreat and what they cover:

- **Comprehensive Lab Panel:** Analyzes over 200 blood and urine biomarkers to assess metabolic health, inflammation, hormonal balance, and more.
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG):** Evaluates heart health by spotting arrhythmias and cardiac risks early.
- **DEXA Scan:** Measures body fat, lean muscle mass, and bone density to assess risk for osteoporosis and metabolic conditions.
- **VO? Max Test:** Determines aerobic fitness and cardiovascular endurance, indicating how efficiently the body uses oxygen during exercise.
- **Private Mind-Body Session:** Introduces practices like meditation and breathwork to enhance mental clarity, build emotional stamina, and decrease stress.

- **Physician Consultation:** Integrates conventional and holistic approaches to address overall health and specific concerns, pulling together everything from genetics to biomarkers to craft a personalized health plan.

- **Continuous Glucose Monitoring:** Tracks your blood sugar levels minute-by-minute to, revealing how your body responds to the impact of food, movement and stress in real time.

- **Sleep Screening:** Monitors your sleep overnight to identify sleep disorders like apnea and provide insights into your sleep quality and patterns.

- **Carotid Ultrasound (CIMT):** Assesses vascular health by measuring the thickness of carotid artery walls, indicating risk for cardiovascular disease.

- **Musculoskeletal & Joint Assessment:** Looks at joint function and full-body movement to spot areas of pain or limitation, providing strategies to prevent or resolve injury.

- **Diet Score:** Analyzes how your dietary habits and nutrient intake are impacting your health, offering personalized nutrition strategies to nurture healthspan.

- **Longevity Mindset Session:** Provides support to explore emotional well-being, stress management, and mental resilience.

- **Personal Training Session:** Develops a customized exercise program to build strength, endurance, and mobility—tailored to individual fitness goals.

- **Galleri Cancer Early Detection Blood Test**: Screens for over 50 types of cancer by detecting signals in the bloodstream, allowing for earlier detection and intervention.

- **Genetic Testing**: Studies your genetic makeup to uncover potential health risks, providing the information you need to customize your prevention strategy.

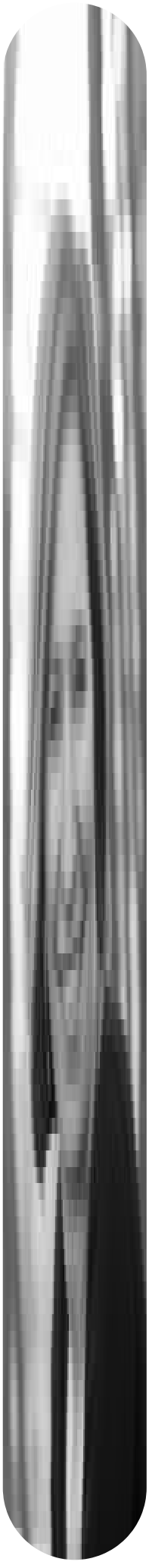
Getting the results felt a bit overwhelming, (the genetic report was 125 pages on its own), but the aim is for the experts to decode it and curate a full-body, full-life strategy for each guest. While I met with each specialist on site, the support doesn’t

end when you check out—the program includes six virtual follow-up sessions with any of the specialists for six months after your stay.

My time at the retreat didn't just give me a sharper view of where my health stands—it reshaped how I think about my future. I walked away understanding that lasting vitality isn't hinging on a single breakthrough; it's built through steady intentional actions deepened over time. For me—strength training is essential. Nutrition is about fueling resilience. Sleep is my nightly reset. And mindfulness ties it all together—keeping me grounded in the moments that matter most. The retreat didn't hand me a new life. It reminded me I still have the agency to shape my own.

*The information provided in this article is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as health, medical, or financial advice. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat any health condition. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider regarding any questions you may have about a medical condition or health objectives.**Read our disclaimers**.*

WRITTEN BY:



Caren Osten Gerszberg