

## ***Walk... and Live Longer by Dr. Felicia Darling (no... not that kind of Dr.)***

In early May I was recovering from pneumonia, sepsis, and respiratory failure. I and my wheelie oxygen tank would walk the 130 feet to my mailbox. It took 30 minutes to lumber there and back, stopping to take breaths every ten feet through my oxygen apparatus. This was a trip that previously only took 2 minutes. But I did it, because I wanted to regain my vitality.

A new meta-study of 30 million people found that if we do moderate activity for only 75 minutes a week, it lowers the risk of dying from some cancers and heart disease. These are two leading causes of death among adults! That is only about 10.1 minutes a day or 5.4 hours a month. According to the CDC, if you can talk, but not sing, while you do it, then it counts as moderate activity. The Mayo Clinic says a brisk walk counts as that moderate activity, too... But don't just walk, because it will extend your life. Walk because walking is awesome.

Apparently, the speed with which we seniors walk declines after age 65. This is important, since a 2022 meta-analysis of 34,000 seniors found that how fast we walk predicts our life expectancy—regardless of age, sex, injury, and illness. Some reasons that our walking speed decline with age are:

1. Poor posture
2. Decreasing strength and flexibility in hips and legs
3. Dizziness and light-headedness
4. Decline in cognitive functioning
5. Vision and hearing loss

Some ways to overcome these challenges are to do strength training, walk while holding items, walk to the beat of the music, walk with others, walk more consistently to build up stamina, and take a yoga class that focuses on improving strength and balance.

### **TIPS TO HELP YOU WALK MORE AND FASTER**

- Borrow someone's dog and take them for a walk. (I can suggest two cute chihuahua mixes LOL).
- Walk criss-cross along all the paths at Pueblo Serena (some say it is 3 miles)
- Form a lunch-time walking group.
- Do yoga to build stability and strength. (Classes taught by me begin in January at Pueblo Serena Clubhouse to benefit the HOA).
- Walk a little bit faster (time yourself).
- Walk through our awesome nature up behind the mailboxes and by the bocce courts at Pueblo Serena.

Get out there and walk, walk, walk and live and love longer.

Felicia Darling is an educator, researcher, and yoga and mindfulness teacher. She is also the author of *Empathy Unchained: Heal Your Trauma, Uplift Your World* and *Empathy Unchained DEIA Conversation Deck* coming out in February.