

# It's Never Too Late

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René Burton, 73, is determined to change the public's perception of aging – one DVD and exercise class at a time. She has, in fact, been on a mission toward health and wellness at every age and stage of her own life since moving to Huntington Beach from her native New York 35 years ago.

The former dancer and mother of three taught ballet and offered jazz, tap and modern dance out of her own HB-based dance studio for a number of years before deciding to launch an exercise program specifically geared for adults at Coastline College, calling the program “Fitness over 40.”

“At the time I was in my 40s, but then we eventually changed the name of the class to ‘Fitness over 50,’ then ‘Fitness over 60,’” and now it’s just ‘It’s Never too Late,’” she says with a laugh. “The truth is that chronological age simply doesn’t matter. What matters is how you feel, which is determined by the lifestyle you lead, the food you eat and your level of activity.”

With regard to the latter, Burton designed a tri-level exercise program for adults over 55 to target individuals at every level of physical fitness: Level One follows a “slow and steady” pace geared toward individuals who have perhaps not participated in a regular exercise program for some time; Level Two and Three are designed for more intermediate and advanced enthusiasts.

“My personal mission is to change popular misconceptions about aging in America,” she says. “My plan of action is to promote fitness for seniors aged 55 and over, and I seek to redefine what seniors are and what seniors can be called upon to do. This program has been specifically designed for baby boomers and seniors, tailored to their specific needs to unlock their potential and unleash their minds and bodies. It’s not their bodies that are too old, it’s their attitudes and expectations.”

## Ages and stages

Burton, who also teaches at the Rodgers Seniors Center in Huntington Beach and Irvine Valley College, created a series of exercise DVDs to correspond with her increasingly popular classes, which often became standing-room only sessions.

Nationally certified in the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Burton’s DVDs feature low-impact weight-bearing aerobics to improve cardiovascular fitness and endurance, strength



training to build muscle and bone strength, stretching and flexibility exercises for coordination and balance exercises to prevent falls.

“The DVDs are ideal for people who don’t drive or aren’t able to travel or those who feel more comfortable trying out the program at home,” she says. “Many of the people who come to my classes also purchased the DVDs to take with them on vacation so they could continue their exercise program while they are away.”

## Advocates and enthusiasts

“(By taking these classes) I am able to do household and gardening chores with ease,” says Huntington Beach resident Dori Alyea, 64. “Lifting grocery bags is effortless and they actually act as workout weights from store to parking lot. I seldom use a cart. The walks with my husband provide a time for reflection and pleasant conversation. The group workouts provide fun and laughter with others my age that have a positive outlook and are striving to keep fit. A day without exercise is worse than a day without sunshine! We must have it to survive.”



Dr. John Bergman of the HB-based Bergman Family Chiropractic agrees with Alyea’s assessment and adds “what René does is expand people’s consciences into the limitless and takes away the limits of how people think the body should age.”

Bergman recently joined forces with Burton to conduct a workshop called “The 100-Year Lifestyle,” designed to educate attendees on the ways in which to “live dynamic lives and be healthy well beyond 100.”

“The human body is so simple and elegant,” says Dr. Bergman. “It is designed to adapt, survive and thrive in this environment. But the average sick person over 60 in this country is taking over 13 pills a day. Every medication slows or stops a metabolic process. Give the body what it requires and you’ll likely see a reversal of degeneration and decay. That’s what René’s program is all about.”

