



A conversation about aging with Diane Atwood and Rita Losee

Rita: I read Helen Keller's words "life is either a daring adventure or nothing. And the jolt, the energy I got through my body at that point was like you plugged both feet into a 21- socket. And I just said I'm going to live a life of adventure.

Diane: I'm Diane Atwood. I'm a health reporter and I share news and stories on my catching health blog and podcast that I hope will make a difference by inspiring people to be as healthy as possible in mind, body and spirit.

Today I am in Brunswick, Maine, and I'm going to have a conversation about aging with a woman who told me she is about to turn 78 on the Ides of March. And I hate it when people do this to me, but my God, you don't look at day over 60? You have so much energy. You're vibrant. You're always learning new things. And you suggested that we start this conversation talking about what you did this weekend. So let's do it. You climbed a mountain after dark?

Rita: After dark in the moonlight with people I didn't know, in crampons. I bought myself some crampons for my birthday. I'd never worn crampons before. So I got invited to go by a friend and when he invited me, my first reaction was I don't have any equipment, which as I mused about that was realization of I was confronting some fear and kind of making an excuse. And then I started to think about, well, you know, I've got boots, I've got ski pants, I've got thermal underwear, I guess I really do have the equipment after all. So I said, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. And then, as we were laying out the logistics, he said we'd be

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leaving Topsham around five o'clock probably starting to hike around seven, seven thirty, oh, that's going to be so after my bed time.

Diane: It wasn't even that, Oh my God it's going to be dark out.

Rita: No, it was, I'm going to have to stay up past my bedtime. I tend to go to bed early and get up very early but as I've reflected on it, since then. The changing and doing something different, I challenge people to do that all the time. I can't ask other people to do what I'm not willing to do myself. And this morning I was speaking with a group and saying, you know, sometimes in order to experience an absolutely phenomenally exciting and wonderful event, you have to stay up past your bedtime. That's the principle there.

Diane: I love it. You know, I haven't formally introduced you or you haven't formally introduced yourself. So tell us who you are.

Rita: I am Rita Losee. I'm a woman of adventure, doctor of success and proponent of prosperity. I am also the founder of Soaring Seniors.

Diane: Which you obviously are yourself.

Rita: Absolutely.

Diane: Well, I'm going to try to start closer to the beginning. Were you a soaring neonate?

Rita: I don't think so although I think one thing that was really, really germane to subsequent challenges, I was a six month fetus the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed and I was with my mom on 911. And when I encountered her, the very first thing that she said to me wearing that horrified expression that we all wore that day, this is just like Pearl Harbor and that gave me some incredible insight that the amniotic fluid that I was floating around in, on December sixth was very, very different on December 7th. And I think there were profound implications for my

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health ongoing. So when I was 21, I had just graduated from Maine Medical Center and was an RN and I don't remember that it was much of a challenge to convince my roommate to go cross-country. So we worked every shift we could get our hands on and put away all the money we could. And in early September of 64, we hopped in her 62 Chevy and headed west. And we spent three months on the road. We had a tent; we actually used it one night. Other than that, we stayed with friends or friends of friends or we slept in the car. Of course, she was no bigger than I, so I had the front seat, she had the back seat. I had started skiing that first winter when I was 21, because I'd always wanted to downhill ski and never had the resources to do it. So I started skiing and loved it. Then fast-forward, worked, moved to Boston, married, little kid, probably. 71, 72 kid was sleeping and I was reading as I was often found doing when nothing else was taking me away from it, and I read Helen Keller's words: life is either a daring adventure or nothing. And the jolt, the energy I got through my body at that point was like you plugged both feet into a 210 socket. And I just said I'm going to live life of adventure.

Diane: But you already knew what it was like to try to have an adventure. The mere fact that you traveled across country. So you understood that already.

Rita: Yeah. And I think that realization wasn't that I was a woman of adventure, it was that I'd already been a woman of adventure and I think the energetic thrill I got from reading those words was recognition of this is who I am. Right. This is who I am, even though I didn't know it.

Diane: And at that time you were raising children?

Rita: I had one toddler, son. I was working as a nurse. Just about that time I'd started to run, and the thing just kept going and going.

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Diane: That was like turning a page to a brand new adventure, a huge lifelong adventure. You would have been in your late twenties? Early thirties. Early thirties. I want to ask you about your early childhood, where you a sickly child, or were you a child of adventure?

Rita: Grew up on a farm in West Bath, four miles from town, father was a dairy farmer. We swam in the summer, we ice-skated, it was always outdoors and had a mom who loved to be outdoors. That also was, I think, a germane part of who I am, this woman who wants to be outside and doing something like climbing a mountain in the middle of the night.

Diane: It's not easy to do though when you're starting to raise a family and you're working full time and we get sort of sidetracked a little bit, but this epiphany moment for you in reading Helen Keller's words changed it.

Rita: Oh, absolutely, and within a very short time, before Stephen Covey made it popular, I had written a mission statement for my life, which is my life is to be a life of adventure. During the course of my adventure, I intend to master all that I can physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and share what I know with as many other people as I can.

Diane: And here you are almost 78 years old and you are going strong doing that.

Rita: Absolutely. And my whole intention with Soaring Seniors, the book that I wrote and the work that I'm doing right now is that the expectations that we have about seniors, particularly senior women although I think it's pretty much all seniors, is what I call four Ds. Diminishment. Deterioration, Disease, Die, and oh, by the way, get out of our way while you're in this process.

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Diane: I'm finding though, as I go around the state and interview people who are older, there are a lot more resourceful, happy, energetic, inspirational people than I had ever imagined.

Rita: Absolutely. There are so many resources that we can tap into and one of the resources is what others of us are doing to take this period when we're supposed to just be quiet and go away and get out of the way, is to figure out how they can make a contribution. And I think that's something that a lot of people don't think about until they're at that retirement stage. What am I going to do to feed my soul? Well, what I did Saturday night feeds my soul big,

Diane: [Well, let us go back and I'm a little bit to that epiphany moment that you had. So how did you set things up for yourself? I mean, you're going to live a life of adventure. So how did you do it any differently than you were already doing it?

Rita: Well, I discovered rock climbing. I signed up for a course called Mountain Encounter at one of the junior colleges on the North shore of Massachusetts and went to Mountain Encounter. And one of the experiences, I didn't know we were going to do it, but one of the experiences we were out in Western Mass was to go rock climbing.

So I went up and out across the cliff, turned around to look and went uuuuh, all right, not sightseeing here. And then finished the climb, and the very last move I had to make was across something that was probably as big as this placemat and as flat. Across the space, it was maybe 15 inches apart and there was another great big flat rock, and I stood there. I'm going to go. I'm going to go. Okay. I couldn't get myself to and it was on a rope, you know, I wasn't going to go anyway, but there was nothing but air and finally I stepped across. And it was a piece of cake. I mean, it was just an incredibly easy step. So it was all my perception that it was dangerous but I walked away from that weekend

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absolutely hooked on rock climbing. So. Living in Boxford Mass., I didn't have any friends I could call up and say, hey, you want to go rock climbing on Tuesday? So I ended up going up to Eastern Mountain Sports Climbing School and started climbing on Cathedral Ledge, and became friends with a guy that was the head of the school and did as much climbing as I could possibly do. And then I had a college professor who said, you know, you really ought to run and it was during my masters and truly that changed my life. I mean, I was running by 1972 before the invention of running shoes. I had white Ked sneakers first running shoes, you know, put them on and run out the door. So again, I think it's in my nature to just love physical activity.

Diane: What was your Master's degree in?

Rita: Education counseling.

Diane: So you were a psychiatric nurse and then when you got your master's degree, did you continue?

Rita: I dodged in and out of nursing. I'd do this and that, and I had a work education pattern. I'd work for a while; that would get kind of old, then I'd go get more education. I'd come to the end of that course, go back to work and by the early seventies, I was a committed athlete. I mean, running was just part of my life.

Diane: Did you go on to have a larger family, more kids?

Rita: One. My boys are about five years apart.

Diane: Did you pass along your athletic gene to them?

Rita: Well, you know, my sons, not so much their kids, uh, my oldest son married a woman who was a gymnast all the time that she was growing up. And my oldest grandchild, Charlotte, who will be 17 next month is a really good athlete. She's a gymnast, and still competes. She's a good

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volleyball player and her sister is into cheerleading and she's an incredibly good athlete as well. My younger son's two kids, he has a daughter who will be 13 in May, who is a hockey player and pretty good, and my grandson, Evan will be 10 in April, and he's a goalie and apparently a really, really good goalie. So yeah, there's some real athleticism in the Losee young people.

Diane: Yeah. Your pride is overflowing. I can see it.

Rita: Oh yeah. I do have them all. I totally adore them all. I'm so blessed with what magnificent people they are.

Diane: I saw picture of you and maybe the 13-year-old doing aerial yoga.

Rita: That's Julia. Yes, we did that a couple of years ago together and in January of 2016, I set an intention that every month I would do something I've never, ever done before just for fun. And so that experience with Julia was one of those things just for fun. Last weekend was certainly one of those just for fun.

Diane: That's right. Going climbing after dark in the moonlight, and climbing after bedtime. That's right. It was essentially a full moon.

Rita: Oh, it was gorgeous and from that rock that I was standing on, if you looked over to the West, you could see Mount Washington. Wow. I mean it was a magnificent night.

Diane: But you have no idea where you were.

Rita: No. We headed up 295 and I was sitting in the back seat. The guys were chitchatting in the front and I'm just riding along. Along for the ride. I'm along for the ride. I just trusted that we would end up where we were going and we did.

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Diane: So between the 70s and 2016, when you set this monthly intention, which I want to talk about more, because I think that's really inspirational. You went on to get your PhD?

Rita: It's an ScD, doctor of science, which basically means I had no language requirement. All science. It's just doctor of science.

Diane: When did you get your doctorate?

Rita: 92 was when I walked, I finished it in 91.

Diane: And did you pursue that just because you wanted it or did you have a particular goal in mind?

Rita: I pursued it because at BU there and I was, had been working consistently in psychiatric nursing and the professor that taught me to run had a colleague who created a rehab model for people with psychiatric illness. Which was modeled on physical rehab, so what skills does this person have? What skills do they need to survive or grow in their environment and how do we teach them that? So I was very much enchanted with that because at that time psychiatric nursing was turning to be a medication line, so that had a lot of appeal to me again, it was teaching. So that's why I ended up in that program at BU when I decided I wanted a doctorate.

Diane: During this time of your life, you were athletic, you were doing those kinds of things, but did you take good care of yourself would you say?

Rita: As best as I knew how. I certainly wasn't skipping the ice cream. My ex husband owned a Dairy Queen and I happened to be addicted to ice cream. So I had all the ice cream I wanted now in retrospect, that wasn't a good thing to do. But I lived in Boxford. It's a rural town you know, lots of trees around there. One of my jobs when I was a young mom was to take the kids to the pond to swim, and this one could be better than that

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and hang around with the other moms, but I think within me, and I believe within all human beings, there is an inherent urge to grow. To expand, to become more, to do more, to accomplish more. And I'm not sure how that seed germinated within me, but by the time I heard those words that Helen Keller wrote, and I wrote my mission statement, it was a done deal. This is what I'm going to be. This is who I am for the rest of my life and one of the things that I think is really critical to mention about being a woman of adventure, when I reach a crux point, when I get a decision to make a particularly a hard decision, the question I ask myself is what would a woman of adventure do here? Instant clarity. Instant clarity.

Diane: Describe what a woman of adventure is.

Rita: I think she's a person who is committed to living full out, physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, financially, whatever.

Diane: Because each woman, each human being has to decide for themselves what adventure means to them.

Rita: Or what their life purpose is. You know, I certainly have a good time playing. I'm not sure that everyone, you know, people could look at me and think I've made very frivolous choices.

Diane: For instance?

Rita: Oh, to go do the Hawaii Iron Man.

Diane: Did people try to discourage you from doing that or anything? Did people ever try to talk you down from things?

Rita: A certain ex-husband of mine. He said to me as the marriage was falling apart in 1992, look, I'm a forties and fifties kind of guy, what do you expect? And I was standing there thinking, gee it's 1992, maybe you could come up to the sixties or the seventies.

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Diane: And so the forties, fifties kind of guy is one whose wife is home waiting for him at the end of the day with the meal, the whatever, not out rock climbing and.

Rita: Mmmm huh. And certainly not harboring ambitions.

Diane: Do you mind talking about that a little bit more because you're not the only partner that has been in that situation. Took you a long time to get to that point?

Rita: Oh, yeah, it was really hard. I can remember back probably in the early eighties, maybe mid eighties doing the exercise where there is a circle and you rate income, your social, your marriage whatever. So I had a circle that was very round except for the big indentation where my marriage was. And that was like the first really conscious awareness that I was not happy in that marriage. And then it got to the place where at one point I said to myself, you know can I do this for 40 more years? And the answer was no way. I had asthma. I was using an inhaler while I was racing and running. I left the marriage and I never used, I don't have asthma and never used it again. I'm sure it was a metaphor. I can't breathe here. And so I left and it was extraordinarily hard and there were certainly people who didn't think it was such a good idea, including my kids.

Diane: Did you ever get married again? No. Never wanted to?

Rita: No. You know, I would consider a steady long-term relationship, but what I'm finding right now, first of all, most men are socialized to look for younger women. Men my age, most of them, they couldn't come near my energy level, my interest level, my activity level.

Diane: So, you've basically built a life for yourself?

Rita: I have, and I love it.

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Diane: What do you love about it?

Rita: I love the friends I have around me. I love the products that I'm selling. I love the energy that I'm having. I love the commitment to helping other people really get healthy. I mean there was an urge as a nurse to help people get healthy. But contemporary medicine doesn't help people get healthy. It's killing them.

Diane: So you've really gone more and more the, shall we call it the integrative route?

Rita: Functional. Well, the idea is we're physical we're intellectually or emotional spiritual. Health is about being able to function at high levels in all of those things. And, you know, I hear probably three times a week, you're amazing or you're so inspiring. That's not what I'm about. If I inspire you, what I really want to do is I want to inspire you to take some action.

Diane: So, you talk a lot to people, you've written a book, Soaring Seniors, which is about you. And it's inspirational for other people. It's about your journey. Would you call yourself a health coach?

Rita: You know, I puzzle about what to call myself, you know, I certainly am a health advisor. I'm a life advisor. I'm just a soaring senior, I guess, you know?

Diane: Well,, how do you inspire say somebody, who's your age? Who doesn't have your energy level to inspire them on all those levels?

Rita: The hardest step of any activity is the first one, the hardest step to going to climb that mountain last weekend was watching myself pull back. And then asking, hey, what would a woman of adventure do here? She'd go for it.

Diane: Yeah, so you put yourself to the test all the time, it seems

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Rita: Absolutely. Because as someone who aspires to be a leader, I lose all credibility with me if I'm not willing to do everything that I'm asking other people to do.

Diane: How did you happen to write the book?

Rita: I had a coach a couple of years ago, who was offering a weekend webinar on write a book in a weekend? Well, I had social plans in Massachusetts that weekend. I can't do the webinar, but Rita, you've written books before you can write a book.

Diane: You wrote a book before the Soaring Seniors book?

Rita: Yeah, I've written three or four books.

Diane: You just get the urge to write and you just do it?

Rita: I wrote one called *Unlock Your Possibilities* in the late nineties. I was working as a speaker then and, you know adds cachet to your resume if you're a speaker and you've got a book and I got inspired to write it. And again, there was a woman in the speaker's association. She was a business writer and I got inspired by her. She would think of her topic. And at that point, we were all using paper files and she'd find something and, oh, that belongs in that. She'd have the chapter outlined in the file. Oh, that belongs in that file. That point in that file, that belongs in that file.

Diane: Because she's already out there teaching people, things, public speaking.

Rita: Yup, and she's running across articles and other speakers and all, so she'd go to a hotel with her files. When she felt she had enough material lock herself in and write a book in a weekend.

Diane: So she inspired you in the nineties. What'd you write about?

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Rita: *Unlock Your Possibilities:* How to stop shooting yourself down and selling yourself short. I had been very competitive as a triathlete at that point, so I was drawing from my experiences as an athlete. I had climbed Kilimanjaro. I'd done a Hawaii Iron Man, so I had a lot of experiences with setting BHAGS, big, hairy, audacious goals and going for that.

Diane: I might get inspired by you, but I'm not going to go climb a mountain. I'm sorry. Well. I have other types of inspiration. Yeah, so that's what's important. You don't have to do what Rita does, but be inspired by the possibilities of what you could do.

Rita: Say hey, if that old broad can do that, I wonder what I can do?

Diane:] How old were you when you did the Iron Man in Hawaii? 46. Okay. And then Kilimanjaro? That was the year before, so I was 45. Okay. So let's just barrel on forward through the decades. What are some of the things that you did in your fifties?

Rita: That was when I left my business behind and hiked the Appalachian Trail.

Diane:] So you did the whole trail and by business, your business at that time?

Rita: I was a speaker. I was a professional speaker.

Diane: Like a motivational speaker would you say?

Rita: Yeah, I prefer to call myself inspiractional speaker.

Diane: What is that? Inspirational?

Rita: Right? Cause if you get inspired without taking action, it's just another breath.

Diane: [So for those speeches that you gave to inspiract people.]

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Rita: Inspiract people, yeah, I've done a lot of customer service talks with healthcare professionals. Customer service had just moved into healthcare, and so I was working in that arena.

Diane: Okay. You stopped that to do the Appalachian Trail. How long did that take you?

Rita: Five months and three weeks.

Diane: Oh, you're going to show me the picture.

Rita: I am.

Diane: You're perched on top of the sign. On my knees. That's a real balancing act. When you look at this picture of yourself what do you see? What do you think about you?

Rita: What I see is the incredible joy on that woman's face. It's the same thing I see on that same face, 20 years later on that mountain top the other day.

Diane: When you made it to the top of Mount Katahdin, how old were you?

Rita: What was I? 58, 59, 58 when I started. It was 20 years ago. I had a birthday.

Diane: Celebrated your birthday on the trail? Hmhhh. Did you go with people?

Rita: I started with a woman who I met at a business meeting and we decided to have lunch. And right after we sat down for lunch in Newburyport, she said, you want to hike the Appalachian Trail? I said, well, I don't know. I've thought about it. She said, well, let's do it. Wow. So. A year and a half later there, I was.

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Diane: Well, good for you. I'm impressed. So you do that. How do you find more adventures? They just pop up?

Rita:] Yeah, well, I mean this invitation last weekend, I never in a thousand years would have, when I, you know, it was, this was a business meeting. Like we're going to end up with a invitation to an adventure though I talked with the gentleman before and he's pretty adventuresome, you know, real outdoors .

Diane: Is he your age?

Rita: No. No.

Diane: So how wonderful is that though, that a younger person. Invited this woman who's nearly 80-years-old to climb a mountain when it was her bedtime, you know?

Rita: Absolutely. That's awesome. And, you know, it's interesting. I very much believe in the power of, I am. If I say I am fill in the blank, Those are very powerful words. Nobody on the planet can say I am and mean me except me. Right? So. One of the things that I have been saying for the last three or four years is I am youthenating. Y O U T H - ENATING. I am getting younger. So people typically think I'm in my sixties. In the last couple of weeks, two people have guessed that I'm in my fifties. So there I am. I am getting younger.

Diane: There you are, good for you. All right. So now we're going to go into your sixties. What kind of adventures did you have in your sixties?

Rita: I was sick. I came back from the trail and I was very, very sick. What happened? I couldn't move. Now, I'd heard people talking on the trail about how they had done the trail previously. Yeah, took me a couple months to recover. So when I came off the trail and I had no energy and my joints were aching, I just figured that out.

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Diane: So you got off the trail and you were sick and it turns out you had confronted a tick and you got Lyme disease.

Rita: I picked four or five of them off me while I was in New York and New Jersey. And those are the ones that I saw.

Diane: What was it like for you to have Lyme disease?

Rita: It destroyed my life. I had six and a half months with a picc line in. And that was my education in how totally ineffective our healthcare system can be. I was on medication for another condition in 2000 and in January of 2016, I learned on the Internet that the drug for condition A was an immune suppressant. So I instantly knew I couldn't get rid of the line. I was on the antibiotics. I'd be on antibiotics, I'd do pretty well for a while, I mean, I had the picc line taken out and 17 days later I ran a five K. And then I'd relapse. The antibiotics were for the Lyme. The other thing was for a thing called trigeminal neuralgia.

Diane: So you went through hell in your sixties.

Rita: I went through hell, and one of the blessings that I had done all these hard things in the past because even though exercise was certainly a stress reduction and a coping skill and an ego gratifying ability, what I kept out of it was the ability to be determined over a long period of time.

Diane: So you didn't give up on yourself?

Rita: Nope.

Diane: Or that image, maybe of being healthy again?

Rita: Nope, absolutely. Because if I hadn't kept that image of the possibility to be, and one of the things with the trigeminal neuralgia, the party line among docs was you'll never get rid of it.

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Diane: Is that just pain, constant pain?

Rita: Not constant, but agony.

Diane: And is it in your face? Mostly?

Rita: Yeah. Veer to agony in a nanosecond, but I refused to buy that. It's like there is a way out of this. I know. Now. I'm not a hundred percent of the way there yet. But I'm getting there.

Diane: But that's like 20, 15 years at least.

Rita: Had that from the time I was in my late thirties.

Diane: Are you Lyme disease free though?

Rita: I consider myself Lyme disease free. Again, the party line, you've got the organism in your body, you'll never get rid of it. So I say to myself, does that benefit me to believe that? No. How about, I can choose to believe I can get rid of the organism. Now, can I prove it? No, but they can't prove.

Diane: Right. And you feel better.

Rita: And it's not restricting me anymore. I really, I had a metabolic meltdown; again, thank you to the medical structures in this country. What I call a metabolic meltdown in 2000 and October of 2009, I was on thyroid, and I went to get my prescription refilled and I was stunned when the pharmacist said, I can't give it to you. Why not? She said I can't get it. Oh, why not? I don't know. So I was on Armour thyroid, which is made from pig, medical pig thyroid and it's a broader replacement than Synthroid or other T-4 only products. So they put me back a generic Synthroid and by early December I was having marked hypothyroid symptoms, but I didn't recognize what they were because I was taking my thyroid every day.

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Diane: Right, so you never made a connection?

Rita: Nope. Never put the pieces together. So then on January 1st, I went down to Old Orchard Beach to do the Lobster Dip. I did the Lobster Dip, had a good time, had my lobster stew, and then went to work my three to 11 shift that afternoon. And I worked New Year's Day like three or four days later, and then one day I got up and I had just totally crashed. I couldn't sit up. I had to lie down, cause I felt like I was going to faint. I couldn't wash my dishes without leaning on the sink. I was a mess. It took a while to figure out, but what it did was it blew my adrenals.

Diane: All because of the change in the medication?

Rita: Yep. Yep. And then, I was prescribed in the spring of 2010, I was prescribed a DHEA replacement and I took it faithfully until April of 2016. I had so little DHEA on board they couldn't even measure it.

Diane: it sounds like you already were interested in this holistic approach, but it sounds like maybe at this point you really dove into it.

Rita: I had a library card and a lot of time to read. And so I started reading a lot of books.

Diane: So how do you clean things up for yourself?

Rita: I eat non-GMO organic and the products that I use are organic.

Diane: So you are very careful about what you put in your mouth? What you put in your body? Absolutely. Does that hinder you in terms of going out to eat, being with friends, stuff like that? It does. So, how do you handle that? I've become a picky eater. And you feel healthier?

Rita: Yeah. I mean, typically you can get a salad, with oil and vinegar. Now, I don't know of anywhere locally, where I can get an organic salad, which I would love to be able to do, but more and more, I'm buying

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organic and Mark Hyman is talking about regenerative nutrition. Which is what? Which is the soil is healthier after you've harvested your crop than it was before you planted it. So you're actually rebuilding the soil as you're farming. Human physiology is adapted to plants. We all grew up together. We evolved together, plants and humans. And pharmaceuticals and now the food are all manmade, chemical stuff. Our bodies don't know what to do with it. And so we we've got the most affluent country that ever existed on the planet and we've got the worst healthcare results.

Diane: And a lot of it you believe, and the research is showing is connected to what we put in our bodies.

Rita: Absolutely.

Diane: For yourself, but also because you want to be able to share it with other people, what do you think are some of the most profound changes that you have made in your life since you went through that horrible experience?

Rita: I bought hook line and sinker into the medical model that you go to the doctors, they'll tell you what to do and you'll get well, and then I found out not necessarily so, and then I found out there were things that were related to the medication I was taking for the trigeminal nerve. One of the side effects of that is DVT, deep vein thrombosis. I had one of those within 10 days after I had the PICC line put in. Nobody recognized what it was, why, why it happened.

Diane: So you have no medications that you take.

Rita: I take thyroid replacement that's compounded at Coastal Pharmacy because I don't trust the medical people.

Diane: All right. Well, this is a conversation about aging and we have touched upon things.

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Rita: Don't do it.

Diane: I don't think I have a choice and neither does anybody else.

Rita: However, there's biological aging and chronological aging. Chronological aging can be irrelevant if you take care of the biological aging. I mean, science tells us we have 120 productive years as human beings and we don't get there.

Diane: But you're going to get there. Come hell or high water.

Rita: Off the record I will tell you my intention is to live to 127, maybe somewhere in there, and die in multiple orgasms.

Diane: I wondered why you were going off the record, but I really, really wish would let me use that.

Rita: Oh, why not put it on the record. See, there's another myth that older people don't have. Sexual thoughts, desires, needs, urges, whatever.

Diane: Do you ever feel old?

Rita: Sometimes I look at the face in the mirror, but no, I really don't. I really don't feel old. I am conscious of the insidiousness of the cultural indoctrination about what it's like to be old. And sometimes if I'm feeling tired, my brain would go to well, yeah, it's your age. I refuse to believe that. We have such a distorted image of what one can be at 70, 80, 90.

Diane: So your book *Soaring Seniors*, you're trying to dispel that myth?

Rita: Absolutely. I mean, look at the birthday cards that people give you when you're 50, the ha, ha, ha it's all downhill. We've created an expectation that when you're older, you're going to be debilitated period. When I was really sick, people would say, you know, how are you? I'm terrific. Don't confirm what you don't want.

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Diane: Right. It's so hard for some people though, because when you say I don't feel well, then people are more apt to comfort you and sometimes we need comforting.

Rita: [Absolutely. I have nothing, nothing wrong with being comforted, but let's do it for the right reasons. One of the things that we were on a call last night and they were talking about the virus and how you strengthen in your own immune system. Now I have no concern about that virus. Aren't you worried about it? No, I'm not worried about it because worry itself is stressful. Stress reduces your immune power. Don't go there. If I get it does it do me any good to worry? No. Then I need to take action, do what I need to treat it. Right now what I need to do is take action and do what I need to do to not get it.

Diane: Right. So the piece that you're talking about that is important to get rid of is the worrying, because studies have shown that worrying and anxiety can wreak havoc on your immune system.

Rita: Right? In fact, there's no fun in worrying all the time either.

Diane: Right. What makes it a good day for you?

Rita: God, almost every day is a good day for me. So this morning I got up, I read for a while, cause I love to read, I meditated great meditation this morning. Got dressed, went off to a networking meeting. I got to speak and I love to do that. Then I came back and I went for a run and then I did some email stuff and

Diane: Here we are, here we are. So I got here a little after one to do this interview and you'd put in a full day and think of the people who get up and they have their coffee and they have their breakfast and then they turn on the TV. And they watch the news that makes them worry. And there are a lot of people who might say, Oh, I really ought to go for a walk, but,

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Rita: But, yeah, and this morning's run. I just restarted running after the winter, you know, it's probably a month ago that I went for my first run and it was a run walk this morning. I ran probably total of about 25 minutes. Didn't stop to walk.

Diane: Good for you. Good for you. And you feel great.

Rita: Yeah.

Diane: I said I wanted to come back to this, but this a thing that you started a couple of years ago, it'll be four years now that you have something that you accomplish, you never know, at the beginning of the month, what it might be, but each month you try to do something that what pushes you outside of your comfort zone?

Rita: No, it doesn't have to. I mean, there was an experience with bringing Julia up here to go to aerial yoga together and skip and ski day with Caroline. One month, it was just hopping on the back of the tractor that my brother was driving just for the fun of it.

Diane: So what is it that you want people to take from that? What are you suggesting we do?

Rita: Have fun. I mean, think about we allow kids not so much anymore, but you know, kids used to be allowed to play, and then they had to grow up and stop playing. Adults love to play.

Diane: And you talk about wanting to live to be 127, but do you plan in any way for the eventuality that you might, take that step on the mountain and plummet ?

Rita: That could be a really good way to go, right? Yeah, I do have a plan. I don't think I'm lined up for dementia. But if I do, I'm going to go for a swim in January and take care of myself.

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Diane: Do you think it's important to at least talk to your kids about it in the, in the event of? Absolutely. This is what I want.

Rita: Absolutely. I think we have more control over when and how we die than we've ever been led to believe, so I'm putting it out there. This is what I want and whether I'll get it, I don't know, but.

Diane: You want a party?

Rita: I'd rather have a party before I go, but the plan is afterwards I want everybody to gather in the summertime down on the end of the point, have lobsters and clams and a really good time and talk about what a wonderful woman I was and how much they enjoyed my company. And I want to leave behind these grandkids who are thriving and being of benefit to the planet. I can't imagine what these kids have the potential to do the ones that have reasonable food and education. I mean, these kids are so smart and, you know, yeah. I'm biased about the four that I call grandkids, but I worked part time at Monkey Seas in the summertime and I work with 18, 19, 20 year olds. They're awesome.

Diane: You think it's important for people who are older to hang out with younger people?

Rita: Oh, yeah, that's one of my steps. Don't allow them to age segregate you.

Diane: Wait a minute. One of your steps? We didn't even talk about that. It's in my book, my book. Well, we'll just have to plug the book more. Okay. How many steps have you got? I think it's 22. Twenty-two steps on how not to age. I can't remember. How to soar as a senior. I always ask the people I interview for advice since they've lived so long and you know, they're pearls of wisdom. So maybe that's how I'll end my interview with you. You have written this book, how to be a soaring senior.

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Rita: Stories, steps and strategies for living full out after 50 60, 70 dot.dot.dot.

Diane: Good for the dot, dot, dot dot.

Rita: I'm in the dot dot, dot. Well, I'm almost out of the dot, dot, dot stage chronologically. Biologically I'm youthanating.

Diane: I love the word. You do love words.

Rita: I do love words and I heard one yesterday I wish I said. Goal friends. G O A L friends.

Diane: Goalfriends? Goalfriends So friends that also have goals and you work on your goals. Yeah.

Rita: Whoa, what a concept.

Diane: Okay. So we know your goals are to keep on thriving. You bet. To inspire people to thrive. To thrive. All of these steps that you suggest in your book, not going to go through them all, but if you could pass along some advice to help someone maybe get out of a rut, somebody who thinks chronologically instead of how you think.

Rita: Well, you know, I started the book. Step one was move more because one way we distinguished dead people from alive people is the dead don't move. That's step one, step four is watch what you eat or don't eat. If I was writing the book today, I would put the eating thing first because that's how convinced I am that our food is literally killing us, literally killing us and sapping us of years and years and years of productive, healthy, happy life.

Diane: Well, you have a lot of good advice. Thank you. I'm having a good time. I'm glad you're having a good time. I've learned something. When we first met, I learned things and that word inspirational really speaks to me. Because we can be inspired, but then we just settle into our

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recliners. And. So what. And just stay there. So the fact that you ask yourself what would a woman adventure do or what would a woman adventure do this? Yes. And off you go. I think that is the key. It's that get yourself up and just do it,

Rita: Right. So, like with this climb last weekend. One of the things, well, what's the worst thing that could happen? Well you could fall off the edge of the mountain and die. What's the probability of that? Pretty low. In reality, the probability of dying was higher when I was driving up there. Yeah, and I wasn't even in control, I wasn't driving.

Diane: You were there in the backseat just having a good time. Right. Well you're certainly a soaring senior.

Rita: And I'm having fun.

Diane: You have been listening to the catching health podcast? I'm Diane Atwood. And I've been having a conversation about aging with Rita Losee or is she prefers to say it Low-say. Rita knows what she wants out of life, and isn't afraid to tell you or to do it. She's a woman of action or in her words, inspiration. I hope she has inspired you to get up and take action as well.

Catching Health is sponsored by Avita of Stroudwater a memory care facility, and Stroudwater Lodge, an assisted living community, both in Westbrook, Maine. Find out more about them at northbridgecos.com. The name of Rita's latest book is *Soaring Seniors*. And you'll find her on Facebook at [soaringseniorsunlimited](https://www.facebook.com/soaringseniorsunlimited). You'll find more catching health podcast episodes and information about health and aging at catchinghealth.com. I hope you have a great day.