

# Stand Taller to *Live Longer*

Interview by Lauren Douglass

*Dr. Steven Weiniger, international Posture Expert, White House Delegate, and author of **Stand Taller – Live longer: an Anti-Aging Strategy**, joins me to discuss the less “glamorous” aging woe of poor posture, and gives us some helpful hints on how to stand taller to live longer.*

## **Why is it important to focus on posture?**

As a chiropractor by training and practice, I see a lot of people who complain of acute back pain. It's obvious just by looking at them that many of their problems come from how they treat their bodies. Either they have an occupation where there's a lot of hunching over, or they're in a place that causes occupational stress, which results in back pain. One of the things that has helped people manage their own pain is to make them aware of their posture, and then to teach them ways to straighten it.

## **How does standing taller improve your health, not just in relation to pain relief?**

From a mechanical point of view, standing taller means the muscles don't have to work as hard and don't put as much stress on a joint. If you're hunched over, it takes some work to keep from falling forward. You may not think about it because you've gotten used to doing it, but you're doing that work every minute that you're standing. Over time, your muscles become overly tight and create joint stress, which means that you're at risk of something going out while you're moving around.

## **Does standing taller have an anti-aging effect?**

Think of how people look when they get to be eighty. Are they hunched over, or are they standing tall? We have that instinctive, "I want to be the person who looks tall," desire, because it looks aesthetically better, but there's other reasons for it also. People who stand tall and who can move easily without pain can keep on exercising and reaping the benefits of exercise. On an even more substantial level, if your body is hunched over, you can't take a deep breath. If you keep your body hunched over for several decades, it stops you from being able to breathe. If you're doing something to get

taller and straighter, you'll be a lot more able to take a deep breath, which helps people to age better. Breathing is a good thing.

## **Do you suggest things like yoga or other activities that focus on the breath?**

Absolutely! I actually took a yoga class with my daughter on Monday for our father-daughter date, and we ran into some of her friends. They said to her, "Oh, how cute, you take daddy to yoga class!" and she has to tell them, "No, it was actually my dad that got me into yoga." It's funny because I've been doing yoga since college, and I used to be the only man in the class, but over the past few years I'm not the only one anymore. It's cool, that's the way it should be; more guys should be doing yoga as they get older.

## **For the people who are stuck at desk jobs, how do you suggest they improve their posture?**

One of the best ways we've found to help people improve their posture is to take a picture. Many people think that they just need to stand straight for their posture to be good, but they don't actually know how straight they must stand. I think it's a wonderful idea to take a picture once a year as a benchmark to see what your posture looks like. If I took a picture of you while you were relaxed, and then I told you to stand with your best posture and I took another picture, you'd be able to see how far out of line your body was. One you see that, you can incorporate a posture exercise into your daily routine.



## **Tell me about your involvement in the White House conference.**

In 2000, I was a delegate in the conference on aging; it's a once every ten year event that looks at the problems of aging in society. To get on my soapbox, there's a lot of money spent on drugs and surgery and aesthetics. The thing with posture is that there's not a lot of money to be made on the drugs and potions and lotions side of things, even though posture can make a huge difference in how well people age. Educating people about posture and letting them know that your posture effects not only how you look but also how well your body functions, and literally how well you age, is what my soapbox, so to speak, has been. Not having good posture is a big issue, but there's no money to be made in teaching people how to stand taller. That's one of the ironies in my life; this is a problem that I've seen which I'm promoting, but there's not a company out there that wants to make it a part of their agenda.