

## moving for wellbeing and strength

I used to think I was a sloth, but when I checked that fount of all knowledge, Wikipedia, I realised this was not true.

Sloths are perennially slow. I move fast at times, when I am motivated to do so. It's just when I am not motivated that I find it difficult to get out of my chair, or bed.

My new form of recreation is paddleboarding and I recently came back from a long session on Ohiwa Harbour. This wasn't all exertion either. The good thing about stand up paddleboards (or SUPs) is that you don't have to stand up all the time.

In fact, their flat surface is just right for lying down and floating underneath the pohutukawa trees hanging over the water's edge, or sitting to quietly scull beside the island where the spoonbills nest. This is my kind of exercise. I have noticed that paddleboarders constantly smile, unlike joggers who exude grim determination.

On my return, after sitting down to a late lunch and an episode of *Coronation Street*, I found it hard to get back on my feet. I never quite manage a nana nap but I can see their attraction. I am a part-time sloth.

Yet I know I need more exercise. Last year, physiotherapist Sam Doogue told me what I should do and it wasn't hard, just boring. He says that getting up and down from my chair 100 times a day will ensure I can stay on my feet until I take my last breath. But it is not much fun, even when listening to music or radio.

Still, I do this a couple of times a week, along with lifting weights to strengthen my arms for paddleboarding. Since Sam told me that I can build new muscle, even at my advanced age, I regularly check my biceps, though sadly I have yet to see much expansion there.



High Intensity Incidental Physical Activity (HIIPA) is the latest rage. This means you do the housework at a speed that brings up a sweat or makes your arms ache. This is counter intuitive to a natural sloth. Like most people, I favour convenience, getting somewhere quickly without breaking a sweat. However I am giving this a go, not just at home but also forgoing lifts and taking stairs two at a time. When my thighs ached after the third flight at Tauranga Hospital, I took this to be a good sign.

My motivation increases markedly when exercise is a social activity, such as walking with friends. Even on sloth inducing days an invitation from a friend can get me off the couch. With winter fast approaching, slothfulness can creep up on me, so it seemed timely to explore what's on offer.

I contacted Angelika Gillen, who recently moved to Whakatane. She co-ordinates Age Concern's falls prevention programme for seniors throughout the Bay. She offered me a chance to try a Steady as You Go class and I quickly assented.

I was most impressed. It was light years from gyms where lycra clad youth fling themselves around to their images in mirrors. Here everyone felt welcome. Disability is no barrier and a member with visual impairment is supported to participate. Even couch potatoes would feel at ease, and yet be gently challenged.

The exercises are designed to improve the strength of legs, buttocks, back and core and to ensure we can walk safely, aware of what our feet are doing. I have often seen people begin to shuffle as they age. Not picking up their feet, they then start to trip. Eye exercises are included so we retain peripheral vision, so important when driving. For only \$3 a week this is a bargain.

Sport Bay of Plenty also caters to older people with special classes. I haven't had a chance to try one, but have arranged a public meeting where both Rachel Garden, the Keep on Your Feet project leader and Age Concern peer leaders can share information on their programme. Sam Doogue has also agreed to come and let us know how to stay upright as we age. He even promised to tell us the minimum we can get away with, and it's less than I had thought.

This will begin at 1pm on Tuesday, June 11 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Domain Road. All



**grey matters**  
by Ruth Gerzon

A fortnightly series for seniors by Ruth Gerzon from Eastern Bay Villages.

are welcome. Meanwhile I challenge readers to try getting out of their chairs 100 times a day and to do their daily chores in a way that gets the house clean and blood pumping. This will not only improve your home but also your mental and physical health, as it will give you a doubly virtuous glow.

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