

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

BY BRITNEY PORTER

Start Strong, Finish Strong

Physicians Kenneth and Tyler Coopers' new book is a prescription to slow down, stop, and even reverse the aging process

With a 40-year span between them, Dr. Kenneth Cooper and his son, Dr. Tyler Cooper, prescribe healthy habits to slow down, stop, and reverse aging. *Start Strong, Finish Strong: Prescriptions for a Lifetime of Great Health* shows readers how to 1) add three years to your life, 2) prevent age-related mental decline by 10 percent annually, 3) live without a disability for seven extra years, 4) reduce the risk of dying from coronary disease by 33 percent, and 5) reduce the risk of dying from cancer by 24 percent.

"Tyler just turned 37 and I'll be 77 on March 4," said Ken. "We're both approaching different extremes of age, and that's why we wrote the book."

Known as the "father of aerobics," Ken is the founder of Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas and McKinney. He is a testament to the benefits of lifelong fitness, exercising regularly for 47 years and running marathons and half-marathons totaling 38,000 miles.

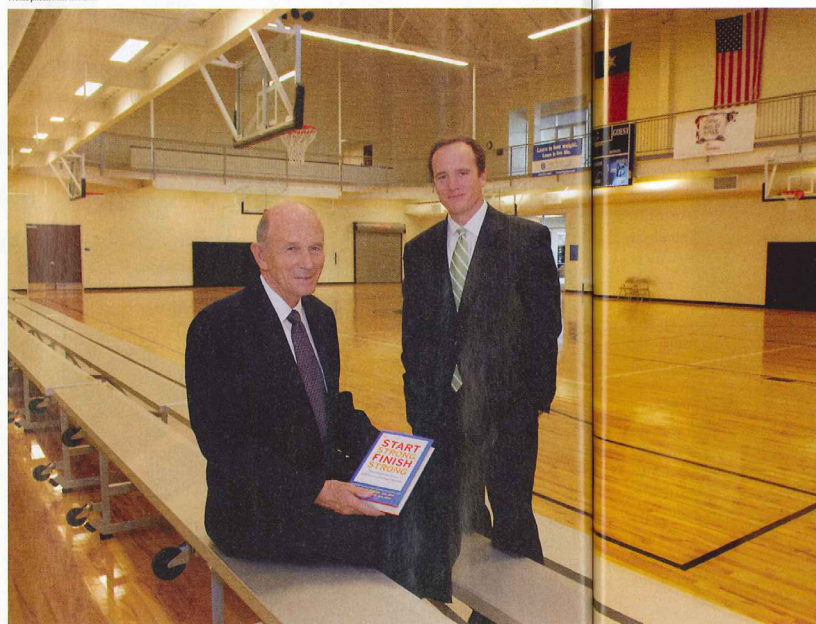
Stamped on the back of Baked Lay's packages, Ken is quoted as saying: "Fitness is a journey, not a destination. It must be continued for the rest of your life." About five years ago, Ken worked with the Plano-based Frito-Lay company to eliminate trans fats from its snack line, creating an international wave that other food companies have followed.

Tyler followed in his dad's footsteps becoming a physician at Cooper Clinic in 2006. He splits his time between his patients and business development for Cooper Aerobics Center. Tyler founded Cooper Benefits and Cooper Ventures, which provide benefits advice and wellness programs to corporations. He said, "My main purpose in medicine is to improve people's lives. That's what we try to do in the book, talk about realistic ways to improve the quantity and quality of your life."

What's your hot button?

So how do you will a stubborn body or work-up a stubborn will? *Start Strong, Finish Strong* lists 13 motivational hot buttons. Among them are *The Feel-Good Hot Button* (exercise makes you feel good); *The Competitive Hot Button* (competition drives you to exercise); *The Loner Hot Button* (you prefer solitary workouts

Profile photo/Mike Newman



Co-authors Kenneth and Tyler Cooper in the gym of the Cooper Aerobic Center at Craig Ranch.

to be alone with your thoughts; *The Sociability Hot Button* (you exercise to meet people); *The Good-Looks Hot Button* (exercise makes you look attractive and youthful); *The Health-Crisis Hot*

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Button (a health scare, like a heart attack, may motivate you to exercise); and *The Numbers-Game Hot Button* (understanding the meaning of your numbers and measurements may motivate you to improve them).

Ken exercises to control stress. "I work 50 or 60 hours a week or more," he said. "I've got 700 employees, 30 physicians, and two major divisions. I've got tremendous demands on my time, but as Hans Selye once said, 'Stress is the spice of life.' What would life be like if there were 'no runs, no hits, and no errors?'"

Ken exercises in the evening to "burn up the stress for the day" and to control his weight. "When my heart rate goes up for a couple of hours, I have stoked the furnace to burn more calories," he said.

Tyler added, "The main things you can do for your health are the things you have control over – your diet and your exercise. It takes 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise three times a week, and 80 percent of the time eating healthy. It's a balance, but you have to enjoy your life along the way."

What is Tyler's motivational hot button? "The Feel-Good button," he said. "I run every day after work to let my mind relax. I'm an outdoors person, so the chance to get out and run four or five miles is a complete stress reliever."

"It's not that I'm just dying to do it every day," Tyler admitted. "Certainly there are days when I don't feel like it, but I know I'll feel better when I finish."

To finish strong, according to the book, your exercise routine should evolve as you age. So, if you're younger than 40, aerobics should compose 80 percent of your workout time versus strength training at just 20 percent. If you're in your 40s, you should do 70 percent aerobics and 30 percent strength training. In your 50s? Do 60 percent

aerobics and 40 percent strength training. And if you're over 60, split your workout time into 55 percent aerobics and 45 percent strength training.

Ken suggested knowing your Body Mass Index (BMI), which is your weight in pounds multiplied by 703, divided by your height in inches squared. So, someone who is 5'5" (65") and weighs 130 pounds would calculate 130 divided by (65 X 65) = 21.6.

"BMI should be between 18.5 - 25. It must be less than 25 to be considered healthy, whereas a BMI of 25 - 29.9 is considered overweight, and a BMI over 30 is obese," Ken said, and added that BMI is not as accurate as percent body fat measured by skin fold measurements or underwater weighing, which is done at Cooper Clinic.

Ken, at just 14 percent body fat, said that a healthy man should have 15 - 19 percent body fat, and a female, 18 - 22 percent. But "you can be highly muscular and have a very high BMI, and in reality be very lean. Chad Hennings, when he was playing for the Cowboys, weighed approximately 300 pounds and was 6'6", but his BMI was over 30. His percent body fat was 10."

Besides proper diet and exercise, *Start Strong, Finish Strong* covers proper supplementation. "Studies indicate that if people pass 65 took even a single vitamin daily, it could reduce Medicare cost \$1.5 billion dollars over a five-year period," said Ken.

Supplements are not replacements for diets but can "fill gaps" in your diet. An entire chapter charts out vitamins and their recommended daily dosages. Did you know that vitamin D deficiency may increase the risk for cancer? "The deficiency of vitamin D may be related to cancer of the prostate, colon, breasts, and certainly osteoporosis," said Ken. "We've found that 51 percent of our patients are vitamin D deficient."

Like father, like son

After completing his undergraduate and medical degrees at the University of Oklahoma, Ken pursued his Master's in Public Health (MPH) from Harvard University School of Public Health, which is where Tyler received his MPH.

From 1964 - 1966, Ken worked with NASA to create an exercise program to prepare astronauts for space. He developed the 12-minute and 1.5-mile fitness tests and the Aerobics Point System, all used today by military organizations, athletes, law enforcement agencies, and schools.

For years, Ken would boast that he hadn't missed a day of work from being sick since 1956. However, on December 29, 2004, he braved a snow skiing accident in Beaver Creek, Colorado, and fractured his tibia plateau in the right knee. Surrendering to crutches for nine weeks, Ken began to sink into postoperative depression.

However, he began to see his patients' problems in a different light. "I could literally feel their fears, their anxieties, their depressions, and their frustrated questions" he writes in *Start Strong, Finish Strong*, and told *Plano Profile*, "I think all physicians need to become patients to be better physicians."

Tyler also had a life-changing experience in Colorado. After graduating from Baylor University, Tyler moved to Vail to figure out what he wanted to do with his life. “There had been no ‘Mister’ Cooper going back three generations in my ancestral line – all had been ‘Doctor,’” he said, but Tyler wasn’t set on becoming a physician. “I went to Baylor on a track scholarship. Running was my goal in life.”

In Colorado, Tyler taught blind people how to ski. One day as he was closing down a ski gondola, Tyler broke his finger. Sitting in the doctor’s office, he noticed several crayon drawings from kids thanking the doctor. “I was sitting there and thought, ‘Maybe I do want to be a doctor. I want to do something with my life that will let me give tangibly to people ... to make their lives better.’”

Will Tyler stay in medicine as long as his dad? “I can’t see *not* being here. At some point, I’d love to be involved in public policy, improving people’s lives on a mass scale. One thing my dad is doing with the Texas Youth Evaluation project, is getting PE back into Texas schools.”

Last fall, the Texas Education Agency announced The Cooper Institute’s FITNESSGRAM® as the statewide physical fitness assessment tool for students in third through twelfth grades. Annual testing is a new requirement in Senate Bill 530, which also enhanced physical PE activity for kindergartners through fifth-graders.

Ken and Tyler agreed that improving healthcare in this country will take one person at a time. “The key to improving healthcare is ultimately personal responsibility,” said Tyler.

“We have an explosion of obesity and inactivity in our country, along with an escalation in the cost of healthcare, and it’s simply out of control,” Ken added. “We think, My health isn’t my responsibility; it’s the government’s responsibility; it’s insurance’s responsibility; or it’s my physician’s responsibility. Until that attitude changes, we’ll never control the cost of healthcare in America.”

For more information on Dr. Kenneth Cooper or Dr. Tyler Cooper, or the Cooper Clinic and Aerobics Center, visit www.cooperaerobics.com.