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What's Your Five Year Plan?

By Joan Maiden

"What's your five year plan," the doctor asked Helen. "What do you mean, my five year plan, I'm 80." "Everyone needs a five year plan. I think you need to start strength training." "WHAT! I'm 80!"

That's how I came to train Helen. At 80, Helen was diabetic, overweight and had heart disease. She had accepted that frailty, disease and disability were a natural part of growing older and was well on her way to spending her last years bedridden. But Helen had a can-do attitude and was willing to give strength training a try.

Helen's goal was to regain her independence. She had quit going places by herself because if there were stairs she couldn't manage them. Helen was tired of sitting on the sidelines because of the limitation of her body.

When Helen and her husband traveled, if there were stairs on a tour, she would sit on a bench and wait for the others and bypass the cathedral or whatever site was on the agenda. As Helen became stronger, she started losing her fear and regaining her independence.

Even after a broken hip that would have sidelined most 80-year-olds, Helen was able to recover and keep going, to the amazement of her doctors. She even traveled to the south of France with me and some friends. There was no sitting on the sidelines for Helen on this trip! She kept right



up with the rest of us even though we were all a good 30 years younger.

At 85, the doctor once again asked, "Helen, what's your five year plan?" Everyone needs a five year plan. With a plan and a goal, you can regain and maintain your independence and live an active life at any age. What's yours--to remain independent and active at 80 and beyond or to sit on the sidelines?

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