

“You are only as old as you think you are..” – Mala Mansukhani (Founder of Grow Younger, Fashion Designer, and Author)

1. You are an inspiration for so many women, please tell us about yourself?

By profession I am a fashion designer now turned into an author, I also run a social enterprise called “Grow Younger”. My early life has been quite ordinary with being a working woman and also simultaneously looking after my home, though this was not quite common back then. As they say, charity begins at home; it was the experience of looking after my mother that motivated me to get out of my comfort zone and to start working for the elderly. That was where the idea and concept of fitness programs for men/women who are 50+ years old were born.

2. Please tell us about your family and how do they feel about the work that you are doing?

At 60+ now, I am a proud mother of 3 and a grandmother of 5 kids. I believe in strong family bonding and that is why I have always been very close to my mother, I have tried to embed the same family values in my children. My family has always supported me in whatever endeavors I have taken up.

3. At 60+ you exude so much energy, that in itself is so inspiring;

Please take us through your journey from a fashion designer to author and founder of “Grow younger”?

I started my entrepreneurial journey as a fashion designer at the age of 23, I successfully ran my business until I had my 3rd child. After my 3rd daughter was born I took a break from work to spend more time with my family. A few years later I restarted my boutique, it ran successfully until I chose to refocus my energies on health and fitness for women over 50 years of age. That is how “Grow Younger” was born. Grow Younger aspires to create health and happiness for people in their second innings.

4. That is interesting, but what motivated you to start “Grow Younger”?

My mother, and her ailments that hit me hard. I was spending maximum of time caring for my elderly mother who had many health issues through her advancing years. I realized how one's life changes after a certain age. So many people in today's fast-paced world don't seem to have time to care for their aging parents or grandparents.

Fitness has worked miraculously for me and felt it was an area that is often overlooked for our seniors.

I reached out to them, connected with people, and after a lot of perseverance, I nurtured strong bonds. I would like to think that aside from the physical health benefits, it supports thinking skills, boosts their mood, the social and community aspect helps them make a wider support network of friends, and re-ignites hope (purpose?) s in several mothers

and grandmothers who otherwise would be confined to their homes and the daily grind of life.

Right up till the onset of the Covid pandemic our “Grow Younger” community had grown considerably. We were running over five groups of batches, with around 15 women in each group session. These sessions cover a wide range of activities such as storytelling, dance, meditation, yoga, and Zumba, designed to stimulate both the body and the mind.

The ongoing pandemic has changed our lives drastically and I see it as the senior citizens who are most affected, especially as they are unable to step out of their homes. They cannot go to the gyms as most gyms would restrict their entry, also it may not be safe for them to visit crowded or enclosed places. However, it doesn't mean they can't work out, or they shouldn't stay fit. I have started special boot camps for my “Grow Younger” 50+ community. After all, to fight the virus we all need to stay fit!

5. What tips you would like to share with other women to take the first step to change their life?

Health is wealth, it may sound like a cliché, but that's the truth. Women often compromise on their health while putting everything else before. I would say if the woman of the house is healthy both physically and mentally then the house will be a haven with peace, health, and happiness.

There was a time in my life when I was battling depression; it was my workout and fitness training that proved to be a savior. So, my first advice to all the women who think it's too late to start a new chapter would be to focus on their health. I urge you to focus on your health and fitness, it's never too late to start.

The second advice is “you are only as old as you think you

are". Age should not limit you from pursuing your passion. I walked the ramp at the age of 47. Climbed the highest mountains at the age of 58, and I continue to run marathons, sometimes being the oldest of all the runners.

6. What is the most valuable thing you learned from this experience?

Time and health are very precious; do not let this go waste. I have constantly worked on myself, evolved every single day to be a better version of myself. So make the most of your time and constantly work to improve yourself.

7. What does success mean to you, how would you define it?

Ultimate success to me is "Peace". Money can buy you anything but not peace. Peace is a state of mind.

8. Do you think in 2021 India will see an increase or decrease in the women workforce?

I think more women will join the workforce. 2020 has changed the dynamics. 2021 will see more empowered women.

9. What should women do to maintain their mental health at their workplace?

I can't emphasize enough the importance of health; physical health and mental health go hand in hand. I urge all the working women to take regular breaks from their desks. They can get up every 40 minutes and stroll around the office/home, drink water, and wash their face. Stretching and deep breathing help immensely.

10. One piece of advice you would like to give women of all age groups?

Make your health a priority, atop one. Work-out for at least 30 minutes a day. Follow your passion, if you love dancing, dance as a workout, or join yoga/Zumba class.

For some time, every day, take a break from your daily distractions, keep your phone away, and indulge in something creative. Sing, learn to play new musical instruments, write, join a new exercise class or take up yoga for a half-hour every day

That “Me” time can energize you for the rest of your day.