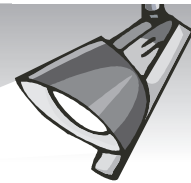




FEATURED ADVERTISER



H. Robert Silverstein, M.D.

by Karen M. Rider, M.A.

"Everything I share in this interview is an 'invitation for consideration' by the reader. It's not dogma – no matter how dogmatic I sound. People are free to choose how all of this fits for them." So began my interview with H. Robert Silverstein, MD, a leading cardiologist and preventive medicine specialist in Hartford. But, there is much more to Dr. Silverstein: Allow me to introduce you

to Dr. Silverstein the philosopher, adviser, and humorist.

Almost immediately, I was struck by the doctor's quick wit and sharp mind. I hardly expected Dr. Silverstein to admit that he did not always think of himself as smart.

"As a child, I had no idea I had a brain worth anything. My highest marks were Cs and Ds," he said with a smirk that I could sense, even though we were talking by phone for the interview.

"That changed in third grade," Dr. Silverstein continued, "when my teacher took me aside and firmly told me that I was smart and could get better grades. Thereafter, I became a straight A student." Still, the Ohio native was shocked to find out there were others in the world "twice as" smart as he was.

"In seventh grade, I met two kids who were incredibly bright, one of which was, and still is, my best friend, J.T. Guy, M.D. After that, I struggled psychologically a bit at no longer being the top student, but was recognized as a good teacher." His innate skills and even-handed nature earned him the privilege of teaching high school math when the teacher was out!

Dr. Silverstein went on to earn his medical degree (M.D.) with honors from the Ohio State University, a prestigious Cardiology fellowship at Emory University's Grady Memorial Hospital, and Board Certification in Internal Medicine and Cardiology. He also is a Fellow of the American Colleges of Preventive Medicine and Cardiology.

Not bad for a kid from the small mid-western town of Bellefontaine who never excelled at sports, unless you count the year, in hi youth, when he won the county ping-pong championship title. He did love playing basketball and was "heartbroken when cut from the team in his Junior year despite having an excellent hook shot."

Dr. Silverstein reminisced about the way things were for a young man growing up 'back in the day'. "I lettered in football but only because I stuck it out, as I spent most of my time on the bench. It was small-town America . . . young men were [expected] to be athletic heroes."

He was the first in his family to graduate college. His father was a high school dropout but a shrewd businessman. His mother also had a brilliant mind. "She lived to age 96 even after having open heart surgery and neck (carotid artery) surgery. She had a remarkable way of communicating with people - a harmony and warmth that comes from within. She was funny and compassionate."

As we conversed about more topics than I could possibly have written about in this article, it was evident to me that he inherited these rare and phenomenal traits from his mother – no doubt, adding to his skill as a physician.

Oddly, medicine was not Dr. Silverstein's first choice for a career. "I had an aptitude for science. In college, I was like an ace from outer space at chemistry."

Dr. Silverstein went on to share a simple, but life-changing, conversation he had with his father. "One day, I told my Dad I wanted to be a physicist. He said, 'Son, do you want to work for yourself or someone else?' That was the end of physics and the start of medicine."

Early in his medical training, Dr. Silverstein pursued psychiatry but eventually switched to Cardiology. He explained, "When I observed the university cardiologists using mind-capturing technology, even back then, I became so intrigued. I displayed a natural aptitude for understanding the physiology of the heart - its sounds and waves form, that I was 'home.' At Emory University, I studied under master clinician and cardiologist, J. Willis Hurst."

So, what does the busy doctor do when he is not caring for patients? One of Dr. Silverstein's past-times is fixing-up stately old houses. However, he learned the hard way about getting in over his head. "Back in the 70's I bought an 11,000 square foot house on six acres. I dumped 100K into it – a lot of money back then – and it nearly broke me. I have an aesthetic sense for design but I am not Mr. Fix It. After three years, I got back what I put in; I broke even when that property sold. Over the years I've lived in homes of amazing beauty in and around Hartford County."

Dr. Silverstein speaks fondly of his sons and his grandchildren. "My two grown sons are so terrific; I can only say that I aspire to be either one of them when I grow up."

Ever modest, when asked to name his greatest achievement, he said with a chuckle, "Putting up with the eternal derisions of J.T. Guy, who is constantly making fun of me."

All joking aside, there are two short pieces of writing that concisely reveal his wellness philosophy and which he considers to be his "stellar moments" (see side bars). "One of the writings, titled IF, describes what is necessary to develop disease, but also implies how to avoid all diseases. The other is VIRTUALLY, which illustrates how virtually all the diseases we know have specific causes that are related to what we do."

Dr. Silverstein's philosophies of life and of medicine, as well as his approach to patient care, are grounded in a "spiritualness" rarely noted in physicians. (Dr. Silverstein is not keen on the term spirituality, though many of his philosophies reflect the fact that he is widely read in comparative religion and spirituality. He does believe that "people are body, mind, and 'essence' – something extra-human.") Still, he presents all the ideas, philosophies, and practices in a very down-to-earth manner.

"Patients might tell you that I'm either cold or so concerned. I'm *always* concerned. Some [patients] sense the soul-connection. Really, I'm a simple, plain guy. A caring, agape, concern for others is a part of my nature."

"I want to, and can, meet people at their level. My ethnic patients find me straightforward. My 'spiritual' connection shows my humanity. This comes from my mother. Even though [her] charm is not in my voice, it is in my heart and in my concern for patients." (This writer surely agrees!)

What more could anyone want from their physician, friend, adviser, or colleague?

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Karen M. Rider

Writing with
clarity, integrity and creativity.

IF

Most diseases occur if, and only if, the person with a genetic tendency does what is necessary to express that genetic tendency. While people have the "tendency" to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, etc., these diseases occur if, and only if, susceptible people engage in the behaviors that cause the expression of that genetic tendency/disease. In that sense, all diseases are "genetic" and merely represent the interaction of that person's genetic tendency coming in contact with a specific, disease generating behavior - very much as a lighted match plus gasoline creates fire.

VIRTUALLY

The Natural Human Design implies that we are designed or have evolved to be genetically strong and well, not ill. Mistakes of living (errors) break down our natural strengths. If anything goes wrong with you, look in the mirror and ask, "What am I doing to make this happen?" You are in charge. You have choices. Whatever you choose, accept your choice, experience the consequences, learn from it; and change - or don't.

Virtually all the diseases that we know, all the high blood pressure, all the high cholesterol, diabetes, gallstones, cancers of the colon-prostate-breast, all the body malfunctions have direct causes.

There are some diseases with unknown causes. Each person is more resistant to certain diseases when compared to others. In this sense, each person has particular genetic strengths and weaknesses.

When people do certain things they should not (errors), these behaviors plus one's genetic weaknesses result in abnormalities or diseases. If they never "did" certain things, these weaknesses would never generate the diseases listed above plus many more.

- 1. What they breathe.** Breathe clean air. Do not smoke.
- 2. What they drink.** Drink clean water and weak herbal teas. Save room for wine or high quality beer: not more than 4 a week.
- 3. What they eat.** Eat fresh fruits and veggies, whole and unprocessed grains and beans, organic everything, fiber everything. Our human biology – our human design – from digestive organs to our teeth and the fact that we don't have claws or lap our water – requires primarily GVB (grains, vegetables, beans) fresh, whole and unprocessed organic fiber. Follow this 90+% of the time. Treat yourself to anything you like once in a while (the other 5-10%).
- 4. What they think.** Keep a positive, serving, and persevering attitude. Be as spiritual as you want to be but don't get lost in wishing, wanting, and hoping. Things are what they are. Be realistic, have hope, but be brave to deal with the issues at hand. Acceptance of this and staying in reality minimizes stress, but it will not minimize problems. For that, think creatively and actively problem solve.
- 5. What they do for movement/exercise.** Our bodies are designed to move. Walk 5 days per week, 3-5 miles a day. Twice per week do strength training. Stretching helps.