

Alacia's Always On The Go!

Retirement is a time to take it easy and slow down, right? Not so, says Alacia...

Stretching my arms and feeling my muscles relax, I let out a deep breath and smile. My grin is returned by my students, who have clearly enjoyed the workout session as much as I have.

At 84, I never imagined I'd be teaching keep-fit, but it just goes to show where life can take you.

I was brought up during the war, and one thing my parents taught me was to be

resourceful. With food on ration, my father grew vegetables in the garden, and in the school holidays we used to go blackberry picking. My mother always made sure we had a balanced diet, so I had a really good start in life.

However, in 2000, when I retired from my council job aged 69, I barely recognised myself: I was out of shape and looked 20 years older than I should. Years of raising children, working and having

very little time to exercise had taken their toll.

Rather than despair, I decided to make some changes. I was entering a new chapter of my life where I could really focus on myself.

Lots of people see retirement as their time to sit back – but this is the worst thing you can do. You need to keep your body in good condition to live the best life that you can.

With my husband Arnold (now 84) still working as a

painter and decorator, I decided to join a local gym in Ashington. It was fantastic! Not only did I improve my health, I increased my social circle dramatically and found a renewed sense of purpose.

I also met a woman – Anne Robinson – who worked for Age Concern (now Age UK). She told me about a scheme called Age Well, which teaches older people about the importance of diet and exercise.

Anne asked me if I'd like to be involved – and offered me the chance to train as a fitness instructor, funded by Age Concern. I was thrilled.

The course was fantastic: we learned to teach exercise to different groups from children to adults and even those who are physically impaired or bed-bound.

There were so many different and inventive methods of helping people to keep moving – using everything from tea-towels to paper plates!

Over the years, I've taught



Alacia remains dedicated to fitness

Still going strong!



I was entering a new chapter in my life where I could really focus on myself



Dance stars!

classes arranged by Age Concern at the YMCA in Blythe, in the Church Hall in Cramlington and even at a rehabilitation centre at Ashington Hospital. I've met so many inspirational people – including a woman who, despite being paralysed, was able to exercise using her arms and really benefited from the movement.

Fifteen years later and I am still passionate about health and fitness. Arnold and I are both active.

Last year my daughter Val told me about the beautiful retirement village of Sandyford Park, run by Anchor, near to where she lives in Newcastle upon Tyne. She suggested we moved there so that we could be closer to her and our beloved granddaughter, Julie.

We've never regretted the move. Rather than being a place where people simply come to grow old, the community here is vibrant and full of activity. One of the things that makes it so

fantastic is the manager, Glynis. She is so enthusiastic and full of energy.

When she found out about my background in exercise, she asked me to run a class for the residents. Of course, I said yes.

As well as being enthusiastic about fitness, Arnold and I have always been keen dancers and have learned both ballroom and modern sequence.

It was this love of dance that led to our being invited to participate in the Anchor Strictly Dancing Competition last year. We were thrilled – taking part included a trip to London, and the chance to be judged by Angela Rippon.

The competition consisted of two sections – one for those with dementia and one for residents. Watching those with dementia take part was

beautiful – you could see their enjoyment and the trust they had in their carers.

There were some great dancers in the residents' section; most notably a couple who performed an energetic jive. Arnold and I did a rumba to *Rebel Heart*, but didn't expect to win.

Then our names were called. We'd won first place!

People said that they couldn't believe we were both in our 80s and I put that down to our active lifestyle.

I feel that I've been extremely lucky in life. I've learned to enjoy and make the most of every day – and I can't wait to see what adventures are yet to come!

FIT AT ANY AGE



DIANA MORAN

Diana Moran (75), aka the Green Goddess, is a fitness enthusiast and cancer survivor. She continues to promote exercise and released her last DVD in 2010.



MR MOTIVATOR

Derrick Evans (Mr Motivator) found fame in the 1990s with his enthusiastic attitude and unique outfits. Now 62, he is just as passionate about exercise.



JANE FONDA

Having created her first exercise video in 1982, 77-year-old Jane Fonda continues to inspire. Her latest exercise DVD was released in 2012.