



Boomers: For some, “physical therapy” is a post-event necessity. It follows hip replacements, torn rotator cuffs, and anything immediately following the announcement, “I thought I could still do it!”, a phrase they utter with a mix of defiance and deep, bone-weary regret. Their PT clinic smells faintly of antiseptic and Werther’s Originals, and they know their therapist by first name, college attended, and that they “used to be a gymnast.”

Therapy involves foam blocks, resistance bands, and a printed diagram of “gentle stretches” taped to the fridge with a souvenir magnet from Myrtle Beach. Every exercise is punctuated with a story about “the good old days” when they could bowl three games in a row without an ice pack, or when their tennis elbow was just called “tennis.” A successful session means regaining enough mobility to garden, golf, or finally get the suitcase down from the top shelf without involving

a neighbor, though usually followed by a celebratory nap.

Some Boomers treat PT like a social club, comparing scar sizes, heating pads, and swapping tips on the best way to sneak Advil into Thursday’s bridge game. There’s a quiet sympathy in their shared ailments, a silent acknowledgement of bodies that, if they aren’t quite what they used to be, seem to now have their own ideas. They arrive fifteen minutes early “to warm up” and stay thirty minutes after to chat about the Medicare paperwork. Their stretches are slow, deliberate, and occasionally interrupted by an impromptu rant about today’s music lacking “real instruments.”

The Rest of Y’all: For everyone else, “physical therapy” often starts before the injury is over. It’s part training, part Instagram content, part dubious life

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choices. If a Boomer injures their shoulder cleaning gutters, a Millennial or Gen Z-er does it attempting a “reverse Superman” in an aerial yoga class after seeing it on TikTok. That moment, suspended mid-air, is followed by a silent, immediate regret that will live on their Instagram feed forever.

Your “therapist” is just as likely to be a certified sports medicine specialist as a climbing buddy named “Chaz” who swears foam rolling “opens up the fascia, bro.” PT gear includes kettlebells, climbing harnesses, skate shoes with a “broken in” aesthetic, and a GoPro 360 to make sure the recovery process gets proper coverage. Appointments are scheduled between indoor bouldering sessions, experimental HIIT workouts involving battle ropes and unicycles, and 5Ks in which you wear a cardboard costume shaped like a giant avocado.

Instead of comparing scars, the younger crowd compares apps: Strava, Fitbod, Whoop. Their therapy sessions double as content creation: “Day 37 of shoulder rehab; smash that like button if you think I’ll be back doing parkour next week.” There’s a certain empathy for a generation that feels the need to perform their recovery, as if the pain isn’t real unless it’s got a viral soundtrack. Their warm-up is a cold plunge “to build resilience,” followed by a protein shake so thick it requires a straw engineered by NASA.

Life in the Wild: At the community fitness center, a Boomer is dutifully walking heel-to-toe down a balance beam (two inches off the floor), while a Y’aller is hanging from the pull-up bar upside-down “for core activation.” A Boomer mentions they’re “doing rehab” for their knee; the Y’aller nods and says they are too,

except theirs involves downhill mountain biking on weekends “to keep it loose.”

During the MPCA Health Fair (to be announced), Boomers will line up for complimentary blood pressure checks while the younger set head straight to the rock wall set up in the parking lot, two of them limping from that “friendly” pickleball tournament. At the pool, a Boomer will quietly do water aerobics with foam noodles, while a twenty-something will launch into a gainer off the pool deck, and explain it’s part of his or her “injury prevention routine.”

Somewhere in the clubhouse, Boomers will attend a seminar titled “Stretching for Longevity,” while Y’allers will sneak into the same room afterward to try burpees on the folding tables. The divide is less about age and more about philosophy: Boomers treat therapy as recovery; everyone else treats it as performance art.

Your Survival Play: If a Boomer tells you they’re in physical therapy, nod with empathy and ask about their progress. If a Y’aller says the same, ask what extreme sport they picked up this time. In either case, express admiration; it builds goodwill and distracts from the fact that you secretly think they’re both doing it wrong.

For intergenerational harmony, suggest a “joint session” involving the safest common ground: a neighborhood walk followed by light stretching. The Boomers will think they’re mentoring you in balance and posture; you’ll think you’re teaching them mobility drills. Everyone wins, until someone decides to “spice it up” with a cartwheel, and then, it’s ice-packs and we’re back at square one in the waiting room.

- STORY, ART: EDITOR

