

# SELF

## My HealthySELF: How Bar Method Founder Burr Leonard Stays Fit at 64

8.5.11

Dame Helen Mirren made headlines this week when a poll named her 66-year-old body the sexiest on the planet, but we know another 60-something whose fitness philosophy has made countless physiques slim and toned (and maybe a teeny bit sore) -- including her own.

She's **Burr Leonard, 64, the creator of the now-world-famous Bar Method**, a ballet-inspired workout that combines deep toning exercises with short, intense cardio intervals to leave enthusiasts long, lean and strong.

With more than 58 Bar Method studios nationwide, and three DVD sets (including a new set out this year!), Leonard is spreading the addiction -- and, she says, helping fans break out of the mold of hard-to-follow training.



*Burr Leonard in action.*

"The class is structured so that students get very specific instructions about what they need to do, and they're delivered succinctly so the class flows," Leonard says. "Teachers are trained to give dynamic, succinct, supportive instructions and to interact with individual students, but to keep a beautiful flow."

We asked Leonard how she stays fit and balances it all.

### **What's your exercise routine?**

I usually do about four or five Bar Method classes a week as a student. I'm 64 years old, and the more I age, the more I value this -- it helps me stay youthful and strong and toned and flexible, even as my muscles lose strength more quickly than they used to. In my 30s, I'd take three classes a week, but now I really need to take four or five to hold the same strength.

### **What's in your fridge?**

I'm a vegetarian, and I eat dairy, but not fish or meat. I keep rice cakes, eggs, whole wheat bread and tomatoes around, but I have to say, I'm not a cook. I would love to learn to cook, but being so involved with workout classes, especially since so many are between 5 and 7 p.m., the lifestyle doesn't permit me to go home every night and cook something good. So usually I'll order out, and where I live in Sausalito, Calif., we have wonderful, healthy, organic restaurants.

### **What's your most unhealthy habit?**

When I take an early morning class, I will order a grande nonfat chai and drink most of it before the class, and have breakfast afterward. I really think that sweet food, and especially sweet liquids, is probably one of the downfalls of modern civilization, and I would like to change that habit and get away from the grande nonfat chais, but I have one on my desk right now. I'd like to work that down to one or none a day.

### **What's the best happiness advice you know?**

I know it sounds corny and like a plug, but I really think that steady exercise is magic for the human being. Our bodies are designed to be extreme athletes and multitaskers -- we're an active animal. And growing up in civilization, it's removed that athletic element from our lives. Exercise enables to put it back. Without it, our bodies are deprived. They're not functioning the way they're designed to. I really think exercise is a great key to happiness.