

HEALING HABITS 3

1. The removal of waste is one of the secrets to physical health and psychological well-being. Without adequate detoxification the body becomes a cesspit in which all manner of infection and disease is generated. Endotoxicity (the reabsorption of toxic substances back into the blood stream) is probably the greatest threat to our health. Instead of waste being detoxified, firstly in the intestinal tract, then in the liver and eventually removed from the body via faeces and urine, we are increasingly drowning in our own waste products because of bad diet and poor lifestyle. In fact, we have created a state of 'chemical confusion' which means that our primary biological systems are now working against each other rather than in harmony with each other. The chemical messengers that send their very specific and precise instructions to various parts of the body are now either not successfully making the journey, or are attaching themselves to the wrong cells, tissues and organs creating chaos and ill health. The 'ideal' model of physical health is one where food is properly digested and absorbed in the intestinal tract and the nutrients are then distributed throughout the entire physical body to service the body's many needs and functions. The detoxification process is a vital part of this 'ideal' model, which when working effectively, works in tandem with the digestive process, beginning its work in the intestines, then continuing and completing any further processing of waste material in the liver. All physiological processes are affected by digestion, absorption and detoxification; the most profound effects can be seen in the major biological networks (the endocrine (hormonal), immune and nervous systems). These three systems were once thought to be individual and independent of each other having their own unique roles and functions, but it has become clear, particularly over the last 10 years, that this is not the case. In fact, these three systems are subtly linked and are affected by each other's activities and all three are dependent on digestion, absorption and detoxification to achieve optimum function. Therefore, to improve our health we must pay attention not only to the importance of digestion and absorption, but also to the crucial role of detoxification. One way of improving detoxification is by consuming more cruciferous vegetables, such as: Brussels sprouts, cabbage, swede, turnips, cauliflower and broccoli, which are packed with detoxifying properties, anti-tumour nutrients, energising qualities and much more.

2. Having understood the importance of digestion, absorption and detoxification in the model of physical health, the first step to achieving this goal is proper mastication (chewing). Without properly chewing our food, not only do we run the risk of poor digestion and malabsorption, but we also run the risk of creating a catalogue of health problems. Probably the most undermining of these are food allergic reactions. Food allergy is nearly always associated with a leaky gut and where there is an inadequate breakdown of food, the food molecules leak out of the gut and are absorbed into the blood stream. Many health professionals working in the field of nutrition and allergies are now discovering evidence to suggest that all physical ill health has its origins (at least in part) in a leaky gut. And so if the poor breakdown of food causes so many problems it is in our own interest to do as much as we can to prevent it. Proper breakdown of food begins with chewing. We therefore need to eat food slowly, chewing until it is liquefied before swallowing. This enables the digestive enzymes to carry out their part of the process effectively. Having selected the right foods to eat, chewing is the first step to really extracting nutritional benefit from what we eat and preventing ill health.

3. Health is best defined as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Our aim is to achieve a state of health in which we are living to our full potential. In order that we can achieve this we need to give particular attention to the code of ethics we live by, our diet, physical exercise, healthy mental stimulation,

relaxation, positive thinking, developing interests which further our enjoyment and pleasure. Start by doing at least one thing every day that meets your primary needs (physical, mental, social and spiritual). For example: (1) Ensure every day you get your basic nutritional needs met and perform some form of physical exercise (stretching for 5 minutes daily is amazingly therapeutic). (2) Find some time to be still and relax for at least 10 minutes every day; a time in which you can reflect or generate positive thoughts (first thing in the morning is good, and just before bedtime). (3) Social health is not about having an active social life; it is really about the quality and nature of our social interaction; so focus on developing social interactions with more significance and meaning. (4) Spiritual health evolves out of the 'way' we live our lives. Try honouring and living by your own truths. Limit (or better still, remove if you can) the hypocrisy and contradictions that are present in your life.

4. Phytonutrients (nutrients derived from plant sources) really provide the solution to so many of our health problems. Plants are packed with nutritional components which work in harmony with body function. In fact, they are amongst the best biological modifiers (substances which alter our biochemistry) because they improve and maximise body function, unlike foods which are overly processed, laden with sugar, artificial colours and chemical preservatives, which also biologically modify, but do so to our detriment. Some examples of these amazing health enhancing phytonutrients are polyphenols, (the cell wall of plants), carotenoids (the pigmentation in plants), plant sterols (the flavour and odour of plants). All these substances work together to liberate their healing potential in a variety of ways throughout the body. Phytotherapy (the medicinal use of plants) is the branch of naturopathic medicine that has evolved out of the incredible diversity and function of natural substances. Everything from anxiety, asthma, cholesterol imbalance, circulatory problems to diabetes, fatigue, headaches, insomnia, menopause, psoriasis, sciatica, and much more are able to be addressed by nature's abundant pharmacy.

5. Aspirin, ibuprofen and other cortico-steroids and anti-inflammatory drugs can cause ulcers, gut irregularities and there have even been cases of intestinal bleeding, kidney and liver failure. They also destroy other vital tissues in their attempts to reduce inflammation. Given the possible consequences of using cortico-steroids, and anti-inflammatories, why risk damaging vital organs and functions in the name of relieving pain? Especially when there are natural alternatives such as: ginger extract, boswellic acid, and curcuminoids all of which are anti-arthritis, anti-inflammatory agents. Curcuminoids (derived from turmeric) are particularly worthy of mention. They are proving to be as effective as cortico-steroids, but in addition are liver protective, cholesterol reducing, antioxidants, and also relieve pain. Another amazing substance is cortisone (a bioflavonoid), which is also anti-arthritis, cancer reducing, anti-viral and is excellent in addressing food allergies. A number of teas that offer similar benefits include green tea, bilberry and blueberry teas. So, when dealing with inflammation and its associated pain, you could first consider the natural options mentioned above, rather than looking to man-made medication to provide the answers.

This is not a recommendation to renounce allopathic remedies, nor is it denying modern medicine has some value and a role to play, it is simply highlighting the fact that nature has many answers to the questions we continue to ask. And unlike modern medicine, which can cause as many problems as it offers solutions, natural substances are much safer and far less toxic.

6. The gut has a vital role to play in the attainment of optimum health. Closer scientific inspection has helped us to realise that the gut functions in similar ways to the brain. It too has neurotransmitters, receptor sites, neurons, neuropeptides and support cells, which means these two

seemingly separate systems have more in common than meets the eye. In fact, what affects the brain affects the gut and vice-versa. For example: feelings are able (via the biochemical network) to actually register their impact on the gut, which is why so many of us feel stress, fear, loss, anger, etc in what can be called our second brain (the gut). Think of those times when you have felt butterflies in your stomach, or felt that terrible knot connected to anxiety, panic or fear. Conversely, physical upset, or some form of impairment in the gut impacts negatively on the brain, so any activity affecting one of these areas automatically affects the other. All the evidence continues to show that thoughts affect the body's biochemistry and the body's biochemistry affects thoughts, and food is a force that can undermine or enhance both.

7. The concept of synergy is the cornerstone of personal growth, in fact without it growth is at best haphazard and short lived. Synergy is based on the principle that, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". In other words, any one aspect of personal growth may be powerful by itself, but when it is 'locked together' with the other aspects of growth, its potency is made far greater. When the state of balance and harmony (between mind and body) is fragmented in any way then synergy is lost and the potential for "dis-ease" (better known as disease) is born. Disease is treated as our enemy and we nearly always despise it, but this attitude simply feeds our condition. Disease is in fact an important messenger which highlights some conflict and breakdown in communication within the mind and body; it helps us to see something is wrong, something needs to be done. Pain, infection, ill health, mental disturbance, etc, are all activities trying to gain our attention, inviting closer inspection of how we are living our lives. If we achieve harmony of mind and body, physical health and emotional well-being are quite naturally conceived. So, our aim is to re-establish harmony and to value the importance and power of synergy. To do this we need to address the following: 1) The quality and nature of our sleep. 2) Our diet and nutrition. 3) The amount of exercise we take. 4) Drink plenty of water. 5) Practice with consistency personal growth activities such as: mirror work, meditation, still-time, creative visualisation, breath therapy, positive affirmations, etc. 6) Develop meaningful social interaction that is stimulating and pleasurable (life without fun and humour is no life at all!). 7) Pursue a vocation (even if that is voluntary) that gives our life purpose and meaning. This might at first seem like a huge task to embroider all these things into our lives, but that perception, more often than not is about our resistance to change, our poor time management and lack of prioritisation. When we simultaneously practice all these endeavours, then we really do experience the whole as being greater than the sum of its parts.

8. Well-being depends upon the movement of energy. Where movement is impaired or there are actual blockages to the passage of energy, damage and dysfunction are natural consequences. All our endeavours to improve diet, sleep, exercise, and mental posture are about creating better movement of energy in mind and body. If we are stuck in our thinking, unable to shift an emotion, or "displace" some negative behaviour, our mental potential becomes narrow and limited. That narrowing and limiting of our mind becomes a source of mental un-wellness (which is where most of us live; at a point just beyond ill health, never really knowing the joys of well-being). If we overload the body with non-essential fats, sugars and allergy producing foods then the free-flowing nature of physical energy is disrupted, which in turn causes physical illness. So, we could define ill health as the condition that is produced when the vast network of essential pathways within the mind and body become limited, restricting the flow of energy necessary for life. Health is therefore about unblocking these essential pathways and generating as many options for free-flowing movement as possible. In addition to all the suggestions already made under the heading of Healing Habits (which are all about opening up pathways and re-creating movement) there are other endeavours and activities that could also be added to the list. One worth considering is

massage. Massage is often referred to as “internal exercise”. It exercises the muscles, tissues and vital organs by improving circulation which promotes the internal flow of energy. Massage helps break down blockages and open essential pathways in both mind and body increasing your health potential. Other options for generating movement and improving energy include tai chi, Alexander technique, psychocalisthenics (a set of physical exercises that focus on the power of breathing), yoga, meditation, prayer, shiatsu, aromatherapy, acupuncture, etc...

9. Do not make the mistake of admiring the contents of this handout, thinking how valuable and useful all this information is and then fail to apply it in your own life. Make a pact with yourself today, to put into practice all those things that are relevant to you. Remember knowledge has no value unless it is applied.