

THE 7 NATURAL KEYS TO WELLNESS

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– HENRY DAVID THOREAU



DR. MICHAEL MURRAY



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By Dr. Michael Murray

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How to Get Well

We live in a society where there is tremendous confusion about the concept of wellness and health. I am of the belief that health and wellness is much more than merely the absence of disease or illness. I am not alone in this belief as even the World Health Organization defines health as *"a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."*

This definition provides a positive range of health well beyond the absence of sickness. The differentiation between wellness and health is that wellness is the term that also includes the emotional and spiritual aspects of living.

To achieve wellness involves a systems approach. This means that attention has to be given to all areas as every component of our life affects another.

Wellness requires a "whole person" perspective that revolves around all the myriad of choices that we make with our attitude, habits, diet, lifestyle, etc. You absolutely must realize that getting well is achieved by taking personal responsibility for your life, your current situation, and your health; and that every aspect of your life must be utilized to propel you towards the goal of wellness.

The question of health or disease often comes down to individual responsibility. In this context, responsibility means choosing a healthy alternative over a less healthy one. If you want to be healthy, simply make healthy choices on a consistent basis.

No matter what your current state of wellness might be, you can take steps to improve. Keep in mind that the human body is constantly regenerating. For example:

- Every three to four days, we gain a whole new lining in the gastrointestinal tract as new cells are formed to replace damaged old cells.
- In just thirty days, we renew our entire skin.
- Every six weeks, we make an entirely new liver.

We live within an incredible vessel of complexity designed to propel us through life. Though we might abuse it for a time, our body is very forgiving if we give it the right support and time.

It's Crazy NOT to be a Health Nut

My new patient, Anne, was dealing with a myriad of health issues typical of a 65 year old woman living in the United States – osteoporosis, high cholesterol and blood pressure, arthritis, ulcers, and diabetes. When I met her in the lobby of our clinic, I was enthusiastically greeted by her sister, Elizabeth – a vibrant, healthy looking, attractive middle-aged woman. I later learned from Anne that her being in my office was all Elizabeth's doing. Anne went on to tell me that everyone in her family, two brothers and two other sisters, was fighting the same sort of ailments that she was except for her “younger” sister, Elizabeth.

When I said that perhaps Elizabeth would fall prey to the same fate, she just smiled and said “I don't think so.” I was a bit curious about her inflection of “younger” and the obvious disapproval regarding something about her sister, so I asked her how much younger Elizabeth was than her. Well, Anne told me that Elizabeth was actually her older sister by 8 years and the oldest in the family. I was shocked because while Anne looked like she was closer to 80 than 65, Elizabeth looked in her mid-fifties.

I could not resist, I asked Anne why she felt Elizabeth would be spared from the diseases that were afflicting the other member of the family. Her response was prescient, but stated with disdain “Oh, she has been a health nut for over 50 years.”

It was at that moment that I truly realized how absolutely insane it is for everyone not to be a health nut. We are given one body to nourish and serve us, why not make it as healthy as possible?

Like many patients more or less coerced into seeing me by a family member, I felt that Anne might not be receptive to the dietary, lifestyle, and supplementation strategies that I would lay out to address her health issues. She belonged to an era that for some reason rejected the notion that diet and lifestyle are fundamental to healing. Instead, she chose to rely on a few little pills, actually she was on 11 different medications to try and correct her faulty biochemistry.

Experience had taught me that the best way to handle these situations was to simply ask Anne if she was willing to make any changes to her diet and lifestyle. When she said no, I quickly, but graciously ended the appointment.

Since we had only used 15 of the allotted 45 minutes, I was excited to have the opportunity to spend some time with Elizabeth.

It was inspiring to me to see so vividly how following a path of health could defy the odds of developing diseases with an inherited tendency as well as dramatically slow down the aging process.

For nearly 40 years I have lived the life of a health nut – so, I have not only talked the talk, I have walked the walk and helped others do the same. Over this time, while it has been interesting to see many components of the natural health movement in the 70s and 80s become mainstream items – yogurt, salad bars, whole grains, vitamin and

mineral supplements, tofu, soy milk, etc.; for some illogical reason there still remains a stigma that if you care about your body and health that you are “nuts.”

There also seems to be a deep underlying rejection in society to the idea that diet, lifestyle, and the use of natural medicines offer an effective answer to the health challenges in America even though there is tremendous support for this assertion.

In this era of the information age, most people know what they need to do to be healthy, live longer, lose weight, etc. The disconnect is in the effective execution of the strategy. What I will detail in this report are the necessary steps to wellness, but you and you alone will have to make those steps.

The 7 Steps to Wellness

The title of this report pays homage to the book, *How to Get Well* by Paavo Airola published in 1974. It was one of the first books I read when I started making choices to achieve wellness in my own life. Paavo Airola was one of the premier natural health educators of the 70s and, along with Adele Davis, was responsible for creating much of the initial momentum of the natural health movement.

I have learned a lot since I read Airola’s landmark book. My goal with this report is to crystallize the salient points from my experience with patients and other books into clear-cut easy to follow steps to wellness:

- Step #1 – Incorporate spirituality in your life
- Step #2 – Develop a positive mental attitude
- Step #3 – Focus on establishing positive relationships
- Step #4 – Follow a healthy lifestyle
- Step #5 – Be active and get regular physical exercise
- Step #6 – Eat a health promoting diet

- Step #7 – Support your body through proper nutritional supplementation and body work

I go into detail with tips for implementing each step toward wellness below.

Step #1 – Incorporate Spirituality in Your Life

Spirituality means different things to different people. For me, it means *recognizing that there is a power greater than myself that connects us all.*

I believe it is critically important to make the connection with the inner presence at the core of our being that connects us to that higher power. I know that many people try to make it through life without faith or God, but quite frankly, I don't see how life could have much meaning without them. And I believe that incorporating spirituality in our lives can have a profound effect on our health, however or whatever you imagine God to be.

As a physician, I have reached the conclusion that the most powerful medicine of all may have nothing to do with drugs, surgery, or other medical “magic bullets.”

I have seen firsthand that the human spirit is a source of phenomenal healing and can create miracles when science falls short. In order to incorporate more spirituality in your life, I believe that you must focus on the following keys:

- 1. Realize the power of prayer.** Prayer elicits the relaxation response, promotes healing, and connects us to our inner self and God.
- 2. Make prayer part of your daily routine.** Set aside time in your day, everyday, to acknowledge the good in your life and be

thankful. Bless those you care about and ask for guidance to good for those you don't.

- 3. Read the Bible or other inspirational books on a daily basis.** Recognize that we all need to be reminded of our true path in life. We require guidelines and inspiration to stay the course.
- 4. Use the power of love.** It is true love heals all. But before we can love others, we must first learn to love and accept ourselves so that we can become more accepting and loving of others.
- 5. Create a vehicle in your life that makes a difference in the life of other's.** Giving is our nature and we must have a vehicle through which to express it. Making a difference in life does not have to be anything on a grand scale. The biggest impact that most of us will have in our lives is on those around us that we care about - our family.
- 6. Tithe or give to charity.** Giving in a material sense is a sign of our commitment to trying to make the world a better place.
- 7. Attend church or "spiritual gatherings" regularly and get into nature often.** It is very special when people come together to express their spirituality, pray together, and extend love to one another. And according to many studies, people who attend some kind of "church" regularly have better health. Nature is also a wonderful source of rejuvenation.

Step #2 – Develop a Positive Mental Attitude

As I have seen over and over in our patient's lives (and my own), it is not what happens in our lives that determines our direction; it is our response to those challenges that shapes the quality of our life and determines to a very large degree our level of health.

Surprisingly, it is often true that hardship, heartbreak, disappointment, and failure serve as the spark for joy, ecstasy, compassion, and success. The determining factor is whether we view these challenges as stepping stones or stumbling blocks. Optimism is not only a necessary step toward achieving optimal health, it is critical to happiness and a higher quality of life.

Detailed evidence supports the contention that optimists live longer, suffer from fewer and less severe diseases (including cancer), and are much healthier than pessimists.

In a 30-year study conducted by researchers at the prestigious Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, the survival rate among optimists was 19% greater compared to pessimists. All causes of death were reduced including cancer.

But how does one shift to a more positive, optimistic attitude? I detail 7 tips for shifting into a more health generating, positive attitude below:

1. **Become an optimist.** The term optimism comes from the Latin word *optimum*, meaning “the greatest good.” Optimism is the philosophy that looks for the best possible outcome and that focuses on the most hopeful aspects of a situation.
2. **Practice positive self-talk.** We all conduct a constant running dialogue in our heads. In time, the things we say to ourselves percolate down into our subconscious mind. Those inner thoughts, in turn, affect the way we think and feel. Naturally, if you feed yourself a steady stream of negative thoughts – “*I’m no good, I hate myself, I hate the world*” – your subconscious will respond in kind. Become aware of your self-talk, and then consciously work to feed positive self-talk messages to your subconscious mind.

3. **Ask better questions.** The quality of your life is equal to the quality of the questions you habitually ask yourself. For example, if you experience a setback, do you think, “*Why am I so stupid? Why do bad things always happen to me?*” Or do you think, “*Okay, what can I learn from this so that it never happens again? What can I do to make the situation better?*” Clearly, the latter response is healthier. Regardless of the specific situation, asking better questions is bound to improve your attitude.

4. **Employ positive affirmations.** An affirmation is a statement with some emotional intensity behind it. Positive affirmations can make imprints on the subconscious mind to create a healthy, positive self-image. In addition, affirmations can actually fuel the changes you desire. I use certain phrases and sentences as affirmations each day. I have these affirmations in plain sight on my desk:
 - *I am blessed with an abundance of energy!*
 - *Love, joy, and happiness flow through me with every heart beat.*
 - *I am thankful to God for all of my good fortune!*
 - *YES I CAN!*

5. **Set positive goals.** Learning to set achievable goals is a powerful method for building a positive attitude and raising self-esteem. Achieving goals creates a success cycle: you feel better about yourself, and the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to succeed. Here are some guidelines for setting health goals:
 - **State the goal in positive terms and in the present tense;** avoid negative words. It’s better to say, “*I enjoy eating healthy, low-calorie, nutritious foods*” than to say, “*I will not eat sugar, candy, ice cream, and other fattening foods.*”

- **Make your goal attainable and realistic.** Start out with goals that are easily attainable, like drinking six glasses of water a day and switching from white bread to whole wheat. By initially choosing easily attainable goals, you create a success cycle that helps build a positive self-image. Little things add up to make a major difference in the way you feel about yourself.
 - **Be specific.** The more clearly you define your goal, the more likely you are to reach it. For example, if you want to lose weight, what is the weight you desire? What body fat percentage or measurements do you want to achieve?
6. **Use positive visualizations.** Imagery is another powerful tool in creating health, happiness, or success. I believe that we have to be able to see our lives the way we want it to be before it happens. In terms of ideal health, you absolutely must picture yourself in ideal health if you truly want to experience this state. It is our dreams that propel us as we roll through this life. They are powerful and inspirational.
7. **Read or listen to positive messages.** Again, we all need to be reminded of our true path in life. We require guidelines and inspiration to stay the course.

Step #3 – Focus on Establishing Positive Relationships

As human beings we need each other, we need relationships. We need to work with others, exchange services, share information, and provide emotional comfort. Positive human relationships sustain us and nourish us — body and soul.

There is much scientific evidence that positive relationships can prevent

disease and extend life.

And, on the flip side negative close relationships or not having any close confidants can be very harmful to our health. Poor marital quality is linked to heart attacks, heart failure, metabolic syndrome, and type 2 diabetes.

In one very detailed study, 9011 British civil servants (6114 men and 2897 women) filled out a questionnaire that assessed their relationship status. Of the 8499 individuals who did not have coronary heart disease (CHD) at the beginning of the study and who provided sufficient information for analysis, 589 reported a CHD event (e.g., heart attack). After adjusting for things like obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and cholesterol levels, smoking, alcohol intake, exercise, and fruit and vegetable consumption, the researchers found that people who experienced negative aspects of a close relationship had a 34% higher risk of incident coronary events than those who did not.

The researchers concluded that for people to avoid CHD and live longer they needed to "be nicer to each other."

Human relations can be complex. Through my own experience and working with patients over the years, I have found that there are 7 essential actions we can take to improve the quality of our relationships:

1. **Learn to listen.** The quality of any relationship ultimately comes down to the quality of its communication. The biggest roadblock to effective communication in most relationships is poor listening skills. When we are truly listening, we are telling the person that he or she is important to us and that we respect and love him or her.

Here are seven tips to good listening that I found easy to learn and quite useful:

Tip 1. Do not interrupt. Allow the person you are

communicating with to really share his feelings and thoughts uninterrupted. Empathize with him, put yourself in his shoes. If you first seek to understand, you will find yourself being better understood.

Tip 2. Be an active listener. This means that you must act really interested in what the other person is communicating. Listen to what she is saying instead of thinking about your response. Ask questions to gain more information or clarify what she is telling you. Good questions open lines of communication.

Tip 3. Be a reflective listener. Restate or reflect back to the other person your interpretation of what he is telling you. This simple technique shows the other person that you are both listening and understanding what he is saying. Restating what you think is being said may cause some short-term conflict in some situations, but is certainly worth the risk. Just explain that you want to be certain you understand what he is trying to say.

Tip 4. Wait to speak until the person or people you want to communicate with are listening. If they are not ready to listen, no matter how well you communicate, your message will not be heard.

Tip 5. Don't try to talk over somebody. If you find yourself being interrupted, relax. Don't try to out-talk the other person. If you are courteous and allow him to speak, eventually (unless he is extremely rude), he will respond likewise. If he doesn't, point out to him that he is interrupting the communication process. You can only do this if you have been a good listener. Double-standards in relationships seldom work.

Tip 6. Help the other person become an active listener.

Ask them if they understood what you were communicating. Ask them to tell you what they heard. If they don't seem to understand what it is you are saying, keep after it until they do.

Tip 7. Don't be afraid of long silences. Human

communication involves much more than words.

Unfortunately, in many situations silence can make us feel uncomfortable, but a great deal can be communicated during silences. Relax. Some people need silence to collect their thoughts and feel safe in communicating. The important thing to remember during silences is that you must remain an active listener.

2. **Develop positive personal values.** Our values define who we really are. Values are learned so we can change our lives by changing our values. Values are ultimately what allow us to receive the love and acceptance of friends and family. Develop positive values and you will be blessed with very gratifying and rewarding relationships. Here are some universal positive values that are respected by all:

- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Integrity
- Sincerity
- Humility
- Enthusiasm
- Dedication
- Dependability
- A sense of humor
- Open mindedness

3. **Learn to help others.** Again, our nature is to be giving, so too is altruism, the unselfish concern for the welfare of others. Although its focus is on others, altruism ultimately serves us indirectly.

To illustrate this point, here is a favorite story of mine from Zig Zigler's book, *See You at the Top*:

“A man was given a tour of both Heaven and Hell, so he could intelligently select his final destination. The Devil was given first chance, so he started the “prospect” with a tour of Hell. The first glance was a surprising one because all occupants were seated at a banquet table loaded with every food imaginable, including meat from every corner of the globe, fruits and vegetables and every delicacy known to man. With justification, the Devil pointed out that no one could ask for more.

However, when the man looked carefully at the people he did not find a single smile. He heard no music nor did he see any indication of the gaiety generally associated with such a feast. The people at the table looked dull and listless and were literally skin and bones. The tourist noticed that each person had a fork strapped to the left arm and a knife strapped to the right arm. Each had a four-foot handle which made it impossible to eat. So, with food of every kind at their fingertips, they were starving.

Next stop was Heaven, where the tourist saw a scene identical in every respect - same foods, knives and forks with those four-foot handles. However, the inhabitants of Heaven were

laughing, singing, and having a great time. They were well fed and in excellent health. The tourist was puzzled for a moment. He wondered how conditions could be so similar and yet produce such different results. The people in Hell were starving and miserable, while the people in heaven were well-fed and happy. Then, he saw the reason. Each person in Hell had been trying to feed himself. A knife and fork with a four-foot handle made this impossible. Each person in Heaven was feeding the one across the table from him and was being fed by the one sitting on the opposite side. By helping one another, they helped themselves.”

4. **Find and look for the good in others.** The way that you see others has an effect on how you relate to them, how they view you, and how you view yourself. If you are constantly criticizing and looking for the negatives in people, this attitude will be reflected back at you. If we can focus our attention on the positives - if we can look for the good in people and situations - that becomes more of our reality. To be happy and have positive relationships, you absolutely must become a good finder. You must look for the good in people. You must expect the best from people. And, you must reinforce the good that you see.
5. **Demonstrate love and appreciation.** It is not enough to simply feel love in your friendships and intimate relationships, we must express these feelings outward. We must demonstrate to our loved ones just how important they are to us. We must continually find ways to communicate our deepest feelings through our actions whether they are verbal, written, through touch, or by our behavior. We all need to see, hear, and physically feel loved and appreciated.
6. **Develop intimacy.** Intimacy is very important to good health. It

probably relates to the nurturing that takes place when we share our deepest selves. Intimate relationships are the most gratifying. However, many people have a hard time developing a truly intimate relationship - especially with their spouse.

Here is a simple tip that I have found to help nourish intimacy. Take a walk together. Moving together physically really opens up communication. It has to do with body language and a phenomenon called “mirroring and matching.” Adopting another person’s speech, body language, or behavior triggers our subconscious to develop a feeling of rapport. The next time you are out in a restaurant, take a look around and notice how many people (especially lovers) are mirroring and matching. You’ll be amazed. Try using mirroring and matching to your advantage to enhance intimacy. It is very powerful.

If you have few intimate relationships in your life, you need to reach out and establish more friendships. Here are three additional tips you may find useful:

- Attend workshops, seminars, and classes you are interested in. You will find people who share your beliefs and interests — fertile ground for developing supportive friendships.
- Become a volunteer at your local hospital, school, nursing home, or any other place where you can really make a difference.
- Get a pet. A relationship with a pet can be almost as positive as a human relationship. Studies have shown that owning or caring for a pet can relieve loneliness, depression, and anxiety, and even promotes a quicker recovery from illness.

7. Recognize challenges in relationships and be courageous in dealing with them. Even the best relationships experience stress.

In fact, it is these “stress points” that actually strengthen a relationship. That is particularly true in marriages.

John M. Gottman, Ph.D. has conducted detailed analysis of how married couples resolve differences at his Relationship Research Institute and the University of Washington show that how couples resolve differences is a key factor in whether a marriage will last. Dr. Gottman learned what makes marriages fail, what makes them succeed, and what can make marriages a source of great meaning. In a 20-year study involving more than 600 married couples, Dr. Gottman is now able to predict with more than 90% accuracy which couples will make it, and which will not. What advice does Dr. Gottman have to offer? Below are some of his top suggestions:

- **Soften your "start up."** Arguments first "start up" because a spouse sometimes escalates the conflict from the get-go by making a critical or contemptuous remark in a confrontational tone. *Bring up problems gently and without blame.*
- **Edit yourself.** Couples who avoid saying every critical thought when discussing touchy topics are consistently the happiest.
- **Accept influence.** A marriage succeeds to the extent that the husband can accept influence from his wife. If a woman says, "Do you have to work Thursday night? My mother is coming that weekend, and I need your help getting ready," and her husband replies, "My plans are set, and I'm not changing them" this guy is in a shaky marriage. *A husband's ability to be influenced by his wife (rather than vice-versa) is crucial because research shows women are already well practiced at accepting influence from men, and a true partnership only occurs when a husband can do so as well.*

- **Have high standards.** Happy couples have high standards for each other even as newlyweds. The most successful couples are those who, even as newlyweds, refused to accept hurtful behavior from one another. *The lower the level of tolerance for bad behavior in the beginning of a relationship, the happier the couple is down the road.*
- **Learn to repair and exit the argument.** Successful couples know how to exit an argument. Happy couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Successful repair attempts include: changing the topic to something completely unrelated; using humor; stroking your partner with a caring remark ("I understand that this is hard for you"); making it clear you're on common ground ("This is our problem"); backing down (in marriage, as in the martial art Aikido, you have to yield to win); and, in general, offering signs of appreciation for your partner and his or her feelings along the way ("I really appreciate and want to thank you for...."). If an argument gets too heated, take a 20-minute break, and agree to approach the topic again when you are both calm.
- **Focus on the bright side.** In a happy marriage, while discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and their relationship, as opposed to negative ones.
- **Seek help early.** The average couple waits six years before seeking help for marital problems (and keep in mind, half of all marriages that end do so in the first seven years). This means the average couple lives with unhappiness for far too long.

Step #4 – Follow a Healthy Lifestyle

Our lifestyle reflects our daily habits. In many ways, these habits define our health. By avoiding harmful habits and embracing health-promoting habits we can transform our lives toward wellness. Here are the seven key components of a healthy lifestyle (NOTE: exercise is so important it is dealt with separately):

1. **Do not smoke.** Smoking is still the most preventable cause of cancer and premature death in the United States. Smoking is associated with an increased risk for virtually every cancer (including lung cancer) and accounts for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths. Smoking is also a major cause of heart disease (the leading cause of death in the United States), strokes, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema.

Here are ten tips to stop smoking:

- List all the reasons why you want to quit smoking and review them daily.
- Set a specific day to quit, tell at least ten friends that you are going to quit smoking, and then DO IT!
- Use substitutes. Instead of smoking, chew on raw vegetables, fruits, or gum. If your fingers seem empty, play with a pencil.
- Avoid situations that you associate with smoking.
- When you need to relax, perform deep breathing exercises rather than reaching for a cigarette.
- Realize that forty million Americans have quit. If they can do it, so can you!
- Visualize yourself as a nonsmoker with more available money, pleasant breath, unstained teeth, and the satisfaction that comes from being in control of your life.

- Join a support group. Call the local American Cancer Society and ask for referrals. You are not alone.
- Each day, reward yourself in a positive way. Buy yourself something with the money you've saved, or plan a special reward as a celebration for quitting.
- Take one day at a time.

2. **Drink alcohol only in moderation.** Alcohol is our nation's #1 drug problem as it seriously affects the health of more than 10 million people. While moderate drinking (no more than one or two drinks per day) has actually been shown to be associated with a longer life, *excessive drinking is strongly associated with five of the leading causes of death in the United States: accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, pneumonia, suicide, and murder.*

3. **Get adequate rest.** Your body needs sleep to function properly. During sleep, the body repairs itself. Without sufficient sleep, needed repairs go undone, and the body is more likely to break down. Exactly how much sleep you need depends upon you. Some people find they need only 5 or 6 hours of sleep; others may need 10 or 11. Regardless of how much sleep you think you might require, the truth of the matter is that most Americans do not get enough sleep to function optimally. In addition, at least 40 million Americans suffer from insomnia or some other sleep disturbance.

To improve your ability to sleep, give yourself some time to tune down before going to bed. Sip some herb tea and listen to some beautiful music or a relaxation tape. Let the day go. Whatever you must accomplish tomorrow, give yourself permission to rest now, so you'll wake with the energy needed to get the job done.

4. **Develop a positive way to manage stress.** Let's face it, everyday stress is a normal part of modern living. Job pressure, family arguments, financial pressure, traffic, and time management are just a few of the "stressors" we are faced with on a daily basis.

Whether you are aware of it or not, you have developed a pattern for coping with stress. Unfortunately, most people have found patterns and methods that ultimately do not support good health. These include negative coping patterns like overeating, uncontrolled emotional outbursts, feelings of helplessness, having a cocktail or beer, or smoking a cigarette. *It is important for you to identify any negative coping pattern and replace it with positive ways of coping.* I believe that effective stress management involves four equally important areas:

- Techniques to calm the mind and promote a positive mental attitude
- Following a healthy lifestyle including regular physical exercise
- Eating a healthful diet
- Utilizing key dietary and botanical supplements that can improve the ability to deal with stress.

5. **Effective time management.** One of the biggest sources of stress and frustration for most people is time. They simply do not feel they have enough of it. Here are some tips on time management that really seem to work. Oh, by the way, time management does not mean squeezing more and more work into less and less time. It means learning to plan out your time more effectively, so you allow time for the activities in life that you enjoy.

6. **Connect with nature.** Most Americans spend 90% of their lives indoors separated from fresh air, natural sunlight, and nature. Something extremely refreshing and calming happens when we can get in touch with nature, whether it is simply a walk through a park or getting out in the wilderness for a weekend of camping.

7. **Laugh long and often.** Laughter is without question the most

powerful medicines available. Recent medical research has also confirmed that laughter enhances the blood flow to the body's extremities and improves cardiovascular function; plays an active part in the body's release of endorphins and other natural mood-elevating and pain-killing chemicals; boosts the immune system; and improves the transfer of oxygen and nutrients to internal organs. Here are seven tips to help you have more laughter in your life:

- *Learn to laugh at yourself.* Recognize how funny some of your behavior really is—especially your shortcomings or mistakes. We all have little idiosyncrasies or behaviors that are unique to us that we can recognize and enjoy. Do not take yourself too seriously.
- *Inject humor any time it is appropriate.* People love to laugh. Get a joke book and learn how to tell a good joke. Humor and laughter really make life enjoyable.
- *Read the comics to find one that you find funny and follow it every day or week.*
- *Watch comedies on television.* With modern cable systems, it is usually quite easy it is to find something funny on television.
- *Go see a funny movie with a friend.* We laugh harder and more often when we are around others who are laughing. It is contagious, we feed off each other's laughter and laughing together helps build good relationships.
- *Listen to comedy audiotapes in your car while driving.* Check your local record store, bookstore, video store, or

library for recorded comedy routines of your favorite comic.

- *Play with kids.* Kids really know how to laugh and play. If you do not have kids of your own, spend time with your nieces, nephews, or neighborhood children with whose families you are friendly. Become a Big Brother or Sister. Investigate local Little Leagues. Help out at your church's Sunday School and children's events.

Step #5 – Be Active and Get Regular Physical Exercise

While the immediate effect of exercise is stress on the body, with regular exercise the body adapts; it becomes stronger, functions more efficiently, and has greater endurance. *The entire body benefits from regular exercise, largely as a result of improved cardiovascular and respiratory function.*

Exercise enhances the transport of oxygen and nutrients into cells. At the same time, exercise enhances the transport of carbon dioxide and waste products from the tissues of the body to the bloodstream and ultimately to the eliminative organs. As a result, regular exercise increases stamina and energy levels.

Regular exercise is also a powerful prescription for a positive mood. Tension, depression, feelings of inadequacy, and worries diminish greatly with regular exercise. Exercise alone has been demonstrated to have a tremendous impact on improving mood and the ability to handle stressful life situations.

Benefits of Exercise

Musculoskeletal System

Increases muscle strength

- Increases flexibility of muscles and range of joint motion
- Produces stronger bones, ligaments, and tendons
- Lessens chance of injury
- Enhances posture, poise, and physique
- Prevents osteoporosis

Heart and Blood Vessels

- Lowers resting heart rate
- Strengthens heart function
- Lowers blood pressure
- Improves oxygen delivery throughout the body
- Increases blood supply to muscles
- Enlarges the arteries to the heart
- Reduces heart disease risk
- Helps lower blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- Raises levels of HDL, the “good” cholesterol

Other Bodily Processes

- Improves immune function
- Aids digestion and elimination
- Increases endurance and energy levels
- Promotes lean body mass; burns fat

Mental Processes

- Provides a natural release from pent-up feelings
- Helps reduce tension and anxiety
- Improves mental outlook and self-esteem
- Helps relieve moderate depression
- Improves the ability to handle stress
- Stimulates improved mental function
- Induces relaxation and improves sleep
- Increases self-esteem

Exercise promotes the development of an efficient method to burn fat. Muscle tissue is the primary user of fat calories in the body - the greater

your muscle mass, the greater your fat burning capacity. Physical inactivity is a major reason why so many Americans are overweight. If you want to be healthy and achieve your ideal body weight, you must exercise.

Here are seven keys to implementing an exercise program that works for you:

1. **Recognize the Importance of Physical Exercise.** The first step is realizing just how important it is to get regular exercise. Regular exercise is vital to your health, but this fact means nothing unless it really sinks in and you accept it, too. You must make regular exercise a top priority in your life.
2. **Consult Your Physician.** If you are not currently on a regular exercise program, get medical clearance if you have health problems or if you are over forty years of age. The main concern is the functioning of your heart. Exercise can be quite harmful (and even fatal) if your heart is not able to meet the increased demands placed on it.
3. **Select an Activity You Enjoy.** If you are fit enough to begin, the next thing to do is select an activity that you will enjoy. Using the list below, choose from one to five of the activities that you think you may enjoy—or fill in a choice or two of your own.

Make a commitment to do one activity a day for at least twenty minutes, and preferably an hour. Make your goal be to enjoy the activity. The important thing is to move your body enough to raise your pulse a bit above its resting rate.

- a. Bicycling
- b. Cross-country skiing
- c. Dancing
- d. Golfing

- e. Jazzercise
- f. Jogging
- g. Stationary bicycling
- h. Swimming
- i. Tennis
- j. Treadmill
- k. Walking
- l. Weight lifting

4. **Monitor Exercise Intensity.** Exercise intensity is determined by measuring your heart rate (the number of times your heart beats per minute). This determination can quickly be made by placing the index and middle finger of one hand on your opposite wrist, or on the side of your neck just below the angle of your jaw. Beginning with zero, count the number of heartbeats for six seconds. Simply add a zero to this number, and you have your pulse rate. For example, if you counted fourteen beats, your heart rate would be 140.

Would this be a good number? It depends upon your “training zone.” A quick and easy way to determine your maximum training heart rate is to simply subtract your age from 185. For example, if you are forty years old your maximum heart rate would be 145. To determine the bottom of the training zone, simply subtract 20 from this number. In the case of a forty-year-old, this would be 125. So the training range for a forty-year-old would be between 125 and 145 beats per minute. For maximum health benefits, you must stay within your training zone or range and never exceed it.

5. **Do It Often.** A minimum of fifteen to twenty minutes of exercising at your training heart rate at least three times a week is necessary to gain any significant cardiovascular benefits from exercise. *It is better to exercise at the lower end of your training zone for longer periods of time than it is to exercise at a higher intensity for a shorter period of time.*

6. **Exercise with others.** The key to getting the maximum benefit from exercise is to make it enjoyable. One way to make it fun is to get a workout partner. For example, if you choose walking as your activity, here is a great way to make it fun: Find one or two people in your neighborhood whom you would enjoy walking with. If you are meeting others, you will certainly be more regular than if you depend solely on your own intentions. Commit to walking three to five mornings or afternoons each week, and increase the exercise duration from an initial ten minutes to at least thirty minutes.

7. **Stay Motivated.** No matter how committed you are to regular exercise, at some point in time you are going to be faced with a loss of enthusiasm for working out. Here is a suggestion: read or thumb through fitness magazines like Shape, Men's Fitness, Muscle & Fitness, and Muscular Development. Looking at pictures of people in fantastic shape really inspires me. In addition, these magazines typically feature articles on new exercise routines that interest me.

Step #6 – Eat a Health Promoting Diet

Diet is fundamental to good health, yet few Americans really spend much thought or time on designing a diet that will promote health. Far too many people have fallen prey to the comforts of modern life, leading to physical inactivity and the reliance on foods that provide temporary sensory gratification at the expense of true nourishment.

As a result, there is an epidemic of diet-related disease in the United States. But, it's easy to give your body its best chance of maintaining or achieving health.

Following are seven important keys to eating a health promoting diet:

1. **Eat to control blood sugar levels.** Refined sugars, white flour products, and other sources of simple sugars are quickly absorbed into the bloodstream, causing a rapid rise in blood sugar leading to poor blood sugar regulation, obesity, and ultimately type 2 diabetes. But, the stress on the body that they cause, including secreting too much insulin can also promote the growth of cancer and increase the risk of heart disease.

The same thing can happen if you simply eat more carbohydrates than your body can handle. So, I will make this simple recommendation: Don't eat "junk foods" and pay attention to the glycemic impact of food that you eat and the portions of carbohydrate sources that you consumer.

Two measures to become familiar with are the glycemic index (GI) and glycemic load (GL) of foods. I feature a list of the glycemic index, fiber content, and glycemic load of common foods in most of my books.

2. **Eat five or more daily servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit.** A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is your best bet for preventing virtually every chronic disease. This fact has been established time and again in scientific studies on large numbers of people.

The evidence in support of this recommendation is so strong that it has been endorsed by U.S. Government health agencies and by virtually every major medical organization, including the American Cancer Society. In particular, by selecting fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, you'll be giving your body the full spectrum of pigments with powerful antioxidant effects, as well as the nutrients it needs for optimal function and protection against disease.

A serving of a fruit or vegetable is defined as 1 cup uncooked (raw) or ½ cup cooked. Here are some easy tips to increase your consumption of vegetables and fruit in order to reach your daily goal:

- Buy many kinds of fruits and vegetables when you shop, so you have plenty of choices.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for easy cooking so that you always have a vegetable dish with every dinner. You can easily steam your frozen vegetables.
- Use the fruits and vegetables that go bad quickly, such as peaches and asparagus, first. Save hardier varieties, such as apples, acorn squash, or frozen goods for later in the week.
- Keep fruits and vegetables where you can see them. The more often you see them, the more likely you are to eat them.
- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables on the top shelf of the refrigerator.
- Make up a big tossed salad with several kinds of greens, cherry tomatoes, cut up carrots, red pepper, broccoli, scallions and sprouts. Refrigerate in a large glass bowl with an air-tight lid, so a delicious mixed salad will be ready to enjoy for several days.
- Keep a fruit bowl on your kitchen counter, table, or desk at work.
- Pack a piece of fruit or some cut-up vegetables in your briefcase or backpack and carry moist towelettes for easy cleanup.
- Add fruits and vegetables to lunch by having them in soup, salad, or cut-up raw.
- Increase portions when you serve vegetables. One easy way of doing so is adding fresh greens, such as Swiss chard, collards, or beet greens, to stir-fries.

- Add extra varieties of vegetables when you prepare soups, sauces, and casseroles. For example, add grated carrots and zucchinis to spaghetti sauce.
- Take advantage of salad bars, which offer ready-to-eat raw vegetables and fruits, and prepared salads made with fruits and vegetables.
- Use vegetable-based sauces such as marinara sauce, and juices such as low sodium V-8 or tomato juice.
- Choose fresh fruit for dessert. For a special dessert, try a fruit parfait with low-fat yogurt or sherbet topped with lots of berries.
- Freeze lots of blueberries. They make a great summer replacement for ice cream, popsicles, and other sugary foods.

3. **Eat organic foods.** In the United States, more than 1.2 billion pounds of pesticides and herbicides are sprayed or added to food crops each year. That's roughly five pounds of pesticides for each man, woman, and child.

There is a growing concern that in addition to these pesticides directly causing a significant number of cancers, exposure to these chemicals through food consumption damages your body's detoxification mechanisms, thereby increasing your risk of getting cancer and other diseases.

Here are my recommendations for avoiding pesticides in your diet.

- Do not over consume foods that have a tendency to concentrate pesticides, such as animal fat, meat, eggs, cheese, and milk. Try to purchase free-range and organic forms of these foods.
- Buy organic produce, which is grown without the aid of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Although less than 3

percent of the total produce in the U.S. is grown without pesticides, organic produce is widely available.

- Develop a good relationship with your local grocery store produce manager. Explain your desire to reduce your exposure to pesticides and waxes.
- To remove surface pesticide residues, waxes, fungicides, and fertilizers soak them item in a mild solution of additive-free soap, such as Ivory or pure castile soap. All-natural, biodegradable cleansers are also available at most health food stores. To use, spray the food with the cleanser, gently scrub, and rinse.

4. **Reduce the intake of meat and other animal products.** Study after study confirms one basic truth: the higher your intake of meat and other animal products, the higher your risk of heart disease and cancer, especially for the major cancers like colon, breast, prostate, and lung cancer.

There are many reasons for this association. Meat lacks the antioxidants and phytochemicals that protect us from cancer. At the same time, it contains lots of saturated fat and other potentially carcinogenic (cancer-causing) compounds, including pesticide residues, and heterocyclic amines, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which form when meat is grilled, fried, or broiled.

Particularly harmful to human health are cured or smoked meats, such as ham, hot dogs, bacon, and jerky that contain sodium nitrate and/or sodium nitrites, which are compounds that keep food from spoiling but dramatically increase the risk for cancer. These chemicals react with the amino acids in foods in the stomach to form highly carcinogenic compounds known as nitrosamines.

If you choose to eat red meat:

- Limit your intake to no more than three or four ounces

daily—about the size of a deck of playing cards. And choose the leanest cuts available, keeping in mind that the USDA allows the meat and dairy industry to label fat content by weight rather than by percent of calories.

- Avoid consuming well-done, charbroiled, and fat-laden meats.
- Consider buying free-range meats or wild game.

5. **Eat the right type of fats.** It is important to consume less than 30 to 40 percent of calories as fat. However, just as important as the amount of fat is the *type* of fat you consume. The goal is to *decrease* your intake of saturated fats, and omega-6 fats found in most vegetable oils, including soy, sunflower, safflower, and corn; and *increase* the intake of monounsaturated fats from nuts, seeds, avocados, olive oil, and canola oil while insuring an adequate intake of the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish and flaxseed oil.

6. **Keep salt intake low.** Too much sodium in the diet from salt (sodium chloride) not only raises blood pressure in some people, it also increases the risk of cancer. In the U.S., prepared foods contribute 45% of our sodium intake, 45% is added in cooking, and another 5% is added as a condiment. Only 5% of sodium intake comes from the natural ingredients in food. Here are some tips for reducing your sodium intake:

- Take the saltshaker off the table.
- Omit added salt from recipes and food preparation.
- Learn to enjoy the flavors of unsalted foods.
- If you absolutely must have the taste of salt, try salt substitutes such as NoSalt and Nu-Salt. These products are made with potassium chloride and taste very similar to sodium chloride.
- Try flavoring foods with herbs, spices, and lemon juice.
- Choose low-salt (reduced sodium) products when

available.

- Read food labels carefully to determine the amounts of sodium and learn to recognize ingredients that contain sodium. Salt, soy sauce, salt brine or any ingredient with sodium, such as monosodium glutamate, or baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) as part of its name contains sodium.
- In reading labels and menus, look for words that signal high sodium content, such as barbecued, broth, marinated, Parmesan, pickled, smoked, and tomato base
- Prepared sauces and condiments are often high in sodium such as barbecue sauce, cocktail sauce, Creole sauce, mustard sauce, soy sauce, and teriyaki sauce as well as many salad dressings.
- Don't eat canned foods, particularly vegetables or soups as these are often extremely high in sodium.

Step #7 – Support Your Body Through Proper Nutritional Supplementation and Body Work

The physical care of the human body involves making sure that it has all of the necessary nutritional blocks to build good health as well as paying attention to four other key areas: exercise, breathing, and posture. While some of these areas are dealt with by other steps described above, I believe that there are seven other keys to include:

1. Take a high potency multiple vitamin and mineral formula.

Your body needs essential vitamins and minerals - each in the right amount - for your body to function properly. Vitamin and minerals function as components of enzymes, which are molecules that trigger and control chemical reactions.

Since most enzymes in the body have both a vitamin portion and a mineral portion, it is vitally important to insure optimal levels of these nutrients by taking a high potency formula that provides

optimal levels of both vitamins and minerals.

2. **Take a pharmaceutical grade fish oil supplement.** The health benefits of the long-chain omega-3 oils from fish oils are now well known. Using a high quality fish oil supplement is the perfect solution to people wanting the health benefits of fish oils without the mercury, PCB's, dioxins, and other contaminants often found in fish.

All told about sixty different health conditions have been benefited by fish oil supplementation including not only diabetes, but also cancer, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases like psoriasis, eczema, asthma, attention deficit disorder, and depression. It is estimated that the use of fish oil supplements may reduce overall cardiovascular mortality by as much as 45%. For optimum benefit, take a dosage of fish oil sufficient to provide a combined total of 1000 mg of EPA+DHA daily. If you have one of the 60 or more health conditions shown to benefit from EPA+DHA, especially inflammatory, autoimmune, heart, or brain-related conditions like attention deficit disorder, depression, etc., then bump up the dosage to 3,000 mg EPA+DHA daily.

3. **Take a “greens drink” or supplement containing concentrated sources of phytochemicals such as curcumin, grape seed, pine bark extract.** The term “green drinks” refers to green tea and a number of commercially available products containing dehydrated barley grass, wheat grass, or algae sources such as chlorella or spirulina. Such formulas are rehydrated by mixing with water or juice. These products—packed full of phytochemicals, especially carotenes and chlorophyll—are more convenient than trying to sprout and grow your own source of greens. An added advantage is that they tend to taste better than, for example, straight wheatgrass juice. Alternatively, products providing bioavailable curcumin (e.g., Theracurmin) or flavonoid-rich extracts like pine bark or grape seed extract can be used.

- 4. Use appropriate natural products to deal with any “weak links.”** Most of us have a least one weak link that needs special attention. For one person, it might be a weak immune system. For another, it could be poor digestive function or circulation. Used in the context of nutritional support, many dietary supplements and herbal products produce significant therapeutic effects.

A natural product can be as or more effective compared to a drug, but without the risk of serious side effects. For my other recommendations, please visit my website (www.doctormurray.com).

- 5. Develop and focus on your posture.** Posture, the manner in which the body is held is extremely important to good health. First of all when the body is slouched, shoulders slumped, and head down, diaphragmatic breathing is more difficult. As a result, poor posture promotes shallow breathing and low energy levels not to mention possible physical repercussions due to misalignment of vertebrae and/or muscle spasms.

Become aware of how you are holding your body as well as how you are breathing. When you have low energy levels, you will probably notice that you tend to hold your body in a tight posture with your head slightly down and shoulders slouched. When you find yourself in this position, just start breathing with your diaphragm and pull your head up by imagining a cord affixed at the top of your head gently pulling your spine and neck straight and into alignment.

- 6. See a body worker on a regular basis.** Bodywork is a general term referring to therapies involving touch, including various massage techniques, chiropractic spinal adjustment and manipulation, Rolfing, reflexology, shiatsu, and many more. Fortunately, all of these techniques can work wonders. So, it is

really a matter of personal preference.

Find a technique or practitioner that you really like and incorporate bodywork into your routine. I have been fortunate to have experienced a broad range of body work from Rolfing and deep tissue massage to more gentle techniques like Trager massage, Feldenkais, and craniosacral therapy. My experience has led me to the conclusion that the therapist is more critical to the outcome than the technique. How do you find such a person? Word of mouth is probably the best method. Ask around.

- 7. Engage in yoga, Tai chi, or stretching.** These activities are very important as they not only increase flexibility and reduce tension in our musculoskeletal system, but also once again bring an awareness to our posture and breathing. As I have gotten older, I have found that stretching is even more important. As one chiropractor told me, “you are only as young as your body is flexible.” If you are not familiar with stretching, you may want to take a beginner’s yoga class, or pick up a yoga video or a well-illustrated book on stretching.

Final Comments

You may need the help of a naturopathic physician to deal with your health issues. In fact, even if you are in good health, I highly recommend doing so to focus on disease prevention. Ask around for a referral or please contact:

Naturopathic Physician Associations and Referrals

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians
8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 300
McLean, VA 22102
1-877 969-2267

Website: www.naturopathic.org

Canadian Naturopathic Association
1255 Sheppard Ave. East
North York, Ontario M2K 1E2
Canada
(416) 496-8633
Website: www.naturopathicassoc.ca

If you are interested in learning more about naturopathic medicine as a career, here are the accredited schools:

Bastyr University
14500 Juanita Drive
Kenmore, WA 98028
(425) 602-3000
Website: www.bastyr.edu

Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine
1255 Sheppard Ave. East
North York, Ontario M2K 1E2
Canada
(416) 498-1255
Website: www.ccnm.edu

National College of
Naturopathic Medicine
049 S.W. Porter
Portland, OR 97201
(503) 499-4343
Website: www.ncnm.edu

Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine & Health Sciences
2140 E. Broadway Road
Tempe, AZ 85282
(480) 858-9100