

Welcome Wellness

A Self-Health Book



No gardener has made a rose. When it's needs are met a rosebush will make roses. Rachael Naomi Remen, MD

Lynn Durham, RN,
Well Being Coach

Notes

It is something to be able to paint a particular picture or carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful, but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look... To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

Thoreau. Walden

FROM DISTRESS TO STRESS HARDY

Lynn Durham's Self-Health Course: Welcome Wellness

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*It may be that some little root of the sacred tree still lives.
Nourish it then that it may leaf and bloom and fill with singing birds.
Black Elk*

FROM DISTRESS TO STRESS HARDY

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WELLNESS IS A JOURNEY

The National Wellness Association defines wellness as “an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more successful existence.” We are as different as our fingerprints, and our individual answers lie within us. We can read and ask for professional advice, but in the end, we must decide what we are going to do and then do it. The **compass** is inside us, we need to look and listen to our mind, body and spirit. Note the direction you are going and change your course if necessary.

Awareness is key: Your body can be a vehicle for your spirit to speak to you. Are you ready to pay attention and listen to the messages?

Adjustment: Once you know what needs to change, make the adjustments that will move you in the direction of your ideals.

Whether or not someone gets sick depends not only on the organism (virulence and numbers), but also on the immunity of the host. For our purposes we could change that sentence to read: Whether or not someone is distressed depends not only on the stressors (how intense, how many there are and for how long) but also on the person (their perception and their ability to cope). Think about what stressors are in your life and consider the importance of changing or removing some of them.

This program will look at tips for adjusting perception and boosting adaptability, to move you toward optimum wellness.

DEFINITIONS: STRESS, DISTRESS, EUSTRESS

Hans Selye, MD, the physician who first noted the connection between distress and disease, **defines stress** as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand made on it” (1, p.14). Stress is not something to be avoided. All life involves some stress. Selye calls it the “spice of life.” We can use it to help us prepare and boost our performance up to a certain point. In fact, a new word ‘**eustress**’ has been coined to describe ‘good’ stress. Selye says “Although contrary to public opinion, we must not – and indeed cannot – avoid stress, we can meet it efficiently and enjoy it by learning more about it’s mechanism and by adjusting our philosophy of life accordingly” (1, p. 21).

But when we get too much, for too long, on a system that can’t cope, it can become **distress**. In that form can lead to other problems. “It has been reported that between 60 and 90 percent of those seen in a primary-care physician’s office have symptoms or illnesses which can be attributed to stress and lifestyle habits” (2, p. 5).

There are all kinds of stressors, positive and negative, physical and psychological. And each person has their own perception and ability to handle them. So what is described as distress for one person, may not be for another. Eustress or distress is about intensity and demand verses capacity. This program looks at ways to decrease what we feel in intensity and increase our capacity. Consider choosing to replace old harmful patterns with positive thoughts, words and actions.

DISTRESS WARNING SIGNS

We each have our own distress warning signs. When we're distressed we have symptoms to tell us that we need a change. Christiane Northrup, MD said "sometimes the body is the only way our soul can get our attention." Many times our symptoms are messengers, alarms for us that something needs changing.

We're familiar with some of the **physical** signs. We can feel our heart rate increase, or note our respirations get more rapid and shallow and may even feel our blood pressure rise. Many recognize muscle tension and the headaches or other pains associated with it. We might notice abdominal symptoms such as indigestion. Studies have proven that the immune function is decreased and that our platelets get sticky. In the moment of distress you can ask yourself: "Is this worth sticky platelets?"

There are more than physical means of getting our attention that change is necessary. We might exhibit some **behavioral** signs by reaching for more food or alcohol. Our **emotions** may be volatile and cause relationship problems. We might notice apathy toward life (**spiritual** stress) or find it difficult to think clearly (**cognitive**). It's important to become aware of our individual warning signals so we can make a course correction.

Distress that goes unchecked can cause personal problems with health, **relationships** and jobs. Information on how to handle it is important for individuals and to bring to the workplace to consider because distress negatively impacts productivity and the bottom line.

Many times people want to find ways of managing the distress of all the things they have on their "to do list." Sometimes what they are asking of themselves is unreasonable or impossible. Maybe some things on the list need to be removed. It's time to think and act in kindness not only to those around you but to yourself also. When some of your basic needs have been met, you are more available to help others.

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT TOOLS

There are many tools and techniques to use for staying well or feeling better. They include mind, body and spirit tools. Some or all of them can be practiced to enhance the quality of your life and your health. You are one unified whole, each of these suggestions has the power to effect other aspects of your lives.

The Relaxation Response

The Relaxation Response is a physiological state where the pulse and blood pressure go down, breathing slows, and immune function is boosted. It is opposite the stress response and while useful during an emergency, living in a constant fight-or-flight state may lead to “permanent, harmful physiologic changes” (2 p. 34). Even with a psychological threat our bodies will prepare us physically for fighting or fleeing. We are not often in a position to need this ready state and all the accompanying stress hormones it releases.

While the Stress Response is involuntary, the Relaxation Response can be elicited by different techniques and you have no doubt experienced it before. It might have been in that timeless moment when you were looking at a sunrise, during a quiet time of prayer, or resting calmly near a stream. It is a pleasant state that can be accessed through a number of different techniques.

Some of the techniques which elicit the Relaxation Response include: diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, body scan, mindfulness, repetitive exercise, repetitive prayer, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga stretching, and imagery (2 p. 37). Herbert Benson, MD has noted **two basic components of the relaxation response: 1. a repetition and 2. a witness attitude.**

The repetition can be a word, a sound, a phrase, a prayer, an image or a physical activity. The witness attitude is a passive disregard of the trail of thoughts. You just watch them go by like

clouds (2 p. 37). Benson recommends you elicit this response for ten minutes twice a day.

The calmness that you experience in those moments carries over into other activities of your life. “The relaxation response yields many long-term benefits in both health and well-being and can be brought on with very simple mental focusing or meditation techniques” (3 p.17). You can use Bio-dots (they read skin temperature) to give you an indication of your physiology at any given moment. There are many relaxation techniques to choose from giving you the opportunity to test different ones to see which suits you and your life style best.

THE MIND

Healthy thinking is a necessary component of stress hardiness. At the end of the day have you ever stopped to think of what was put into your consciousness for the past 24 hours?

Mind Awareness

What is it that goes into your mind? Choose carefully because it’s important for your well being. At the end of the day have you ever stopped to think of what the input was into your consciousness for the last 24 hours? First we need the awareness - listen to your thoughts and notice which ones influence your stress levels for better or worse.

Each thought can be a physical event. Dr. Candace Pert talks about the ‘molecules of emotion.’ You could be guided through a lemon visualization and find that your salivation increases. Why? There is no sight, smell, touch or taste of a lemon. The lemon visualization shows the power of thought to create chemical changes throughout the body-mind.

Mind Food

How many positive, uplifting messages have been entered into your consciousness, and how many negative draining messages have been logged in? Andrew Weil, MD recommends a “news fast” for a week (4 p. 218) and then you get decide how much you allow back into your life. Dr. Northrup says, “Human beings were never designed to act as receiver sets for the bad news from around the entire planet” (5 p. 541). Be purposeful on what you want in your mind. You might write out affirmations, statements of what you intend, and post them for you to see. The purpose being to repeatedly implant this message into your mind. You can choose to make your reading inspirational and uplifting. Hopefully you take care in what you feed your body, be deliberate on what you feed your mind.

Cognitive restructuring

What are you saying to yourself? Maybe you need to remove the irrational negative thoughts you have been feeding your mind. Next time you’re distressed, rewind the tape and ask yourself, “If anyone heard me speak those words to another person, what would they think of me?” We each have our own usual pattern of cognitive distortions. Once the thoughts, beliefs or attitudes that cause you distress have been observed and identified, you can challenge these irrational beliefs and change your distorted thinking. (See *The Wellness Book*, Chapter 11) Since most of our emotional suffering comes from how we perceive an event, changing self-defeating thoughts will affect our mood and our health. Sometimes this may mean accepting the things you cannot change, because it’s your only option. Check out www.thework.org for testing your thinking.

Imagery

You can use the power of your imagination and the intimate connection of the mind-body-spirit to your advantage. When you come across a rope that you ‘think’ is a snake, you will have all the same physical reactions ‘as if’ it were real. This power of thought can be used to your benefit as well. By acting ‘as if’

things are going well, our body will ‘think’ that it is. Like dominos, when the body, mind or emotions fall or change they effect the others. Listen to a guided imagery tape and you can feel the tension drain from your body (6 p. 108). You may want to try Self-Hypnosis to expand the practice of your own natural abilities to help you feel better (6 p. 100).

Learning

When we are fully engaged in life, doing what we enjoy, learning and developing our minds, we feel better. Did you know optimism is a learned skill? The health benefits are impressive. Optimistic people are healthier, recover faster and have a higher psychological well being independent of variables. They have less distress, better problem solving abilities and take corrective action (7).

An important skill to learn may be how to simplify, clean out, organize. Maybe you need techniques for better time management. Figure out what would bring your life more peace and go and get it. Life is like a grand buffet, it offers us all sorts of things. We can stay seated at the beautifully set table and starve if we choose. Or, we can get up and serve ourselves. And if we eat too much of everything served, we will have a different problem. Be still, discern what you need, and bring it into your life. If you make a mistake, decide to make a change and act again.

Mindfulness - Mindfulness is a great tool to access the relaxation response and make you feel better. It begins by focusing your attention on what you are experiencing in the present moment. If you take each of your daily activities and look deeply into them, such as doing the dishes, it will change the experience. You can choose to be resentful or angry that no one is helping you, or... you can try this: Feel the water on your hands, think of the warm temperature and give thanks for running water. Be grateful for your hands and all they have done for you. Notice the bubbles, all the beautiful colors and be grateful for your eyes and that you can see. Feel the smoothness of the plates and think of the food that was served on them and the people who shared your meal with you. Bless all who helped to bring the food to the table from the

cashiers, grocers, truckers, farmers, all the way back to the earth, rain and sun. Looking deeply, becoming mindful of all the reasons to be thankful is a powerful method to feel better. Enter your moments, one at a time.

Think thanks

Did you know your heart variability pattern is jagged and erratic when you think about something that angers or frustrates you? But consciously choosing to focus on caring compassionate thoughts changes that pattern into one of smooth even rhythms (8 p. 41). You choose your attitude and the inner quality of your body follows the thoughts you hold. The greatest terrorists in the world are between our ears. Do you need mental floss? When you choose peaceful thoughts your body knows it. Shifting into gratitude is a powerful attitude adjustment. We always have the option to look at what we don't have, what we wish were different, but when we change our thoughts into gratefulness for what we do have, and what makes us thankful, it changes our physiology.

Humor Habits

Develop them, it's good for you. Humor is such a powerful tool. There have been studies that prove the physical benefits of humor and laughter. It boosts immunity, and reduces levels of classic stress hormones and the damage they may cause (9). After laughter your body naturally experiences the relaxation response. Consciously choose to bring more laughter in your life. Be joy for others, when you are you can't keep it from yourself.

Humor is a learned skill. Work on developing your humor habits, practice makes improvement. You can read funny stories or jokes, and share them. When you socialize consider playing games that make you laugh. Choose to be with people who make you laugh. Use props that make you laugh. Look for the humor everywhere including, maybe especially, in your own mistakes and imperfection.

Think it will be funny later? Then think it's funny now. You'll have much more fun! So many times when you are in the

moment it doesn't seem so funny, but in retrospect and/or retelling it brings a smile or laughter. When you have learned to laugh at yourself, you'll have a constant supply of good material! When you look at life from a new perspective, you may find you are a humor-being.

Be sure the humor is safe, kind and fun for everyone. Sarcasm means rip or tear. Ridicule is cruel. To know the difference just ask if it lifts people, if it brings people closer and if it's based on caring and empathy.

You can smile and laugh for no reason. Thich Naht Hahn the Vietnamese monk recommends taking a deep breath and smiling whenever you hear a bell. You can breath and smile whenever you start the car, come to a traffic light, or before you pick up the phone. I always thought that smiles worked their way out, they also can work their way in. Dr. Madan Kataria from India has started World Laughter Day and laughter clubs all over the world. Members don't have to have a reason they just laugh. He calls it yogic laughter.

Consciously choose to bring more laughter in your life. Practice makes improvement. Be a source of joy for others. When you are, you can't keep it from yourself. Start the day laughing to get all the physical and psychological benefits and begin the day on the right note. Joy is inside us and when we let go of our unhappy thoughts, it's free to come out.

THE BODY

The Environment

Look at your physical environment. Where do you place, how do you use and what do you put into your body? Are you making choices conscious of possible toxins? Are you considering fresh air, sunshine, pure water, good nutrients and a healthy environment? Do you need to consider Feng Shui or ergonomics with your furniture? Would another climate be more helpful? You get to notice and decide what you will do.

Body Awareness

Are you listening and paying attention? When you start to be aware of your body, you can notice where you store tension, once you have noticed, then you can begin to release it. When there is an area of your body that is in pain, you practice an armoring technique to protect that area. For example, after the initial problem has healed, you may still have pain due to the continued habit of tension to protect it. Once you are aware, you can let go and allow the muscles to relax.

Body Scan

Scan your body right now, do you notice any tension. Start at your head and go down the body noticing and releasing if you find tension. Your head, face, jaws, are those muscles relaxed. Become aware of your neck and shoulders right now, can they let go of the tension? Continue down to your toes. This is a technique you can use in bed when you find your self unable to sleep. Is your body relaxed? What thoughts are you holding? What makes you peaceful? Choose to go there.

Air

To carry nutrients and remove waste products we need oxygen. A deep diaphragmatic breath, where the belly sticks out like an infant, is one way to access the Relaxation Response. (Who cares about the Ken and Barbie look?) The rapid breathing of the Stress Response is shallow and in the upper airway where there is no oxygen exchange. The deep breath puts the air down into the small air sacs called alveoli where the oxygen can be picked up in the blood stream, transported to the cells and waste products can be removed. If you live in a city where the air quality is questionable, go to a park or somewhere where there are trees. Trees help the air quality. (4 p. 158) You have choices to make about how you breathe. When you feel distress, take a deep breath and notice the difference.

Food and Drink

Is the food and water wholesome? The dietary guidelines from the Wellness book list: eating a variety of foods, maintaining a healthy weight, choosing healthful diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits and grains, and low in sugar, salt, sodium and alcohol (2 p. 132). Awaken to what your particular needs are. If you find you have indigestion notice why it might have occurred. Did you eat too much, too late, too greasy, too spicy, in the wrong environment, with the wrong person? Listen to the messages your body has for you and act accordingly.

Test this in your life - eat mindfully. Just be with your food, savoring every small bite, the smells, tastes, textures. As an exercise eat a raisin, peanut or chocolate chip in 10 bites, mindfully. You will see how it expands to fill your consciousness and you don't require as much food to fill you. When you are mindful of your body, you notice when it is beginning to be satiated and you can stop eating *before* you are stuffed.

Activity and Rest

Balance your life between *movement and stillness*. You want to be involved with activities that give your life meaning. Or to be sure that you find the meaning in each of your activities, use the mindfulness technique discussed previously.

Movement does not have to be hard vigorous, unpleasant exercise (10 p. 103). So many times we think we have to be straining, pounding, and pushing. Instead of adding another 'must do' on your list, and getting into traffic to rush over to the gym, maybe you can find an activity that brings you joy It be gardening or dancing.

If a repetitive *exercise* can elicit the Relaxation Response and if it's hard for you to sit still, you can start to still your mind with – Walking Meditation, Yoga, or Tai Chi. Find your still point and enter it for refreshment. Maybe gentle *stretching* is what you need on some days, and maybe a more vigorous workout on others. Check in with yourself, pay attention. We know about physical

homeostasis – it’s about balance, we need to find that in our overall life.

Sleep – You may manage to get by missing some sleep one night, but if it continues, it can be stressful and cause problems - from difficulty concentrating to poor health (6 p 192). Notice your behaviors that might influence your sleep. Do you eat too late, drink caffeine, not exercise enough, worry a lot, and try too hard?

Sleep is one place you can’t hurry off to, no matter how hard you try! Remember we are unique and have different sleep requirements. Maybe you don’t need as much sleep as others. Use the relaxation techniques to prepare you for sleep.

Senses

It has been recommended that we get our minimum daily requirement of sensual pleasure. (10) Maybe it’s time to come to your senses.

Sights – Step into the timeless moments of breathtaking natural beauty. Remember the peacefulness of looking for shapes in the clouds? Get up for the sunrise. Take time in the natural environment. Those moments when you go into a natural reverie are good for you (10, p. 56). Beauty refreshes our soul.

Light – Light “a nonintrusive, very powerful tool, resides at the core of the new medicine: “energy medicine.” (11p. xxv) Jabob Liberman, OD, PhD calls the human body a living photocell and sunlight a nutrient. Trees need sunlight for processing and we need it for Vitamin D. There will probably be discoveries that prove other reasons it’s necessary in the future. Notice what you need as far as sunlight goes. Maybe just going out for a ten-minute walk during lunch will make you feel better. Colors may be more important than we know. The color blue is already used to help in neonatal jaundice and mal-illumination appears to have a bearing on Seasonal Affective Disorder. Would a full spectrum light bulb be helpful? Just start to be conscious of what works in your life.

Smells - Scents are the language of nature and traditional wisdom. Aromatherapy uses distillation of plant essence into essential oils. You probably have been aware of your olfactory system triggering old memories. If there is a scent that you like, use it, enjoy it. If you use odors while you elicit the relaxation response, then when you smell that scent again, you feel more relaxed (10 p. 69). David Sobel, MD recommends enjoying the aroma of foods. He says “sometimes smelling the food alone can satisfy your hunger for sensation, providing more pleasure and fewer calories (6 p.67).

Sound - Billie Thompson from the Listening and Learning Center in Phoenix, Arizona noted the importance of the ear - “the whole central nervous system emerges from the rudimentary vestibular system in the fetus, which later becomes the inner ear.” She points out that the ear registers differences in eight octaves of sound frequencies and the eye only one octave of light frequencies (12 p 17). Music studies in California - demonstrated increased endorphin levels, in Michigan - increased levels of interleukin-1. Testing music in Texas - of mothers listening to music, only half required anesthesia. Don Campbell, author of *The Mozart Effect*, put his theories to test on himself. Chanting ‘Om,’ he reduced the size of a potentially fatal blood clot in his brain (12 p. 17). What are your good vibrations? Do you need more music of Nature – waves, wind, birds, or will Mozart be your vibrational medicine?

Touch – From the turn of the century in foundling homes to neonatal intensive care units of today there are studies that show the positive effect of touching on growth and emotional development (10 p. 42). The skin does speak to our hearts. In Ayurvedic medicine they recommend you give yourself a daily massage with aromatic oils specific to your body type called a dosha. We know about babies with failure to thrive through lack of touch. We want to be sure it doesn’t happen to us. Maybe making an appointment with a professional body worker would be attractive to you. Put aside some money, even \$5 a week and when you have enough – go. You’re worth it. Besides the joyful exercise, if you’re alone, one of the reasons to consider dance as an

activity is - you don't get failure to thrive through lack of touch!
Touch and be touched lovingly.

Temperature – A study in Czechoslovakia “demonstrated that sitting in a sauna for thirty minutes doubles beta-endorphin levels in the blood. Saunas also increase serotonin and following a sauna, people show more brain waves related to deeper more restful sleep, so a sauna or a hot bath may be an excellent way to relax before bedtime.” (10 p. 46)

Taste - Taste and smell help us avoid poisons and to eat good food. We seek different tastes and that helps us eat a variety of foods and nutrients. Today's artificial foods and flavorings can fool us if we eat them. If we really savor each bite, we eat less and enjoy it more. A Swedish study showed that enjoying food influenced its nutritional value and more iron was absorbed. Spicy food has been shown to lower cholesterol and trigger endorphins. Garlic reduces “bad” cholesterol and increases the “good” cholesterol. Here's some food for thought – protein foods release chemicals that keep us alert and carbohydrates and fatty foods, calm and relax us (6 p. 66).

Take advantage of all your senses, it just makes good sense.

THE SPIRIT

Spirit is about freedom and connection with our source, our selves and others. “Prayer, art and healing all come from the same source: the human soul. Research has shown us that a person in prayer, a person making art, and a person healing all have the same physiology, the same brain wave patterns, and the same states of consciousness” (13 p. 1).

Free spirit

Do you have a spirit free from addictions? Is your spirit free from worry and unjustified guilt? Is your spirit light hearted

and fun, ready willing and able to play? Does that describe you? What do you need to do to move you in that direction?

Child like curiosity is a wonder-full place to be. Watch a child, imitate their care-free curiosity. You will be able to do more when you just focus on what is before you to do in this moment, and then the next. Eliciting the Stress Response hinders your productivity. Let go of the worry and move into the wonder, release the joy.

Create

When you get in touch and nourish your spirit with the arts, it is healing. There are even organizations such as the Society for the Arts in Health Care. Journal, paint, craft, dance, sing, write a poem, play an instrument, tell a story, plant a garden, embrace and celebrate life. Release your creative spirit, the healer within. Everyone is an artist. Release your critic and welcome your inner child. “When the spirit is listened to, the body, mind, and spirit resonate as one, the spirit dances and sings, and healing happens....Gone are the tension and fear that block this healer when the spirit is asleep” (13 p. 88). Art is about creating a space and taking time for yourself, it’s an invitation to do what attracts you.

Visual arts and crafts - Whether it’s distraction, a focused intention or meditation, or the sense of controlling something when all else seems out of your control, bringing something that is yours into existence is a natural high. Value yourself enough to do what you love. The stories of how art has healed have come from the people who have healed with it. You experience the art, then transform yourself, as the art becomes your teacher (13 Chapter 5).

Good vibrations – There is more research on music than on any of the arts. Since ancient times healers have used song and chanting. “It [music] has been shown to alleviate stress, elevate moods, help with clear thinking, reduce pain, and promote healing” (13 p. 216). You know what songs elevate your spirit, are they the sounds you have in your life? Over 2,500 years ago, Pythagoras,

the Greek philosopher, advocated singing and playing an instrument every day to purge the body of worry, sorrow, fear and anger” (6 p. 63). How can you let your music out?

Words – Rachael Naomi Remen, MD says, “In times of crisis, meaning is strength. But the deepest meaning is carried in the unconscious mind, whose language is the language of dreams, of symbols and archetypes. Poetry speaks this language and helps us hear meaning in illness, in the events of our lives often for the first time. Finding such meaning feels like revelation. Like grace.” (14 p. xiv) Write in a journal or try your hand at poetry.

Your story – “Confession is more than a moral issue: it can sometimes be good for the body as well (10 p. 183). “The evidence is that long buried events can undermine health (10 p. 184). Self help groups and religious organizations have long recommended confession. Sometimes after sharing, the constant negative thinking diminishes. Maybe once it’s off your chest you can better move on and heal.

Again use poetry, journaling, storytelling or theater to nurture your spirit. All aspects of us need nourishment. Whether it’s a visual art, word, music or movement or even if it’s a ‘prescription pet’ or ‘retail therapy’ (shopping). Have you noticed what draws you? Do you take time for it in your life? Aren’t you worth it?

Forgiveness – Release your connections to a painful past. In a review of the forgiveness research studies have shown forgiving people have higher self-esteem and mental health. They recover better from trauma and have better relationships and life satisfactions. Those who are able to forgive have less anxiety and depression, less anger, retaliation and violence and less harmful physiological responses (15). Forgiveness is an important tool for well being.

Forgiveness is not about the other person at all. It’s not about reconciliation. It’s about ‘for giving’ you the gift of peace and releasing your attachment to the pain. Are you willing to let go

of the painful memories and move on beyond that situation? A key concept of forgiveness is forgiving yourself.

Relationships

Our relationship with others is a powerful healing tool. It's our compassionate connections with other people in our lives that sustains us when all else is taken away. Dean Ornish, MD talks about the healing power of intimacy in his book *Love and Survival*. In it he lists the studies that show that opening your heart to caring and connection has profound physical changes, even reversing heart disease. (16)

Communications- If you find you are lacking in communication skills, find a program and go quickly. Inability to communicate is very distressing. Being able to communicate effectively helps avoid distressing situations as well as helping resolve them when they arise. Be specific in saying what you need. Be able to say "no" (2 Chapter 14).

Empathy- The gift of a listening presence is healing to both parties. Becoming real, communicating our hopes and feelings opens a new way of being in the world. It's important that you share your truth and are available to others who are willing to be known. Make your relationships exquisite, they are the fabric of your life.

Fun - Plan pleasant times with your loved ones. Having fun and connecting to others is not an extra, it's an important tool. Is there enough of it in your life? Where do you laugh and with whom? How often? What do you remember that you used to do that brought you joy. Will you bring it back into your life? Give yourself something to look forward to, it eases our days.

Service - Hans Selye says "My own code is based on the view that to achieve peace of mind and fulfillment through self-expression, most men need a commitment to work in the service of some cause that they can respect (1 p.4). It increases your sense of

significance to be connected to something greater than yourself. Altruism expands your potential for happiness. As we are serving others, doing what the Torah calls a mitzvah or good deed, we connect to the goodness of God (17 p. 34). There are studies that show the physical and emotional benefits of giving: longevity, less stress, enhanced immune function, better circulation, less self-absorption and isolation, increased personal satisfaction and ability to cope, enhanced compassion and quality of life (17 p. 36). Tap into the “Helper’s High.” Whatever you choose to do, don’t do it with resentment, do it with joy.

Spirituality - Herbert Benson, MD says we are in some profound way “wired for God.” As this is the case, our disconnection from our higher power may be the most distressing of all. When we start to reconnect and listen to our intuitive wisdom (the still small voice within us), it will let us know what we need. Dr. Benson recommends eliciting the relaxation response twice a day for 10 minutes. And what he has found is that his patients become more spiritual. “People who reported increased spirituality after eliciting the relaxation response described two things about the experience: 1) the presence of an energy, a force, a power – God- that was beyond themselves, and 2) this presence felt close to them. And it was the people who “felt this presence” who noted the greatest medical benefits” (3 p. 157).

Besides eliciting the Relaxation Response and all the benefits that it has, this is what we seek - to be plugged into the transcendent, our God. We may be getting messages to change but if we don’t listen, it doesn’t help us. Meditation allows us to listen and remember wellness, our wholeness. Not acting in accord with our spiritual ideals is probably the most distressing of all.

Based on *The Faith Factor: An Annotated Bibliography of Clinical Research on Spiritual Subjects*, Dr. Herbert Benson says “religious commitment is consistently associated with better health. The greater a person’s commitment, the fewer his or her psychological symptoms, the better his or her general health, the lower the blood pressure, and the longer the survival. Across the board, in groups of different ages, ethnicities, and religions, among

patients with very different diseases and conditions, religious commitment brings with it a lifetime of benefits” (3 p. 174).

STRESS HARDINESS

Dr. Suzanne Kobasa developed the concept of ‘stress hardiness,’ a resistance to distress. She noted these people who seemed to cope best with stressful situations and were more stress hardy have the characteristics of: control, challenge and commitment (2 p. 178).

- 1) **Control:** When you feel that you have some control and are not a victim, (at the very least you are in control of how you choose to perceive it, Viktor Frankl, MD, PhD calls it “attitudinal heroism).
- 2) **Challenge:** When you look at situations as a challenge - an opportunity to learn and grow, and
- 3) **Commitment:** believe in what you are doing, find meaning and are committed to giving it your best. (you can look at this journey as soul growth, not about our material success) then you are more stress hardy.

In the Wellness Book (2 p. 179) they have added a fourth “C” – **closeness**. Weave into your life, healthy, fun, unconditional relationships. It’s important to have a support system. Remember to connect and commune with your higher power, others and your self.

I have divided this program into body, mind and spirit, although we are a unified whole. Dr. Candace Pert, former chief brain biochemist at the National Institutes of Mental Health said, “In the end I find I can’t separate brain from body. Consciousness isn’t just in the head. Nor is it a question of mind over body. If one takes into account the DNA directing the dance of the peptides, [the] body is the outward manifestation of the mind” (5, p.25). Dr. Christiane Northrup points out that from quantum physics we

know that matter and energy are interchangeable. She says “We can view our bodies as manifestations of spiritual energy” (5, p. 25).

Now it's up to you!

You can read this information and understand it intellectually, but what is it you are going to do? Pick at least one thing that you will do to change and then commit to doing it. Is there something here that needs further study? Tell someone else what you plan to do. You may even want to get a partner to support you in this endeavor.

If you are interested to find the best way to access your healing system you're on the right road. If you're ready to make tender loving **self-care** a priority in your life, congratulations! Then, be patient with yourself and others. One by one, each baby step, or slight adjustment will effect the outcome.

Remember you are a miracle.

Life is a kaleidoscope, when you change, things around you shift into a new pattern. Your world will never be quite the same again.

The End

(Of one way.)

The Start of another! ;-)

I'll conclude with a blueprint for optimal medicine and health that I believe takes full advantage of remembered wellness and the visceral nature of human beliefs. When mobilized, the wisdom inherent in our bodies will not only transform individual health, it will reform medicine, saving our nation billions of dollars per year in unnecessary health care expenditures.

Herbert Benson, MD, (3 p. 24)

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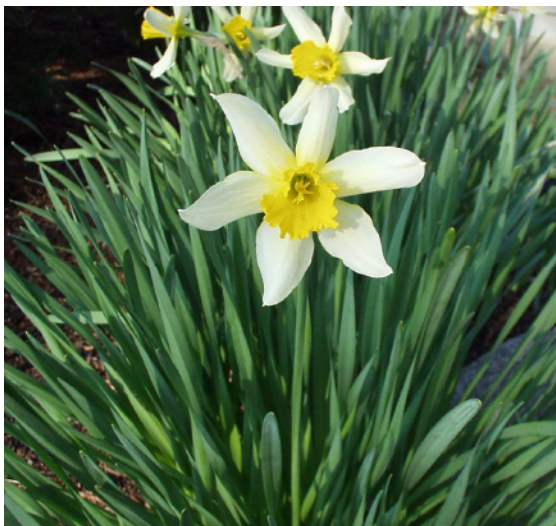
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One seed of grain grows to be rye. The nature of another causes it to grow into wheat and never to stop until its end has been achieved.

Meister Eckhart.

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