

The Ten Elements of Great Health

by Daniel Gagnon

As a human being, you are a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual ecosystem...

It is important to understand that good physical health does not exist independently of our thoughts, feelings and beliefs, as well as the lifestyle decisions we make. We each exist in a personal and collective ecosystem where our physical bodies interrelate with our internal processes and our external surroundings. No system of health care, herbal or otherwise, can “cure” a physical condition existing in an ecosystem that is out of balance.



Personal choice is the most important element in maintaining the health of our ecosystem. Who we are is the sum of the choices that we make every day. We constantly choose what to think, what to eat and drink, who to be with, what to talk about, when to exercise, how much sleep to get, which movies to watch, and so forth. All of these choices may seem insignificant when we make them one by one. But when we add them together, they have a tremendous impact on our bodies.

For example, occasionally going to a fast food restaurant does not have major health consequences. However when fast-foods become our main food supply, two things happen simultaneously. Our

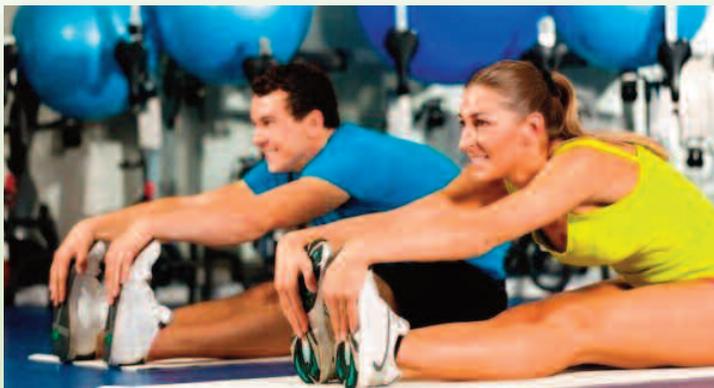
bodies become overloaded with fats, omega 6 fatty acids, sodium, free radicals, preservatives, food additives and many health-depleting substances. At the same time our bodies become starved for fiber, vitamins, minerals, omega 3 fatty acids, and other essential nutrients. Over a period of time, this type of diet leads to degenerative diseases. It may take time, but it will happen. The bottom line is that each choice we make is either health enhancing or health depleting.

Maintaining our ecosystem is a dynamic process. It is like being on a seesaw. As we move away from our center, our energy becomes increasingly out of balance and we are more subject to extreme highs and lows. Conversely, the sooner we take measures to stay close to our pivot point of balance, the less energy we need to expend to stay healthy. This additional energy can then be used for doing the things in our lives that give us joy, happiness, and contentment.

As a society, we have become overly dependent on doctors, drugs and surgery to maintain our health. Doctors have not been trained to inquire about and to recognize the neglect of the ten essential elements. Perhaps this is also why most people miss the point: the obvious is easy to overlook. By far, most of us get sick because we neglect to take care of the basics regularly. The good news is that optimal health is incredibly simple to attain and maintain. Take personal responsibility for your health and integrate these ten elements into your every day life.

If you wish to optimize your health and increase your resilience, or if you are confronted with health issues, I suggest you take a look at the following ten areas. What choices will you make today? Balance these ten elements on a daily basis and gain or maintain good health.

1. Exercise: Are you exercising regularly? Exercise at least five times a week for one-half to three-quarters of an hour a day. One of the best forms of exercise is walking because it is low impact, aerobic, and inexpensive! The importance of exercise cannot be overestimated.



2. Rest: Are you getting enough rest? Set aside some time every day to relax, breathe and reconnect with yourself. Make it a priority to get enough restful sleep; sleep time before midnight is the most beneficial. Taking a short nap during the day is recommended.



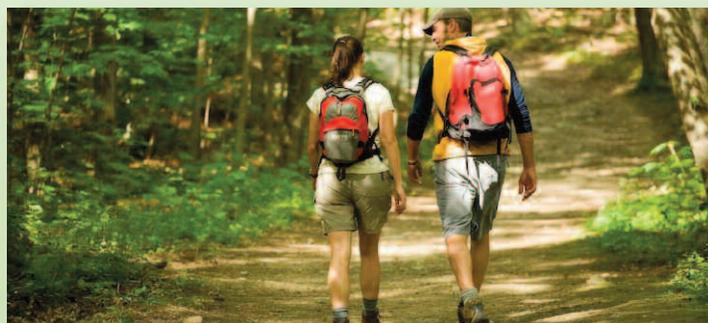
3. Nutrition: Is your diet fully supporting your body? Eat whole foods and organic foods. Eat a variety of whole grains, vegetables and fruits. The more colorful the fruits and vegetables you eat, the better they are for you. Focus on the color purple, blue, red, yellow and green.

Include at least one portion a day of the following green leafy vegetables: Swiss and red chard, kale, collards, Brussels sprouts, parsley, mustard greens, turnip greens, chicory greens, dandelion greens, beet greens, spinach, cabbage, watercress, purslane, okra, and broccoli.

Take a full-spectrum vitamin/mineral supplement every day to supplement your diet. Drink up to 1/2 ounce of water per pound of body weight a day to stay fully hydrated (the recommended ideal amount is about 8 - eight ounce glasses a day). Don't forget to take your herbs!



4. Nature: Do you spend enough time outdoors? Nothing can replace being in nature when it comes to balancing your ecosystem. Devote time daily to get fresh air and sun. The good effects of adequate amounts of sunlight go beyond the production of vitamin D and emotional balance. It is easy to get your daily sun allowance when you take your regular walk during the day.



5. Creativity: Do you have some sort of creative outlet that keeps you physically and mentally active? Creative outlets can range from hobbies, gardening, writing, painting or other ways to express your inner self. Working in moderation in a field that you enjoy is also nurturing, self-affirming, and rewarding. Staying active and in contact with other individuals engaged in creative projects is integral to good health.



6. Emotional balance: Are you emotionally healthy? Choose to cultivate joy, love, gratitude and a sense of humor to nourish your ecosystem. Do you have repetitive episodes of anger, fear or grief that keep you out of balance? There is nothing wrong with having feelings.

However, emotional imbalance becomes an issue when feelings are either repressed or allowed to irrationally rule us. If either of these extremes is true for you, take measures to identify and change these negative emotional patterns.



7. Goals: Do you have a sense of purpose? To thrive, everyone should have something whether it's doing volunteer work, spearheading a project, or working toward a goal that demands mental activity. We all need direction and a sense of purpose in life. Goals give meaning to our lives. Giving back to our community through volunteering is life affirming.



8. Mutual support: Are you giving and receiving love in your life? Having a loving and accepting support system is critical to healing and staying healthy. Ecosystems, by their very nature, are dependent upon relationships. Giving and getting support and love from your family, friends or support group is essential to good health.



9. Faith: Do you regularly communicate with your Higher Self or your Higher Power? When we are connected to a higher power, it is much easier to feel balanced and fulfilled in life. Make time daily for this aspect of yourself. Ask for spiritual guidance from your higher power to help you in your daily life.



10. Choice: Do you take personal responsibility for your life? Taking responsibility for your actions is a critical step in creating a healthy body, mind, soul and spirit. Of all the points presented, I believe that choice accounts for nearly half of our driving force for healing or staying healthy. At any given moment, you have many choices.

Taking personal responsibility is the key that unlocks the door to integrating and balancing all of the other elements of healthy living discussed above. Remember that each and every positive choice you make daily gives you the power to shape your life!



Making positive changes in your life! Start on the road to wellness today. Choose one of the preceding ten steps. Make the appropriate changes. Focus on and practice that step on a daily basis for three months. Three months is the amount of time it takes to create a new habit. Once the chosen step becomes an integral part of your life, move on to another step. As you begin to rebalance your personal ecosystem, your rewards will soon become apparent. You'll have more energy, enhance your health and feel better about yourself.