



Happy 4th of July!!!

Steps to Optimum Health

As Independence Day commences, we celebrate our hard-won freedom, and I hope you all take a moment to realize what that truly means. Also, recognize the options and choices we have here in America, the land of truly plenty. In health matters, we have every food, supplement, treatment modality and exercise option that one can think of—are we making the most of it so that we can really experience excellent health? I thought it time to revisit exactly what it takes—in the opinion of a holistic health counselor and nurse---to have optimum health and vitality.

Great health is more than freedom from disease. Being healthy means:

- Having a healthy body to do the things you want to do.
- Having a clear and healthy mind to fully participate in work and play.
- Having a connection to a higher power and/or the earth.

- Having relationships that nourish and feed our souls.
- Having the ability through work or other avenues to contribute to the greater good.

At the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, we learned about the [Circle of Life](#). This is a great tool that I often use with my clients to see which areas they need improvement in, and it is usually a big hit. I encourage you to explore and revisit the Circle often.

Having a Healthy Body

You know I'm a foodie. I think the majority of us are. The trick is to become a healthy foodie! Learn to prepare great seasonal vegetables. Create desserts using fresh fruits. Snack on melons and berries. Eat the biggest salads imaginable! When you clean up your palate, your tastebuds come alive and begin to appreciate real, wholesome food. Veer away from packaged food products in favor of fresh real foods—sans labels!! Real food doesn't have labels!! I challenge you to eat real foods for the summer- no boxes, cans or labels, please! I do make exceptions for canned organic beans and canned fishes—these are too good and nutritious to pass up! As [Marion Nestle, PhD](#) says, if it has more than 5 ingredients on the label (or if you can't pronounce any of them) leave it on the shelf!

Move your body every day, and I don't mean from the bed to the shower. Get out

and do something—walk, run, bicycle, swim. Our bodies were meant to move, not sit, and we will all be healthier if we do it more. Getting up 30 minutes earlier is not going to kill you—I get up at 4:45—and it will, in all likelihood, prevent you from getting diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, depression and PMS!

Supporting a Healthy Mind

Speaking of exercise: to me exercise is the best antidepressant out there, has no side effects—unless you count weight loss as a side effect!—and it's totally free! And a word about anxiety: so many of my patients are taking anti-anxiety drugs that it concerns me. We are running ourselves into a manic, frenzied mess. Our nervous systems are on constant overdrive, and it is killing us slowly. Without getting into a lesson on the workings of the nervous system (NS), let me tell you that we need a balance between our calming NS and our “fight or flight” NS, and for most of us, we are heavy on the latter. This is why many of us have GERD, insomnia, rely on caffeine and alcohol to get through a day, and feel utterly wrecked in general. Exercise helps to mitigate some of this nervous stress by burning off the excess cortisol. In a nutshell, these things will help to create a calm, clear mind:

- Eat small meals every 3-4 hours to keep cortisol levels stable
- exercise daily, concentrating on breathing always through the nose

- Start a [mindfulness practice](#), yoga practice or investigate [breath work](#).
- Experiment with herbal teas. Hot or iced, many medicinal plants can evoke calm and focus with out the side-effects of drugs. I like chamomile, passion flower, linden, kava and holy basil. A terrific company that puts together delicious tea blends is [Mountain Rose Herbals](#). They also sell beautiful tea pots, loose tea bags and tea balls.



Maintaining a Connection

Having a healthy body, mind and soul is a work in progress for all of us. Jesus, Buddha, and maybe the Dalai Lama got it right, but for the rest of us, maintaining meaningful relationships and a connection to a greater power is hard work. Often, our relationships and our spiritual life get put on the back burner because we think we have no energy left for such matters. The truth of the matter is just the opposite—we

cannot afford to become disconnected from God, from the earth, from whatever it is that keeps us feeling a part of something larger than ourselves. As a Christian and a part Native American, I spend time in nature every day, often all day when I am not working. I spend my ending moments of the day with a prayer journal, even if it is only for 5 minutes. I try to thank God for all His goodness throughout even my toughest days.

It is not healthy to be alone in this world. Losing our connection to others is often at the root of mental illness, substance abuse and criminal acts. I am not saying that time alone is bad—in fact, it is healthy and healing. But time alone should connect us to the larger plan, not alienate us or make us feel lonely.



I encourage all of you to:

- Develop a spiritual practice that suits you, whether it is through prayer, devotionals, or working with your hands in the earth.

- Start and end your days with thoughts of thankfulness for all that you have—and we have plenty here in the United States of America!
- Spend time with someone close to you; a spouse, child, or dear friend. Hold hands, hug and be present with each other. Share tea and memories as you connect and nurture the bond.
- Love an animal. Spending time with God's kindred, sentient beings nourishes the soul and reduces stress and blood pressure. Don't have a pet? Volunteer at a local shelter. [Mylestone Equine Rescue](#) is a fabulous place to work around rescued horses- I worked there last year. [Common Sense for Animals](#) is a shelter in Stewartsville that always needs volunteers to walk their dogs and spend time with their animals.



Attaining excellent health is not a birthright nor is it passive, or static. Optimizing our health is active, dynamic and attainable for most of us. Even those of us who are suffering from illness have it in our power

to improve our health through the methods I have mentioned herein.

- What could be more important?
- What is a better investment than your health?
- If you had all the money and time in the world but did not have your health, what would you have?

I hope you have a wonderful holiday weekend and spend it with family and good friends. We have so much to be grateful for on this Independence Day!

Please give some thought to your health today. Where does it need improving? Check out the [Circle of Life](#) wheel and fill it out. See where it puts you.

Do you need help?it's a great time to make the move toward more vibrant, wholesome living. Schedule a session with me and let me get you off to a good start. No need to do a long program—just let me tune you up and give you a plan!

As always, the **first consult is free**, and then it's \$95 for a 60-90 minute session with a complete set of notes.



Please feel free to pass along this newsletter to friends and family. It has been a pleasure writing it for you and it is my hope that it will inspire you to explore the prospects of optimum health for yourself. If I can be of any assistance, please call or write to me!
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Namaste,
Diane