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Enjoying Optimal Health and Fitness

By Penny Kelly
with Howard Pepper, and
Charles Betterton

**“Compassion for myself is the most powerful
healer of them all.”**

— Theodore Isaac Rubin

Enjoying Optimal Health and Fitness

Welcome... to ***Enjoying Optimal Health and Fitness!***

Chances are high that you are reading this e-book because you are interested in good health or have some noticeable health challenges. These pages contain a program for the wise, forward-looking person who wants to maintain excellent health.

Was there a time in your life when you could eat or drink anything, stay out all night dancing then get up the next morning and go to work? Go back a little further...remember when you rolled and tumbled about freely on the grass, in the sand, or over the furniture? Was there a point in life when you climbed playfully across monkey bars or through the trees? How many of these activities have you given up? Why? Motion and flexibility *is* youth!

In general, when you are young, especially if you are healthy, it is easy to take good health for granted. As you grow older you can slip into habits that undermine health without realizing it. Without a crisis, you may be lulled into thinking your current state of health, energy, and sense of well-being is as good as it gets...*but it isn't!*

Perhaps you know the story of the frog and the boiling water. If you drop a frog into boiling water, the frog will jump out immediately. But if you put the frog in room temperature water and slowly heat it to the boiling point, the frog makes no effort to jump out and ends up cooked. In the same way, your health may slip away so gradually, that you aren't aware of it until too late. About half of the time, the first symptom of serious heart problems is *death!* Like the frog who fails to notice the increasing heat, it's too late to save yourself.

It's also possible that you have forgotten, or never really knew, what it feels like to have true health and vibrant energy! There are numerous factors, often unknown, in your diet or personal biochemistry that may have kept you from feeling as healthy as you could be.

What is more important than health, fitness, and a peace of mind? If these are important to you, you are part of a large group that feels the same way! These factors are interlinked, and returning to a state of good health often means working in all three of these areas at once.

Health is something that you might easily forget about or put off until it becomes an issue. By then, it can be a serious challenge to restore. ***It is much easier to preserve good health or even improve mediocre health than it is to regain it after a catastrophe.*** If you have a developing condition, are gaining excessive weight, experience constant fatigue, or just sense yourself slipping into bad habits of diet or other health matters, ***take steps now*** to get things back under control.

Too often we put off thinking about health. Even more often, we think that it is normal and natural to become disabled, decrepit, and unable to take care of ourselves, especially after the age of sixty or seventy. This is a tragedy because there is no reason we cannot remain healthy, active, and in full control of our capacities for our entire life – and to live much longer in the bargain! To do this you must accept the fact that you are in charge of your health. No one else is going to live in your body and take care of it.

If your energy has been running lower and lower each successive year, if you have gained weight, noticed small disabilities like being out of breath, signs of allergy, or been struggling with big issues like heart or kidney disease and cancer, it is time for you to educate yourself a little better on

how to clean out, rebuild, feed, and exercise the body you've been living in for some years now.

Whether or not you develop a specific disease, the energy and fitness that allow you to enjoy life and continue to work and play the way you want can slowly disappear. With it can go your sense of well-being – having positive, pleasurable emotions most of the time. Too often you come to accept this as part of the aging process when you shouldn't. It's easy to blame some situation for your condition and end up doing nothing when you could easily make changes for the better.

“If sickness is separation, the decision to heal and to be healed is the first step toward recognizing what you truly want.”

— *A Course In Miracles*

A principle to keep firmly in mind if you expect to have and keep optimal health is that ***you are in charge of your health. You are the best expert on you.*** Physicians and other health practitioners may have more expertise in specific aspects of your system – your blood chemistry, for example, or how to treat a certain bacteria or virus. But they rely first, and sometimes almost exclusively, on the symptoms *you* report. Even if your symptoms are outwardly observable or measurable, you are the one who will know the details and fine points of how something feels, where it is felt, how often the symptom occurs, in what kind of pattern, etc.

If you are in the habit of running to the doctor and relinquishing responsibility for your healing, you may have forgotten that you are the one who is ultimately responsible for your health. Just remember: it is *your* body/mind system, you are the one who will care the most, and you have the most personally invested in your life. This responsibility must be actively translated into commitment and action, otherwise it means nothing.

Too often people treat the body/mind system in whatever way is most convenient, demands the least effort, or is immediately

pleasurable. They only take action when a problem appears. You would probably agree that this is not the best plan.

Over your lifetime, you have likely experienced a sudden infection, a quick case of the flu, or the results of a minor accident. These are dealt with as they arise and usually constitute manageable personal emergencies in daily life. However, for the long term, if you want to remain strong and flexible, avoid physical and mental degeneration, and remain vital and engaged in contributing to life on this planet, then you must take charge of your health. You must figure out what your body/mind needs to function at peak potential and provide it.

“The body never lies.”
— Martha Graham

Good health doesn't happen automatically in the same way that disease doesn't occur automatically. There is an old saying that goes something like, “It is far more useful to know what kind of person has a disease than to figure out what kind of disease has a person.” ***This is because disease is usually the result of a given lifestyle.*** While genetic disposition and heredity are played up as the culprits in many diseases, the truth is that by changing your lifestyle you can often avert the disease altogether. You can gain relief from many symptoms, if not outright healing, by knowing what to do and then doing it regularly.

The challenge for many of us is knowing what to do, and especially – *getting started!* To truly heal yourself and enjoy excellent health and fitness you have to work at multiple levels simultaneously – the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels. The physical work may consist of changing what you eat, doing regular exercise, shifting your sleep patterns, taking vitamins, or doing some regular detox routines.

The mental work may include learning to think differently, practicing new forms of self-affirmation, deliberately shifting

your worldview and habits of perception, or assessing your relationships and career.

The emotional work often involves exploring your feelings, weeding out guilt, facing fears, letting go of pain or the people who constantly thrive on pain and drama, or learning to accept yourself as you *really* are.

Inside each of us, often hidden under multiple layers of hurt, worry, anger, disappointment, and fear, is a beautiful Being full of love. To find this Being means learning to “feel what you feel: and accept those feelings *as is* so they can either pass (if painful) or be integrated if joyful or loving.

Spiritual work requires that you excavate the spirit of your real Self! It means having to explore the meaning of your life, how you would like to live that life, and what kind of health you need in order to do so. The spirit that animates your body and your life is the true healer in you and it is only when you acknowledge that incredible Life Force that wholeness and miracles begin to unfold. To touch this spirit of life is to recognize that you are truly unique and beautiful inside, regardless of what is happening outside.

For all of us, it takes effort, knowledge, and self-disciplined actions. This program is designed to help you make the effort, gather the knowledge, and develop the discipline to make good health a way of life – one that is filled with joy rather than being a chore.

If you can vividly imagine yourself as healthy, active, and joyful about life, then you can learn to create it. To learn to create anything, you must first decide you want it, then decide to do something that will take you in that direction. What will optimal health look like for you? How will you feel and look? Close your eyes and recreate the feeling of what it’s like to be fully energized, active, and healthy...then bask in that feeling.

If you can't recreate a feeling of ideal health answer the questions outlined in the next section. These will be helpful in helping you figure out where your health is slipping. If you already know you are facing serious problems, this program will help you focus and manage yourself in ways that return you to good health. If your health and energy are optimal *now*, the steps below will help you stay in that wonderful place.

Enjoying Optimal Health and Fitness is a wonderful way to start creating a life that you can enjoy all the way through. From creating a new vision of yourself, to goal-setting, action plans, and support networks, everything you need to get started is here.

To begin your journey, you may use this book to record your thoughts, ideas, lists, observations, dreams, affirmations, drawings, sketches, goals, plans, resources, names, addresses, and other details related to creating optimal health and fitness. Or you may prefer to get a notebook, journal, or 3-ring binder and write out your answers and thoughts in it. Think of it as your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook.

Begin reading and working your way through the 12 steps below, completing the exercises in each one by recording your responses in the space provided or in your Empowerment Journal.

1. Know Thyself! Self-Assessment Discovery Exercise

“One is healthy when one can laugh at the earnestness and zeal with which one has been hypnotized by any single detail of one's life.”

— *Friedrich Nietzsche*

Knowing oneself is generally thought of in terms of character traits. However, it is just as important, if not more so, to know yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Thoughts, emotions, and the spirit of your deepest Self are

woven into your physical body. This means that what is happening in your thoughts and feelings will affect what is happening in your body, and the condition of your body affects the kinds of thoughts and feelings you might have. If your body is unable to produce certain chemicals, you will be unable to experience certain feelings!

You are a unique and special being, and this will be expressed in many physical habits and traits. To take the first step toward optimum health you will need to conduct a survey of those factors that contribute to that health.

Now get your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook and a pencil or pen, go to a quiet place, and begin answering the following questions to the best of your ability. You do not have to answer them all at once; indeed, some will require you to watch yourself for a few days. When you have completed them, you will have at least some idea of where your strengths and weaknesses are and can plan to fill in the gaps as you create a new, healthy you.

Sleep:

1. How many hours of sleep would you *like* to get each night? _____
2. How many hours of sleep do you *actually* get each night?

3. If you are not getting the amount of sleep you would like to get, what is the reason? _____

4. What would you have to do to change this? _____

5. Are you the type who likes to take brief cat naps throughout the day? _____

6. Do you do this because you're constantly fatigued? _____

7. Do you like to go to bed early and get up early? This personality type is often governed by the sympathetic nervous system and tends to have an acidic body.

8. Do you like to go to bed in the wee hours and then sleep in the next morning? These personality types are often governed by the parasympathetic nervous system and tend to be more alkaline. _____
9. Do you sleep peacefully through the night most of the time? _____
10. Do you wake constantly throughout the night and have difficulty going back to sleep? This is often a sign of depression, which can be physical or emotional.

11. Do you wake around 2:00 a.m. and toss and turn for several hours? This is often a sign of a sluggish, malfunctioning liver. _____
12. Do you sleep with someone who snores or tosses and turns, thus waking you in the night? What would you have to do to get a good night's sleep? _____

13. Is your mattress comfortable, and does your room have access to fresh air? _____

What You Eat:

Create a section in your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook to keep track of everything you eat and drink, how much you eat, and the time you ate or drank for three days. Make sure at least one of the days is a weekend day and one of the days is during the week because people eat differently on the weekend than they do during the week. Find and

purchase a good reference that shows you what is in fresh fruits, vegetables, and other foods. After finishing the list of what you ate for three days, look at the list and answer the following questions:

1. How many food groups did you eat from? What were these groups? The broader the spectrum of foods eaten, the better off you will be.

2. Did you eat the same foods every day? This could cause allergies to develop and also limits the spectrum of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that are available for absorption. _____

3. Do you know what nutrients were provided by the foods you ate? If so, how much useful nutrition did these foods provide your body? You cannot repair and rebuild a perfect body every day without the right building materials in the form of amino acids, minerals, vitamins, and enzymes. _____

4. Do you have a nutritional reference book available so you can make good decisions about the kinds of foods to eat? If so, what is the title? _____

5. Did you drink more than 1-2 cups of coffee or tea each day? Coffee and tea, as well as other caffeinated drinks, withdraw water from your tissues, leaving your organs dehydrated, which ages you more quickly. _____

6. Did you drink at least six glasses of water each day? This should be pure water. _____

7. Did you need a nap within a short time after each meal? This indicates adrenal exhaustion and/or allergies.

8. What percentage of what you ate was fresh, whole food, or organic? What percentage was out of a box or can? Foods should be fresh and whole with as many of their natural enzymes preserved as possible. _____

9. How much of what you ate contained white flour, white sugar, caffeine, or alcohol? These are empty of nutrients and burden the body with a lot of work for very little gain. _____
10. How much time did you spend preparing what you ate? Or did you eat at restaurants, fast food places, etc.

11. What percentage of what you ate contained high-density nutrition? _____

Supplements:

1. Do you know how to put together a supplement plan? If you are sick or suffering from some type of degenerative disease, it will take at least four times as much nutrition to restore health as it takes to maintain good health in the first place. _____
2. Do you have a good reference book that outlines how to create a supplement plan for you? _____

3. If you take supplements, list them here. _____

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4. Do you take a balanced amino acid capsule each morning? Your body needs amino acids in order to utilize vitamins and minerals. _____
 5. Do you take a well-balanced multiple vitamin/multiple mineral each day? Many foods grown today are seriously deficient in vitamins and minerals, and it is almost impossible to get enough nutrition from food alone.

 6. Do you need digestive enzymes to help you digest foods completely and absorb the nutrition they provide?

 7. Do you take trace minerals? There are over 90 trace minerals that are critical to good health. _____
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Detox Routines:

1. Have you ever practiced any form of detoxification programs for your body? _____
2. If so, what did you do? If not, are you interested in learning how to do detox? _____

3. When was the last time you did some detox for the body? _____
4. Are you familiar with the eight major forms of detox used to clean out the body and restore good health?

(These are: the Liver Flush, the Colon Sweep, the Purge, Castor Oil/Olive Oil Sweat Bath, Water Fast, Juice Fast, Coffee Enema, and Chelation to remove heavy metals. See *Getting Well Again, Naturally* for instructions.)

5. Do you know how to use detox procedures to eliminate disease and rebuild good health? _____
Whether you are suffering from something as simple as the common cold or more serious such as heart disease or cancer, detox is critical to restoring health and function. It is like cleaning your house, something that should be done regularly.

Exercise:

1. Do you exercise? _____
2. If so, what kind of exercise do you do each day?

3. If not, why? _____

Exercise increases order in the body and decreases disorder and entropy.

4. How much exercise do you do each week? _____

5. List the types of exercise you have used. _____

6. Do you get 20 minutes of aerobic exercise at least 3-4 times per week? _____
7. Do you spend at least ten minutes each day stretching?

8. Do you spend at least ten minutes each day using free weights to improve strength and bone density? _____

9. Do you know how to use exercise to restore the endocrine system in your body? _____

10. Does your home have enough space in it to allow you to move about and exercise freely? _____

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Balance:

1. Do you engage in active meditation or prayer? _____

2. If so, how often? _____
(Prayer is asking for help, searching for ideas & solutions to come to you, etc. Meditation is listening for answers.)
3. If not, why? _____

4. Do you engage in passive meditation? _____

5. If so, how often? _____

This is inner silence, letting go of all stress, entering into profound peace.
6. If not, why? _____

7. What do you do for a living? _____

8. Why did you choose this kind of work? _____

9. Do you like your work? _____
10. If so, why? _____

11. If not, why? _____

12. If you like your work, how can it become a path to an even better future? _____

13. If you don't like your work, what would you have to do to change it? _____

14. Apart from your work, do you like the company you work for? _____

15. If yes, how do you envision your future there? _____

16. If you don't like the company you work for, what would you have to do to change employers? _____

17. Which of your relationships are satisfactory and fulfilling? _____

18. Which of your relationships need work or serious therapy? _____

19. Which of your relationships would be better off if brought to a close? _____

20. What hobbies or other activities do you enjoy? _____

21. If you were in perfect health, what would you enjoy doing? _____

22. If you were in perfect health, what would you do differently with your life? _____

Additional Factors:

1. Can you walk, run, jump, lift, bend, climb, dance, and move easily without pain or shortness of breath?

2. How long can you do these activities without having to stop? At least 20 minutes? _____

3. Can you see, hear, and smell what others around you report seeing, hearing, and smelling? _____

4. Does food taste good to you? Or does it all taste the same? _____

5. Have you lost interest in new tastes and food textures? _____

6. Do you ever have a metallic taste in your mouth? _____
7. Do you have gas frequently after eating? _____
8. How tall are you? How much do you weigh? _____

9. Can you feel every square inch of your body? Or have you lost touch with some areas? For instance, can you feel your shoulder blades, the area between your toes, the back of your heel, behind your ears, the top of your foot? List those areas you can no longer feel. _____

10. Is your skin smooth and elastic? Or is it blemished, dry, flaky, or itchy? _____

Dry, flaky skin indicates lack of minerals and a shortage of the right fats, while itchy skin often indicates a lack of nutritional sulfur. Brown spots on your skin indicate your liver might be sluggish.

11. Are your fingernails strong and smooth? Or are they ridged and split or break easily? _____

If they are ridged, you are not absorbing minerals, especially iron.

12. What risk factors have you inherited from your mother and her side of the family? _____

13. What risk factors have you inherited from your father and his side of the family? _____

14. Do you believe that it is normal to deteriorate, degenerate, or become disabled either physically or mentally as you grow older? _____

15. What sorts of degenerative diseases do you see in yourself? _____

16. Do you intend to do anything about these diseases?

17. If yes, what will you do? _____

18. What risk factors are associated with your job? _____

19. Have you taken a mental stress assessment test within the last year? If so, what was your score? _____

20. Have you had a complete physical examination within the last year? _____

21. Have you been to the dentist for a complete dental examination within the last year? _____

22. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "none" and 10 being "constant," rate the amount of fatigue you experience daily. _____

23. How long would you like to live? _____

24. Experts agree that the human body should *typically* live to be ten times your age at puberty. This means if you

reached puberty at 12, you should live to be 120; if you were 15, you should live to be 150 years old. Multiply your age at puberty x 10. How old does this indicate you could live to be? _____

25. Do you believe in a power greater than yourself? Or are you the only source and resource you have? _____

26. Do you have the time, energy, and permission from yourself to really do the work of healing? _____

27. Do you feel it is important to keep working, keep moving ahead, even if you're not well, and that pills or drugs will help you do so? _____

28. What kinds of natural healing techniques have you used?

2. *Envision* your ideal, healthy future by harnessing the creative powers of your imagination.

“It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”
— *Shakespeare*

Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for 15 or 20 minutes, take your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook, a pen or pencil, perhaps put on some quiet instrumental music that doesn't have words, and envision yourself, your life, and your health. Start with the end in mind.

What will optimal health look like for you? What activities will you do? Will you sleep more or less than you do now? Imagine how you will feel and look. See yourself exercising, working, and playing. How much will you weigh? What are you eating and drinking? If you have forgotten how it feels to be fully energized and active, recreate this feeling and bask in it.

Imagine your healthy life as vividly and in as much detail as possible. Learn to relax deeply and allow your vision to create a future where you see yourself in your ideal body, living and working with joy, energy, and enthusiasm. Make this image of your life ideal for *you*. Don't try to copy fashion models, bodybuilders, or sports stars – unless you *are* one and plan to continue along those lines. See yourself taking the steps that create a vibrant, healthy body, enjoying exercise that is fun, taking the time you need to purchase, prepare, and eat delicious, healthy food, and sleeping enough to restore yourself. See yourself changing those relationships that severely stress you, educating yourself, if necessary, for a new and different job that fills your soul, becoming relaxed, wise, and peaceful in the world, and having the health and energy to fulfill your destiny in this world.

As you allow your imagination to create this vision of your life, keep in mind these questions, then write down what you see:

- What kind of health do you want now? _____

- What kind of health do you want five years from now?

- What about when you're 75? _____

- When you're 85? _____

- When you're 95? _____

- What about when you're 105? _____

- Simply put, how long would you like to go on living?

Some people think about this subject and others don't. If you're one who doesn't, your chances of living in good health to a "ripe, old age" are not as good as if you envision what you want your health to be, set an intention about it now, and take the steps to make it happen. Of course, you can't fully control how long you will live, but you can give yourself every chance to live a long, healthy, happy life while remaining energetic and active.

When you are finished visualizing your perfectly healthy life, write down *all* of the things you saw and felt, including as many details as possible, in your Empowerment Journal or your Self Growth Notebook. Be sure to put the date on your entry so you can look back later and see how your visions of a healthy life for you have changed over time.

My visions of optimal health and fitness would look, sound, and feel like:

feel a combination of excitement and gratitude for the life you envision.

If you find yourself struggling with gratitude, don't give up! Assume you will get there and keep going. The brain and body will soon begin to produce feelings of gratitude in accordance with any prominent imagery simply because to the brain and nerve impulses, mental rehearsal is the same thing as actual experience.

When you are finished, take a few minutes to count your blessings on paper by writing them in your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook because writing helps to make them more real. ***Write down as many things as you can think of that you are grateful for*** – both those you already have and those things that you envisioned as coming to you. We will return to this list in Step 11.

The things in my vision that I can be grateful for even if I don't actually have them yet:

Now make a commitment to re-envision your life as healthy, happy, fit, and energetic every day. When you do, you'll have a triple benefit – you will experience a taste of what that good health will feel like, you will build your capacity to create more health and energy, *and* you'll begin to become the way you imagine yourself being!

“The laws of God and nature are immutable: they cannot long be broken without retribution... Life in all its fullness is Mother Nature obeyed.”
—Weston A Price,
Nutrition and Physical Degeneration

Do this visualization and gratitude process during meditation or just before falling asleep each night. Some people reinforce their goals and create gratitude for ten minutes in the morning before they get out of

bed, while riding the train to the office, or by making it part of their daily preparation for the next day. When you do it, focus on the end state you want to achieve. This will condition you to look for things related to the reality you are creating, to be prepared for them, and thus ready to **perceive** and **receive** them when they emerge.

4. **Set S-M-A-R-T Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-Dated).**

“Set priorities for your goals... A major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first.”

— Robert J. McKain

This step involves making a list of goals that will create the level of health and energy you want. To begin, look back at the things you wrote down in *Step 2*. These were your visions of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health you want in life. Note: Although you were supposed to be envisioning your perfect health, don't skip over anything negative that may have crept into your vision. This may be something you have to pay special attention to in order to turn it into a positive.

As you review your vision of perfect health, make a list of goals that will move you toward optimal health and fitness. Your first goals may involve starting or stopping a given way of eating, a habit, or an activity. It might involve doing research to educate yourself about nutrition, starting an exercise program, or figuring out a perplexing physical or emotional problem.

There are hundreds of books, magazines, and journals on virtually every aspect of health – exercise, yoga, diet and nutrition, herbs, essential oils, nutritional supplements, homeopathy, drugs, massage, reflexology, surgery, and other powerful healing modalities.

“Better to act on something that doesn’t work out than wait for that one correct answer. Everything is a learning process; there is no perfect answer in life.”

— from *Gary Null’s Ultimate Anti-Aging Program*

People you know and the Internet can also be goldmines of helpful information. Don’t shut yourself off from a therapy or healing technique just because it is new, you don’t understand how it works, or it sounds strange. On the other hand, be careful to evaluate the information and the authority it comes from. And of course, what is helpful for someone else may not be helpful for you. At all times, put your own self-knowledge and common sense to work.

As you write your goals – and they must be written – be sure they are **specific**. Avoid generalities like “I want to improve my health,” “I will begin exercising,” or “I want to get rid of depression.” Instead, be specific and say, “I will eat at least five servings of vegetables and fruits every day.” For the exercise, look at your calendar or schedule and set aside specific times on chosen days. If you are suffering from depression, you might decide to investigate supplements that will alleviate it, or you might find a life coach or therapist to work with you.

Next, make sure the goals you set are **measurable**. If your goal is to eat more fruits and vegetables, it would be specific but not measurable. If you write, “I will stretch for ten minutes each morning (or lunchtime or whatever fits your schedule) on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Mondays,” that is a measurable goal. Once you’ve

“In order to seek one’s own direction, one must simplify the mechanics of ordinary, everyday life.”

— *Plato*

set your goals, track your performance. Get a calendar or planner with lots of room to make notes each day of what you actually do. In our example of eating five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, you would need to measure and track daily. Getting healthy requires work on your part.

Some of your goals will be more easily **attainable** than others, and it is actually good to have some goals present a significant challenge. They may even seem impossible from your current perspective. That's okay – as long as you can at least imagine that something could change that would allow attainment.

“Don't attempt to heal others when you yourself are full of wounds.”

— Euripides

It is best to set both short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals should be something you intend to accomplish within the next 90 days. Long-term goals typically involve more serious challenges and, thus, require more time. As you achieve the short-term goals, you will begin to experience a sense of satisfaction and success which will help you transition to the long-term goals. Long range goals may not seem attainable when you begin. However, as you work toward them, you'll begin to discover ways to reach them, and new conditions will emerge to help enable their fulfillment.

Realistic means that your goals are things that are both real and important to you. It is not realistic to think that you can grow an extra pair of lungs. Nor is it realistic to set goals to please someone else. Goals should be yours. They should come from *your* desires and motivations.

Time-dated means that you want to accomplish them by a certain date. You are going to push – in a playful, effortless way – to reach them by that time. In some cases, it may not matter if you miss the deadline, as

“Every morning we have twenty-four brand new hours to live.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

you can set a new time frame. However, if you are lax about the date again and again, it defeats the purpose of setting a time-frame for accomplishment.

Process-oriented goals – things that you do on a daily or weekly basis – may not necessarily have a completion date. Let's say you have a goal to exercise for 20 minutes daily. Once it becomes a regular and enjoyable habit that you do willingly, you might stop reviewing and tracking it because it's now part of your lifestyle.

Long-term, lifetime health goals:

90-day health goals:

Monthly health goals:

There are many factors that play into attaining optimum health – it usually is more than a matter of merely avoiding bad habits. Early in the process it might be prudent to consult two or three expert advisors, survey books to find those that would be helpful, or explore a class that offers helpful information from someone experienced in the subject you’re learning about.

“If you truly want to heal, one of the most important steps you can take is to return to *real* food.”

— Penny Kelly,
From The Soil To The Stomach

If you want to fine tune your body *and* mind, managing your action plan is crucial to creating the healthy life you envision. Wherever you decide to begin, write your action plans in your Empowerment Journal or Self Growth Notebook. The important thing is to begin!

6. Use visualization with vision boards and treasure maps.

“Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.”

— Jonathan Swift

Visualization greatly accelerates getting what you want because of the law of attraction – the more time and energy spent envisioning something you want, the more quickly and completely you draw it to yourself. If you can visualize during meditation or on and off throughout the day – great! However, you don’t have to be good at visualization to enjoy the benefits of it. Instead, you can create a vision board that will do essentially the same thing.

A vision board, or treasure map, is a poster or personal bulletin board with all sorts of pictures, cards, words, sentences, photos, sayings, clippings, or meaningful items pasted, pinned, tacked, or clipped to it symbolizing your vision of yourself.

In the case of goals for fitness, your vision board might include pictures of people doing recreational or sporting activities that you love. If you are training seriously and want to increase your skills in a particular sport, scientific studies have shown that mental practice in times of relaxed but focused meditation can be very helpful. You must visually go through each step of completing the perfect tennis or golf stroke, shooting the basketball, etc., while seeing and feeling the perfect result. Championship skiers will mentally ski an entire course as a form of practice that reinforces what they've done on the hill earlier in the day.

Whatever your specific goals are, it is important that the images you choose be as specific and emotionally charged as possible. See the precise nature of how you want to be and act. Imagine yourself in the setting you are pasting onto the vision board. Feel yourself engaged in the activity, looking like the body, or preparing and eating the food you select for your bulletin board. Let yourself feel what it will be like to be enjoying optimum health and fitness, so that almost any activity you wish to pursue is open to you immediately.

It is well known in American culture that a perfect figure is more highly prized than good health. Eating disorders, which were once mainly a female problem, have spread to an increasing number of men. Numerous people of both genders suffer from a poor self-image, distorted thinking, unrealistic expectations, and self-destructive behavior patterns. The unfulfilled need for approval, belonging, and love, coupled with widespread ignorance about real food,

“The greatest force in the human body is the natural drive of the body to heal itself—but that force is not independent of the belief system.”

— *Dr. Norman Cousins*

nutrition, true health, balance, and fitness, sets off unhealthy habits of eating *and* thinking.

If you have struggled with an eating disorder, it may not be helpful to focus on visual images of an ideal body without a coach, mentor, or otherwise trained professional. If you have distorted self-perception, you may be unable to recognize what is realistic for you. Remember that reaching optimum health may mean *freeing your mind* from concerns about your body's appearance and learning to eat for a balance of enjoyment and good nutrition.

7. Develop and use affirmation statements.

“Affirmations are simply a blueprint for growth and change.”

—Lou Tice

Affirmation statements, as the name implies, affirm what is true, what we believe to be true, or what we want to be true. They are a natural part of our self-talk. The trouble is, what we are saying to ourselves often affirms *negative* things we take to be true about the self – “I can't do that”... “I'll never get in shape,” etc.

Affirmations need to be ***brief and positive***. If you struggle with controlling what you eat, don't say, “I'm going to stop overeating.” Make your affirmation be “I am a healthy eater.” Then, believe that your new intention, your decision to eat foods that are good for you whenever possible, is making you a healthy eater from that moment forward, even though you may have an occasional lapse. Since all self-perception is based on habit and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, ***think of affirmations as gentle reminders of how you want to be and the new habit of self-perception that you are establishing.***

as excellent reminders that you are taking charge of your life and are doing so with energy and enthusiasm!

8. Nurture your heart's desires.

“Every ceiling, when reached, becomes a floor, upon which one walks as a matter of course and prescriptive right.”

— Aldous Huxley

Much time in our lives is spent learning to suppress, rather than nurture, our heart's desires. Yes, some gratification needs to be deferred, but we often take it too far.

There are many ways to nurture your heart's desires. One important way is to **reserve at least one day a week to follow your heart and do things associated with health and fitness**, things that you may have little time for in your ordinary routines. This may include making special foods, detox, fitness activities, recreation, or other activities healing, refreshing, or revitalizing.

Another way is to **practice meditation**, which is a powerful way to keep your heart's desires alive. Meditation can take many forms and a helpful way to begin is to purchase a guided meditation on CD from an experienced teacher. This will help you get started, although you can also begin on your own by sitting quietly, with eyes closed, and letting go of all thought, tension, problems, or worries. Breathe slowly and deeply and remain quiet until you are empty of everything except awareness of your own presence. Hold this for a short time, and then allow yourself to become aware of your desire for health, energy, fitness, and a life in which you can express your heart's desires.

“The mastery of nature is vainly believed to be an adequate substitute for self-mastery.”

— Reinhold Niebuhr

In the type of meditation that remains quiet and receptive, you may find that ideas come to you that will help you

realize your goals. There is also abundant documentation that meditation dramatically lowers stress, increasing the effectiveness of your immune system, helps focus for better productivity, among other benefits. Learning and practicing simple forms of meditation and physical relaxation are a key component to enjoying optimal health and well-being.

A third way to nurture your heart’s desires is to use **Heart Math**, a powerful and easy-to-use computer-based system to help you get into the zone of relaxation, focus, and high performance. It guides you to move into what is called “mind and heart coherence” and teaches you to extend that state for a multitude of mental, emotional, and physical benefits. Part of its effectiveness is the relaxed state you enter and the profound feelings of appreciation and gratitude that fill you – emotions that help you keep or restore good health. You can find more about this incredible tool at www.freezeframer.net.

In our hard-driving, competitive society it is easy to think that your highest achievements will be reached by working long hours for six or seven days a week. Taking time to do some of your favorite activities, especially those that require physical activity or exertion, will help move you toward vibrant good health and make you *more effective*, especially when you need to put in those long hours.

“One way to get thin is to re-establish a purpose in life.”
— Cyril Connolly

Places I can go, things I can do to nurture myself and my soul:

Often, those of us who do business coaching see that people actually *increase* their productivity and career success when they start taking a day or two off each week. You have a natural cycle of exertion and recovery.¹ Learn to recognize and follow it. Nurturing your heart’s desires for optimal health and fitness requires that you remain physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in dynamic balance.

9. Identify and work with coaches, mentors, and cheerleaders who will support you.

“Goethe said there would be little left of him if you were to discard what he owed to others.”

— Charlotte Cushman

No one can get where they want to be by themselves. Even the most independent, successful people have teachers, associates, or coaches who help them achieve their goals. Many people have multiple coaches, each for a different aspect of their lives.

As much as possible, ***try to find coaches or mentors who have experience and personal success in the area you are seeking to improve.*** The more you are around or work with healthy, high-functioning people, even in informal settings, the more you will tend to think and act like them – a key to your success.

Potential mentors and coaches:

People you need for support are probably in your life right now. You may merely need to begin sharing your goals and intentions with the carefully chosen coaches, advisors, or associates you believe will grasp what you need and be there in helpful ways. Avoid choosing friends or family members as they won't have the needed perspective, may not see your true potential, and may be afraid of how your goals might affect them.

There are many places to find supporters who are vital to your success. The internet is a great resource, and you may find local people who are wonderful healers and supporter!

10. Create your own Mastermind team.

“You can overcome almost any obstacle you face, no matter what your education or talents, if you use the mastermind principle effectively.”

— *Napoleon Hill (as summarized by Matthew Sartwell)*

One of the most powerful ways to achieve goals in any area of life is to be part of a mastermind team. This is a group of like-minded people who meet regularly to support each other and generate powerful ideas through interaction,

brainstorming, deep listening, etc. Often someone else in the group will have dealt successfully with the very health issue you are struggling with and can offer suggestions and support along with encouragement.

You can create your own group if you can't find one to join. Start with just one other like-minded person, although three or more in the group will be better. As the group forms, write down the commitments you will make to one another. For example, group members may share intimate, frightening, or potentially embarrassing details of life, so confidentiality is critical from the start. Other agreements might include not making assumptions, being honest, not interrupting, being compassionate, or other points that are important to various members. Making these agreements from the start will increase the depth and power you experience during the mastermind process.

“A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him, I may think aloud.”
— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Possible members of my Mastermind Team:

You will find a lot of information on mastermind teams in a classic work that has guided millions of people in accomplishing goals and fulfilling their missions, *Think and Grow Rich*, by Napoleon Hill. You can order it at Amazon.com or any good bookstore.

11. Apply the Law of Attraction by flowing energy to your vision.

“The first rule of tinkering with intelligence is to rule out all fear.”

— Penny Kelly

There is a very simple but profound principle that works in the subtle levels of the physical as well as the metaphysical and spiritual realms. This is the principle that similar things are attracted to each other or “like attracts like.” The mechanism through which it works is *thought*. **What you think about becomes your experience** and draws to you those people and events that come to characterize your life and time in the body.

If you are always worried that your husband is cheating, will fall in love with someone else, or will leave you for someone else, and you spend a lot of time feeling suspicious, spying on him, objecting when he wants to go somewhere without you, dressing yourself in overly-sexy clothing and flirting to make him jealous, demanding that you do everything together, being upset if he talks to another woman or looks at another woman – your life experience is dominated and limited by the thought of jealousy.

“What is at the center of your life? Carefully examine where you spend your attention, your time. Look at your appointment book, your daily schedule... This is what receives your care and attention—and by definition, you love.”

— Wayne Muller,
How Shall We Love

Do any of the following phrases describe you?

- You are always worried that you will catch every cold, virus, and disease that’s going around.
- You tell yourself that you can’t afford time to really heal.
- You refuse to take a day off to rest and heal because you believe you can’t afford it.

A constant feeling of dissatisfaction with your health or body image is usually the result of being in a negative rut that runs on autopilot and of which you are barely conscious. To counter this, you must ***begin consciously choosing what fills your mind***. Creating and nurturing thoughts and feelings of perfect health is central to success in reaching optimal health!

A good place to start is to go back to the list you made in Step 3 of what you are grateful for in relation to health, fitness, energy levels, and what you are able to do physically. Once again, sit in a quiet place and think about the things that are working in your life and the gifts you've already been given. See yourself the way you want to be. If you want to accelerate the process, the thoughts you purposely create and dwell on should include vivid imagery as much as possible and engender positive emotions. Emotion is the driver of most of our crucial choices and is a powerful attracting force.

Work at creating the feelings associated with this and keep working at it until you can actually *feel* a combination of excitement and positive energy for the life you envision. Then let those feelings flow outward into the world. When the entire world is engulfed in your gratitude for health and well-being, verbally say thank you for the good health, strength, energy, or whatever you are feeling. Express it in your own words. Know that the energy of what you are creating in your mind immediately begins drawing this experience to you. Then, in your Empowerment Journal, write down each thank you expressed aloud. Put a date on your entry so you can see things change as you progress.

“Nature never did betray
the heart that loved her.”
— *William Wordsworth*

Conscious thoughts I will hold in my mind:

Things I can say “thank you” for and really *feel* it:

Things I can say “thank you” for and *learn to feel* it:

These tie back to Steps 6, 7, and 8 above. The things you want to attract are what will drive the visualization, affirmations, and nurturing of your heart’s desires, bringing them into reality.

An important distinction here: avoid giving significant attention to what you don’t want. Don’t worry, fuss, or mull over things you fear or the energy you put out will draw them to you. If you catch yourself thinking such thoughts, that is good – you’re changing old habits! That is one of the hardest steps. If you quickly reverse the thought to the positive and engage a positive emotion, you can reverse the

negative habits. It's a challenge to break old habits, and it takes time! Again, just begin...again and again if necessary!

12. Engage in lifelong learning of the essential successful living skills.

“...that is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.”

— *Doris Lessing*

There is no point at which a person masters all the skills of successful living. Even in your strongest area or two, there will always be much more to learn and new ways to apply that knowledge. Commit yourself now to lifelong learning, and the journey will be eternally interesting and rewarding.

One thing is certain, however. You can be much healthier, happier, full of energy, light of heart and mind if you take good care of your body. Recent research has discovered that there is no gene for death. We are programmed only for life! The body is designed by our Creator to constantly renew, repair, and rebuild itself. All we have to do is cooperate! Learn to do so and you can be vibrant, energetic, mobile, and productive for your entire life. The internet alone has enough educational resources to keep a person busy for a lifetime. Search and find solutions that work for you, and you will begin to feel more and more able to heal yourself.

Conclusion

Plan to return to this book several times for review and support in what you are doing toward achieving health and fitness. Find ways to set up systems and habits so as much of it as possible becomes automatic. This saves the time and distraction of constant, repetitive decision making as well as the incredible energy drain of inner battles over what to eat, when to exercise, and what to do to maintain good health.

Even if your former activity and function cannot be *fully* remedied, you can still proceed and reap tremendous improvements along with a sense of well-being that is beyond value.

Everything in your life is interconnected. Working on health, fitness, and being able to do the things you would love to do will impact what is happening in other areas of your life as well. With the power of good health, fitness, and a deep sense of well-being, you can proceed more rapidly toward fulfilling your destiny and give your gift to the world. So now...***begin your life of Optimal Health and Fitness!***

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¹ *The Power of Full Engagement* by Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr.