

P A R T I

Strengthening Your Inner Resources

Introduction to Holistic Health

OBJECTIVES

This chapter should enable you to

- Identify basic human needs and factors that enable them to be satisfactorily met
 - List at least six features of an ideal health profile
 - Perform a comprehensive self-evaluation of holistic health status
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Welcome to your journey to optimum holistic health!

Often, health is thought of as the absence of disease. While that certainly is an important aspect of health, it is hardly complete. A comprehensive consideration of health includes all facets of an individual: physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. This *whole person* view of the individual is what holistic health is all about.

As you most likely have experienced yourself, when one facet of your life is not functioning satisfactorily, your total well-being is affected. For example, you may eat nutritious foods, exercise regularly, and ace a physical exam with no abnormal findings. However, if you just lost a relationship with someone significant to you, you may feel fatigued, have a poor appetite, experience insomnia, be unable to focus, and, generally, feel poorly. Such situations remind us that a disruption to any one aspect of ourselves impacts general health and well-being.

Self-care is a term that is used to describe the active role people take in maintaining or improving their health. It is an aspect of health that is often overlooked when health care is discussed. Even in the arena of preventive medicine, which aligns close to the idea of self-care in modern medicine, the emphasis is more on the early detection of disease than the active promotion

KEY POINT

Americans have come to accept the World Health Organization's definition of health as a state of physical and mental well-being and not just the absence of disease.

There is a broader view in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). TCM includes the belief that the human being is composed of and surrounded by an energy system or field. This energy system is understood to resemble an electromagnetic field, expressed on the minute level as the behavior of electrons and neurons and on the gross level as the experience of vitality. The energy system is made up of energy pathways, often referred to as meridians. The pathways are believed to carry energy and information throughout the human organism to unite body, mind, and spirit. Health is seen as having a sufficient amount of energy circulating freely in the organism.

of health. Although there is a focus on health screening, less attention is given to educating people about healthy living habits, such as exercise, stress management, and nutrition and on the factors affecting the ability to achieve them.

Making minor adjustments in health practices to prevent diseases is easier than caring for diseases after they have developed. Prevention starts with taking stock of health habits and comparing them with those consistent with optimum health. By identifying the behaviors that lead to poor health, individuals can address those unhealthy practices and sources of imbalance and begin taking steps to change.

Basic Human Needs

To maintain a healthy state, people need to assure they are meeting basic human needs, which include the following:

- Respiration
- Circulation
- Nutrition
- Hydration
- Elimination
- Rest
- Movement
- Comfort
- Safety

Connection with significant others, culture, the environment, and a higher power

Purpose

Although these needs appear straightforward and simple, their fulfillment depends on some complex factors, such as:

- *Physical, mental, and socioeconomic factors.* A person who is paralyzed and unable to lift a utensil to her mouth or someone who has Alzheimer's disease and cannot remember what to do when food is placed before him may be able to chew, swallow, and digest food, but lack the ability to get food into his or her mouth due to physical or mental impairments. Likewise, a senior citizen on a fixed income may omit the medications that her body needs to function normally, because she lacks adequate funds to pay for the prescription.
- *Knowledge, skills, and experience.* A pregnant woman who is unaware that alcohol can be dangerous to her baby may continue drinking and threaten the safety of her child. A person who lacks an understanding of the significance of a relationship with Christ may experience hopelessness and depression in an existence without spiritual meaning.
- *Desire and decision to act.* An individual could describe the recommended dietary intake and list foods that are harmful, yet continue to consume junk foods. A person may know that an adulterous relationship is loaded with problems and risks that could destroy health, job, and family, yet be unwilling to terminate the affair.

Exploring the factors that impact the basic need for nutrition demonstrates the complexities at play. To maintain a healthy nutritional state, an individual needs to do the following:

Know what constitutes a healthy diet

Have the cognitive ability to plan, prepare, and consume meals

Have the money to purchase food

Be physically able to shop for, handle, prepare, and consume food

Know how to cook or have access to someone who can

Be motivated to eat properly

Have an emotional state that is conducive to proper food intake

Make sound dietary choices

Organize activities to have the time to eat

When deviations from health are identified, it is useful to consider what factors could be contributing to the problem so that appropriate plans of correction can be developed. For example, someone with an obesity problem who

eats too much of the wrong foods may do so because he or she is depressed. Although classes that review healthy foods could be beneficial, behavioral changes may be more likely to occur if the person receives counseling and other treatment for depression.

Self-Assessment

An overall evaluation of health begins with a review of the current health status and health practices. An ideal health profile is one in which an individual:

- Consumes an appropriate amount of quality food.
- Exercises regularly.
- Maintains weight within an ideal range.
- Has effective stress coping mechanisms.
- Balances work and play.
- Looks forward to activities with energy and enthusiasm.
- Falls asleep easily and sleeps well.
- Eliminates waste with ease and regularity.
- Has meaningful relationships.
- Enjoys a satisfying sex life.
- Feels a sense of purpose.
- Feels safe.
- Is free from pain and other symptoms.

When the ideal is not being met, there needs to be an exploration into the reasons so that strategies to improve health habits can be identified and implemented.

Self-Assessment

An important first step to your journey to optimum holistic health is to take stock of your current status. This process takes time, effort, and serious evaluation of your current status and function. The following pages offer a comprehensive assessment tool to help you gain insight into your health status. Try to answer the questions as thoroughly as possible as they will help you later when you consider habits that you can acquire to improve your health in a holistic manner.

You may feel that completing an assessment such as this one is a tedious process. Perhaps you've never had to participate in such a comprehensive

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF HEALTH

Age_____ Marital status_____ Children_____ Occupation_____

Height_____ Current weight_____ Weight range_____

Diet

Describe your food intake in a typical day:

Check all items present and describe:

- _____ Indigestion, heartburn
- _____ Regurgitation
- _____ Use of antacids
- _____ Poor appetite
- _____ Nausea, vomiting
- _____ Chronic halitosis

Condition of teeth:

Do you fast? If so, describe:

Nutritional supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, enzymes) used:

Give amount and type:

Please check the frequency of intake of the following foods:

	<i>Daily</i> <i>(amount)</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Comments/Related</i> <i>Factors</i>
Fruit	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fruit juices	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vegetables	_____	_____	_____	_____
Vegetable juices	_____	_____	_____	_____
Red meat	_____	_____	_____	_____
Poultry	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fish	_____	_____	_____	_____
Milk	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cheese	_____	_____	_____	_____
Pasta	_____	_____	_____	_____
Bread, rolls	_____	_____	_____	_____

Cereal	_____	_____	_____	_____
Beans, peas	_____	_____	_____	_____
Coffee	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tea (caffeinated)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Soda	_____	_____	_____	_____
Candy	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cakes, pies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ice cream	_____	_____	_____	_____
Chocolate	_____	_____	_____	_____
Salty snacks	_____	_____	_____	_____
Table salts	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sugar	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sugar substitute	_____	_____	_____	_____
Beer	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wine	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hard liquor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Water	_____	_____	_____	_____
Comments:				

Activity

Describe all checked:

- _____ Difficulty walking or moving
- _____ Joint pain or stiffness
- _____ Muscle cramps, pain
- _____ Muscles too loose, too tight
- _____ Frequent fractures, sprains
- _____ Brittle bones, osteoporosis
- _____ History of falling

Type and frequency of exercise:

Breathing and Circulation

Describe all checked:

- _____ Allergies
- _____ Nasal stuffiness
- _____ Chronic runny nose
- _____ Shortness of breath
- _____ Cough
- _____ Wheezing, asthma
- _____ Frequent colds

- _____ Chest pain
- _____ Palpitations
- _____ Numbness
- _____ Dizziness, light-headedness
- _____ Leg cramps
- _____ Varicose veins
- _____ History of smoking

Sleep Pattern

Usual bedtime_____ Usual wake-up time_____

Napping pattern:

Do you awaken refreshed?

Insomnia? Describe:

Fatigue? Describe

Sleep aids:

Quality of sleep:

Factors interrupting sleep:

Elimination Pattern

Describe all checked:

- _____ Urination difficulty, dribbling
- _____ Pain or burning with urination
- _____ Voiding during night
- _____ Inability to pass urine, hesitancy
- _____ Incontinence
- _____ Blood in urine
- _____ Constipation
- _____ Diarrhea
- _____ Gas (flatus)
- _____ Irritable bowel syndrome
- _____ Blood in stool
- _____ Hemorrhoids
- _____ Laxative use
- _____ Enema use, colonic irrigations
- _____ Regular Frequency of bowel movements:

Skin and Hair

Describe all checked:

- _____ Rashes
- _____ Itching
- _____ Unusual sensations

- _____ Foul body odor
- _____ Dry skin
- _____ Oily skin
- _____ Unusual marks or moles
- _____ History of shingles
- _____ Hair loss, breakage
- _____ Dry scalp
- _____ Unhealthy-looking hair
- _____ Brittle nails
- _____ Soft nails
- _____ Other problems:

Reproductive

Female

Describe all checked:

- _____ Vaginal discharge
- _____ Vaginal dryness
- _____ Hysterectomy
- _____ Problems with sexual function
- _____ Change in sex drive, interest
- _____ Pain during intercourse
- _____ Breast abnormalities

Perform monthly self-exam of breasts? _____

Date of last mammogram:

Date of last gynecological exam:

If menopausal:

Year began:

- _____ Symptoms:
- _____ Hormonal replacement therapy

If menstruating:

- _____ Regular menstruation
- _____ Painful menstruation
- _____ PMS

Male

- _____ Prostate exam
- _____ PSA

Sensory*Describe all checked:*

- ☐ Wear eyeglasses
- ☐ Poor vision
- ☐ Cataracts
- ☐ Glaucoma
- ☐ See halos around lights
- ☐ Cloudy vision
- ☐ Pain in eyes
- ☐ Dry eyes
- ☐ Watery eyes
- ☐ Poor hearing
- ☐ Excess ear wax
- ☐ Unusual sensations, tingling
- ☐ Numbness
- ☐ Paralysis
- ☐ Decreased taste
- ☐ Unusual taste in mouth
- ☐ Inability to smell
- ☐ Smell unusual odors
- ☐ Sensitive to scents/odors

Date of last eye exam:

Date of last hearing exam:

General Symptoms*Describe all checked:*

- ☐ Frequent colds, infections
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Pain
- ☐ Unusual fatigue
- ☐ Swelling
- ☐ Other

Emotional and Spiritual*Describe all checked:*

- ☐ Depressed
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Moody
- ☐ Mood swings

- ☐ Hyperactive
☐ Suicidal
☐ Episodes of confusion
☐ Inability to focus
☐ Easily cry
☐ Never cry
☐ Feel hopeless
☐ Paranoid, suspicious
☐ Argumentative
☐ Passive
☐ Difficulty maintaining relationships
☐ Marital conflict, problems
☐ Difficulty coping
☐ High level of stress in life
☐ Measures to manage stress:
☐ Belief in God, higher power
☐ Connection with faith community
☐ Feel spiritually empty, distressed
☐ Feel worthless
☐ Feel life has no meaning

Changes I would like to make in my life:

Known Health Conditions/Diagnoses Treatment/Management

Prescription and Nonprescription Medications Used

Medication	Dosage	Frequency Taken	Reason Used
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
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Complaints

List major complaints you have about your health in order of importance:

Landmarks in Your Life History

Often, significant events, positive and negative, can provide an understanding of your current health status and needs. Divide your life into decades and remember the significant occurrences during each decade. These can include the loss of a significant person, change in school or job, relationship started or terminated, illness of self or significant others, period of spiritual growth or distress, etc.

List the occurrences the appropriate decade.

Age	Description of Significant Occurrence
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1–9	
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10–19	
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20–29	
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30–39	
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40–49	
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50–59	
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60–69	
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70–79	
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80+	
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assessment of your health status. Unfortunately, the realities of our healthcare system are that many practitioners are too busy to spend time getting to know the minds, bodies, and spirits of their clients, and insurance reimbursement favors the treatment of symptoms and diseases rather than the nurture and care of the whole person. This presents a challenge for you to be an informed, proactive healthcare consumer so that you will be able to:

- Understand the many influences on your health.
- Identify problems and relationships among your mind, body, and spirit that may not be readily apparent to your healthcare provider.
- Be able to seek the assistance you need from the source best able to help you (e.g., physician, clergy, nutritionist, counselor, etc.).

Go through your self-assessment and highlight or circle signs, symptoms, and unusual or abnormal habits. Now, think about the specific need that is affected by the signs and symptoms and write them under the appropriate heading in column A on the form that follows. Some signs and symptoms can affect several needs. For example, “Use of antacids” can be listed across from *Food and water* and *Safety*; “Unusual fatigue” can be listed across from *Movement and activity*, *Sleep and rest*, *Connection*, *Safety*, and *Normality*.

Now, examine the signs, symptoms, and habits and try to consider the underlying reason(s) that could be responsible, such as eating a lot of fried foods for use of antacids and eating poorly and having stressful job for unusual fatigue. Jot down what you believe the underlying reason to be in column B. In some circumstances, you may not know the underlying reason; it is fine to put a question mark in the column.

Lastly, in column C, write an action you can take to change or reduce the sign, symptom, or habit, such as “reduce meals at fast food restaurants to once a week” or “discuss excessive workload with supervisor.” For some signs, symptoms, and habits, your action may need to be to obtain a medical evaluation, seek the counsel of a professional, or pray for insight and guidance into the situation.

Following the blank action plan for your use is one that shows some options to consider under each category. As you progress in this book, you will find additional suggestions to assist you in developing your actions.

YOUR ACTION PLAN TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

<i>Need</i>	<i>A Sign/symptom/ habit</i>	<i>B Underlying reason</i>	<i>C Action</i>
Respiration/ circulation			
Food and water			
Elimination of wastes			
Movement and activity			
Sleep and rest			
Comfort			
Safety			
Connection with significant others, culture, environment, higher power			
Safety			
Purpose			

SAMPLE ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ACTION PLAN

<i>Need</i>	<i>A Sign/symptom/ habit</i>	<i>B Underlying reason</i>	<i>C Action</i>
Respiration/ circulation	Chronic cough Shortness of breath when climbing > 15 stairs	Smoking Poor physical condition	Enroll in smoking cessa- tion plan Begin exercise program Do deep breathing exercises several times throughout the day
Food and water	Frequent heartburn High intake of snack food	High intake of fried food Eat while working stressed mealtime Don't have time to go to caf- eteria at lunch time; rely on vending machine items	Eliminate fried foods Increase fresh foods, broiled and baked items Schedule time to eat in cafeteria Keep healthy snack foods in office
Elimination of wastes	Frequent constipation	Low fiber and fluid intake Low activity level	Include bran cereal at breakfast Eat at least five fresh fruits daily Eat a salad at lunch Adhere to exer- cise program

SAMPLE ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Movement and activity	Stiff joints in morning Difficult to walk and engage in physical activity	Lack of exercise	Get physical exam to determine safety of exercise program Begin exercise program Park car in farthest space from building Perform yoga stretches several times each day
Sleep and rest	Poor quality of sleep Awake tired, difficult to get out of bed Nod off after meals	High consumption of caffeine Spouse snores loudly Consume high amount of sweets	Eliminate caffeine after 4 p.m. Suggest spouse get evaluated for snoring Sleep in separate room every other night Change diet
Comfort	Stiff joints	Insufficient exercise	Adhere to exercise program Stretching exercises Heat application
Safety	Overmedicate with pain medications	Try to find quick and easy means to control joint pain	Engage in exercises to keep joints flexible Use heat, massage

SAMPLE ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

Connection with significant others, culture, environment, higher power	Often neglect prayer life	Allow worldly demands to take priority	Discuss with friend and ask friend to hold accountable
Safety	Take higher than recommended doses of medications for headaches Overuse antacids	Fail to manage stress and eat well	Eat healthier diet Practice stress management techniques daily Eliminate foods that trigger heartburn
Purpose	Don't feel inspired or excited by anything	Working at job that is not challenging and that I do not feel good about	Begin to explore other jobs that use more of my skills and that offer meaningful work

Summary

In Western medicine, self-care primarily implies preventing illness and recognizing symptoms early; however, from a holistic perspective self-care refers to the active role individuals assume in maintaining and improving their physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health. From that perspective, an ideal health profile is one in which a person consumes an appropriate quality and quantity of food, exercises regularly, maintains weight within an ideal range, has good stress-coping skills, balances work and play, looks forward to activities with energy and enthusiasm, falls asleep easily and sleeps well, eliminates waste with ease, enjoys a satisfying sex life, feels a sense of purpose, and is free of pain and other symptoms. When deviations from the norm are experienced, factors that may be responsible must be explored, and, again, the approach must be holistic. For example, a physical symptom such as chest pain could be due to a medical condition of the heart or lungs, but it could also be related to stress, fatigue, guilt, a dysfunctional relationship, or

other nonphysical causes. An understanding of underlying factors affecting the health state is essential to developing individualized, effective health plans. Other chapters in this book will offer guidance in this process.

Suggested Reading

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