



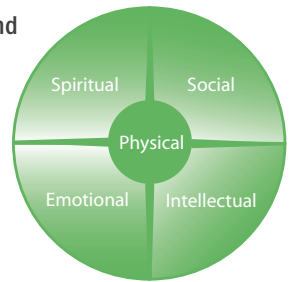
# Living the Healthy Choices

A Self-Care Guide to  
Creating Your Healthy Lifestyle

# Welcome to Living the Healthy Choices

This booklet is designed for you and your loved ones as a self-care guide, providing tips and resources that will help you toward improved well-being. The tips on the following pages are from renowned researchers and practitioners who have built their life's work on caring about the health and well-being of all people.

How each person attains health is unique to the individual and requires personal awareness beyond physical health. There are also emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of health to be balanced and nurtured. The diagram right demonstrates how these aspects interconnect. As you peruse this booklet, please contemplate how the various aspects of health interconnect for you. For example, the simple act of "taking a walk" outdoors can impact you physically by lowering your blood pressure, emotionally by boosting your mood, spiritually by promoting a sense of communing with nature, intellectually by improving your energy and focus, and socially if you walk with another person.



Source: *American Journal of Health Promotion*

Make new or increase the healthier choices you make each day, and your quality of life will be abundantly enhanced. May this self-care guide inspire satisfaction and fulfillment in your health and well-being.

Here's to your health and living the healthy choices!

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# Take a Walk... Receive Many Health Benefits

Walking is a gentle, low-impact exercise that can be one of the easiest and cheapest ways to be physically active. All you need is a good pair of shoes, and you can do it almost anywhere any time.

Brisk walking is considered a moderate-level physical activity. Experts agree that you need at least 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity on most days of the week to experience health benefits. It is acceptable to divide the 30 minutes into periods of at least 10 minutes each. For instance, use stairs instead of an elevator, get off a bus one or two stops early, or park your car at the far end of the lot at work.

Walking programs are available through neighborhood community centers, shopping malls, and fitness facilities. Or, you can start your own program at [www.thewalkingsite.com](http://www.thewalkingsite.com).



## Benefits of walking

- Raises “good” cholesterol.
- Lowers “bad” cholesterol.
- Lowers blood pressure.
- Reduces risk of or helps manage type 2 diabetes.
- Helps manage weight.
- Helps keep bones, muscles, and joints healthy.
- Boosts mood, reduces anxiety and depression.
- Method of stress mastery.
- Helps you feel more energetic.
- Helps you sleep better.
- Improves self-esteem.
- Provides an opportunity to socialize actively with friends and family.

# Eat Whole, Eat Fresh

## Nutrition Basics

- Use plant foods as the foundation of your diet—vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans & legumes.
- Consume enough calcium through low-fat or fat-free dairy products, vegetables, or a dietary supplement.
- Consume no more than 30 percent of calories in fats, preferably omega 3 fatty acids, e.g. avocados, olive oil, nuts and seeds. Keep saturated fats to no more than 10 percent of calories and trans fats as low as possible.
- Choose food with natural sugar, e.g. fresh fruit, limit foods that add sugar, e.g. most sports drinks.
- Eat moderate portions, e.g.: 3 ounces lean meat (*size of a deck of cards*), one-half cup fruit or vegetables.
- Use alcohol in moderation—one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. (*One drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor.*)
- Stay hydrated by drinking water daily. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) advises men to consume roughly 13 cups of water and women to consume 9 cups of water per day.

## The Dirty Dozen (high levels)

For people concerned about pesticides



on fresh produce, the Environmental Working Group, a non-profit research organization based in Washington, DC, has established the Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce. The Dirty Dozen are the 12 fruits and vegetables that most often contain pesticide residues—this is when to buy organic. The Clean 15 are fruits and vegetables with low pesticide residues—this is when it is okay to buy conventionally grown.

## The Dirty Dozen (*buy organic*)

Apples, celery, strawberries, peaches, spinach, imported nectarines and grapes, sweet bell peppers, potatoes, domestic blueberries, lettuce, and kale/collard greens.

## The Clean 15 (*buy conventionally-grown*)

Onions, sweet corn, pineapples, avocado, asparagus, sweet peas, mangoes, eggplant, domestic cantaloupe, kiwi, cabbage, watermelon, sweet potatoes, grapefruit, and mushrooms.

# Sleep Well Tonight

**Sufficient sleep** is defined as a duration of sleep followed by spontaneous awakening leaving one feeling refreshed and alert for the day. The actual number of hours an individual needs varies. Most adults require 7-8 hours of sleep per night.

## Health benefits

- High quality of life.
- Improved coping mechanisms—less irritable, better mood.
- Improved immune system—less likely to get sick and miss work.
- Improved memory function for learning and job responsibilities.
- Reduce odds of obesity, depression, and high blood pressure.
- Increased productivity—work and home.
- Reduced likelihood of work-related injuries.

## Sleep Tips

- Maintain a regular bed and wake time schedule, including weekends.
- Establish a regular, relaxing bedtime routine—reading a book, listening to soothing music, journaling to clear the mind, or meditating.



- Create a conducive sleep environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.
- Keep bed for sleeping—not watching TV or being on the computer.
- Finish meals 2-3 hours before bedtime routine—if snacking is required, choose milk or herbal teas, something not sugary.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol 2-3 hours before bedtime routine.

*For more tips, visit National Sleep Foundation, [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org).*

# Get Routine Health Screenings

Be an active participant in your self-care and healthcare. More than 70% of chronic diseases are preventable or manageable through lifestyle choices, such as routine health screenings, and behavior change and educational counseling.

Screenings are tests that look for diseases before symptoms are evident. Health plans cover basic preventative health screenings—at no additional cost.

## Common screenings

- Blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Cholesterol
- Cancer, such as mammograms and colonoscopies
- Flu and pneumonia shots
- Vaccinations against diseases such as measles, polio, or meningitis
- Flu and pneumonia shots
- Counseling, screening, and vaccines to ensure healthy pregnancies
- Regular well-baby and well-child visits from birth to age 21



## Behavior Change and Education Counseling

- Quitting tobacco use
- Losing weight
- Treating depression
- Reducing or stopping alcohol use
- Having a healthy pregnancy

For complete information, consult with your health care provider or go to:

### Men

[www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm)

### Women

[www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm)

*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



# Be Free from Substance Use and Abuse

Living tobacco-free, drug-free, and, if you consume alcohol, drinking responsibly are the best, most responsible choices you can make for yourself and the lives of the one you love. In addition to recreational drug use and more than moderate use of alcohol being illegal, these habits and tobacco use are detrimental, often fatal, to both you and your family's health.

Moderate alcohol use is no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. *(One drink is a 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.)*

Positive effects of quitting tobacco and drug use, and alcohol abuse include:

- More money is available for furthering education, vacations, and large purchases, such as a home or car.
- Reduced stress related to tasks, such as paying bills, and finding locations to smoke or drink.
- Reduced disease risk (cancers, diabetes, heart disease, stroke).
- Improved overall physical health and well-being.



- More time for family and friends.
- Increased productivity at work and home.
- Fewer sick days, which might translate into more paid time-off.
- Reduced risk of accidentally hurting yourself or others.

## **Do you or someone you know need to get help with an alcohol or drug issue?**

You can contact The National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service, which provides a toll-free telephone number, 1-800-662-HELP (4357), offering various resource information. Through this service you can speak directly to a representative concerning substance abuse treatment, request printed material on alcohol or other drugs, or obtain local substance abuse treatment referral information in your state.

# Embrace Your Emotions

Emotional health is the ability to create and sustain a positive attitude in life, maintain a healthy level of self-esteem, and express the full range of emotions that occur in human experience. While emotions can be thought of as the flow and experience of feelings that are molded by our attitudes, judgments, memories, and expectations of those feelings.

Learning to sustain a positive emotional state has a wide range of benefits physically and mentally, which include:

- Reduced stress
- Decreased anxiety and depression
- Improved social functioning
- Enhanced focus and thinking
- Increased emotional intelligence
- Decreased burnout and fatigue
- Increased energy for physical activity.

Many factors influence emotions. When feeling stress or out of control, try these breathing and smiling exercises to recreate a place of balance and calm.



## Breathing

- Inhale into a relaxed belly taking in light, love, and a healing energy. Feel yourself becoming brighter as you fill with light and joy.
- Exhale fully, releasing any negative states or feelings. You may picture this as darkness or a fog. If you have anger, fear, or sadness, breathe them out. If you have tension, anxieties or worry, release them as you exhale.

## Smiling

As you breathe, say the following statements in your mind. Repeat the exercise for several minutes.

**Inhale:** Breathing in, I calm my body

**Exhale:** Breathing out, I smile.

*If you want or need help, contact your Employee Assistance Program or United Way 211 ([www.211.org](http://www.211.org) or dial 211).*



# Stress Mastery

Stress is normal and impacts a person's quality of life every day. Positive stress that stimulates goal achievement can be an excellent source of motivation. However, prolonged low level stress can have a negative impact on health, work performance and relationships.

## Impact on Health

- Health conditions such as high blood pressure, heartbeat irregularities, insomnia, fatigue, digestive disorders, fertility problems, disruption of normal blood sugar control, and psychological dysfunctions such as anxiety and depression.
- Prolonged suppression of the immune system, results in higher rates of disease, recurrences of latent conditions, and increases susceptibility to cancer.

The first step of stress mastery is to be aware of what causes you stress and how you cope with it. Eating well, getting adequate rest, and exercising regularly are at the heart of maintaining a healthy, balanced perspective.

For daily preventative strategies



or when you need to ease stress, try these simple approaches to help you on your quest for stress mastery:

- Practice meditation or other mindful relaxation.
- Take mini-breaks during the day.
- Invite a mindful state as you go about your day.
- Get bodywork (e.g. *massage, reflexology, healing touch*) to help you get in touch with sensations in your body.
- Do exercises to reduce tension in your body.
- Engage in expressive therapies such as art, music, or dance.
- Talk with people you trust.
- Ask for and receive help.
- See a counselor or attend group support sessions.
- Choose not to worry about things you cannot control.
- Have fun through sports, hobbies, or social activities.

For more information, visit *Taking Charge of Your Health, University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality & Healing* ([www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu](http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu)).

# Know Your Community

A community is a social network created by a common bond to one or more people. You might be a member of multiple social networks. They can provide a sense of:

- Belonging
- Purpose
- Security
- Self-worth
- Altruism

Social networks promote positive mental health, by being a significant support system through life events, helping you master stress, and enhancing your immune system.

Ideas of social network communities are:

- Exercise at a fitness facility.
- Spiritual community.
- Take a walk with your pet.
- Find one or more hobbies.
- Be a mentor.
- Volunteer – join a cause.

According to *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research*, people who volunteer reported higher levels of happiness,



life-satisfaction, self-esteem, a sense of control over one's life, and physical health. In addition, people who volunteer experience better health in later years in terms of greater longevity, higher functional ability, and lower rates of depression.

To find volunteer opportunities in your community, visit the Corporation for National and Community Service at [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov), United Way at [www.liveunited.org](http://www.liveunited.org), or the website of your favorite cause, e.g. American Heart Association.

# Make Time... Connect with Family and Friends



**Relationship** is a state of connectedness between people, formed by an emotional bond or mutual experiences. Healthy relationships enhance your immune and endocrine systems against illness and disease, help you live longer, and respond better to stress.

Generally, a person's primary relationships are family and friends. These connections offer security, mutual support, care, nurturing of self-esteem, and love. Ways to stay connected:

## Tips to make family time:

- Eat at least one meal together each day without any kind of media distractions. Talk about each other's day, interests, and plans.
- Be a good role model. This supports your well-being as well as influences children to make healthy choices.

- Be active together. As a family, create a destination list of places you can walk, ride bikes, skate to, or visit.
- Laugh together either through activities you choose or funny movies.

## Create friend time or make new friends by:

- Scheduling a time to get together on a regular basis. Even if you have to reschedule, you briefly connect.
- Meeting to do one or more hobbies together.
- Volunteering.
- Exercising at a fitness facility.

*We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow humans.*

—HERMAN MELVILLE

# Education



## Discover Your True Potential

Potential is the possibility to expand your knowledge and skills on a path of self-discovery and development. Through intellectual growth and stimulation a person expands his or her perceptions of self and how they fit into the tapestry of life. This results in increased confidence, self-worth, mental capacity, and sense of purpose.

### Ways to discover your potential:

- Continue your education toward a higher academic degree.
- Take classes through a community college or university, community center, retail store, or service provider (*e.g. cooking class through your health insurance provider*).
- Pursue further education and major in something that you enjoy learning about.
- Volunteer at a hospital or other type of facility.
- Be a mentor through a school or non-profit organization.
- Teach English as a second language.

- Job shadow or be an apprentice for someone who is doing a job you are interested in learning more about.
- Learn a new hobby (*e.g. ballroom dancing, knitting, archery, basketball league, woodworking, etc.*).
- Create “a bucket list” of things you want to try and places you want to visit.

The *Clifton StrengthsFinder* is a great tool that identifies your top five talents and gives suggestions for hobbies and careers to pursue based on these strengths. The assessment is free with purchase of the book, available from bookstores, Amazon and the StrengthFinders website. To learn more go to:  
[www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx](http://www.strengthsfinder.com/home.aspx)

# Enjoy Your Work

Work is a necessity throughout an adult's life, whether being employed by an organization, running your own small business, or being a stay-at-home parent. It is important for a person to find meaningful work that utilizes unique personal skills and talents and enhances their lifestyle.

Even if a position is not what you thought it would be, look at the tasks and see how you can incorporate your own creative flair. Leave your mark and bring your strengths and gifts to improve a project. Be proactive and let your supervisor know about your ideas.

## Tips to experience happiness at work:

- **Build relationships:** Have a best friend or someone you connect with at work.
- **Be active during your day:** Get up each hour from your chair and move around, drink some water, connect with co-workers, take a 5-minute walk outside.
- **Personalize your workspace, surround yourself with things you love:** pictures of loved ones, art, quotes, plants, your favorite mug and tea—anything that expresses who you are and what you love.



- **Let your creativity shine through:** Look at ways you can bring your unique talents to a project.
- **Laugh:** Find ways to laugh throughout your day. Get a joke book, subscribe to daily joke e-mail, watch a funny video, and laugh at the absurdities of life.
- **Breathe:** When you sit a lot in front of a computer, you forget to breathe properly. As a result, you restrict the energy and oxygen moving through your body. Sit up tall and inhale your belly out and exhale your belly back toward your spine. Even just one minute of deep breathing can wake up your body and you can feel more relaxed and energized.
- **Be positive:** Focus on the good in any situation and keep away from people who are negative and gossiping, which brings negative energy to the working environment.

## Spiritual Well-being

You are a part of something greater. The world needs you and what you can contribute to make a difference!

Spiritual well-being is a sense of awareness of your connection to others, the planet, and beyond. It is appreciating that not everything can be understood and realizing the importance of the questions about meaning and purpose. Learn to honor and respect other people's views on those questions and create your own personal goals, values, and purpose.

Connecting with your spirituality happens in many different ways:

- Taking a walk in nature.
- Deep breathing.
- Keeping a gratitude journal.
- Observing and taking in a sunrise, sunset, or other moments of beauty in nature.
- Praying.
- Meditation.
- Practicing Yoga, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, or dancing.



- Attending a service at a faith community.
- Being part of a spiritual community.
- Serving in a homeless shelter, nursing home, or other service organizations in your community.
- Helping a neighbor, friend, or family member.
- Doing a hobby that you enjoy—painting, cooking, archery, music, etc.
- Writing in a journal expressing thoughts, emotions, or creative writing of poems, stories, songs, etc.

*We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.  
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.*

—TEILHARD DE CHARDIN



# Congratulations on taking steps to a better and healthier you!

May you find the information in this guide helpful for your journey to abundant health. Continue to celebrate the small successes each day. Soon, the healthy choice will be the easy choice!

We, at the Environmental Resource Center, hope you will continue living the healthy choices and encourage your friends, family, and your community to strengthen their efforts in creating a culture of health.

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