

## TAKING CHARGE OF OUR HEALTH

Most of our health outcomes are determined by our individual choices and to a lesser extent by our home and work environments, over which we as individuals also have some control. Very little good health comes from good genes or from what doctors or hospitals can do. Even our genes are turned on and off by what we eat, drink, and breathe, and by our other health habits. To stay healthy takes effort, discipline, and trade-offs or “sacrifices.” We can “pay now or pay later.” When we pay later, we pay a lot more, both we and our loved ones who have to care for us or have to grieve our sudden demise.

In most circumstances, we can choose the couch or the walk, and can allow ourselves time to sleep, pray, meditate, and relax. We can choose to avoid tobacco and other addictive substances and risky sexual and driving habits, and to avoid excess alcohol, processed food, fast food, sugars, sweet drinks, and refined starches

Even though many of the foods available to us are poisoned through greed, corruption, and lack of proper regulatory enforcement, we can do something about that. Eighty per cent of supermarket corn, soy and canola products come from genetically modified organisms (GMO’s) and are not labeled as such, but we can inform ourselves about them. We can refuse to buy these dangerous products, and we would likely see much different food choices made available to us as a result of our actions. Through political action we can demand the end of government subsidies for large scale agribusinesses that grow products used for junk food (high fructose corn syrup for one example.) Then maybe organic farmers (who receive no subsidies) would gain a more equitable competitive advantage.

Certain organic foods may be too expensive, but we can inform ourselves about which non-organic foods are most to be avoided, and we can choose to buy locally, directly from growers who can tell us about their farming methods, and we can grow some of our own foods, even in pots if no land is available.

We can connect with support groups for various health challenges, behavioral issues, and stress management, both in person and online, and we can get counseling for the really tough challenges.

Unfortunately, too many of us pay little attention to our sickness-promoting behavior choices and expect costly sickness and emergency care to be available to us when we need it, and we rely on doctors and drugs and hospitals to “fix” us when it is “late in the game.”

That option is a prescription for disaster, especially considering that adverse events from properly administered drugs and procedures in hospitals cause over 400,000 deaths per year, the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. Medical errors cause nearly 100,000 deaths, most of which are not investigated, and few result in changed procedures for improved safety. There are likely many more that are never reported.

Also unfortunately, we rely on health insurance to cover costs of procedures, and then sometimes more dangerous drugs or procedures are preferred by the insurers because they cost less. Many safer, natural, alternative treatments are not covered at all. As a result we choose the more toxic treatment rather than pay out of pocket. Making health insurance available to everyone is good, but it will not make us much healthier if not focused on prevention and wellness. It will deliver illness care to a disease-ridden society, still left suffering.

Even when chronic disease has already set in, it is not too late to make changes. I have known many people who have reversed chronic diseases such as cancer, arthritis, and heart disease with lifestyle changes along with food supplements and natural therapies.

For those of us who believe that God uses our bodies as temples, this is another incentive to stay healthy, to be more useful to serve God and creation. Jesus went around healing people. He wanted people to be well. Although sometimes illness can be a teacher and an opportunity to reassess our values, we don't have to make sickness a way of life. Also, it is more difficult to concentrate on spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, worship, selfless service, and scriptural study when caught up in depression, chronic pain, sleep deprivation, and the stress that comes with a chronic illness or disability. While illness does not stop us from doing them, if we come to these spiritual practices from vibrant health, they can be all the more effective and powerful. In Deuteronomy 31:6, God encourages us to "Be strong and of good courage."

Why not pay now instead of later? Let's take the best care of the precious gift we have been given so that our footprint on this earth will be one of leaving our surroundings in better condition than the way we found them.

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## BASICS OF MEDITATION

David G. Schwartz, M.D.

Quiet, undisturbed location

Comfortable position, preferable sitting or standing, not lying or you may fall asleep

Word or phrase that is inspiring, to repeat to yourself (a mantra)

As the mind wanders (it surely will), just bring the attention back to the mantra without judgment, say, "Oh well."

Take as little or as much time as you like. You probably will not want to do more than 20 minutes at a time. Twice a day is great. Even a little time is beneficial. No amount of effort is ever wasted.

The above methods are elements of concentration. If for a second or 2 or for a few seconds, you notice your mind stays on the mantra and it takes no effort, hold everything, don't do a thing, just be. That is meditation. Very few experienced "meditators" seldom reach the state of meditation for much longer time than that. Most people spend most of their time trying to concentrate. But that time is beneficial anyway. Then if, by any chance, the meditation turns into a loss of awareness of anything around, and you and the mantra are one, and you lose track of time, you experience the state of absorption, one step deeper than meditation. That also can be momentary. It is nice, but don't expect it.

Other forms of concentration/meditation include staring at an object, watching the breath, watching the thoughts, walking meditation (walking very slowly keeping attention only on the walking), and laughing meditation (laughing for no reason, fake or real, using the laughter as a mantra, then a few moments of silence afterward). Meditation in action or "mindfulness meditation" is practicing being fully present in all daily activities, focusing totally on what you are doing or experiencing in the moment. This is not compatible with multitasking. This is the most practical form of meditation. Too much sitting in meditation more than 3 times per day can lead to imbalance. All things in moderation are best. A caveat is important for those who are tempted to zone out and lose awareness of things around them frequently or for long periods of time. This is not a problem for most people, but for someone with a severe psychiatric problem, that could be an issue. So some sitting meditation balanced with meditation in action is best. Another caveat is that an occasional person can, through meditation, become a conduit for extraordinary psychic powers, and that is best not to get involved unless accompanied by a strong commitment to ethical principles such as the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, or some similar set of ethics and morals.

When you first start, your concentration may be very focused, beginner's luck, but as soon as you do it more regularly, don't be surprised if the mind rebels and acts like a "drunken monkey just bitten by scorpion." Just like when you tie a puppy to a leash, it gets more jumpy than before it was tied. Training the mind is like training a puppy, gentle discipline and a little trickery, and much patience. "Oh well."

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COCKTAIL  
David G. Schwartz, M.D.

Ahh! Intravenous vitamins!

Vitamin sea, magnesium, bees – thiamin, riboflavin, cobalamin, pyridoxine, et al squirt into the river's flow.

Ahh,! She smiles, flushes, as if floating.

Mitochondria mount a recovery.

Ribosomes revive.

He feels his get-up-and go coming back again.

Adrenal exhaustion, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue smile, nourished, relieved, satisfied, begin to take flight.

“Shall we see you again?”

Fools Do Approve thousands of toxic brews.

Not this one.

Too natural.

Not patentable.

Not sanctionable.

Not provable.

Heresy!

Fear Dominates Again.

Pharmaceutical behemoths reign on regulatory dysfunction.

Community-minded capitalism crippled by crony capitalism.

Freedom Dies Again.

Five smooth stones needed for David's sling.

Compassion, courage, community, collaboration, nature.

Will the Myer's Cocktail survive?