

Getting Well and Staying Well

By Rosie Bank

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In the very last chapter of *Integrative Nutrition*, the author and founder of the Institute of Integrative Nutrition, Joshua Rosenthal, challenged his readers to consider if we were in the process of **becoming** healthy, or were we living a healthy lifestyle in order to **be and stay** healthy. Let's noodle on this together, preferably the whole-grain, gluten-free kind.



Consider the following:

- Is health a destination or a journey?
- Is health something that you strive for to fix not being healthy?
 - Have you made a choice about the level of vibrancy, energy, strength, and vitality you experience?
 - If so, do you support that choice with activities throughout the day?
 - If not, what is the price you pay?

Let's just say that you decided to become one of those fortunate individuals who knew without any doubt that you wanted to live your very best life and have your body work beautifully for you. Let's say that you were ready for a shift in your attitude and actions in order to feel more confident, be happier, have more energy, and avoid some of the pitfalls of not taking care of yourself. Where would you start?

Begin with the end in mind

Health and wellness are the rewards of making on-going choices over time. There are some changes that can give you practically instant results. A few examples are switching from soda to water, getting in bed at a reasonable hour in order to become well-rested, and (if you are sedentary) incorporating movement and exercise into your regimen. Especially if this is a change from your current practice, you will get back energy practically right away. Other adjustments will have long-term benefit. Learning how to separate from work and focus on relationships with loved ones might take some getting used to, but know that in the long run you will be happier and more content connecting with people who are most important to you. Depending on where your weak links are, you can get the most back from these adjustments that pertain to your situation. (If your family relationships are harmonious but you are addicted to Oreos, your work is different than the person who only eats organic plant-based foods, but whose family life is in shambles.)



Start from where you are and focus on the areas where you already know that some tweaking is necessary. For example, you already know that it is important to drink plenty of water and to avoid excess anything (sugar, alcohol, red meat, caffeine), so ask yourself where you might begin to make some shifts.

Here are a few great questions to ask yourself as you steer yourself to being healthy long-term:

- Where will you get the most return on making certain modifications? What would be the long-term benefits and why are they important to you?
- If you were to pick something easy for starters, something you know you can do, what would that be? What adjustments might you really enjoy?

The answer to whether health is a journey or a destination depends on where you are in the process. If you have anything glaring at you to make some changes (such as fear of disease,



embarrassment and shame, lack of mobility, don't like how you look or feel, and thinking that enough is enough) stare right back at those reasons. In health, as in life, you can have reasons, or you can have results. When it comes to making your health a priority, you need to figure out what is most important to you.

- Is it more important to you to go with the status quo among your friends (partying 'til the wee hours and consuming enough alcohol to knock you out), or is it more important to avoid the liver cancer your cousin succumbed to last year when he passed away?

- Is it more important to you to eat commercial red meat almost every day (loaded with nasty chemicals that are 100% linked to a variety of serious diseases), or is it more important to you to get and keep a healthy heart?
- Which is more important? Feeding your addiction to Internet games, or getting outside to breathe, move, perspire and stimulate your brain to release feel-good, life-enhancing hormones and neurotransmitters?

Let's say that you have chosen to take much better care of yourself. It might look like this.

- You love your veggies and they are part of every meal. You lead your body to crave food that is good for you. You learn to recognize food that depletes your energy and compromises your health (saturated fats, high sugar, overly processed, over-heated oils) and you avoid them. The contents of your plate look different. It is greener.





- You breathe and relax when you eat so as to optimize your entire digestive process and get more nutrients from your food. You taste and savor every bite knowing that you eat to get nourished, not stuffed.

- You are at zero risk to over drink or overeat because you definitely want to feel good and you know that you would feel crummy if you did either

of those. You know that being stuffed feels gross and you know that the morning after a lot of booze reduces your effectiveness and ability to focus. You have made a decision to feel good.

- Movement and exercise come naturally to you, even if you have to encourage yourself to get those walking or running shoes on. Again, you are at zero risk to being sedentary because you want to feel good and you don't feel good when you sit around like a slug.
- Smoking cigarettes? You wouldn't do this to your lungs if your life depended on it, which it does!
- There is no way you would work around the clock and ignore your family or forget to have fun. Your body will remind you to flow with work and family and to make time for both.
- You honor your body by getting adequate sleep. Again, you know how you feel if you stay up too late and you simply want to feel better than that!
- You are not "too busy" to take care of yourself. You left that excuse in the past. You understand that you get time and energy back and you are more productive at work and with your family when you make taking care of yourself a priority. Everybody is happier, including you. It rubs off on the people with whom you live, work, and interact.



We are talking about your *life*. Health is not a habit or a fad. It's not "in" to be healthy. (Well, it is, but that's not the point.) Health does not "trend." You can put a # in front of the word, but at the end of the day, you have the chance to look back and see how often you honored yourself. Learning to cherish the results of those little choices means that you will make more of them.

Riding your bike for relaxation after work instead of coming home to two drinks (an adjustment that one of my clients decided to make) will change your outlook on everything. (In her case, her gout cleared up and the swelling in her knees disappeared.) When you feel better, when you think more clearly, when you feel yourself flowing with life because you are eating foods that enhance your very life-force and avoiding foods that are dead and decaying... you will **be** healthy. **For life.** At the point when you realize that you could turn back but it is not really an option for you, you will have crossed over. Happiness comes with a well-nourished, well-hydrated, well-rested, well-exercised body.

In his brilliant book [*The Big Leap*](#), Gay Hendricks describes the challenge that some people encounter when they attempt to clear out blocks in their lives, including physical ones. He states, "The choice to experience life as a genuinely powerful person liberates a huge amount of creative energy, and most people are unwilling to enjoy that amount of energy."

But you can. Set your sails. Make whatever adjustments you need to make, at any pace, and as small as you need, but get on that path. Love your body and your body will love you back. **For life.**

