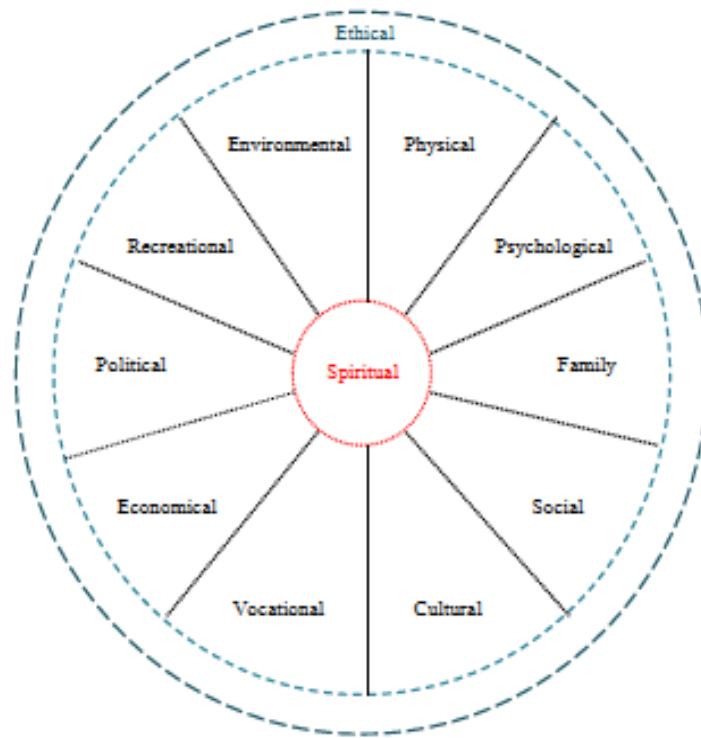


Healthy Living:

How to Create a Personal Health Plan



Tom Bougsty

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Chapter 1

Healthy Living Arises from Twelve Dimensions of Life

Health constitutes a fundamental need in life. Our survival, growth, and ultimately, our optimal development depend on it. Health influences all of our activities from our physical to mental to social functioning. Consequently, we need to understand health more fully, so we can support the development of our natural capacities. With improved comprehension of what contributes to health, we can successfully plan and create lifestyles of healthy living.

At least twelve dimensions of life contribute to health (see Figure 1). Each area needs to function in beneficial manners. While these dimensions are depicted in the figure as separate areas, they actually operate in relationships that interact and work interdependently. Thus, these twelve areas function both individually and collectively to generate a dynamic balance that forms our overall health. Accordingly, we need to learn to manage these separate health dimensions and their interdependent relationships, so we can create healthy living.

Throughout history, health has been conceptualized in limited terms, largely due to our brain functioning. For instance, our brain consciously processes only four to six items at the same time (Hanson, 2012). Therefore, we cannot naturally perceive and contemplate all twelve major dimensions of life that contribute to our health simultaneously. This helps explain why we have not developed comprehensive approaches to health that support the complex functioning of the whole person.

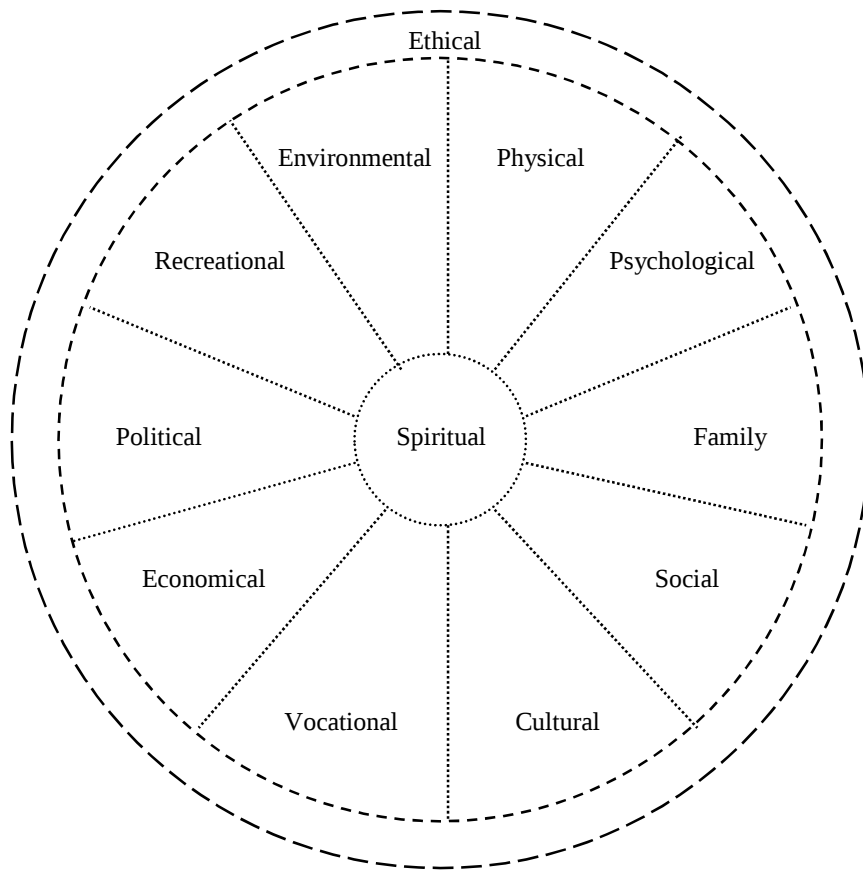
For instance, “Physical” health has traditionally represented our main health concern, despite operating as only one of the twelve health dimensions. In the last fifty years, mental (“Psychological”) health has increasingly been considered, and more recently, “Economic” health has been introduced as an important concern. Hence, we tend to consider only one to three of the twelve major areas of life that contribute to a fully functioning person. Naturally, we struggle to integrate our body, mind, social, spiritual, and environmental activities into balanced healthy lifestyles.

Healthy Living Depends on the Integration of the Twelve Health Dimensions

If we intend to create healthy living, we need to include and integrate all the major components that contribute to health. In other words, we need to consider the functioning and the balance among the twelve dimensions that combine to produce our overall health. To meet this challenge, the “Healthy Living Model” incorporates these dimensions into a comprehensive picture of health (see Figure 1). Using this integral model, our brain can systematically perceive all twelve dimensions, while assessing how they interact and contribute to healthy living as a whole.

We expand our capacities to perceive and manage our lives when we evaluate the twelve separate dimensions of life, their interdependent relationships, and their synergies that generate a fully functioning balanced life. In this process, we perceive through the three fundamental

Figure 1: The Healthy Living Model



perspectives necessary to perceive reality fully and accurately. These perspectives include the lenses of separateness (represented by each dimension), relationships (the interactions among separate dimensions), and oneness that generate an inclusive picture of health. Each perspective provides different information that needs integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation. The model pictorially includes each perspective, thereby enabling us to perceive from an integrated viewpoint that invites wise choices for healthy living.

When we increasingly understand ourselves and the complexity of our lives, we can progressively begin to understand the world, universe, and the potential of all, so we can choose how to live in greater harmony with the whole. Thus, we can expand our healthy functioning to include health for others and the world, as we shift onto the path for healthy, sustainable living (Bougsty, 2012). In other words, as we perceive more fully and accurately, we can consciously choose actions that benefit our healthy living, as well as benefit all people and the world. We then contribute to the creation of our larger mission to develop healthy, sustainable living. As sustainability increases, we can continue our evolving quest for healthy living.

The Healthy Living Model

“The Healthy Living Model: The Wheel of Life” (Figure 1) provides a relatively simple picture of these major health dimensions. Portraying them concurrently in the same figure helps our brain perceive and consider how these different areas and their interactions contribute to our overall health. Each dimension represents a particular aspect of health and, similar to a puzzle, each piece fits together to form a complete picture of healthy living. This comprehensive picture lays the foundation for a viable, personal health plan.

The model, portrayed as a wheel, shows ten dimensions that function as spokes, while the other two dimensions operate as the hub and the rim of the wheel. The twelve health dimensions connect, interact, and work as a whole to move the wheel along the road of life. No dimension operates independent of the others. In fact, all operate interdependently to produce a functional human being capable of ongoing growth and evolution.

In this context, when one dimension is deficient or fails to function properly, it undermines the functioning of other areas. Metaphorically, the wheel rolls relatively smoothly through life, until a problem develops, such as a heart attack. Suddenly, the wheel rolls with a lurch due to its impaired operations. This physical problem may then disturb the functioning of other dimensions (for instance, heart disease often interferes with work, psychological, family, and other areas of life). Consequently, overall health also suffers. This example illustrates how our health as a person depends on all dimensions functioning in healthy manners, as well as interacting and balancing as a whole, to produce a relatively smooth journey through life.

The Twelve Health Dimensions

In examining the construction of the wheel, the ***Spiritual dimension*** operates in the center as the hub of the wheel. The mysteries of the higher powers associated with this dimension appear as central to our lives and to life itself. Each individual has the opportunity to develop a personal interpretation and relationship with the spiritual realm. Most people follow the traditions of one

of the many organized religions in the world, while increasing numbers seek unique, personal relationships with the spiritual domain.

When we act in the ten spoke dimensions, however, we produce combinations of healthy and unhealthy consequences for other people and the planet, as exemplified by the **Ethical dimension** on the rim of the wheel. The ethical dimension symbolically serves as a bridge that connects our internal world of consciousness with the external world that our consciousness and actions affect. In this context, we need to generate benefits and avoid harm to others and the environment. Since we function as separate human beings participating in interdependent relationships that operate with the oneness of the whole, we can expand support to our separate self when we support our relationships and oneness with all. As we affect other people and the planet in positive or negative ways, reciprocal responses tend to occur.

In general, we support our health, whenever we act in ethical manners that support other people and the planet. In contrast, we act in unethical manners whenever we harm any of our interdependent life support systems. Therefore, an ethical mission in life emerges—we need to benefit and simultaneously prevent harm to all people, the planet, and evolution. Unethical actions involve any consciousness and actions that harm and lead to long-term destruction that contributes to the devolution of human life. I present models and methods to help identify such devolutionary possibilities in the book, *Healthy Sustainable Living A Vision for the Future of Humanity* (Bougsty, 2012).

A brief description of each of the health dimensions follows.

- The **Physical dimension** represents our physical *body*. Physically, we live or die directly dependent on the health of our body. As a result, our lifestyle choices, including eating, exercise, rest, sex, safety, and health care, serve as indicators of our will to live.
- The **Psychological dimension**, deriving from our *mind*, creates our personal reality. When we identify and share the thoughts, images, feelings, and sensations that our mind perceives in congruent, open manners, we tend to promote our psychological health.
- **Family health** involves the people we consider as “family” who teach us about relationships, life, and our self. We act responsibly for our family health, when we communicate our love, respect and contribute to others, and encourage reciprocal actions that support the growth of all.
- **Social health** incorporates all other human interactions, including those within societal institutions and the social support systems that extend beyond the family. Healthy social functioning involves effective communications that value the differences and the rights of others, while also resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways in which all parties “win.”
- **Cultural health** involves cultivating an appreciation for human creations, such as art, music, customs, laws, and diverse worldviews.
- **Vocational health**, or *work*, encompasses the activities that contribute to our livelihood. Ideally, these endeavors generate a sense of productivity and meaning in life, as we contribute to others and the world.
- **Economic health**, or *money*, involves making and managing finances to balance consumption, savings, investments, contributions, and debt, as we attempt to meet our needs and desires in life.

- **Political health**, or *power*, applies to our self and to the world. Personally, we influence our life whenever we set goals, make choices, and take actions throughout the twelve health dimensions. Our powers to choose healthy actions and learn from mistakes also expand into respectful participation with others and the planet. We choose how to influence external political processes, so they contribute to health in the world that indirectly contributes to our personal health.
- **Recreational health**, or *play*, includes participation in personal interests, hobbies, humor, and other enjoyable activities.
- **Environmental health** encompasses all natural and human-constructed, physical surroundings and includes that we live in a safe comfortable home, community, and world; enjoy and protect natural settings; and minimize our footprint on the planet.
- **Spiritual health** enables us to feel connected to all of reality—a “higher power”—that gives greater meaning and purpose to life.
- **Ethical health** consciously respects the interdependence of all life by protecting other people and the planet, so life and the pursuit of healthy living can continue.

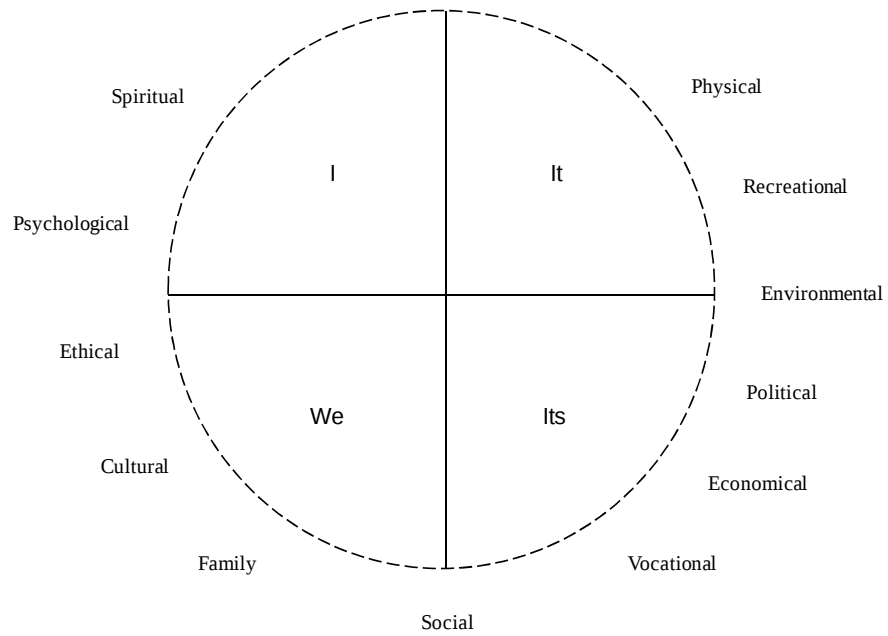
The Healthy Living Model Supports an Integral View of Reality

Integral Theory, as presented by Ken Wilber (1996; 2000), and Integral Practice, as taught through the Integral Institute (2005), demonstrate that everything can and needs to be viewed relative to four perspectives, portrayed as quadrants in Figure 2. In simple form, these four perspectives describe the interior and the exterior of the individual and the collective (Wilber, 2006). The interior of the individual person, for instance, involves the subjective “I” point of view that includes thoughts, feelings, and images. Similarly, the inside perspective of the collective (more than one individual) involves the “We” point of view of collective thoughts, feelings, and images. In comparison, the exterior of the individual involves an objective “It” point of view in which science can empirically describe the features and behavior of the individual. Finally, the exterior of the collective involves an objective “Its” point of view that describes the system of features, behaviors, and environments of the collective.

These four fundamental perspectives (I, We, It, and Its) constitute the four quadrants of integral theory exhibited in Figure 2. All apply in every situation. Each perspective provides an important, yet different viewpoint of the present circumstances. To understand a situation we need to include all four perspectives.

If we omit one or more of these perspectives, we lose the necessary comprehensive view and, instead, gain only a partial view of the situation. When we lack an adequate understanding of a situation, we often create problems when we participate in those circumstances. As an example, when we consider the health care system in the United States, we see that individual physical health is highly valued and objectively measured through symptoms and diseases. The collective health care system develops objective technologies to treat these various medical problems. Meanwhile, the subjective viewpoint of the individual patient often receives minimal attention in traditional fifteen-minute patient visits, and the viewpoint of the collective

Figure 2: Healthy Living Dimensions Relative to the Integral Quadrants



population seems relatively neglected. As a result, the medical system demonstrates great expertise and amazing technologies relative to the It (individual objective problems) and the Its (collective service delivery system) perspectives or quadrants. Meanwhile, the I (individual subjective) and the We (the interior of the collective) perspectives receive minimal consideration.

The subjective perspectives of the individual and the collective of society, however, significantly determine lifestyle choices that influence objective disease processes. For instance, four modifiable lifestyle choices are responsible for much of the chronic diseases (CDC, 2012); and chronic diseases account for nearly three of every four deaths and seventy-five percent of health care costs in the United States (CDC, 2007). Yet, Reeves and Rafferty (2005) found that only a few percent of people actually engage in such positive lifestyles that help avoid these diseases. Without giving relatively equal weight to the individual and collective lifestyle choices in the “I” and “We” quadrants, our health care system appears well along the road to continuing to treat people, while inadvertently allowing more sickness, suffering, early death, and the potential bankrupting of the health care system.

As revealed in Figure 2, the twelve dimensions of the Healthy Living Model distribute and balance naturally across the four quadrants (even if arranged approximately, as they operate across more than one quadrant). Thus, this model functions consistent with the integral approach to understanding the world. All the major perspectives (I, We, It, and Its) are utilized whenever we apply the twelve dimensions of the Healthy Living Model to any situation. If we omit one or more perspectives, we invite problems to develop in our perceptions, our actions, and our institutions, such as our health care system. The use of such a comprehensive approach minimizes the risks that problems and devolutionary outcomes will occur in situations in which we engage. In a complementary way, this model serves to extend integral theory into practical applications in our everyday life. In this case, we now have a comprehensive, increasingly detailed overview of our lives that enables us to improve our understanding of health and how to create healthy lifestyles.

Cultural Traditions Favor Certain Dimensions over Others

When we think about health, we often consider only limited conceptions that follow cultural conventions. For example, many people consider the *physical* dimension as equivalent to health; if we sleep, eat, exercise, and take the right medications, we will be healthy. Other people expand the definition to include *psychological* health; if we reduce stress, control mood swings, and make positive decisions, then we function in healthy ways. Others incorporate *economic* health; if we make enough money to buy or do what we want, we feel healthy. All these represent legitimate health concerns. But each addresses only one piece of the twelve-piece puzzle that portrays health as a whole. Ultimately, we need to focus on all twelve areas and how they interact if we want to foster comprehensive healthy living.

The following example reveals the limitations of a one-dimensional approach to health. Presently, two thirds of adults in the United States are overweight. If we only focus on diet and exercise to lose weight (*physical health*—our traditional one-dimensional approach), success typically proves limited. The reason is that other dimensions usually also contribute to weight problems. For instance, we may overlook that an anxious or depressed mood (*psychological*

health) often stimulates the urge to eat food and thereby alter our mood. We may neglect to notice that many influences from *family* (such as traditional meals), *social* (like eating out, including large portions of fatty, sweet foods), and *cultural* (exemplified by media advertising) serve to limit or bias our choices in the selection of healthy foods. As we shift our attention from one dimension to the next in the Healthy Living Wheel, we can notice how our weight may also be affected by snack foods at *work*, our reluctance to pay extra *money* for healthy foods, or the lack of time (*power*) or a place (*environment*) to sit down to eat a well-balanced meal. We still eat an abundance of high caloric meat products despite the elevated demands on energy, water, and other resources necessary for its production (*ethical health*). Seldom does play (*recreation*) and healthy food go together. As this example demonstrates, our health depends on complex, interacting factors. A simple model that helps us evaluate and then organize these complex relationships can contribute significantly to the management of our weight and to our overall health (Bougsty, 2012).

The “Big Picture” and the Twelve “Small Pictures” of Health

The model provides an overview of major factors crucial to the management of health. We can focus on one dimension, a combination of these factors, or on our overall functioning, and then shift at will among these perspectives regarding healthy living. As a result, the model expands our ability to understand each dimension and how it interacts with other dimensions to affect our total health. This expanded ability to contemplate both the “small” and “big pictures” of health and their relationships enables us to establish more realistic and comprehensive health goals. More proficient planning can be followed by effective actions to achieve our desires and, ultimately, our visions for a meaningful life.

If we review the Healthy Living Model portrayed in Figure 1, we see that dotted lines separate the twelve health dimensions. This reflects our human predisposition to perceive items as separate, despite them simultaneously functioning in interconnected relationships which we often fail to notice. Yet, both the separate dimensions and their interactive relationships contribute to our health as a whole.

To see how a change in one dimension can stimulate changes in other dimensions, consider a woman who loses her job when a company downsizes. How does this event impact other aspects of her life? First, the job (*vocational*) loss likely undermines her *economic* health. Then, informing her family and friends of the loss may stimulate changes in their normal *family* and *social* relationships. As the stresses accumulate, her *psychological* state may suffer, weakening her immune system and making her susceptible to *physical* health problems. Under these conditions she may struggle to seek and gain new employment.

These various interactions can combine to initiate a downward spiral of deteriorating health. To reverse this destructive cycle, conscious efforts are generally required. For instance, constructive actions need to be directed towards all the dimensions that contribute to these difficulties; in addition, efforts to re-balance her health as a whole need implemented.

Cultural Values Sometimes Undermine Personal Health

The “American Dream of Success” depicts a pervasive cultural value (that originates from within the “We” perspective portrayed in Figure 2). This Dream influences the “I” perspective of the individual citizen. This cultural dream suggests that success depends on hard *work* in a job that pays ample *money*; and the more money, the more *power* we have to purchase desired goods and services (in the “It” and “Its” perspectives). The apex of success occurs when we possess enough money that we can stop work and instead engage in whatever we choose, including retiring into a life of pleasure and *play*. While following this dream can generate money that may improve health in a variety of ways, ironically, this cultural value also places our health at risk.

Consider that the American Dream of Success depends primarily on four dimensions of health: *vocational (work)*, *economic (money)*, *political (power)*, and *recreational (play)*. Obviously, each represents important aspects of life. Yet, they involve only four of the twelve dimensions necessary for personal health. Consequently, the serious pursuit of this cultural dream (that directly involves only one-third of the health dimensions) indirectly places our overall health at risk.

These four particular dimensions—*work*, *money*, *power*, and *play*—dominate and guide much of American society; the other eight dimensions frequently fade into the background. Although these four dimensions are important for health, all twelve dimensions are necessary to create healthy living. The twelve areas need to function, synergize, and balance in order to achieve and sustain long-term health. We cannot neglect or shortchange the majority of the ingredients that contribute to health and expect to function optimally throughout our lives.

Ultimately, we may risk losing the American Dream for Success when we neglect the other eight dimensions of health. For example, when we shortchange our *physical* health, medical problems may arise to undermine our work. When we neglect our *psychological* health, then depression, anxiety, or anger can diminish our productivity. When we overlook our *family* health, divorce or parenting problems may disrupt our life. In the end, this cultural dream for success invites us to focus predominantly on only four health dimensions. As a consequence, it inadvertently fosters an out-of-balance lifestyle that undermines healthy living that can then indirectly undermine our success with the American Dream.

Meanwhile, when we do attempt to balance health and take time for family, friends, and our emotional well-being, this may appear to threaten the American Dream. For instance, when we pursue the proper exercise, nutrition, and sleep to support our *physical* health, and take time for *family*, *social* friends, and our *psychological* health, these often require time away from *work*. As a result, these healthy personal choices may lead to unhealthy vocational outcomes, such as the lack of a raise, missing opportunities for advancement, or even dismissal from the job.

In addition to cultural constraints that sometimes restrict our willingness to balance our lives, we may also experience personal constraints. For instance, we may think that time away from work decreases our output and competitiveness. Yet, research shows that a well-rested, fit, healthy employee is typically a more productive employee (Milken, 2003; 2012).

Healthy Living Transcends and Includes the American Dream of Success

The personal health plan proposed here creates opportunities to overcome both the personal and cultural limitations that restrict our health. The Healthy Living Model enables us to include, balance, and optimize all twelve dimensions. In addition, we can now expand the American Dream of Success, based primarily on four dimensions of health, into a new “Universal Dream of Healthy, Sustainable Living” (Bougsty, 2012). This new dream encompasses all twelve dimensions, while directly valuing all aspects of humanity and the world. In this way, we generate healthy living for our self, as we also support health for all people and the environment. When individuals, institutions, and nations proceed together on a path towards healthy, sustainable living, we create the opportunity for transformational positive change in our personal and cultural development (Bougsty, 2012).

Summary of a Comprehensive Personal Health Plan

We can benefit from the following systematic steps regarding how to develop a personal health plan. Initially, the plan incorporates all twelve health dimensions, as exhibited in the comprehensive Healthy Living Model. From this perspective, we can assess our present functioning in each of the major dimensions of health. This assessment generates an overview of our present health status. Based on this status, we can identify specific goals regarding how we want to function in each dimension in one year from now as an example. When we combine our present status and our future health goals, we essentially create a blueprint for healthy living.

To evaluate how well the blueprint reflects our unique potentials, we can contemplate our life in the context of the larger world. When we consider how our personal health may affect the health of others and the planet, we can awaken to larger missions and purposes in our life. For instance, we can intentionally contribute to improved health on the family, business, community, national, or global levels (Bougsty, 2012). Once the blueprint reflects both our desires for personal health, as well as our larger purposes in influencing others and the world, we can identify specific actions to generate healthy living.

Based on our present functioning, future goals, and chosen actions, we can further clarify our priorities and coordinate our actions to maximize our gains. In this systematic process, we transform our lifestyle progressively into healthy living. Along the way, we can steadfastly monitor and modify our efforts. Thus, we can increasingly realize our full potentials within and between dimensions, as we improve our overall health. This comprehensive health plan introduces methodologies and a structural framework to shape our lives and intentionally pursue larger purposes that create lasting legacies in our life. We simultaneously promote our survival, growth, and optimal functioning, as we benefit others and the planet.

Requirements for a Successful Health Plan

The success of this health plan—actually, the success of any health plan—depends upon our ability to fulfill three essential objectives:

- promote our personal health and maximize our functioning as a whole individual by including all the major dimensions that contribute to our life;
- integrate the separate health dimensions, including their interdependent relationships, and create health as a whole person that reflects the separate, relationship, and oneness perspectives of reality; and
- promote the health of all people, the planet, and evolution upon which our health and life depends (see Bougsty, 2012).

Since we live in an interdependent world, our health will be limited to the degree that the environment, society, and other people suffer from dysfunctions. Therefore, no matter how hard we work to improve our personal health, we will be constrained by these external influences. These twelve dimensions appear universal and apply across the range of human activities. Therefore, they appear applicable to understanding health on all levels of society—from the individual, family, organization, business, community, state, national, to global levels (see Bougsty, 2012). Consequently, the comprehensive and universal natures of the Healthy Living Model introduce the potential to unify our efforts to improve health on all levels of society from the local to the global.

Chapter 2

The Healthy Living Questionnaire

Assessing our Health, Setting Goals, and Planning Actions

To increase the utility of the model, the Healthy Living Questionnaire (see Figure 3) provides the opportunity to rate both subjectively and quantitatively our present and future functioning. This questionnaire maximizes our freedom to assess, plan, and monitor our personal health in terms of our present status and our future priorities to develop comprehensive health. In the future, increasingly objective measures of what constitutes health and what contributes to quantitative changes in health status can be developed to extend further the benefits provided in this comprehensive personal approach to health management.

The present Healthy Living Questionnaire highlights characteristics associated with each health dimension. In this way, we can subjectively assess and quantitatively specify our present health status, personal goals for the future, and identify specific actions desired in each dimension to promote our overall health. This comprehensive assessment facilitates an evaluation of the health status within each dimension, as well as how the dimensions balance as a whole. In effect, the questionnaire generates both small and integrated pictures of health that provide feedback to help guide further improvements in the health plan.

1. Assessing our present health status: The questionnaire provides a list of factors that commonly contribute to health in each of the twelve dimensions, so we can assess the general level of functioning in each area. A final, thirteenth question provides an opportunity to rate “Total Health” or health as a cumulative whole. The instructions on the questionnaire read: “Please rate yourself on the following health dimensions. Rate how well you are doing *now* in each area by using a 1 to 9 scale (1 is the worst, 5 is okay, and 9 is the best you could be doing).”

As an example of a rating, I might register a score of “4” on the Physical Health dimension, if I exercise once a week, eat fast foods regularly, often feel tired, and experience an episode of sickness every few months. By rating each area as honestly as possible, we subjectively identify our specific and general levels of functioning. The survey results highlight our strengths and weaknesses across these important areas of life. When we compare our scores across the dimensions, we can see the balance (or lack of balance) in our present lifestyle. For instance, if I score a 4 on physical health, a 6 on psychological health, and an 8 on economic health, I produce a simple picture of my present strengths and weaknesses and can then further explore how these dimensions interact and balance.

2. Setting health goals: The questionnaire asks: “...[R]ate how you want to be doing in each area *one year from now*. Select a number (from 1 “worst” to 9 “best”) that describes a *realistic goal* for you...” After we do a screening assessment of our present health status, we can identify what we really want in our life. After we identify what we want, then we can set personal, one-year goals for each area. (In reality, other timeframes also work, such as one

Figure 3: HEALTHY LIVING QUESTIONNAIRE

Please rate yourself on the following health dimensions. Rate how well you are doing now in each area by using a 1 to 9 scale (1 is the worst, 5 is okay, and 9 is the best you could be doing). Place the number that best describes how you are doing under the “Now” category next to each dimension.

Next, rate how you want to be doing in each area one year from now. Select a number (from 1 “worst” to 9 “best”) that describes a realistic goal for you. Place that number under the “Goal” category next to each dimension.

Finally, consider actions that you want to take to improve your health, and write them in the “Action” category next to each dimension.

DIMENSIONS OF HEALTHY LIVING	Now	Goal	Action
Physical Health (Body): Practice healthy eating, exercise, relaxation, sleep, sex, safety, and health care	_____	_____	_____
Psychological Health (Mind): Have self-esteem; strive to understand self and grow; express thoughts and feelings; experience flexibility and happiness	_____	_____	_____
Family Health: Feel loved; show love; communicate respectfully and effectively; responsible with family rules; have a sense of “family”; model healthy living	_____	_____	_____
Social Health: Have close friends; communicate effectively with tolerance, compassion, and resolve conflicts with win-win, nonviolence; create/use healthy social institutions	_____	_____	_____
Cultural Health: Appreciate human creations—art, music, cultural values/rules, and worldviews	_____	_____	_____
Vocational Health (Work): Feel productive and satisfied with work/school/chores	_____	_____	_____
Economic Health (Money): Have adequate money; consume, save, and make contributions within means	_____	_____	_____
Political Health (Power): Set goals and influence decisions in all areas of life; have intuition and creativity	_____	_____	_____
Recreational Health (Play): Participate in hobbies, interests, humor, and other enjoyable activities	_____	_____	_____
Environmental Health: Live in a safe/comfortable home, community, world; recycle and minimize any harm to the planet; enjoy and preserve natural settings	_____	_____	_____
Spiritual Health: Feel connected to a “higher power;” experience meaning, purpose, and gratitude in life; meditate/contemplate; enlighten to our oneness with all	_____	_____	_____
Ethical Health: Seek/tell the truth; respect the interdependence of life and our oneness with all; contribute to people, the Earth and cosmos, so life and healthy living can continue	_____	_____	_____
Total Health: Contribute to the overall health, happiness, balance, and sustainability of all	_____	_____	_____

month, six months, three years, or whatever seems appropriate. In fact, multiple timeframes—such as rating goals for one month, one year, three years, and ten years—actually offer the most value, as this leads to systematic, long-term planning. In this way, goals can logically build on other goals in a step-wise manner, producing a self-directed path to the life we desire.) As an example, my Physical Health rating was a 4. Hence, I could set a 1-month goal to raise my score to 5, a 3-month goal to 6, and a one-year goal to 7. Then I could set a three-year goal for a score of 8. Following this progression of goal-setting, I can plan systematic, coordinated actions to achieve my objectives.

As we set goals, we need to establish realistic priorities and a balance among the various aspects of our lives. As a cautionary note, some people strive for perfection and want a 9 in every category. Although admirable, realistic limitations—such as time, energy, and individual preferences—dictate that we set priorities, so we rate some dimensions with higher scores than others. For instance, certain areas seem more important or more interesting to us than others, such as vocational health frequently takes precedence over psychological health in our society (despite that our psychological health creates the personal reality that guides us every moment of our lives).

This health plan promotes our freedom to choose personal health priorities. The plan actually encourages us to choose priorities, so we optimize the life we desire. However, priority setting must consider the broader context of balance; for without balance, we can rarely realize and sustain our goals.

3. Planning actions to achieve our goals: The questionnaire asks, “...consider actions that you want to take to improve your health, and write them in the “Action” category next to each dimension.” By specifying concrete actions, we move into the behavior change arena to improve our health. Although the actions written on the questionnaire must be brief, we can expand the description of each action on another page to make it specific, measurable, and time-bound. We can then initiate actions and monitor the changes that result.

Before initiating an action, however, we can review where it falls on our priority list. The simplest means to set priorities relies on gut feelings—what feels right to us. Another method involves relaxing, while considering the question, and waiting for an intuitive answer to arise. At other times, analytic priority setting can generate a more systematic action plan. For instance, we can coordinate actions, so they interact synergistically to accelerate our health gains. Ultimately, we can develop long-term plans that encourage us to orchestrate coordinated actions that build upon one another to optimize health throughout our life.

Examples of Action Plans

I might improve my physical health score from 4 in the earlier example by taking the following actions. Although these analytical measurement tools are subjective ratings that reflect personal perceptions and not objective empirical findings, they introduce the opportunity for us to improve how we manage our personal health. For instance in the first month, I could start exercising three times per week to attempt to increase my score to 5. If this activity did not decrease my fatigue, I could start a relaxation or meditation practice combined with bedtime

routines to help improve my sleep and achieve my 3-month goal of 6. I could reduce my consumption of fast foods and intentionally eat more nutritious, balanced meals to improve my score to 7 by the end of the first year. Finally, to attain a score of 8 by the third year, I could continue, or modify the above actions as necessary, to reduce my sick days. I could also seek traditional and alternative health care services as appropriate, in conjunction with using the Healthy Living Model to help understand the underlying causes of my sicknesses (Bougsty, 2012). In the process, I can systematically work to promote my wellness, as I also intentionally engage in activities to prevent future illness.

The following describes a more comprehensive action plan. It includes actions across dimensions, rather than simply within one dimension such as in the previous physical health example. In this instance, quality parenting represents our concern. As a first step, we can ask a seemingly strange question, “How well do we ‘parent’ our self (*psychological* health)?” In other words, how well do we listen, care, and conscientiously contribute to the growth of our psychological health, including taking care of our feelings and learning more effective alternatives to face the challenges of life? The more effectively we parent ourselves, the more effectively we can likely parent our children. We may then shift and talk to our partner or other family members (*family* health) to assess: their parenting philosophy; what works for them; what they see works and does not work for me; what works in parenting partnerships; and how to develop and coordinate parenting efforts. We can consult with other people (*social* health) and published materials (*cultural* health) to further clarify our parenting options. Then we may decide to create more time for our children by cutting back on work (*vocational* health) or our hobbies (*recreational* health). As we read, talk, and contemplate, our knowledge and choices increase. We can then evaluate the best times (*political* health) and settings (*environment* health) to initiate effective, wise, and compassionate communications with our children (*family*, *spiritual*, and *ethical* health). Such a systematic, multi-dimensional approach promotes actions to build upon and synergize with other actions to increase the probability that we achieve our parenting goals. In the process, we model healthy living to our children.

The Development of a Personal Health Plan

The Healthy Living Questionnaire provides the health assessment, goal setting, and action steps necessary to develop a comprehensive, personal health plan. We can complement this program by considering three planning approaches that can further improve our health (Bougsty, 2012). The three options include the:

1. **Wellness approach**—helping us plan and organize our life, so we can stay well and function at optimal levels;
2. **Prevention approach**—helping us anticipate problems and attempt to prevent them, so we avoid experiences that undermine our health; and
3. **Treatment approach**—helping us plan and take actions to confront problems that already exist.

Treatment, Prevention, and Wellness Interventions Coordinate to Improve Health

To maximize healthy living we need to integrate these three approaches into a comprehensive methodology. For instance, while the treatment approach confronts existing issues, it biases our

view towards problems and generally overlooks the “big picture” or the “holistic picture” that encompasses many positive possibilities for our health. Meanwhile, the prevention approach that anticipates and attempts to prevent problems opens us to a broader landscape of health. Nevertheless, it does not directly address the positive health concerns and how we grow and improve our health as prioritized by the wellness approach. When working with the Healthy Living Questionnaire, we generate the maximum value when we combine all three approaches. This means that we plan to solve and prevent problems, while actively pursuing healthy functioning.

A Practical Example of How to Develop and Implement a Personal Health Plan

The following section demonstrates how to develop a personal health plan by using the Healthy Living Questionnaire in conjunction with these three action approaches. Let us consider the step-by-step development of a personal health plan for a forty-seven year old man, named Jack. As a family man with a spouse, Sarah, and a teenage son, Jerry, he confronted the need to develop a personal health plan after suffering a mild heart attack. Jack concluded that the time had come to change his lifestyle that contributed to his heart disease. When he started examining his life, however, he felt overwhelmed by what to change, how to change, and when to change. Consequently, he decided to complete the Healthy Living Questionnaire in order to develop a systematic approach to understand and address the issues that may have contributed to his heart problems.

Initially, Jack felt compelled to focus on a treatment approach that addressed his immediate concerns about his heart condition. Later, he expanded into the prevention and wellness approaches to complement his short-term focus. To enhance his long-term planning, he developed personal mission statements that defined guiding purposes in his life (see Personal Mission Statements—Guide our Personal Health Plan in the next chapter). Jack realized that the prevention and wellness approaches introduced actions that might help his heart disease over time, as well as promote his overall health and happiness.

Jack's completed questionnaire (see Figure 4) clarifies his present health status, his future health goals, and what actions he chose to change his life. His ratings on his present functioning are recorded under the “Now” category adjacent to each of the health dimensions. Jack also rated goals he considered realistic to achieve in one year; these appear under the “Goal” category next to each dimension. Finally, Jack chose specific actions to help achieve each goal, as listed under the “Action” category.

Jack's Present Functioning

His highest score in the “Now” category is an 8 in the *Cultural* dimension. Jack and Sarah both love music. In fact, they originally met in band class at college twenty-five years ago. Although they gradually gave up playing music when work and family responsibilities increased, they regularly attend symphonies and movies to satisfy their cultural interests.

Jack recorded his second-highest score, a 7, in *Economic Health (money)*. He prides himself on being the primary breadwinner and manager of the household budget. His income,

Figure 4: HEALTHY LIVING QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Please rate yourself on the following health dimensions. Rate how well you are doing now in each area by using a 1 to 9 scale (1 is the worst, 5 is okay, and 9 is the best you could be doing). Place the number that best describes how you are doing under the “Now” category next to each dimension.

Next, rate how you want to be doing in each area one year from now. Select a number (from 1 “worst” to 9 “best”) that describes a realistic goal for you. Place that number under the “Goal” category next to each dimension.

Finally, consider actions that you want to take to improve your health, and write them in the “Action” category next to each dimension.

DIMENSIONS OF HEALTHY LIVING	Now	Goal	Action
Physical Health (Body): Practice healthy eating, exercise, relaxation, sleep, sex, safety, and health care	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	Exercise – ½ hour, 4X/week Eat – limit fast food & high fat & sugar
Psychological Health (Mind): Have self-esteem; strive to understand self and grow; express thoughts and feelings; experience flexibility and happiness	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	Improve my self-esteem Decrease anger and anxiety
Family Health: Feel loved; show love; communicate respectfully and effectively; responsible with family rules; have a sense of “family”; model healthy living	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	Increase quality family time Improve my parenting skills
Social Health: Have close friends; communicate effectively with tolerance, compassion, and resolve conflicts with win-win, nonviolence; create/use healthy social institutions	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	Find a cat as a pet Make supportive friends
Cultural Health: Appreciate human creations—art, music, cultural values/rules and worldviews	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	Decrease movies & symphonies
Vocational Health (Work): Feel productive and satisfied with work/school/chores	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	Work only 40 hours/week Decrease on-the-job stress
Economic Health (Money): Have adequate money; consume, save, and make contributions within means	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	Decreased income/reduce expenses
Political Health (Power): Set goals and influence decisions in all areas of life; have intuition and creativity	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	Reevaluate this survey 1/week Take charge of my life
Recreational Health (Play): Participate in hobbies, interests, humor, and other enjoyable activities	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	Laugh more Play music again
Environmental Health: Live in a safe/comfortable home, community, world; recycle and minimize any harm to the planet; enjoy and preserve natural settings	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	Recycle & reduce carbon footprint Take walks with others in nature
Spiritual Health: Feel connected to a “higher power”; experience meaning, purpose, and gratitude in life; meditate/contemplate; enlighten to our oneness with all	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	Start to meditate Reexamine my spiritual beliefs
Ethical Health: Seek/tell the truth; respect the interdependence of life and our oneness with all; contribute to people, the Earth, and cosmos, so life and healthy living can continue	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	Share my happiness with others Define the legacy I want to leave
Total Health: Contribute to the overall health, happiness, balance, and sustainability of all	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	Live the life I choose Remember to live each day fully

combined with Sarah's, provides a solid middle-class income for the family. Although the budget runs a little tight some months, Jack consistently manages to make ends meet.

Jack scored 6 on his *Environmental, Spiritual, and Ethical Health*. Although not spending much time or thought in regards to the environment, he appreciates that his family lives in a comfortable, suburban house in a generally safe neighborhood with a nearby park and river walk. In the spiritual arena, he grew up going to church regularly, but has rarely attended church in recent years. Nevertheless, he normally tries to do the “right thing,” not hurt others, and even goes out of his way to please other people. His ethical score is not higher because he often gets frustrated, especially at work, then carries these frustrations home and gets into conflicts with his son, Jerry. In addition, he generally lacks both the time and energy to contribute more to others and to the protection of the environment.

He rated a 5 for his *Vocational (work), Psychological (mind), Family, Political (power), and Total Health*. In the work arena, Jack is employed as a middle manager in an electronics firm. He works long hours that include nighttime emergency calls. He claims to like some aspects of his job, but really dislikes explaining and enforcing rules, especially those he does not fully understand or, worse, those with which he does not agree. His managerial duties combine with long hours to generate considerable stress. He typically tries to hide his stress from his co-workers and from Sarah. Instead, he frequently struggles with his teenage son, whom he attempts to manage and boss excessively. This stimulates numerous arguments and generates a chronic condition of low-level tension at home.

Jack's inability to express his thoughts and feelings adequately and resolve problems on the job results in difficulties with self-esteem (*psychological*), assertiveness (*power*) and his *family*. The negative interactions between these different areas explain why he rated a 5 for each area. He feels especially disturbed that his family life does not function better. Consequently, he finds it difficult to play and enjoy activities that he formerly enjoyed. In the end, his *Total Health* also received a score of 5, as he concluded that in all honesty his overall health was only “okay.” This contrasted with the perceptions of other people, who saw his life as rather enviable.

Finally, he scored a 4 on his *Physical (body) and Recreational Health (play)* and 3 on his *Social Health*. The physical health score attests to his tendency to place job responsibilities above his responsibility for his body. For example, his sleep suffers from interruptions due to emergency calls; his diet includes fast foods with few opportunities for sit-down lunches, and his exercise consists of doing household tasks and yard work on weekends. He ignored his recent “heartburn” and did not seek appropriate health care until after his heart attack. He makes almost no time for socializing. Even when he goes to symphonies and movies, he tends to avoid interacting with friends and acquaintances and, instead, quickly retreats to work or family responsibilities. This leaves him lacking social support in most areas of his life, with the exception of occasional conversations with Sarah. Meanwhile, he finds little time to play or engage in other activities that he enjoys.

Jack's One Year Health Goals

As Jack completed the first section of the questionnaire, he became acutely aware that his life was not progressing the way that he wanted. As he completed the second section of the questionnaire on future goals, however, he discovered new hope. Several areas stood out as clear priorities for change. Primarily, he wants his physical health to improve from a score of 4 to 8. In addition, he plans to make rather dramatic changes in his family (5 to 8) and social health (3 to 7). Since he learned that a strong social support system significantly contributes to heart health, he intends to develop better relationships in his life. His heart attack also precipitated a spiritual crisis; he realized that he desires a more substantial spiritual foundation (6 to 8).

Jack concluded that he needs to improve his life in a number of other areas. At work (5 to 7), he decided to decrease his hours by making improvements in his productivity, such as by reducing the stress that diminishes his work performance. In the psychological area (5 to 7), he recognized that he needed to feel more self-worth, learn to relax, and not carry anger home. In terms of power (5 to 7), he committed to monitor his progress weekly on his questionnaire ratings, so he could effectively learn to manage his life. In the environmental arena (6 to 7), he plans to raise his score by taking more walks in nature, ideally with family and friends, and pledges to recycle as much as reasonable. In the ethical area (6 to 7), he challenged himself to define the legacy he wants to leave and to share his life actively with others and especially communicate what makes him happy.

Economically, he chose to cut back on overtime, as that had become too demanding on his time, sleep, and good humor. This reduced income would require the family to spend less. These *economic* changes seemed to balance out; accordingly, he kept his rating at the level of 7. Meanwhile, he made the decision to reduce his cultural events and, instead, stay home with his family and start singing and playing the guitar again. This decision to reduce his *cultural* health score from 8 to 7 would also free more time and money to do other activities with family, friends, and by himself. In turn, he raised his *recreation* score from 4 to 6, and he chuckled when realizing how much he enjoyed playing music and singing with the family compared to watching other musicians play. Finally, Jack concluded that his total health score would increase from 5 to 7, as he chose to take responsibility to lead his life.

Jack's Action Plans

Jack pursued his top priority—to regain his physical health. He resolved to follow his physician's advice and take his prescribed medications and vitamins, to exercise at least four times a week, and modify his eating habits to include smaller portions, less fast food, and lower saturated fats and sugar in his diet. After discussions with his alternative health care provider, Jack decided to take actions in other areas of his life that might also help improve his heart condition. For instance, he decided to start meditating to calm his mind and body and revive his sense of spirituality. He decided to start psychotherapy to improve his self-esteem, learn communication and assertiveness skills, reduce his stress and workplace conflicts, and gain resources on how to parent effectively. He also concluded that he would seek help at work to improve his managerial skills, minimize his evening emergency calls, and reduce work to 40 hours a week.

One particular co-worker seemed quite adept at being assertive with others, as well as had been helpful to Jack in several managerial and disciplinary issues, so Jack asked him to be an ongoing support partner. In fact, they set up a weekly luncheon at a nearby health food store to discuss work related issues. In this step, Jack integrated several areas (*work, social, physical, ethical, and environmental*) to increase his work efficiency and decrease his overall stress. In addition, this mentor relationship supported the enhancement of his personal power and work productivity, while improving his self-esteem. In combination, these changes provided more time for engaging in other enjoyable activities. At home, he promised Sarah he would talk about unresolved feelings from work, so he did not “dump them” on Jerry. As a final step, he decided to go to the animal shelter and find a “mellow” cat that would sit on his lap and help him relax in the evenings.

The heart attack reminded Jack of the ever-present shadow of death. This awareness reinforced him to learn how to rise above daily problems and hassles and, instead, start enjoying his life and helping others do the same. He yearned for a simpler, more fun life, especially with his family. Hence, he prioritized finding quality time with each family member—planning and engaging in mutually enjoyable activities.

Jack came to the realization, “I really want to live, and these lifestyle changes will help me each day and, in the long run, give me the life I want.” Therefore, Jack committed to review his Healthy Living Questionnaire results each Sunday evening and write on his calendar actions that he would take during the next week to move toward his goals. On the first Sunday of each month, he decided to: 1) evaluate his progress toward achieving his goals; 2) revise his goals as necessary; 3) evaluate the success of different actions; 4) modify or identify new actions to initiate; 5) enlist support from others to help him achieve his goals, and 6) celebrate his accomplishments by doing something healthy and pleasurable.

Chapter 3

Personal Mission Statements—Guide our Personal Health Plan

To develop a long-term health plan, Jack identified personal mission statements for each area of his life. Such mission statements describe what we want to be and do in our life. They emphasize what is most important and what gives our life meaning. They provide clarity to our visions that take us beyond the past and the present and, instead, transport us via our imagination into crafting our future. The visions we conceive serve as guides for our decisions and actions regarding how to spend our time. In essence, personal mission statements create a map for our life. We follow this map in our journey to create the best life possible. (See *First Things First* by Covey, Merrill, and Merrill, 1994, to examine further discussions of personal mission statements.)

Personal mission statements help extend our personal health plan by supporting the principles of healthy living and projecting them into the future. These missions define our ultimate goals. They capture the essence of how we want to live in each of the twelve health dimensions and in our overall life. They motivate us to act both in the “small pictures” (each dimension of our life) and in the “big picture” (the integration of all twelve dimensions) to maximize our full potential. The Healthy Living Model provides the opportunity to develop an overall purpose in life, complemented by more specific purposes that range throughout the twelve dimensions of life.

To develop personal mission statements, the following steps often prove helpful.

1. First, we recall the obvious—that each person is unique. We each produce our special imprints on the world. We continually contribute positively or negatively to our life, as well as to other people and the life-support systems of the planet.

2. By identifying our special qualities and potential positive contributions in life, we begin to uncover our larger purposes. Personal mission statements help formulate and crystallize these purposes. These mission statements challenge and guide us towards achieving our personal best. Meanwhile, they remind us of the unique “legacy” we desire to leave to benefit the continuing evolution of the world.

3. Mission statements ideally reflect our authentic self. They help us cut through the demands and stresses of everyday life and connect with the deeper inspiration that defines our uniqueness and our commonalities with all life. Our passions arise from connections with our deeper meanings that express our authenticity (Brown, 1992). When we formulate a vision based on passion, this vision “can become a motivating force so powerful it, in effect, becomes the DNA of our lives” (Covey, Merrill, and Merrill, 1994, 105). Such visions can develop into ongoing, “default” perspectives that guide our decisions towards what really matters. They promote our personal power to move through fear and uncertainty to achieve results formerly beyond our capabilities.

4. How do we identify the unique qualities that spark our passions and light our path into the future? The following steps and questions may help reveal these secrets.

- A. First, find a time and place without interruptions.

- B. Relax the mind and body. Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, tensing then relaxing the major muscle groups throughout the body, soothing

music and aromas, and meditation, can help clear the mind, so we can discover those hidden jewels that can make our life uniquely meaningful.

C. When relaxed, we can contemplate a series of questions. These might include the following: (Some of these questions come from People on Purpose—The Life Training Program (Brown, 1992) and from Covey, Merrill, and Merrill, 1994.)

- What do you deeply care about in your life (for instance, your family, nature, work, spirituality)?
- What really matters or is most important to you?
- What do you love?
- What is unique or special about you?
- What do others perceive as unique or special about you?
- What do you offer that contributes to other people's lives?
- What do you notice, when you are natural and spontaneous?
- When do you feel most powerful?
- What feelings do you want present in your life (for example, peace, joy)?
- What is meaningful in your life at any given moment?
- What gives your life long-term meaning?
- What contributions do you want to make to others?
- What contributions do you want to make to the planet?
- What do you want to be and to do in your life?
- If you had only six months to live, how would you choose to live?
- Overall, what is your purpose in life?

Our personal health plan evolves from the answers to such questions. The answers provide crucial ingredients for our next step—to develop specific mission statements for each of the twelve dimensions in the Healthy Living Model. These personal mission statements remind us of our “true” purposes in life, enabling us to balance and synergize our passions into a working whole.

We can use the following guidelines, as well as refer to the Healthy Living Questionnaire, to help define what we really want in each of the twelve dimensions, allowing us to chart our optimal course in life.

- Physical health (e.g., the vitality of our body—fitness, diet, sleep, relaxation; the prevention and treatment of illnesses);
- Psychological health (e.g., our intellectual and emotional well-being);
- Family health (e.g., the love, commitment, and communications that we want);
- Social health (e.g., the support systems, institutions, friends, and meaningful relationships that we desire);
- Cultural health (e.g., our appreciation of the arts, literature, customs, and values);
- Vocational health (e.g., our satisfaction and contributions in work);
- Economic health (e.g., making and managing money);
- Political health (e.g., our personal power with self, others, and the world);
- Recreational health (e.g., our pleasure, humor, and playfulness in life);
- Environmental health (e.g., our access to and participation in the physical world);

- Spiritual health (e.g., our connection to life, a higher power, and a sense of purpose);
- Ethical health (e.g., our respect, protection, and contributions to other people and the planet);
- Total health (e.g., our overall personal goals and our balance with our self, others, and the world).

Mission statements evolve and often require refinement over time. As we connect with our deepest passions and try to convert them to words, some people find that pictures, music, art, dance, or other forms of expression capture their passions and goals more profoundly than words. Then, whenever appropriate, they play the music or view the picture again to reawaken their passions, so they consciously proceed on “their path.”

After creating mission statements, we can use our imagination to enliven them (Covey, Merrill, and Merrill, 1994). For instance, we can imagine behaving in congruence with our mission. In Jack’s case, he wants to communicate effectively and respectfully at work and at home. Therefore, he can imagine a situation in which he initially communicates empathy for how important a certain project seems to his boss. Then, he can describe how his strengths might help accomplish the project. In another situation that involves a conflict in a meeting, he can imagine acknowledging the strong feelings different people experience followed by reintroducing the need to find common ground for a mutually agreeable solution. At home, he might imagine listening to and acknowledging Jerry’s feelings and desires, before he describes what he feels and wants.

Mission statements come in many forms. To demonstrate several examples, we can examine the missions Jack developed to help guide his life. His mission statements (see Figure 5) generate a powerful foundation from which to develop his long-term, personal health plan.

Figure 5: Jack's Personal Mission Statements:

Physical health: I intend to live longer than the previous generations in my family—live at least 80 years; and be fit enough that my heart does not seriously limit my life.

Psychological health: I will love and care for myself, so I honestly express who I am each day of my life.

Family health: I will communicate in direct, loving manners with both Sarah and Jerry, and stay in close contact with select other relatives, so my presence enriches all our lives and leaves a positive family legacy.

Social health: I plan to develop a support network of friends and co-workers, so we mutually encourage and help each other have more effective, meaningful lives.

Cultural health: I will start playing music again, particularly the guitar, so I renew my exhilaration and sense of musical mastery; I will share my music with my family and with others for our mutual enjoyment.

Vocational health: I intend to make my work productive, personally satisfying, and contribute positively to my co-workers, customers, and to the world; or I will find a new job.

Economic health: Since I plan to live into my retirement years, I will continue to match my company’s retirement investments; I will also help reduce our family spending, so I can work less and enjoy life more, while making manageable contributions to important causes.

Political health: I will review my personal health plan and these mission statements weekly, with more in depth review each month, so I empower myself to live the life I choose.

Recreational health: I intend to play my music, engage in enjoyable activities with Sarah and Jerry, as well as with other friends, so fun becomes an ongoing part of my life.

Environmental health: I will spend time outdoors each week enjoying nature with family and friends and will start recycling what I reasonably can.

Spiritual health: I will reexamine my religious and spiritual beliefs until I develop a personal connection to a “higher power;” I will meditate daily.

Ethical health: I will use and share these healthy living practices with others, so we can each move towards our personal best; and I will act intentionally to leave a positive legacy for all.

Total health: I intend to feel alert and alive throughout my life and consciously choose from moment to moment what I think is best for me. Since I am part of society and the world, I will choose what is simultaneously best for me, others, and the world, while intentionally avoiding harmful outcomes.

Summary: Steps to Develop a Personal Health Plan

The following summarizes the steps to develop a personal health plan, so we can take charge of our health and create a happy, successful life that leaves a positive legacy in the world.

I. Complete the Healthy Living Questionnaire

A. Health Assessment: Rate how you are doing “now” in each dimension.

B. Goals:

1. Rate how you would like to be doing one year from now in each area.
2. Short-term goals can also be rated for any desired timeframe (e.g., 1 week, 1 month).
3. Long-term goals can also be set for any timeframe (e.g., 2, 5, and 10 years) to develop a path to lifelong health.

C. Action: Write specific actions that you will take to achieve each goal.

II. Evaluate your ratings

A. Examine the overall questionnaire results and notice your reactions to:

1. The *magnitudes* of your ratings (from 1 to 9), if you are surprised at how high or low different ratings appear;
2. The *discrepancies* between the scores;
3. The *balance* or lack of balance among all the dimensions.

In a sense, you can also examine your reactions to the results of the questionnaire, so you gain more information about yourself and more clearly identify what may help or, conversely, impede your planning and action steps in the future.

B. Focus on the ratings in the “Now” category and identify more precisely any concerns with the magnitude, discrepancies, and balance of these scores.

C. Analyze the ratings in the “Goal” category and similarly identify any concerns.

D. Focus on ratings in both the “Now” and “Goal” categories and compare the two for the magnitude, discrepancies, and balance between the present and future scores.

III. Action steps

- A. After evaluating your ratings, modify any score, so it accurately represents your present health status and goals for the future.
- B. Modify any actions to make them as realistic and likely to succeed as possible.
- C. Set priorities for actions. Criteria to consider might include:
 - 1. *Importance* of the action to improve your health;
 - 2. *Importance* of the action *compared* to other possible actions;
 - 3. *Time and energy* required to complete each action;
 - 4. *Skills and resources* needed to complete each action;
 - 5. The *probable success* of each action;
 - 6. Initially, choose an action that generates *immediate success* that reinforces your efforts;
 - 7. Then, choose actions that lead to *intermediate and long-term successes*;
 - 8. Finally, coordinate different actions, so they synergize and generate *comprehensive successes* across multiple dimensions and, ultimately, throughout your life.

IV. Evaluate Progress

- A. Establish regular times (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly) to check on progress.
- B. Modify goals and action plans to overcome obstacles, gain greater successes, and adapt to changing conditions and desires.
- C. Gather support from other people, literature, and other resources to make your healthy living journey easier and more productive.
- D. To extend your personal goals expand your focus to improving healthy living on the family, organization, business, community, national, and global levels of your life. Each level affects your health; therefore, as you improve healthy living throughout each and every level of society, you contribute to your health (see Bougsty, 2012 for alternatives to improve health living throughout all levels of society and the world).
- E. Share your successes with others, so they have opportunities to chart their course to healthier lives. In a sense, healthy living needs to spread like a positive, conscious force, as it improves each person's life, while contributing positively to all life. As the health of other people, the society, and the planet improves, our personal health reciprocally improves.

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