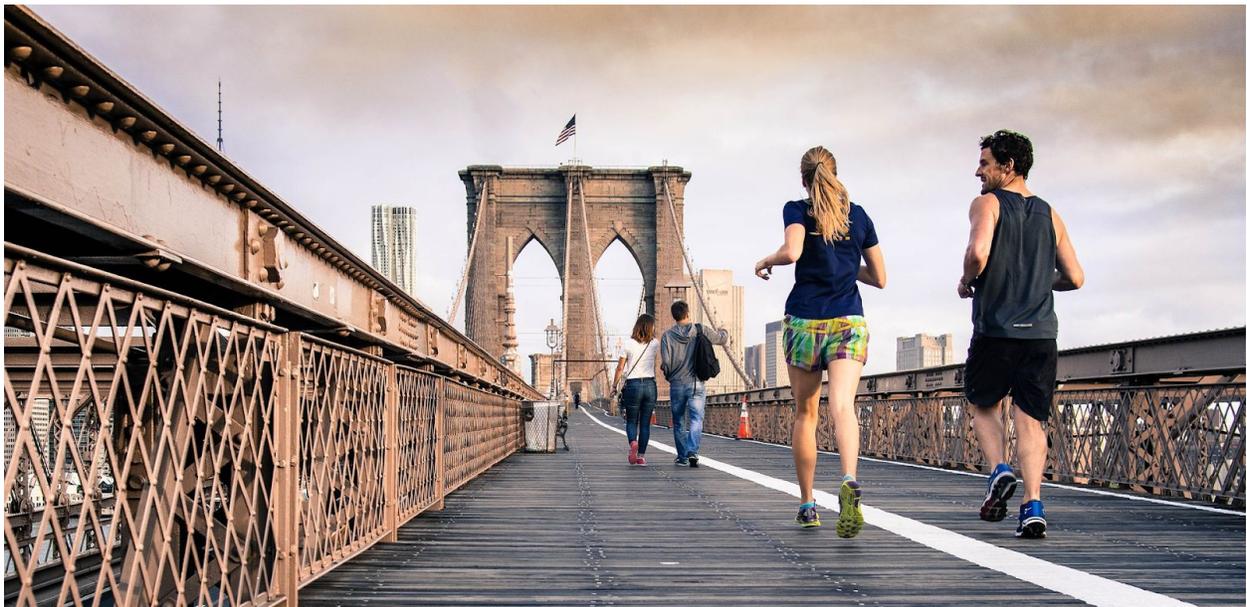

Motive In Motion Weekly Fitness Digest

What is Health?

Written by: Frank Bosmil, Certified Fitness Instructor

With discussion by **Christian Martinez**



What Does it Mean to be Healthy?

Having worked for several years in close proximity with a plethora of diverse clients, I often ask my clients if they consider themselves "healthy". Although all my clients self-report being "healthy", upon further inspection when asked what "health" is, to my astonishment, the idea of what it means to be healthy was difficult to come up with. It made me realize that in order to improve health, we must first be able to pinpoint just what "health" is. It was then that I decided to write this article defining what, in my opinion, being "healthy" really means.

To understand what being "healthy" means, we must first understand two things.

1. What is "health"?
2. What are the characteristics of a "healthy person"?

I always like to put "health" first. It is the precursor to living a fulfilling, dynamic life regardless of other aspects of our life.

What is Health?

Defining health is the first step towards making positive changes towards a healthier lifestyle.

Succinctly put, Health is:

A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Health is much more than the absence of disease.

What Makes a Person “Healthy”?

A few characteristics that I consider to be the defining features of a healthy person are the following:

A healthy person:

- Has enough energy and motivation to complete daily tasks.
- Has enough energy and motivation to enjoy life and pursue pleasurable leisure activities.
- Is able to meet daily challenges and unforeseen stressors without major exhaustion.
- Is free from sickness, disease.

What We Need to Understand About Health

Health predicates having a happy, fulfilling life. It also fosters a forward driven lifestyle, and makes accomplishing all life goals easier. Dealing with chronic health issues can make even the slightest daily task seem daunting. Feeling healthy makes motivating ourselves much easier.

Many factors influence our health. Access to high quality health services helps us stay healthy, and the more we stay healthy and reduce our stress, the more capable our bodies will be at fighting off illness.

By living healthy, we can feel better mentally, spiritually, socially, physically, and emotionally. Healthy living also helps us save money by avoiding junk food, smoking, and drinking sugary drinks or alcohol, which can all cost a fair bit of money.

Healthy living can also increase our quality of life - years of life free from sickness and disease.

Now that we have an understanding of what a “healthy” person is, and what the benefits are of a healthy life, let's talk about how to become healthy.



A Recipe for Good Health

Although there are many competing opinions on what it means to be healthy, here are some key points to consider to increase your health.

- **Drink enough water**
Water carries nutrients to all the cells in our body, and carries oxygen to our brain. Water also helps the body to absorb and assimilate minerals, amino acids, glucose, and other substances. It flushes out toxins, waste, and regulates body temperature amongst many other functions.
- **Get adequate sleep**
While we may sleep, our bodies never sleep. They are in a constant state of repair, amplified by resting. Adequate sleep helps to protect our mental and physical health and increases quality of life.
- **Exercise**
Regular physical activity can improve your strength, which has a direct effect on making activities of daily life easier. Exercise also helps us control our weight whether we want to gain, lose, or maintain our current body composition. Exercise also helps us fend off disease and improve health conditions. Exercise is mood-elevating, and can increase our energy levels, promote better sleep, reduce anxiety, and increase overall happiness.
- **Eat more fruits and vegetables**
Fruits and vegetables help maintain good health by providing micro and macro nutrients. They are also low on saturated fat, salt, and sugar - a perfect part of a well-balanced diet which can help us lose weight, or maintain healthy weight. Fruits and vegetables also help us fight inflammation and lower cholesterol and blood pressure.
- **Cut down on processed foods**
By cutting down processed food intake, we put ourselves in the direction of better health. Heavily processed foods can lead to serious issues like obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.
- **Avoid negative people**

life is too short for negativity. We are lucky in that we can choose who we associate with. If someone causes you undue stress and hardship just by being in your life, sometimes letting go is the best decision for the both of you. Negativity burns through a lot of our energy and can be overwhelming and lead to unhealthy decision making.

- **Manage stressors**

While there are some stressors that should of course be dealt with in the appropriate way, others have no solution and therefore only bring stress and hardship into the picture. *If you have a stressor you can change, why worry? If you have a stressor you cannot change, why worry?*

- **Healthy nutrition**

As with stressors, health should not be something that gets neglected. Neglecting our health when we have pre-existing health conditions will not improve those conditions, regardless of how stubborn we are. To truly be healthy, or move towards greater health, it is important to acknowledge any pre-existing conditions and work towards improving them.

A Final Word on Health

Recognize that the body functions like a complex machine, one we are in control of, and one we need to maintain.

In order to maintain our health we need clean air, water, healthy food, and rest.

Health should never be neglected or taken for granted. Health is not a given, it is earned. While we might be healthy today, if we ignore our health, we begin to move towards unhealth. Unfortunately, while it is never too late to start living healthier, once we've lost our health, sometimes part of it can never be recovered.

Stay Healthy.



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Discussion

I very much enjoyed reading Frank's article on health. I also agree that that which can be measured, can be changed. Health is no different. Having a running definition of what it means to be healthy is paramount to living a healthy life. I think there is only one important change I would make to the definition of a healthy person. I personally believe that society is a social organism, and that those who have difficulty forming strong social bonds with others, have a much harder time enjoying their lives, which, to me, is the true hallmark of a healthy life. So to me, the definition of health cannot exist without social health.

Health and happiness are intertwined. You cannot have one without the other. In order to foster what some call deep health, I also believe it is very important to realize one important thing. We are all human, we all make mistakes, and it is ok to make mistakes. Hating ones-self for a food choice we've recently made quickly spirals into unhealthy. We should have the right to be less than productive some days, less than perfect with our meals some days. I argue that in order to be deeply healthy, sometimes we need to **pause the pursuit of perfect**. Perfect is a funny concept, we all know what it means but it doesn't really exist. We all strive for the perfect life, some subjectively; and i'm sure they come close, some objectively; which i'm sure are further from it. *The fact of the matter is that the true meaning of living a happy, deeply healthy life, is to not sweat the small stuff.* Health, with some very small exceptions, is neither built nor destroyed in a day. That being said, I do agree that encouraging healthy living habits and having some semblance of control over lifestyle choices to the degree that health doesn't feel hard is important as well.

Make more good choices than "bad" choices, and realize these "bad" choices are not inherently bad, but rather that is a label we choose to put on them. These choices can be more aptly named learning opportunities. *When you went to timmies and got a donut in the morning, you learned that it is much harder to say no to early morning cravings when you skip breakfast.* Assigning the label "bad" to these choices does nothing to change making the decision again, it just makes us feel bad for the recent past, which we cannot change, so it is, quite literally, stress and negativity about nothing.

To touch on one other component, I believe that coping is stronger than avoidance. Rather than avoid negative people and stressors, I believe that it is important to foster solid coping mechanisms for the eventuality and inevitability of stressors and negativity. This builds more longevity than avoidance.

Stay strong.



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