



A H e a l t h i e r , H a p p i e r Y o u

Making Smart Lifestyle Choices

Prepared by

Sam Quick, Human Development & Family Relations Specialist; Sandra Proffitt Darnell, Warren County Extension Agent for Home Economics; and Jane Hildenbrand Rudat, Human Development Specialist, Marion County Cooperative Extension Service (Purdue University), Indianapolis, Ind.

(An in-depth leader's manual accompanies this leaflet.)

GOOD NEWS!

Stepping into a healthier lifestyle can be simple and fun. You don't need a ton of willpower. And you don't have to stop eating all your favorite foods, or give up having a good time, or begin exercising two hours a day.

Just follow three simple guidelines: 1. Take small steps, 2. Be kind to yourself, and 3. Enjoy the process. As you gradually make small, positive changes, you'll notice a big difference in both your health and your happiness.

■ Take Small Steps.

Ten small steps will move you just as far as three or four giant steps. Taking comfortable strides toward an important goal requires less energy and willpower and, thus, you reduce the risk of failure and discouragement. As you experience small successes, your self-confidence increases. The key is to challenge the assumption that more is always better and sooner is best.

■ Be Kind to Yourself.

Too often we judge ourselves harshly, exaggerate our shortcomings, and fail to appreciate our strengths and blessings.

Health depends on a state of equilibrium among the various factors that govern the operation of the body and the mind; the equilibrium in turn is reached only when we live in harmony with our environment.

—Hippocrates (circa 400 B.C.)

Pause for a few minutes and focus on your strengths and special gifts. You are a unique, wonderful person—right now—just the way you are. Build your lifestyle improvements on this foundation.

■ **Enjoy the Process.** Consider life as a school in which we learn from the consequences of our choices. We can resist, or we can try to enjoy the learning process. Don't be hard on yourself for making mistakes; it's part of growing. Don't become upset about life's challenges; they're part of the curriculum. You've got what it takes to handle these challenges. Hang in there, expect success, and enjoy doing your best. Remember the Scottish proverb: Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.

What Is Health?

Health is more than not being sick. It is a positive state of well-being characterized by physical vitality, mental clarity, and a constructive outlook. Health does not necessarily mean the absence of disease or other serious problems, but it does mean

having the courage to respond to these challenges in a positive manner.

Health is prevention-oriented. It means listening carefully to your body's signals and to your common sense, and then doing what's necessary to care for yourself. Health is knowing that everything you think, say and do directly affects your state of well-being. It also includes an awareness that your choices influence the people and world around you.

Your Lifestyle Profile & Personal Action Plan

Our health depends on such factors as heredity, environment, gender and age. But each of us controls the most important factor—our lifestyle. Many of our lifestyle choices, however, either shorten our lives or diminish the quality of life. Of deaths that occur before age 65, half are caused by unhealthy habits.

The following Lifestyle Profile & Personal Action Plan was created just for you. Examine the ten dimensions of a healthy lifestyle. Are you strong in some areas? Do you want to make changes in others?

Health is largely a choice—your choice. It is a decision to take good care of yourself, a decision backed with positive action. Take an important step on your wellness journey: Create an action plan you feel good about and commit yourself to following

through. You can do it!

Think Success. Picture yourself accomplishing your Personal Action Plan. Throughout the day, take a few moments to calmly focus on this mental picture of success. Occasionally, give yourself more time for creative visualization. If negative images start to crowd in, immediately let go of them and again focus on your positive mental images.

It also helps to encourage yourself

with silent pep talks:

■ ***“I will succeed.”***

■ ***“I’m learning.”***

■ ***“This is working great!”***

Finally, consider the following quotes:

If you keep waiting for just the right time, you may never begin. Begin now!

—Jackson Browne

Obstacles cannot crush me; every obstacle yields to stern resolve.

—Leonardo da Vinci

We can do anything we want if we stick to it long enough.

—Helen Keller

All that is necessary to break the spell of inertia and frustration is this: Act as if it were impossible to fail.

—Dorothea Brande

Lifestyle Profile & Personal Action Plan

Directions: (1) Rate yourself on the 10 items below by circling the most appropriate numbers. Then connect your circles with straight lines to create your Lifestyle Profile. (2) Looking over your profile and the Dimensions of a Healthy Lifestyle, pick out a small positive change you’d like to make. Write this goal under the Personal Action Plan. Be specific. Wrap a rubber band around your finger (or use another reminder) to prompt you to follow through. Share your plan with a friend and invite your friend to make his or her own Personal Action Plan. After two days, check in with one another to see how you’re doing. Encourage each another; keep on until you succeed. When you both achieve your goals, celebrate!

■ Dimensions of a Healthy Lifestyle

Lifestyle Profile

Weak

Excellent

1. Physical Fitness:

Regular Exercise—aerobic, strength building & flexibility. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Good Nutrition:

Enjoying a variety of nutritious foods in appropriate amounts. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Stress Management:

Acceptance, self-responsibility, relaxation & setting limits. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. Balanced Positive Thinking:

Realistic yet consistently positive, optimistic outlook. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. Personal Care & Safety:

Rest, dental care, abuse prevention, environmental sensitivity. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. Healthy Relationships:

Strong, supportive relations—family, friends, coworkers. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. Work Satisfaction:

Enjoyable, fulfilling work; work & family/personal life balanced. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. Effective Money Management:

Creatively living your values within your budget. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Enrichment, Fun & Laughter:

Activities that relax & refresh; spontaneity; humor. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. Spiritual Nourishment:

Spiritual attunement; trusting/following your inner guidance. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

■ Personal Action Plan:

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, C. Oran Little, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Lexington, and Kentucky State University, Frankfort. Issued 7-94; Last Printed 2-96, 5000 copies; 23500 copies to date

Copyright © 1997 by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. This publication may be reproduced in portions or its entirety for educational or non-profit