



**Responding to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic**

**HOW TO STRENGTHEN  
YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM  
and  
MANAGE STRESS**

**BY MAKING POSITIVE LIFE STYLE CHOICES**

**Pamela Chamberlynn, MSW, NBC-HWC**



**LIFESTYLE MEDICINE FOCUSES ON 6 AREAS TO IMPROVE HEALTH**



# LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

Lifestyle medicine is an evidence-based approach to preventing, treating and even reversing diseases by replacing unhealthy behaviors with positive ones — such as eating healthfully, being physically active, managing stress, avoiding risky substance abuse, adequate sleep and having a strong support system.



**NUTRITION** Food is Medicine. Choose predominantly whole, plant-based foods that are rich in fiber and nutrient dense. Vegetables, fruit, beans, lentils, whole grains, nuts and seeds.



**EXERCISE** Regular and consistent physical activity that can be maintained on a daily basis throughout life – walking, gardening, push ups and lunges – is an essential piece of the optimal health equation.



**SUBSTANCE ABUSE** The well-documented dangers of any addictive substance use can increase risk for many cancers and heart disease. Positive behaviors that improve health include cessation of tobacco use and limiting the intake of alcohol.



**STRESS** Stress can lead to improved health and productivity – or it can lead to anxiety, depression, obesity, immune dysfunction and more. Helping patients recognize negative stress responses, identify coping mechanisms and reduction techniques leads to improved wellbeing.

# 6 WAYS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

Being mindful of your food choices, managing your stress, being physically active, avoiding risky substance use, getting plenty of sleep and having a strong emotional support system in your life — are “just what the doctor ordered” to powerfully prevent, treat, and, often, even reverse chronic disease and select autoimmune conditions.



**SLEEP** Lack of, or poor-quality sleep can lead to a strained immune system. Identify dietary, environmental and coping behaviors to improve sleep health.



**RELATIONSHIPS** Social connectedness is essential to emotional resiliency. Studies show that isolation is associated with increased mortality. Considering a patient's home and community environment improves overall health.

## LIFESTYLE MEDICINE'S UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

- Allows the body to protect and heal itself by promoting healthful lifestyle choices
- Educates, guides and supports positive behavior changes
- Places a focus on evidence-based optimal nutrition, stress management, sleep and physical activity
- Encourages active patient participation
- Treats the underlying, lifestyle-related causes of disease
- Uses medications as a supplement to therapeutic lifestyle changes
- Considers the patient's home and community environment

The American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) is the nation's medical professional association for physicians, allied health professionals, healthcare executives, and those in professions devoted to transforming health and redefining healthcare through lifestyle medicine.

[lifestylemedicine.org](http://lifestylemedicine.org)

# CONTENTS

“Whole-body, chronic, inappropriate inflammation appears to result from eating processed food, getting insufficient exercise, and experiencing ongoing stress – all of which are common in the modern world.”

Andrew Weil, MD

**HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**  
**MANAGE STRESS**  
**HEALTHFUL EATING**  
**INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**  
**IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP**  
**FORM AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS**  
**AVOID RISKY SUBSTANCES**  
**RESOURCES**  
**SUMMARY**  
**AUTHOR**

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You can do the short of it or the long of it! You may read the book straight through or you may go right to the chapter topic that is of concern or interest to you. This book is full of links and resources! You may or may not be the kind of reader who will be interested in those. You may be interested in the self-discovery exercises at the end of each chapter. It's all up to you. Take what you want from the book. You know the current state of your own health and where you might want to make some improvement to manage stress and build your immune system. We all have our own reading and learning styles, so make this book your own.

In addition to the recommendations to wash our hands with soap and water, avoid close contact with others, and call our doctors if we have respiratory symptoms we are worried about, there is so much more that each one of us, and our loved ones, can do as we move through this sudden and unexpected global pandemic. **This book was written to give people scientifically valid information on how they can strengthen their immune systems and manage stress.** You'll see that there is immediately a lot more that you can do in addition to washing your hands and staying away from each other! Everybody is under a LOT of stress, so this is a simple, but powerful, how-to book you can use in several ways to get informed and exercise real power over your own body and health.

Each chapter gives information about an area of lifestyle medicine that you can use to improve your own physical and mental health and maximize your personal well-being, as well as the health and wellness of your loved ones. Just in the past few decades there has been exponential growth in research in the physical and social sciences that inform us about what it takes to live well with optimal health and well-being in every area of our lives. The opportunities for improved health, longer lifespans, and richer quality of life have never been greater!

Unfortunately, in the same time span of the past few decades, our lifestyles have changed so much that many people

- Are now living profoundly sedentary lives
- Eating way too high a daily quantity of high salt, high sugar, chemical laden, highly processed foods of compromised nutrient value with minimal to no natural fiber
- Obesity is pandemic even in young children
- The historical social structures and value systems of family and community relationships and connections have undergone massive changes. We have not yet co-created new social support systems that strengthen meaning and connection in our modern world to the benefit of all
- In just the past few generations, most humans no longer live with viable connections to nature and the web of interconnected life on this planet, of which we are all a vital part

- Most people, even young children, now live with constant high levels of stress that our bodies, minds, and hearts are simply not designed to handle well.

The good news is that medical and health specialties are emerging that bring the healthy living sciences developed over the past few decades directly to the people. You may have heard of [functional medicine](#). This eBook is based on my professional work in the medical specialty of [lifestyle medicine](#). Lifestyle medicine is defined in the two-page infographic at the beginning of this eBook.

As you read over the short chapters, you will notice that each chapter is embedded with links to articles and information on the internet if you choose to look a bit deeper into a particular point. There is also a Resource section at the end of each chapter, and a separate Resource page toward the end of the eBook.

Additionally, besides providing valuable information, you are invited to do some thinking and self-discovery about yourself and your health at the end of each chapter with the following sections titled:

### ***The Opportunity***

In every situation throughout our lives there is an opportunity to make something positive from the situation, and to grow, become stronger, and bring forth more of our own unique self and our gifts and talents into our lives and into the world. The Covid-19 pandemic contains many opportunities for growth and re-evaluation of human life at the individual, national, and global level.

### ***Make It Your Own***

There is a wealth of information in this eBook about your physical, mental, and emotional health. Take what you want. What we know from the multi-disciplinary sciences that are the foundation of health and wellness coaching, is that all successful and permanent lifestyle changes are built on each person's deeply personal values and vision for their own life. People make sustainable changes and grow because of the positive, personal vision that they have for their lives. Permanent changes are built one or two steps at a time, like climbing up a staircase to the top.

In health coaching we also know that we learn as much, if not more, from what didn't work, as from what does work as we change and grow. Consider that whatever you thought was a failure in your past actually contained a lot of learning about what does and doesn't work for you as a

unique individual. There is valuable learning in every step you take. Some work; some don't. Some growth is easier than others. If we stay the course in our own lives, we learn and grow. You are a unique person with your own purpose, gifts and talents. Make the information and exercises on this book your own. Most of all, make your life your own.

### ***Affirmation***

Affirmations are a simple practice that comes under the category of Mind-Body Medicine. Affirmations are positive statements you choose to make about what you want in any area(s) of your life. An affirmation is phrased in the present tense, as if you had this quality, thing or condition in your life right now just as you want it. Our words and thoughts are extremely powerful. When we make positive statements, stated in the present tense, our brain takes this as our reality and begins to direct the body to produce this state of being. Many people say their daily affirmations out loud. Needless to say, we need to become mindful of our negative self-talk, because that self-talk is also informing our brain. Our minds are so incredibly powerful! Making positive affirmations about our health and our lives is a good way to focus our mind and emotions in a positive direction. One of my favorite simple affirmations is “All is truly well.”

These three, short self-discovery sections at the end of each chapter invite you to bring your awareness to your own body, mind, and heart and consider the vision you have for yourself on the other side of this pandemic. With your ideal health vision in your mind and heart, you can start building the steps toward it right now. Maybe the biggest opportunity in this pandemic is the global wakeup call it is giving everyone about how we live in relationship to each other and all life around us, and what is most important to us – starting with our health so we can enjoy our own lives.

I invite you to make the information in this book your own and open your mind and heart to the opportunities that can come from this time in our lives that we are all going through together.

**Please share this free book with family, loved ones and friends, co-workers, your community – basically everyone. We're all in this together, and everyone needs this information.**

# MANAGE STRESS

“According to a large body of evidence, meditation appears to have profound effects on immune function in health and disease because of its ability to reduce stress.”

David. R. Vago, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School

**Stress weakens our immune system.** Yes, stress is a natural part of life. Our bodies, minds, and hearts are well designed to handle stress – to a degree. Let’s consider three basic types of stress:

1. Our body’s natural stress response in emergencies can be a life-saving, automatic response under sudden threat conditions. Our bodies are designed to have a well-documented automatic stress response to lions, tigers and bears! The biological stress response in an emergency typically passes out of the body after the threat is resolved. Our bodies recover quickly and our body systems and functions like breathing and digesting food return to normal. We are designed to handle acute stress in our lives. There is a natural balance in life between times of stress and times of relaxation, rest, and restoration.
2. The constant, high levels of daily stress of modern living is a whole different type of stress, however. Modern living for most people is no longer balanced, and no longer addresses basic lifestyle needs like eating fresh, whole foods, getting daily exercise, and a good night’s sleep. Our bodies are not designed to handle chronic, daily stress well - without paying a significant price physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually over time.

When stress is our way of life, instead of a natural occasional experience of life, it is hard to even see the stress for what it is, or to see how it is draining our vitality and quality of life. You look around and see others living in constant stress. The stress seems normal – “just how it is.” You may not even notice after a while how your body’s vitality is slowly draining, how you may be losing your natural zest for life. Perhaps you ignore the aches and pains, the poor sleep that sets in. Self-comfort is readily available to most of us with more tasty fast foods, delicious restaurant meals of epic portions, and stimulating media and technologies of entertainment. When we notice we are getting more tired we try to keep pushing through. Perhaps more self-comforting that is not actually health-producing for us. But chronic stress does not give our body a chance to complete a release of the stress response and refresh itself. [Seventy-five percent to 90% of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints. Stress can play a part in](#)



[problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin conditions, asthma, arthritis, depression, and anxiety.](#)

3. Extreme traumatic stress can be an acute event (a sudden, single event) or it can be chronic ongoing traumatic stress. Traumatic stress overwhelms us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It may be beyond the capacity of our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual bodies to deal with on a temporary, or even permanent, basis.

Many of us are familiar to some degree with Post Traumatic Stress and its potentially long-lasting effects that permeate every area of our lives – our health, our relationships, work, finances, and more. More recently, some physicians and therapists have developed a theory of extreme traumatic stress that begins in early childhood and tremendously skews the child's ability to successfully learn and grow through the normal developmental stages of childhood into a successful and meaningful adulthood. This trauma theory is called Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACE.

Post-Traumatic Stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences have the same effect on our immune systems as all other stress, but at a much more extreme level and over many years. Adult survivors of ACE may have shorter lifespans and are at higher risk for a wide spectrum of chronic diseases. Our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual bodies are not designed to handle ongoing, extreme stress levels, especially when there is no daily opportunity for our bodies to recover from and release the biological effects of the stress hormones that were released during the stressful event. Our health and our relationships, our hopes and our dreams, are deeply impacted by this intensity of chronic, traumatic stress. Sadly, this is the case for far more people than you may be aware of.

**Stress causes an inflammatory response in the body.** A long-lasting inflammatory response causes tissue breakdown and impairment of the immune system. Extreme stress effects every organ and system of our bodies – our brain and nervous system, respiratory system, heart and circulatory system, digestive system, and our immune system.

In recognition of the many ways that stress can negatively impact every system of our body, learning how and practicing ways to manage stress is one of the key recommendations of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. Their suggestions for basic, ongoing stress management encourage [connection with others](#), getting involved in activities, [taking time for creative activities or hobbies](#), taking care of your spiritual needs, avoiding caffeine or alcohol, journaling or keeping a gratitude journal, and more. There are many simple ways to make stress management a routine part of your life. Nature can be a wonderful healer if you enjoy walking, hiking, gardening, or other ways to enjoy a supportive relationship with your natural world. Walking is an excellent stress reducer.

The growing body of science in Mind-Body medicine offers a variety of effective, stress management skills. Two prominent systems of stress management training and practice that are familiar with are [Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction](#) and [HeartMath](#). There are many others.

I am a Mindfulness trainer, so I will address mindfulness and how it does a phenomenal job of transforming your quality of life, with stress management being a major benefit of regular practice of mindfulness. Most people experience immediate stress reduction results with a few minutes of guided mindfulness practice. You may have noticed the term “mindfulness” being used more frequently in common language. Mindfulness is indeed mainstreaming throughout society around the world. Mindfulness, however, is a lot more than a current “sound bite.”

The first thing I want you to know about mindfulness is that it is how your body, mind, and heart are naturally designed to live. At the simplest level, we are meant to live in the present moment. We are not meant to live our lives in frequent or constant worry about the past or the future.

We are made to live life fully in our physical bodies, engaging and interacting with our world through our five physical senses. We are meant to be whole physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. We are meant to live spaciously in each present moment, moment to moment – without carrying around a huge burden bag of unresolved issues from our past; without worrying about an unknown future full of real or imagined fears. Think for a moment about how open to life most newborn babies are. They are living fully in their new bodies, experiencing the world passionately through their physical senses. As a toddler, that baby can’t want to get up and their hands and knees, pull themselves up to standing, and take on their physical world! They are living fully moment to moment in their bodies, experiencing their world through their five physical senses. This is natural mindful living.

Another thing I appreciate about mindfulness is fully experiencing the complete range of our emotions – just like babies and toddlers do. Oh, when they have a need that is not met, you will hear about it! “Terrible twos” and “fearsome fours”! Society has not yet taken sad, mad, and joy and passion out of our wide-open, adventurous babies, toddlers, and young children yet. They came into this world fully open to their feelings. The full scope of mindfulness-based stress reduction training – maybe we should call it remembering – is reclaiming our wonderful ability to fully experience our feelings, and learn how to handle them as an adult in a constructive, pro-social way as we grow through them. Living fully in the present moment with whatever is here means experiencing some very uncomfortable feelings and emotions, along with the positive ones. This is the reality of life here. We adults are designed to meet the inevitable pain and suffering that comes into our lives, move through and resolve it, and grow and become stronger for the experience. We don’t have to give up our ability to feel all of life passionately – we can learn to use this powerful energy. Our natural ability to be whole physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually and grow through every moment and day and event of our lives is very

important now as we move through this pandemic and the global consequences that are arising from it.

We are not designed to live held captive by our worries or suffering from the past, from the present, or from the future. There is a better way. The problem that feeds the chronic stress of modern living is that we were not brought up to live in the present moment. Most of us were not given the tools to truly handle and resolve stress on an ongoing basis in our lives. How can we handle stress if we cannot handle our feelings and emotions in a positive way? The fullness of mindfulness-based stress reduction is that it does offer the tools to the heal of our emotions and the skills to return to our own wholeness.

The second thing I want you to know about mindfulness is that in the western world it is a secular system of training and practice in whole health and wellness. In the United States, mindfulness started as a secular medical treatment for unmanaged pain at the University of Massachusetts Medical School with the work of Jon Kabat Zinn, Ph.D. and his professional associates. The success was so great that the use of mindfulness expanded into use with other acute and chronic medical conditions. Today, the gold standard in research for mindfulness in medical settings is a comprehensive training protocol called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. This eight-week course in mindfulness training showed significant increases in the size of the prefrontal cortex (executive function of the brain) and a significant reduction in the stress centers of the brain (fight, flight, or freeze). Importantly, the training brought such relief to patients that many of them continued daily practice on their own after the research projects ended.

Mindfulness is increasingly mainstreaming around the world in the past few decades because of the clear success and results people get who are trained in, and consistently practice, mindfulness-based stress reduction.

Professionals in the mental health field quickly picked up on the successful use of mindfulness in the medical field and adapted the mindfulness training and research methodologies to behavioral medicine, working with people suffering long term mental health issues like anxiety, depression, recovery from trauma and other issues. Research shows strong positive results using mindfulness for anxiety, depression and other mental health applications.

At the same time, the U.S. military, always on the leading edge of medical progress due to their critical work with combat injuries and veterans care, got involved and adapted mindfulness training to their work with veterans and soldiers. Results were excellent. From the expanding use of mindfulness-based stress reduction in the military, mindfulness training and practice is also now moving effectively into use with first responders around the world.

The success in behavioral health evolved into use in the school system, corporate world, and even into government settings. Teachers and students are finding mindfulness training and

practice helps manage stress, while also increasing the ability of children to focus and do better in school. Schools that offer mindfulness training to children find a significant decrease in behavior problems as children learn how to handle their feelings and stress in pro-social ways. In mindful schools, there is improvement in learning as children develop their ability to focus better through mindfulness practice. Today there are weekly mindfulness practice groups in both the U.S. Congress, in the Pentagon, and in a group in Parliament in the United Kingdom.

Mindfulness in the workplace is increasing productivity, creativity, and well-being through improved ability to focus, and making the workplace safer. Because consistent mindfulness practice strengthens the immune system and reduces stress, there are fewer sick days, more speedy recoveries, and less medication, therefore reducing health care costs per employee. [Aetna Health Insurance Company saved \\$2000 per employee in healthcare costs by implementing a mindfulness program!](#)

Mindfulness based stress reduction is effective at helping people learn how to manage their stress, strengthen their immune systems, improve their health and quality of life in every sector of society where it has been adapted and implemented.

As we struggle to deal with, and adapt to, very different lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic and an uncertain future, stress management techniques that can strengthen our immune systems, help our bodies heal more quickly, and help us manage both chronic and traumatic stress, can become a major tool for individuals, families, and businesses.

You will often see mindfulness referred to as mindfulness meditation. Yes, mindfulness meditation is a foundation practice of reawakening your natural ability to live fully in each present moment. However, I find mindfulness meditation very different from other contemplation practices I have been trained in. If you have tried other forms of meditation and thought you failed or couldn't still or blank your mind, mindfulness meditation is very different.

The full scope of mindfulness-based stress reduction training includes a wide variety of practices that build on each other as they progress from sitting still with eyes closed to being up and actively moving through the richness of all of your daily living activities from home and work and play and more. Mindfulness transforms your ability to live in your relationships. Remember – living fully in each present moment, in your body and through your five physical senses, is the most natural thing in the world to you!

**Here is a simple and immediate way you can start using some mindfulness.** I learned this when I was shadowing Jon Seskevitch, an Advanced Nurse Clinician at Duke Medical Center. I was in awe of the immediate results I saw in just a few minutes in people in extreme, unmanaged pain and stress that had not been resolved adequately with pain, anxiety, and sleep medications. Jon taught a beginning technique that's **as simple as 1 – 2 – 3**. You can try this now for a few minutes

while you are reading this eBook. Give it about five minutes. (I will post a recording of this mindful 1-2-3 technique by the end of this April.)

1. **Sit** (or lay) in a comfortable position. I invite you to close your eyes while you do this to help you focus. If you don't choose to close your eyes, just let your gaze be down to the floor so you are not distracted by your surroundings.
2. **Bring your awareness to your breath.** Just your natural breath coming in and falling out. There is no special breath technique. Your body knows how to breathe. Just bring the focus of your awareness to that very subtle sensation of your breath coming in and out of your body. If you don't feel anything, that's fine. Just focus your awareness on your inhalation and exhalation coming in and passing out of your body.
3. **Your mind and thoughts are going to wander all over the place.** Sound familiar? Did I turn the burner off before I rushed out to work this morning? Can I pay that bill? Thoughts about a person or situation are running rampant through your mind. That's what thoughts and minds do. Great! You're doing it right! Congratulate yourself that you became aware of your mind wandering all over the place – and, for now, just bring your awareness back to your direct experience of your breath coming in and coming out. Focus on your natural inhalation and exhalation coming in and passing out of your body. Most people, when they start, have to keep bringing their wandering mind back to the present moment awareness of their breath over and over and over again. Excellent! You are not trying to still your mind or thoughts. You are focusing on your natural inhalation and exhalation. Focusing on the natural breath of your body is the beginning of training yourself to bring all of your awareness and all of your senses into the present moment. This the beginning of mindfulness practice and training. Good start, and you can use this simple short technique throughout the day every time you become aware of stress. Check YouTube mid-April for a simple guided practice 1-2-3 mindfulness session. I need to learn how to set up a YouTube – looks easy and how to record and post on YouTube. I'll get it done.

When you finish a few minutes of practice of 1 – 2 – 3 with closed eyes, open your eyes and take a minute to focus on what you feel now in your body. Maybe you notice that your shoulders dropped a little bit lower from their tight position. How does your body feel now after just a few minutes? Was there a shift, even a little bit, in your stress level? Perhaps this gave you just a little feel for how mindfulness can help relax and calm the body and the mind.

**In response to the Covid-19 pandemic I am putting several of my different kinds of guided Mindfulness Meditations on Insight Timer and on YouTube. Insight Timer is a smartphone app and online community for meditation. I expect to have some of my audio files available on Insight Timer and video guided meditations up on YouTube by mid-April 2020.**

Extreme chronic stress seems to be a way of life around the world. It has drained the joy and health from far too many people. There is a better way. Perhaps as we move together through this pandemic and rebuild our world, we as individuals, families, businesses, and societies can

reprioritize our unconscious acceptance of unmanaged, constant stress at work and at home. I invite you, as an individual, to consider and decide for yourself how you can bring more balance into your life. Make what really matters to you a bigger part of your life – the most important part of your life. Stress is natural in life – but it should not be a constant in our lives. Stress as a way of life is not a good way to live. The toll it takes on us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually is far too great. Jon Kabat Zinn, Ph.D., the “father of mindfulness in the western world, wisely titled his first book on mindfulness-based stress reduction Full Catastrophe Living – Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness.

### ***The Opportunity:***

Take some time as you move through this pandemic to seriously consider and review your relationship to the stresses in your life. I invite you to become more conscious of where and when you feel stress in your body. Become mindful of your emotional stresses and the thoughts you think that feed more stress. We are not powerless in our own lives. We can learn how to not only manage stress constructively, but we can learn how to reclaim the richness and fullness of our lives through mindfulness practice.

### ***Make It Your Own:***

What have you learned so far from your life experiences about how you handle stress in your life? What has worked for you, and what didn't work to handle stress in your life? What can you do differently now?

Do you have a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACE)? How far are you into your healing process from that stressful beginning of your life? How mindful are you of how it shows up in your present life and relationships? Mindfulness can teach you how to recognize when those parts of you are getting triggered in your current life and how you can comfort them and care for yourself. The Loving Kindness mindfulness meditation practice will be very beneficial to your healing work with trauma.

How has your health been impacted by stress? (Your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health) How will you protect your health and build resilience now?

How does stress typically show up in your relationships and communications? How can you handle those a bit more mindfully now? How do you let people know what you need and when you need it?

What is your stress management plan for this global situation we are all in together now? Eating healthy food, exercising, managing stress, sleep, giving and receiving love through social relationships, and more?

***Affirmation:***

I take time to become still and bring my awareness to my breath when I become aware of stress. I “put the oxygen mask on my own face first.” I am kind and gentle with myself.

***Resources:***

[What Stress Does to The Body and How Mindfulness Can Help](#), University of Massachusetts Memorial Healthcare

Centers for Disease Control, [Manage Anxiety and Stress](#)

[The American Institute of Stress](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health](#)

[National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine](#)

[Mindful Lifestyles Now, LLC](#)

# HEALTHFUL EATING

“Food isn’t like medicine, it is medicine, and it’s our number one tool for creating the vibrant health we deserve.”

Dr. Mark Hyman, MD, pioneer in functional medicine

**What we eat is a major factor in maximizing the health of our immune systems.** Fueling our bodies with truly healthy foods is the foundation of our physical and mental health and resiliency. It is extremely difficult to achieve health, however, with the standard American diet (SAD) of processed foods, high fats and sugars, and little to no fiber that create a highly inflammatory response in our bodies.

**Dr. Andrew Weil, MD**, is considered by many “the father of integrative medicine” in the United States and his website is a wealth of information on healthy living and how to strengthen your immune system and manage stress. Check out his [interactive Anti-Inflammatory Food Pyramid](#). It is another excellent tool to review and improve your relationship with food and eating. Here is one of Dr. Weil’s [best pages](#) defining his anti-inflammatory food pyramid approach to maximizing our health while enjoying what we eat even more.

**Dr. Daniel Amen, MD** – you may have seen him on one of his PBS Brain Health shows – states bluntly that “The standard American diet is killing us.” It’s called “SAD” with good reason. Now is the time we really need to reconsider our relationship with food and eating to maximize our health and well-being. We will quite likely find ourselves enjoying food better and having a new abundance of energy and endurance – and much better health.

**Michael Greger, MD** is one of the most invaluable resources and true heroes in the science of food and eating. He calls his life’s work [Nutrition Facts](#). Watching his presentation [How Not To Die: The Role of Diet in Preventing, Arresting and Reversing the Top 15 Killers](#) changes the lives of everyone who watches it as he lays out the truth about how our diets are killing us and what the science has been showing for decades about how Hippocrates was right that food is our medicine. Greger’s presentation style is humorous and easy to watch as he lays out hard science that can save our lives. I encourage you to get a copy of his free [Evidence-Based Eating Guide: A Healthy Living Resource](#).

According to the physicians and scientists of the **American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM)**, ‘What you eat makes all the difference! For strong immunity, consume a wide array of fiber-filled, nutrient-dense, and antioxidant-rich whole plant foods at every meal. Choose a rainbow



of fruits and vegetables, eat your beans, consume whole grains, and use a variety of herbs and spices to enhance flavors. Stay hydrated with water!”

ACLM recommends that you eat plenty of:

- Vegetables,
- Mushrooms,
- Fruits,
- Legumes,
- Whole grains,
- Nuts and seeds,

While limiting or avoiding:

- Sugary drinks like soda, juice cocktails, coffee and energy drinks
- Processed meats like sausage, bacon, salami, bologna, deli meat
- Processed snacks like crackers, chips, pretzels
- Cakes, pastries, sweets
- Dairy (especially high-fat types with added salt and sugar)
- Red meats
- Poultry
- Eggs

There is a lot of very solid science behind these recommendations.

**Kaiser Permanente** is a major US health insurance company. They have found [the strong science and impressive results of whole food, plant-based eating](#) so compelling for improving patient outcomes and lowering health care costs, that they have started mainstreaming plant-based nutrition information to all Kaiser physicians and medical centers. They have created plant-based educational resources for their clients. What the science has been showing for many decades is that whole food, plant-based foods are the very best fuel for our bodies that strengthen our immune systems and all of our bodily systems.

What every food plan out there from vegan to Paleo that cite their science of improved health shares in common is whole food, plant-based nutrition!

### **Supplements and Herbs and Spices**

**Duke Integrative Medicine Center at Duke University** teaches their post-graduate professional students, and the patients in their clinic, about the importance of evidence-based nutrition. This instruction includes:

- Botanicals (herbs and spices)
- Dietary supplements
- Vitamins and minerals
- Dietary therapies

### **Dietary Supplements:**

Let us be very clear that dietary supplements cannot replace the foundation of a healthy whole food, plant-based diet, nor make up for the damages to our health of the standard American diet (SAD). Not even close. We are used to thinking that there is a pill for everything to do with our health. This is not the case. The best quality nutritional supplements in the world are not whole food and do not contain the full spectrum of nutrients contained in plants in nature. But there is a time and place to consider if you might benefit from taking some supplements to add to your healthy diet, especially when you are transitioning from the SAD to a food plan that is primarily whole food and plant-based. If you have one or more chronic health conditions, you may want to find out what the scientific research shows about the use of supplements for that health condition(s).

What we know so far about Covid-19 is that it primarily effects the respiratory system. Evidence-based supplements to consider can include, but are not limited to:

### **Vitamin D**

The Harvard Gazette reports on a [recent study by a global team of researchers that found that Vitamin D supplements are effective in preventing respiratory diseases](#). “Most people understand that vitamin D is critical for bone and muscle health,” said Carlos Camargo of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), the study’s senior author. “Our analysis has also found that it helps the body fight acute respiratory infection, which is responsible for millions of deaths globally each year.”

I just saw an **interview of Dr. Anthony Fauci, American physician and immunologist who is the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases** on YouTube where he was asked about supplements to strengthen our immune systems as we deal with this pandemic – specifically Vitamins C and D - and he answered [“It’s a heathy thing to do.”](#)

Let’s remember that our bodies make vitamin D naturally when our skin is exposed to sunlight. There is some science on how sunlight not only makes vitamin D to strengthen our immune systems, but perhaps kills some viruses. WebMD has an interesting article [Can UV Light Be Used To Kill Airborne Flu Virus?](#) Obviously, it is way too early to know how sunlight may or may not affect the Covid-19 virus.

## Vitamin A to Zinc and more

Vitamin A is known to rapidly lower levels of infection. Zinc strengthens our immune response. Essential fatty acids are anti-inflammatory and fight inflammatory diseases. Probiotics support a healthy intestinal microbiome, provide immune support, and prevent the overgrowth of pathogens. A whole food, plant-based diet and some well documented supplements can be part of your plan to strengthen your immune system.

The [Life Extension Foundation](#) (LEF) is a supplement company founded and owned by doctors and scientists. They offer exceptional customer service with in depth patient education opportunities like their monthly magazines and their [in depth Health Protocols](#). If you are over 65 or have a chronic health condition(s) that makes you higher risk during this pandemic, I strongly encourage you to see if LEF has a Health Protocol for your condition(s). LEF specializes in maximizing health for mature people and addressing the chronic health conditions that can be common as we age in the modern world. You will see that every Health Protocol and every magazine article has an extensive reference list of the scientific studies behind their recommendations and products. I recommend my health coaching clients share these Health Protocols with their physicians so they can grow and learn together in their patient-doctor partnership. [They have a page on the Coronavirus and a recommended health protocol.](#)

## Evidence-based Botanicals (herbs and spices)

Most, if not all, herbs and spices have medicinal qualities and have been used for both the seasoning of foods and for their healing properties throughout history in cultures around the world.

[Tieraona Low Dog, MD](#) is an international leader in integrative medicine and healthy lifestyles. Dr. Low Dog teaches intensive courses in herbal medicine to health care professionals, as well as to the public. She states that “The division between conventional and traditional medicine is as artificial as the division between science and nature. They can be woven together in a fashion that meets our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. This is the foundation upon which integrative medicine is built.”

According to Duke Integrative Medicine Center, herbs and foods that can strengthen immunity in our bodies include:

- [Ginseng](#)
- Echinacea
- Astragalus
- Cat’s Claw

- Garlic
- Mushrooms
- Apple Cider Vinegar

Some herbs can have side effects or interact with other medications so herbal formulas should be used with caution. Always let your physician know what you are taking even though most physicians are not knowledgeable about supplements or herbs. It is not part of their training in medical school, so it is not within their scope of practice unless they have taken post graduate training in natural medicines and dietary therapies. Fortunately, increasingly many physicians are choosing to do post graduate study in the use of evidence-based complementary and integrative medicine modalities. [The National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](#) also provides information on a variety of treatments and therapies. Additionally, there are now excellent apps have been created for herbal medicine that provide in depth information including possible side effects and pharmaceutical interactions that could be dangerous. In your community you may be able to find licensed Doctors of Chinese Medicine or Acupuncture Physicians who use evidence-based herbals in their practices. These kinds of physicians, with their expertise on plant medicine, will have recommendations on treating respiratory infections or other conditions that may arise. This is part of their medical training. You may also find a medical doctor (MD), doctor of Osteopathy (DO), chiropractic physician (DC), or Nurse Practitioner who has chosen to do post graduate work and become knowledgeable about the use of herbal products and supplements. This is increasingly the case. I have a great deal of respect for [Gaia Herbs](#) and their quality control, science, and products. Gaia herbal products are available in health food stores and some health care offices and centers.

As the public increasingly turns to complementary health approaches, the quality of herbal preparations and supplements can be a major issue for consumers. [Complementary medicine has become a multi-billion-dollar industry just in the United States](#). Know the company you buy herbal products or supplements from. There are certainly many other ethical and quality herbal and supplement companies serving the public. Quality products also cost more than questionable products.

Please note that I do not have any financial interest in the Life Extension Foundation, Gaia Herbs, or any other specific company I recommend in this eBook. I am enrolled with Gaia Herbs as a health and wellness professional in order to access their excellent continuing education webinars and resources for health professionals. I use Gaia Herbs and the Life Extension Foundation as educational resources when I am preparing an Integrative Medicine Consultation for a health coaching client. I do not sell their products.

This section is only a brief overview of the wealth of evidence-based resources available to help us strengthen our immune systems and deal with this pandemic.

**Most people have no idea how good their body is designed to feel.**

### ***The Opportunity:***

The opportunity now can be to rediscover the real taste of fresh foods in season and how good our bodies can feel when we fuel them with quality foods.

The opportunity is for individuals and families to become educated about the evidence-based science about how what we eat is either the foundation for our maximal health and wellness – or for chronic diseases. Our attention has certainly been powerfully brought to our physical body's potential vulnerabilities and the resilience, or lack of resilience, of our bodies to withstand prolonged health crisis. The standard American diet of processed foods full of salt, sugar, and chemicals with a shelf life of years does not support the basic nutritional needs of our bodies.

The opportunity now is to learn the truth about how we fuel our bodies to build maximal well-being and make more positive lifestyle choices for ourselves.

### ***Make It Your Own:***

What changes could you make now to bring fresher, in season fruits and vegetables into your daily diet?

What are your favorite fruits? Vegetables? How do you like them prepared? How can you make health building foods a bigger part of how you care for your body and health every day?

What new vegetables or fruits are you curious about that it might be a good time to try now? This might be a good time to buy a farmer's box from a local farm and find out what produce is fresh, in season, and picked just for your order.

How can you get to five to ten servings a day of fresh in season or frozen fruits and vegetables to strengthen your immune system?

What interest, if any, do you have in including evidence-based supplements, dietary therapies, or botanicals as part of your pro-active plan for your own best health and well-being?

## ***Affirmation:***

I take loving care of my body. I enjoy giving my body an abundance of fresh, vibrant, colorful foods that build my maximum health and well-being. I am enjoying discovering how good my body can feel!

## ***Resources:***

- [Best Berries](#), Dr. Michael Greger, MD NutritionFacts.org
- Andrew Weil, MD, [Top 12 Anti-Inflammatory Foods To Add To Your Shopping list](#)
- [The Plant-Based Diet – A Healthier Way to Eat](#), Kaiser Permanente
- Dr. Michael Greger, MD, [NutritionFacts.org](#).
- Dr. Michael Greger, MD [How Not To Die: The Role of Diet in Preventing, Arresting or Reversing Our Top 15 Killers](#)

# INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

“What if there was a drug or supplement that could halve the number of sick days you take due to such upper respiratory infections as the common cold? It would make some pharmaceutical company billions of dollars. But there is already something that can boost your immune system for free and by so much that you can achieve a 25 – 50 percent reduction in sick days. And it only has good side effects.

What is it? Exercise.”

Michael Greger, MD

**A sedentary lifestyle weakens our immune systems and makes us more vulnerable to stresses. Regular physical activity improves immune function and lowers respiratory infection risk.**

Regular, moderate physical activity is vital to strengthen our immune systems, decrease stress, and improve sleep. Our physical bodies are wonderful “machines” perfectly designed for intense and frequent physical movement throughout the day. The conveniences of modern living, work that involves less physical activity, and changes in society have inadvertently led to sedentary lifestyles for a majority of people. Like many people, my lifestyle was primarily sedentary. My work is sitting at a computer, sitting talking with my clients, or sitting in a car driving to and from work. Physical movement was a natural part of human life in the past, but for many of us now it has to be an artificially created event wearing “special clothing” suited for the activity.

**The American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)** recommend that each of us get at least thirty minutes a day of exercise five days a week or a total of 150 minutes of exercise per week. Some research indicates that thirty minutes a day can be divided into shorter segments through the day that total thirty minutes per day. ACLM states that “As little as 20 minutes a day can suppress inflammation and support immunity.”

**Dr. Michael Greger** agrees with Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, that both food and walking are the peoples’ best medicines. In an article that is relevant to the Covid-19 pandemic and how it is believed that the virus enters the body, Dr. Greger explains that the mucosal surfaces of our eyes, nostrils and mouth are protected by antibodies called IgA, which provide the first line of defense against upper respiratory tract infections like pneumonia and influenza. “Moderate

exercise may be all it takes to boost IgA levels and significantly reduce the chances of coming down with flu-like symptoms.” That statement was made previous to the gravity of the Covid-19 pandemic, but is nonetheless relevant.

Dr. Greger does caution however that intense exertion stresses the immune system and can increase the risk of infection by impairing immune function. “In the weeks following marathons or ultra-marathons, runners report a two – to six-fold increase in upper respiratory tract infections.”

**Physical movement and exercise strengthen our immune systems and help us manage stress. Chronic stress weakens our immune systems.** Daily exercise is an excellent form of stress relief. The health and best functioning of every system of our bodies depends on regular physical exercise.

- With every inhalation and exhalation, our respiratory system is bringing life to our cells and moving waste out of our bodies.
- How well or poorly our digestive systems process the foods we eat and release what is left over from our bodies depends on both the quality of food we eat and how we maintain the strength of our bodies through daily exercise.
- As blood circulates through our bodies it is both delivering nutrients to every cell and removing waste from the cells. Doctors are also seeing that Covid-19 is also having a detrimental effect on the heart in some patients in the intensive care unit. Exercise strengthens our heart and circulatory system.
- Our lymph system, which removes toxins from our bodies throughout each day, is dependent on the regular physical movement of our bodies to move lymph through that system and remove waste.
- As we perspire or sweat our skin is also releasing wastes throughout the day. Our skin – the integumentary system – is the largest organ of our bodies.

All of these systems that cleanse our bodies throughout the day are dependent on our bodies daily physical movement to function effectively. Daily physical movement is essential to health and well-being, stress management and a strong immune system.

You can get a lot of health benefits from something as simple as walking, especially walking in nature and green spaces. An urban study was done where the subjects wore a cap with a brain wave monitor while they walked down a loud, chaotic big city street. Once the base line reading of the test was recorded on the monitor, the researchers had the person walk into a city park greenspace. The monitor instantly changed to more brain coherence. The monitor of the brain waves confirmed the anecdotal report of the subjects that they felt immediate peace and relaxation as they walked through nature. As soon as they stepped out of the park back into the concrete jungle, the brain waves changed back to stress patterns.



Have you heard of “[forest bathing](#)”? “Physical activity in the form of a 40 minute walk in the forest was associated with improved mood and feelings of health and robustness... Leisurely forest walks, compared with urban walks, show a 12.4 percent decrease in the stress hormone cortisol, a seven percent decrease in sympathetic nerve activity, a 1.4 percent decrease in blood pressure, and a 5.8 percent decrease in heart rate.”

[Yoga](#) and [Tai Chi](#) are also evidence-based forms of exercise and stress management that strengthen the immune system.

A good form of strengthening exercises is the use of hand weights. An inexpensive set of hand weights is a good form of exercise while we are staying at home. Miriam Nelson, Ph.D., currently the president of Hampshire College, has written several excellent books on how to properly use hand weights in the home for strengthening exercises.

For maximum health our bodies need different types of physical exercise. Have a creative variety of types of exercises in your life.

- Aerobic exercises build endurance
- Strength training
- Flexibility exercises like yoga
- Balance exercises like Tai Chi and Qi Gong

### ***The Opportunity:***

Exercise can be a pleasurable, fun, and creative part of our lives. When you were a baby you could not wait to start crawling, get up, stand up, and walk, climb, and run and explore the world! Being in your body was such a grand adventure! Being physical was freedom! If you have fallen into the pitfalls of a sedentary lifestyle, now may be a good time to remember how you enjoyed being physically active in your body when you were a young child. What was playtime like for you? Moving in our bodies was a natural and joyous part of childhood – and it can be in adulthood.

### ***Make It Your Own:***

How can you bring back the joy of being physically active in your body?

In what ways are movement and exercise part of your life now? Is now a time to add to your current modes of exercise – or start exercising? How will you make it enjoyable?

What specific physical activity or activities would you like to add to your stress management plan? **Mindfulness based stress reduction training includes basic standing and floor yoga exercises.**

How much and how many sessions per week? Do you need anything special to feel good doing exercise? Maybe new running shoes – or some “special exercise clothing” for the fun of it?

***Affirmation:***

I enjoy the sensations of being and moving and playing in my body. I value the time I take each day to move in ways that feel good to me and add to my enjoyment of life.

***Resources:***

[Exercise and Immunity](#), Medline Plus  
[Center for Disease Control – Physical Activity](#)  
[CDC Recommendations and Guidelines for Exercise](#)  
[Walk With a Doc](#)  
[exerciseismedicine](#)

# IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

“In many countries, particularly western countries, sleep takes a back seat to productivity, which may make sense in the short term but certainly not in the longer term. Sleep happens with whatever time is left over after all the other ‘necessary’ tasks are attended to.”

Aric Prather, Ph.D., Center for Health and Community, University of California

**A good night’s sleep lowers stress and strengthens the immune system.** While we sleep our brains are literally being cleansed while our bodies are being restored from the day’s physical, mental, and emotional stresses. [“During sleep, the flow of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain increases dramatically, washing away harmful waste proteins that build up between brain cells during waking hours”](#)

It is recommended that we sleep for 7 – 9 hours per night. Here are the CDC guidelines for [how much sleep we need each night](#) by age. Unfortunately, the **Centers for Disease Control** states that [“Insufficient sleep is a public health epidemic.”](#) This is evidence of how imbalanced modern lifestyles have become. Living through a pandemic and experiencing both health, social, and economic consequences is not making chronic sleep problems any easier for people. So many things seem to make sleep hard for many people. To make it worse, some research shows that the body does not make up for sleep we lose one night by sleeping more the next night or later on the weekend.

The **American College of Lifestyle Medicine** lists the following things that can interfere with getting a good night’s sleep every night since we don’t make up for missed sleep like maybe we thought we did:

- Too much food or drink close to sleep time
- Blue light from our devices
- Caffeine and alcohol use
- Stress/anxiety/worry
- Certain noises or sounds
- Too hot or too cold
- Lack of daytime sun exposure
- Medications and medical conditions

- Bed partner or bed pets

The [Centers for Disease Control Sleep and Sleep Disorders](#) provides sleep hygiene tips so you can put together a healthy personal plan for getting a good night's sleep:

- Use the bed only for sleeping or sex
- Establish a regular sleep schedule even on weekends
- Minimize bedroom noise and distractions
- Increase exposure to sun light during each day
- Eliminate night time caffeine and limit day time caffeine
- Avoid alcohol three hours before bedtime
- Eliminate after dinner or late-night snacking
- Maintain a healthy weight (BMI)
- Exercise
- Food choices
- Meditation
- Stay hydrated during the day
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for insomnia

### ***The Opportunity:***

Every person around the world has their attention keenly focused on their own physical health and the health of the friends, families and coworkers. The crisis that we are all in gives each of us an opportunity to look at the core assumptions and foundations of health in our own lives. Instead of taking sleep for granted, we can become informed about how critically important restorative sleep is and decide on our personal plan to get a good night's sleep every night. We can start building more balance between our physical and mental health and the rest of the activities in our lives. Getting a full night sleep is at the top of the list with stress management, food and exercise. **We deserve our own health!**

### ***Make It Your Own:***

What would be your ideal sleep routine each night? Maybe some yoga and meditation – both of which are strongly evidence-based to reduce stress, strengthen the immune system, and promote better sleep. How can you make the last two or three hours of each day an especially peaceful, lovely time you look forward to each night? This is YOUR time.

Which sleep hygiene changes might you need to fit into your lifestyle and sleep routine now?

Have a plan. What are two or three things you can do when you can't fall asleep?

***Affirmation:***

Falling asleep is the most natural thing in the world for my body and my mind. I sleep like a baby. I fall asleep easily, stay asleep, and wake up each morning completely rested and refreshed and ready to enjoy another full day of living my life on my terms.

***Resources:***

[CDC – Sleep Resources](#)

[American Sleep Association](#)

[Sleep Education](#)

# FORM AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

“It is reminding us of how important our family and home life is and how much we have neglected this. It is forcing us back into our houses so we can rebuild them into our home and to strengthen our family unit.”

Bill Gates speaking about the spiritual meaning behind the Covid-19 pandemic

[Research has shown that social relationships can strengthen our immune systems.](#) We are told that we need to “flatten the curve” of the spread of this pandemic by social distancing. We are social beings. We need social support. We just need to get creative about how we connect with people in social relationships at this time. The Italians have certainly given us the perfect example of continuing social connection while properly physically isolating from each other by appropriate distances.

Positive relationships are critical to our health and well-being. Research shows that positive emotions that strengthen our immune systems can occur even in a few minutes of distance social connection using modern technologies of audio and visual connection. Social media is what you make of it. This is not the time to be without our supportive relationships. They feed our souls as we move through the unimaginable. Health measurements like our blood pressure, our heart rate, even the strength of our immune system directly correlate with the quality of our social support system.

While we may be having to experience physical distancing, perhaps it is time to open our minds and hearts to a new way of looking at relationships and ways to build bridges and cross divides. There are many organizations and systems of building stronger, positive relationships that help people learn and grow beyond any limitations in how they were raised to be in relationships. We can all grow in this critically important area of our lives. If you are enjoying time at home with loved ones now, that is wonderful. But if you are home with people you cannot stand spending time with and things are getting worse for staying at home with them – know that this does not have to be the end of the story of your relationships with these people that you once cared deeply for. This is not all there is for you. This is an opportunity for learning new ways of being in relationships and maybe you have some time to begin new learning in this area of your life. You can learn how to get your needs met and co-create loving, fulfilling relationships that do in fact strengthen your immune system while adding immeasurable quality to your life.

**Dr. Marshall Rosenberg** developed a wonderful system of human communication called Non-Violent Communication (NVC). Also called Compassionate Communication by some teachers, Dr. Rosenberg's body of new and positive communication and problem-solving skills helps people get more of their own needs met in a pro-social way, while helping others get their needs met. The practical problem-solving skills in NVC are nothing short of amazing. One of my favorite quotes of Dr. Rosenberg is "What I want in my life is compassion, a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart."

There are many other excellent teachers, books, trainings, and organizations now available to humanity to help those who want to learn how to build stronger, more satisfying relationships at home, at work, and in other areas of our lives. We are social beings. The love and connection that we want is available to us. There is a better way.

### ***The Opportunity:***

It is especially important now, while we are socially distancing in order to minimize the catastrophic spread of Covid-19, that we review the quality of our social support system and get creative about maintaining it in mutual support. This time in our lives is bringing most of us temporarily to a pause in the hectic pace of life and a quieter time where we can think about our social connections and values. Perhaps this is time to make your social relationships a higher priority in your busy life? When this passes, do you want to go back to the way it was in your close relationships? Perhaps it is time for a modern renaissance in your relationships. Are relationships becoming a higher priority in your life now?

### ***Make It Your Own:***

Take some time now to really think about what you want out of your relationships. What were your hopes and dreams for loving, mutually supportive relationships? How would you rate your relationship satisfaction now – and how can you improve it?

Introvert or extrovert or somewhere along that spectrum - how do you enjoy being in authentic and meaningful relationships with people?

How can you use social media and technology to maintain and even build social relationships that are authentic and meaningful to you?

Are social media connections uplifting you during these times of physical distancing and helping lower your stress? Use social media to explore some new positive connections based on mutual interests.

Who do you want to stay in touch with? How will you stay in touch with them socially, but not physically, while we each do all that we can to flatten the curve?

***Affirmation:***

I love and respect myself and I attract loving people into my world. I enjoy the give and take of positive, mutually supportive and creative relationships.

***Resources:***

[How Happiness Boosts the Immune System](#)

[Non-Violent Communication](#)

Marshall Rosenberg, [Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life: Life Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships](#)

Robert Bolton, [People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts](#)

Robin Norwood, [Women Who Love Too Much](#) and more

Melody Beattie, [Codependent No More](#) and more



# AVOIDANCE OF RISKY SUBSTANCES

“So, what’s the best outcome here? For the rest of my life I’m going to take care of myself. I’m going to take care of myself, feel healthy, and feel happy, and feel good, and feel love. That’s not a bad outcome. So, this is forcing us to pay attention and up the quality of our own life.”

Rabbi Gabriel Cousens, MD, speaking about the Covid-10 pandemic

This is a good time to be kind and gentle with ourselves, and be mindful about what we put into our bodies and the ways in which we are handling our stress. Covid-19 causes great suffering and death by attacking the respiratory system. There currently is no treatment for Covid-19. For many people, this is the time to make some positive lifestyle changes to strengthen your immune system and have a conscious and constructive plan for how you manage stress in your life.

The **American College of Lifestyle Medicine** recommends that we boost our immunity by not smoking and that we be mindful to not rely on alcohol or other risky substances as a stress reducer.

If the use of risky substances has been an ongoing problem for you:

According to the American College of Lifestyle Medicine there are several effective treatment models for releasing addictions:

- Counseling – individual or group; many quick visits; longer, more intense visits
- Medications (anti-relapse)
- Counseling plus medication is more effective

Counselors and therapists have had to take their practices to virtual platforms. It may be difficult to get seen quickly under current circumstances if you are not currently in a therapeutic relationship with a professional. If you have a history with a therapist, they may be able to fit you in again as a client now. That is a common professional practice. This may be a motivating time to call your insurance provider and start the ball rolling on getting counseling services started as soon as possible. I encourage you to get on a waiting list with a therapist or whatever you can do to get in queue. Any step taken can be helpful at this time. There can a lot of social

support available through social media and online if you connect with the right people who have positive, supportive intentions.

This may be the right time for you to get group support from an organization of some kind like AA or NA if you are not already connected with that type of organization. Currently these groups are using virtual meetings. If you have been attending AA or NA groups, they have most likely stopped in-person meetings and moved to virtual meetings. If you have a sponsor, keep up that supportive relationship using virtual social connection. There are many ways we can keep physical distance without reducing our supportive social relationships. No one needs to be alone right now. Remember that there is learning and opportunity in every situation. Positive growth is always a possibility to reach for.

Your social relationships and connectedness are a major part of your experiences using risky substances. When I was a therapist (my original career many years ago) and the manager of a half-way house for chemically addicted women, I used Earnie Larsen's books Stage I Recovery and Stage II Recovery for a group I ran. Stage I Recovery is stopping using the problem substance. Stage II Recovery is realizing that you need to work on relationships and social connectedness. I deeply appreciated Earnie's insights into the underlying causes of addictive behaviors being in the area of the quality of our experiences in formative relationships. Earnie's materials are part of the many good resources available to support people involved in the deeply personal journey of addictions. As you read in the "Form and Maintain Relationships" chapter above, social connectedness is now known to be a crucial component of our quality of life and health and well-being. If you are familiar with the toxic side of relationships, know that there can be positive, nurturing, supportive relationships in your life. Many people with addictions have done the hard work of healing and grown to build strong, successful lives and loving relationships. Love is what you are looking for and love is what you can find.

There is great value in learning new relationship skills sets that help you learn positive ways of communication, problem-solving, and being in relationships. We can learn at any age in our lives how to communicate in ways that increase our ability to get our own needs met, while also strengthening our relationships with others. Robert Bolton, Ph.D. wrote a wonderful book People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts years ago. Dr. Marshall Rosenberg created a whole system of non-violent communication and tools for building healthy relationships while honoring our personal needs and values in life. Robin Norwood and Melody Beattie have written powerful books on healing codependency patterns in relationships. The resources for learning how to recognize and heal unhealthy relationship patterns you learned as you grew up and build positive relationship skills are limitless! It's not easy work – you already know that. But it is out there for you.

These are only two of the many thousands of teachers of healing and creating healthy relationships.

**The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine** is one of my favorite resources for the best evidence-based mental health care and approaches to healing and transformation. It is a training organization for mental health professionals, but they have a lot of excellent resources available to the public in their blog archives. When they post new webinars for professionals, they make them temporarily available to the public for free during their marketing phase. The link I put in Resources below is to their Covid-19 response blog (two parts) and you will see their blog archive menu on the right side of this page. It's a gold mine!

This time of crisis may well be an opportunity for great motivation and personal growth. Be patient and kind and gentle with yourself. The number one essential attitude of mindfulness-based stress reduction is non-judgement. Take some time to create a stress management plan if you don't already have a strong one. This book provides an outline of lifestyle medicine to for you work with at your own pace and in your own way.

### ***The Opportunity:***

Perhaps you can use this global crisis to build on your current knowledge of yourself and your vulnerabilities and learn some new ways to manage stress and build a balanced lifestyle that supports you with increased resilience. This is a time to be patient, kind and gentle with yourself as you use this extraordinary challenge to continue to grow. You are not alone right now – we are all in this together, aren't we?

### ***Make It Yours:***

- What are one or two ways that you have learned that you can handle stress without using risky substances? What has worked for you?
- What kind of support do you need to succeed?
- What steps can you take to be kind and gentle with yourself and take care of yourself?

### ***Affirmation:***

"I love myself; therefore, I live totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright and joyous and secure. I rejoice in the knowledge that I have the power of my own mind to use in any way I choose. Every moment of life is a new beginning point as we move from the old. This moment is a new point of beginning for me, right here and right now. All is well in my world." - Louise Hay, [You Can Heal Your Life](#)

### ***Resources:***

[Centers for Disease Control](#)

[SmokeFree.gov](http://SmokeFree.gov)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

Robert Bolton, People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts

Louise Hay, You Can Heal Your Life

Robin Norwood, Women Who Love Too Much and more

Melody Beattie, Codependent No More

Marshall Rosenberg, Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life: Life Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships

Earnie Larsen, Stage II Relationships: Love Beyond Addiction, 1987

National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine (NICABM),  
<https://www.nicabm.com/working-with-anxiety-during-a-pandemic-part-1/>

# RESOURCES

- A. [American College of Lifestyle Medicine](#)
- B. [The CDC Pandemic Preparedness website also has a new page specifically on the Corona Virus](#)
- C. [“Working With Anxiety During A Pandemic”](#), National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine (NICABM),
- D. [Dr. Michael Greger on Pandemic Prevention | Infectious Diseases, Aids, Climate Change, Influenza:](#)
- E. [Life Extension Foundation – Health Protocols](#)
- F. [Integrative Approaches to COVID-19](#), Victoria Maizes MD, Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine
- G. [Lifestyle Medicine: More Relevant Than Ever in the Face of Covid-19](#)
- H. [Mindful Lifestyles Now](#)

# SUMMARY

Human beings are designed to be very physically active every day, to eat clean, whole foods rich with vital nutrients and fiber that support vibrant health, to live in natural cycles of sunlight on our bodies by day and dark nights with the light of stars overhead. Our bodies and minds and spirits are designed to enjoy the cycles of changing seasons and a wealth of relationships with the richness of life all around us. We are part of the whole fabric of life. Our bodies, minds, and hearts are designed to live in a daily balance between active doing and restorative being. Modern living has acculturated our natural lifestyles out of us. Most humans do not eat well, they do not get exercise, they do not sleep well, and they live in constant, chronic stress their bodies simply cannot handle. The top causes of most disability and death in the modern world are diseases resulting from this imbalance in our own lifestyles. Perhaps Covid-19 is yet another evidence of this imbalance between humanity and life on the planet. We can no longer ignore our own physical, mental and emotional health. Each one of us needs to “put the oxygen mask on our own face first.” No one else can decide or do that for us.

This eBook gives you scientifically valid information on the foundations of real health for your body, mind and heart. You can read the parts that interest you, or the whole book to see the full picture of how to can take responsibility to create your own personal health and wellness. If you want to get deeper into the how-to and science, open the links that interest you. If you are ready to take responsibility to live and enjoy maximal health, spend a little time considering *The Opportunity* and *Make It Yours* at the end of each Chapter. Perhaps you will play with the power of affirmations and affirmative thinking. Make the contents of this book, which is a gift of love from me to you, your own.

We do not have to give up the conveniences and benefits of modern living. We have gotten out of balance in how we live in our world and those of us who choose to can bring ourselves back into balance – and help empower others to do so. There will be many opportunities this year and as we move forward to clarify our values as individuals, communities, and as planetary citizens. I have been stunned and delighted seeing the images of cleaner air over cities toxic with industrial smog for decades; of the canals in Venice with clear water after just two weeks of social isolation; of peacocks dancing on empty streets. Humans can develop technologies and comfortable lifestyles that do not destroy the health of our own bodies and the body of the earth. Covid-19 is not the first wakeup call to humanity – and it will not be the last. And this is why this book, written for individuals and families, is written with *The Opportunity* and *Make It Yours* and an *Affirmation* in each section. It is time to choose once again.

# Take Time for Self-Care



## Keep to a Routine



### SLEEP

A regular bed time and wake time that allows for 7 to 9 hours of sleep is optimal. Have a wind-down routine that includes limiting screen time and being in a dark, cool room.

### EXERCISE

Incorporate physical activity into each day. Stand, rather than sit; take the stairs; stretch; garden; go for a walk. Remember that any movement is better than no movement.

### NUTRITION

To balance mood and stabilize blood sugar, eat complex carbohydrates found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds at regular intervals throughout the day.

## Listen to your Body

Know the signs of too much **STRESS**, and ask for help before you think you need it. **Watch out for:** muscle tension, headaches, upset stomach or difficulty sleeping. Be compassionate with yourself as well as with others.



## Drink Water

Water consumption for hydration is vital! Daily goal for men: ~15.5 cups (3.7 liters). Daily goal for women: ~11.5 cups (2.7 liters).



## Socialize

Reach out to friends, peers, older adults and family by phone, email, text, or social media platforms. Even brief virtual connections improve your mood and immune response.



**Don't rely on alcohol as a stress reducer.**

## Respect Your Emotions



Establish "no judgment" rules for yourself and your family as you experience a full range of human emotions: fear, anger, gratitude and grief.

#### References:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256>  
<https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/physical-activity-guidelines-for-americans/index.html>  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/brain-behavior-and-immunity/vol/61/suppl/C>  
<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need>  
<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-body>

@ACLifemed

 AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
Lifestyle Medicine

---

Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality”, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or, we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Arundhati Roy

---





**Pamela Chamberlynn, MSW, NBC-HWC**

- Mindfulness Professional, Duke Integrative Medicine Center at Duke University
- Certified Integrative Health Coach Professional, Duke Integrative Medicine Center at Duke University
- National Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coach, National Board of Health & Wellness Coaches in partnership with National Board of Medical Examiners
- Professional member of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine
- Certified Lifestyle Medicine Coach, (April 30, 2020), American College of Lifestyle Medicine in partnership with Wellcoaches

(850) 329-6638 [pchamberlynn@comcast.net](mailto:pchamberlynn@comcast.net) [www.MindfulLifestylesNow.com](http://www.MindfulLifestylesNow.com)

Facebook: Integrative Health Coach Professional Services & Consulting LLC @MindfulLifestyle

**Please share this free eBook widely with loved ones,  
family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors**

**Free guided Mindfulness Stress Management audio and video mindfulness meditations will  
be loaded to Insight Timer and YouTube by April 30, 2020**

© Pamela Chamberlynn 2020.

Permission is granted to share this eBook freely in its entirety with credit to author.