

Holistic Lifestyle Choices

INTRODUCTION

Lesson 1 introduces basic concepts of health and wellness in terms of living holistically, in harmony with nature and the earth. By providing our bodies with gifts from the earth such as pure sunlight, fresh water, clean air, healthy food, rest and movement—and by not interfering with its innate capacities—our bodies can perform the tasks necessary to maintain a healthy balanced state, as well as heal from injury or illness. You'll learn that we're responsible for our own health and well-being and that we have the power to carry through with that responsibility. You'll learn how to determine when to seek medical care beyond what we're able to provide for ourselves. Lesson 1 explains that by making mindful and healthy choices, we can maintain our own health and well-being. This lesson also offers information on the specifics of making healthy choices by introducing holistic nutrition concepts, leading us to make better choices to support our bodies, minds, and spirits, in maintaining our holistic wellness.

OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you'll be able to

- Explain concepts of self-care, including when to seek medical assistance
- Identify the aspects of healthy lifestyles that empower us to take self-responsibility for our health and well-being
- Distinguish addictive behaviors from healthy lifestyle choices
- Demonstrate understanding of the nutrients provided by our foods
- Explain the importance of water to the balanced health of our bodies



ASSIGNMENT 1

Read Assignment 1 in this study guide. Then, read pages vii–xiv and 142–172 in your textbook, *Natural Health, Natural Medicine*.

Assignment 1 provides an introduction to self-care and emphasizes the innate healing powers of the human mind and body that, when provided what they need, are capable of powerful healing. It also introduces self-responsibility for our own health and well-being, rather than giving that responsibility and power to others. You'll learn to make ongoing lifestyle choices to live in accord with nature's gifts, which in turn are available for our use in establishing and maintaining health and wellness. This assignment explains how we use addictive behaviors to avoid responsibility and awareness and discusses our need for connection to others.

Healing Powers of the Human Body

Many ancient traditions teach of the innate healing power of the human body; many traditional and folk practices use those powers of self-healing for managing diseases and providing healing from various conditions of mind, body, and spirit. Approximately 100 years ago, early medical researchers and writers were attempting to identify and describe the body's wisdom that they had observed and learned about from these healing traditions. According to James Oschman in his book *Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis*, our bodies incorporate an interconnected mind-body wisdom, an unseen intelligence. This invisible but well-known and felt internal intelligence drives the body's spheres of influence and self-healing capacities. In the early stirrings of scientific endeavor, humankind attempted to measure and define this intelligence, and perceived it to be a conscious wisdom. It's this conscious and intelligent part of ourselves that constitutes the body-mind and carries our healing wisdom.

According to the teachings of traditional naturopathy (not medical naturopathy), we're able to support the body's intelligence and healing powers by using the natural elements: fresh air, pure sunlight, clear water, healthy foods, and rest

and movement. All of the various natural health modalities and natural lifestyle practices are designed to follow through with supporting the body's innate wisdom and capacities for healing. By living in accord with lifestyle practices that rely on the elements of air, sunlight, water, foods, and rest and movement, we're bringing our bodies more in alignment with the natural order of life and supporting our bodies' natural state of health and well-being. When dis-ease does occur, we're also able to utilize these same practices and natural modalities as self-care methods, to support the body's internal healing powers.

Disease versus Dis-ease

Our Western mind-set is that we “catch” an illness or “have” a disease, and that we need an external expert to “cure” it. This is philosophically related to Newtonian physics, which is mechanistic in nature, aligned with the thinking of the early scientific era. It lends itself to the concept that the human body, mind, and spirit are separate entities, and that the body is composed of separate systems or parts, again mechanical in nature. This leads to a belief that all the parts are separate, that we need an external intervention to fix the diseased or broken part, and only then can we return to normal function, with the illness or disease cured.

From a holistic perspective, both ancient and contemporary, the mind-body-spirit is an integrated and connected system, working as one beyond our awareness. This is aligned with Einsteinian physics as well as ancient mystical and metaphysical teachings. With the development of quantum physics, modern scientific technology is now able to measure and document many ancient teachings. This ability to measure and document using technology is only now “catching up” to ancient wisdom. One of the long-standing traditions is that as long as the mind-body-spirit remains in balance and harmony, all is well and that disease or illness doesn't occur. However, if we become out of balance in any aspect, our mind, body, and/or spirit can move into a condition of disharmony or “dis-ease.” We're therefore in a state of *un-ease*, or *dis-ease*. By living our lives daily in harmony and balance, utilizing our natural resources for maintaining health and

wellness—as well as healing when needed to support the body’s healing powers—we return to a state of balance or ease. This state of balance and harmony is our natural state of being and is in alignment with the natural order of our world and its healing resources.

Western Allopathic Care versus Self-Care

Because we’ve been trained in our culture to turn to external expert advice and direction, we may not know when to seek outside medical help versus depending on self-care and appropriate home remedies. The introduction to the textbook, written by an allopathic physician with natural health background and training, imparts important information as to when we should seek expert *allopathic* (traditional medical) assistance. Dr. Weil has noted that we should become responsible for our own health and wellness, as well as experiment with lifestyle changes. He also suggests using our good judgment and common sense, particularly when evaluating whether to seek medical assistance. In general, Weil recommends that any time we develop “alarming, dramatic, or persistent symptoms that might indicate infection, malignancy, or malfunction of a vital organ” (p. xi), we should seek allopathic medical care from a physician. It’s also generally accepted in natural health and self-care circles that in cases of trauma, we should always seek Western allopathic medical care, as it’s an outstanding approach to trauma care and acute medical treatment.

Take time now to complete your first learning activity and first self-check. When you’ve completed *Self-Check 1* and have checked your answers against those at the back of this study guide, move on to complete the next assignment.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

1. Identify several things you need to take responsibility for in order to achieve and maintain optimum health.

2. After reading Chapter 7 on addictions, think over your lifestyle and activities. Review some of the addictions discussed in the book, and then identify their characteristics and/or the behaviors that make them addictive.

ADDICTION	CHARACTERISTICS OR BEHAVIORS
Foods	
Legal Drugs Alcohol Tobacco Caffeine	
Sex and/or Relationships	

3. When you've completed the chart above, identify any choices, activities, or behaviors that you think could be addictions for you. Write about what you've identified in your personal journal. This is for your path of personal well-being; your journal entries are for you alone.
4. Distinguish between the concept of "family" as lived in the Native American culture versus what persons of European descent would consider "family." Write a brief explanation in your journal.



Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of *Mind-Body Wellness*, you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you've just read by completing a "Self-Check" exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete *Self-Check 1* now.

1. How should you decide when to use self-care and when to seek the assistance of a medical health care practitioner?

2. Distinguish love in its highest form from the popular notion of romantic love.

3. Discuss the concept of addictive behaviors as a search for healing.

4. Identify and briefly explain the ways to overcome our illusions of separateness and increase our sense of interconnectedness.

Check your answers with those on page 59.
