

# TEN KEYS TO EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

**AVOID TOBACCO AND DRUGS** – Smoking cigarettes is the #1 factor negatively related to longevity and health. Do not smoke. Avoid drugs and most alcohol. (Red wine in moderation has some positive health effects.) Be judicious in your use of prescription and over-the-counter medications. If you truly need medication for health then take as directed. But be aware that all medications have the potential for short and/or long term side effects. Be an informed consumer by asking questions of doctors and pharmacists when medication is recommended and researching medications from reputable sources.

**BALANCED DIET** - Don't over or under eat, just eat a consistent healthy balanced diet. Avoid fad diets; just go with fruits, veggies, and whole grains. Limit sugar, soda and drink more water. Supplements are seldom warranted.

**EXERCISE** – Always exercise at least 20 minutes three times a week, but shoot for 150 minutes per week in three or more sessions. Balance cardio and strength based on your lifestyle and needs but everyone should get consistent aerobic exercise. Don't let yourself be discouraged as any exercise is better than no exercise. Start slow and work up. Consult with your medical doctor if there may be concerns about your ability to undertake an exercise regimen.

**SLEEP** – Get enough sleep without oversleeping. Most people need at least 8 hours of sleep. Get the right amount for your health not what you think you have time for. A short nap of 15 to 25 minutes may be helpful but don't nap for longer than 30 minutes or nap more than once per day.

**REDUCE STRESS** – Stress is a normal part of life and can provide motivation. However, chronic stress and severe stress are harmful to the immune system and to our emotional well being, bringing unhappiness and unhealthiness.

**DEVELOP AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL** – We've all seen how destructive peer pressure can be to teens. External pressure is also not good for adults. Living based on external motivations and judgments is unhealthy. Find yourself and be okay with who you are. Ignore fads. Govern your thoughts and behaviors from inside, not from what others may think or say.

**FIND A SENSE OF MEANING & PURPOSE & LIVE DEEP** – Those with a purpose driven life consistently rate as healthier and happier. Know yourself. Follow your dreams. Be involved with life. Have several hobbies or interests. Try new things. Be involved with others and the community. Give service. Read. Explore.

**GET CONNECTED** – Recent research has shown that connectedness is second only to not smoking for health and longevity. It's even more important than diet and exercise. People with a strong support network are healthier and happier than those that are more isolated. Develop at least 3 close, intimate friendships.

**EMOTIONAL TALK** – Deep, emotional talk is very beneficial. Have several people that you can share deep feelings with. Humans have a need to laugh, think, and feel. Share these deeper thoughts and emotions with others. Be introspective and talk positively to yourself as well. Write your feelings in a journal. Listen to others.

**MAINTAIN HOPE** – Finally, research shows that people with hope, with optimism for the future, are healthier and happier than those without. Every election many politicians preach fear to promote their own career. We often hear doom and gloom from the TV or the pulpit. The truth is that in the recorded history of mankind we've never been safer or lived longer. In 1940 there were fewer than 20 democracies, today there are more than 100. Deaths from war are at historic lows. While we still have progress to make, the world is becoming more tolerant and accepting. We have challenges but there are many reasons to be hopeful for ourselves and for our children and grandchildren.

*Each of the health concepts noted above are well researched. Paying attention to these ten areas can improve immune system function, reduce anxiety, reduce depression, and increase overall health and happiness. We may not have control over genetics, accidents, or other people. But we do have control over each of these ten critical areas. Do a self-assessment of each area, give yourself a grade, and then begin working on making small but steady long-term changes until you're in a healthy range for each item. Perfection isn't needed, just consistent attention, changes in thinking patterns, and changes in behavior. Thoughts and behaviors affect brain chemistry.*