Teaching Chapter 13

***Health and Wellness***

Key Instructional *Goals* of this Chapter

There are two major goals of this chapter: (a) to promote student awareness that wellness means more than merely avoiding illness but attaining a state of holistic well-being that results in optimal (peak) performance, and (b) to equip students with specific strategies for attaining wellness during their first term in college and beyond.

Rationale for the *Placement* of this Chapter in the Text’s *Sequence* of Topics

We include a detailed discussion of wellness at the end of the text not because we considered it less important for college success than topics covered earlier in the book. Since it’s impossible to provide detailed coverage of all topics relevant to college success at the same time, tough decisions have to be made about their order and timing. In-depth coverage of wellness occurs at a later juncture in the text because we felt that students are likely to be more receptive to its message as they prepare for the mental and physical challenge posed by end-of-term projects, papers, and upcoming final exams. Furthermore, we thought that the holistic and integrative nature of wellness provides a fitting conclusion and natural “bookend” to a book that began with coverage of the value of broad-based, interdisciplinary knowledge provided by the liberal arts (general education).

Building *Student Motivation* for this Chapter

The components of this chapter that new students are likely to be most interested in are: sleep, sexuality, and substances; the topics of nutrition and exercise are more likely to pose motivational challenges. What may stimulate greater student interest in the latter two topics is tying them directly to new students’ first-term experience. This should serve to differentiate your coverage of these topics from their coverage in health education classes that your students may have taken in high school or will take in college. Nutrition and exercise may be connected directly to the new-student experience by discussing:

1) how wellness is relevant to college students—particularly with respect to their increasing

independence and freedom to make their own choices;

2) the “freshman 15”—fact or fallacy;

3) common eating disorders among college students;

4) effects of exercise on college students’ mental performance and academic success.

Also, nutrition can take on greater significance and interest to students if it’s related to the role it has played in promoting survival of the *human species*. This evolutionary perspective can add an engaging anthropological touch to the discussion of both nutrition and exercise and, in so doing, provide a powerful explanation for *why* the recommended strategies are effective.

Lastly, discussion of how wellness strategies affect the *human brain* is likely to stimulate student interest in any topic covered in this chapter. (Brain-related information is included throughout the chapter.) Make sure your students realize that the brain is a physical organ of the body, and like any other bodily organ, it requires optimal nourishment, circulation and oxygenation for it to function at peak levels. Relating wellness to the brain gives the topic a concrete, visual dimension; it also enables students understand the underlying reasons *why* and *how* the recommended wellness strategies are effective.

Showing slides or other images of the human brain while discussing this chapter may be an effective way to incorporate a powerful visual element into discussions of wellness. Student interest can be heightened further by bringing to class a model of the human brain, or a real human brain that has been preserved and encased (which may be borrowed from the Biology department).

\* When covering alcohol, refer to it as a mind-altering *drug*. The commonly used phrase, “alcohol and drugs” tacitly suggests that alcohol is not a drug, which may send an unintended message to new students. In sufficient quantities, alcohol contains a psychoactive substance (ethyl alcohol) that alters the brain’s natural chemicals and produces mind-altering effects, thus it works in a fashion similar to any other mind-altering drug (see p. 333).

Focusing on how alcohol affects the brain can also add motivational interest to discussion of alcohol use and abuse among college students. It may also help reduce student resistance or defensiveness about this topic, which can arise if drinking is examined exclusively from the perspective of irresponsible risk-taking or substance abuse.

Key Points to Make When Covering this Chapter

\* Combat the black-white dichotomy that suggests humans can be either in one of two physical states: healthy or sick. Instead, promote student awareness that there is a range or continuum of states between being sick and functioning at an optimal or peak level. The proactive-through-reactive continuum on p. 318 could serve an effective visual aid to help you make this point.

\* Highlight the fact that the first step toward developing good wellness habits is the same as developing any other good habit discussed in the text, namely: *self-awareness—*“know thyself”—a cardinal principle of a liberal arts education. (See chapter 2, p. 40).

\* Underscore the fact that *sleep deprivation* is a major problem among humans in general and college students in particular. The amount of sleep an individual needs is strongly influenced by his or her genetic make-up; we cannot “train” our body (brain) to need less sleep than what it has been biologically-programmed to need. Encourage your students not to cheat on sleep and that shortage of it will eventually catch up with them—resulting in elevated stress, impaired memory, and increased susceptibility to colds and infections.

\* Underscore the fact that avoiding *risky behavior* (behavior that threatens physical safety and well-being) is as important to promoting wellness as eating right and exercising regularly. To begin discussion of this point, ask students to interpret or react to the following statement: “Adolescents and young adults often think and act as if they’re *invincible, immortal, and infertile*.”

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Concluding this chapter with a discussion of the spiritual dimension of wellness may provide

fitting closure because it deals with the “big picture” question of the meaning of life, which will remain significant to students throughout their college years and beyond. Thus, this topic provides a fitting final segment of a chapter devoted to promoting students’ holistic success in college and beyond.

***Spirituality* Reflections**

\* Do you think it is possible for a person to be spiritual but not religious? Why?

\* Do you think it is possible for a person to be religious but not spiritual? Why?

\* Would you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“For humans to be truly happy, they have to find meaning in their lives that comes from recognizing they must make a commitment to something larger than themselves, such as humanity, the natural world, or something that transcends human existence.”

\_\_\_ Agree

\_\_\_Disagree

\* What is the reasoning behind your agreement or disagreement with the previous statement?

\* What do you believe happens to humans after death?

- Do you believe we experience nothingness (lose consciousness forever)?

- Do you believe there is life after death?

- Do you believe there are after-life places, such as heaven and hell?

- Do you believe that after dying we return to life as another human being or in a

different life form?

- How strongly do you hold these beliefs?

- Why do you hold these beliefs? (How do you think you originally developed them?)

- Do you think your beliefs will ever change?

*Exercises* for Chapter 12

**Health Style: A Self-Assessment**

(Adapted from *Healthstyle: A Self-Test*, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2006)

Directions:

Complete each of the following sections by circling the number beside the answer that best describes your behavior. After completing each section, add the numbers you’ve circled to get your score for that section and record your total score on the line provided at the end of the section.

**Almost Sometimes Almost**

**Always Never**

***Cigarette Smoking***

*If you are currently a non-smoker, enter a score of* ***10*** *for*

*this section and go to the next section on Alcohol & Drugs.*

1. I have stopped smoking cigarettes. 2 1 0

2. I smoke only low tar and nicotine cigarettes. 2 1 0

*Smoking* Score *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**Almost Sometimes Almost**

**Always Never**

***Alcohol and Drugs***

1. I avoid drinking alcoholic beverages or I drink 4 1 0

no more than 1-2 drinks a day.

2. I don’t use alcohol or other drugs (especially illegal 2 1 0

drugs) as a way of handling stressful situations or

problems.

3. I’m careful not to drink alcohol when taking certain 2 1 0

medicines (for example, medicine for sleeping, pain,

colds, and allergies).

4. I read and follow the label directions when using 2 1 0

prescribed and over-the-counter drugs.

*Alcohol and Drugs* Score *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**Almost Sometimes Almost**

**Always Never**

***Eating* Habits**

1. I eat a variety of foods each day, such as fruits and 4 1 0

Vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, lean meats,

low-fat dairy products, dry peas, beans, nuts and seeds.

2. I intentionally limit my consumption of fat, saturated fat, 2 1 0

and cholesterol (including fat in meats, eggs, butter,

cream, shortenings, and organ meats such as liver).

3. I limit the amount of salt I eat by cooking with only 2 1 0

small amounts, by not adding salt at the table, and

by avoiding salty snacks.

4. I avoid eating too much sugar, especially frequent 2 1 0

snacks of sticky candy or soft drinks.

*Eating Habits* Score *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

***Exercise/Fitness* Habits Almost Sometimes Almost**

**Always Never**

1. I do vigorous exercises for 30 minutes a day at 4 2 0

least 5 times a week (examples include bicycling,

swimming, jogging, and brisk walking).

2. I do exercises that enhance my muscle tone for 3 1 0

15-30 minutes at least 3 times a week (examples

include using weight machines or free weights,

yoga, and calisthenics).

3. I use part of my leisure time participating in 3 1 0

individual, family, or team activities that

increase my level of fitness (e.g., sports,

dancing, and gardening.

*Exercise/Fitness* Score *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

***Safety* Habits Almost Sometimes Almost**

**Always Never**

1. I wear a seat belt while riding in a car. 2 1 0

2. I don’t drive while under the influence of alcohol 2 1 0

or other drugs, and I never ride with a driver who

is under the influence.

3. I obey traffic rules and the speed limit when driving. 2 1 0

4. I am careful when using potentially harmful products 2 1 0

or substances (such as household cleaners, poisons,

and electrical devices).

5. I get at least seven hours of sleep a night. 2 1 0

*Safety* Score \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Lifestyle Scores**

After you have figured your scores for each of the six sections, circle the number in each column that matches your score for that section of the test.

*Smoking* *Drinking/Drugs* *Eating*  *Exercise* *Safety*

10 10 10 10 10

9 9 9 9 9

8 8 8 8 8

7 7 7 7 7

6 6 6 6 6

5 5 5 5 5

4 4 4 4 4

3 3 3 3 3

2 2 2 2 2

1 1 1 1 1

0 0 0 0 0

Interpreting Your Scores for Each Section

**Scores of 9 and 10 = Excellent.**

Your answers show that you are aware of the importance of this area for your health, and you are putting your knowledge to work by practicing good health habits. You’re also setting an example for the rest of your family and friends to follow.

**Scores of 6 to 8 = Good**

Your health practices in this area are satisfactory, but there is room for improvement, particularly in areas where you answered “sometimes” or “almost never.”

**Scores of 3 to 5 = Risky**

You’re putting your health at risk in this area. You should make some changes.

**Scores of 0 to 2 = Seriously Risky**

Your answers show that you may be taking serious risks with your health in this area. You need to make major changes and make them quickly.

Identify the area in which your score was *lowest*: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Were you *aware* that you needed to improve your health habits in this area?

2. Do you think it is *important* to improve your health habits in this area (Why?)

3. Do you know exactly *what to do* to improve your health in this area?

4. What *information* could you use to help you make positive changes in this area?

5. *Who* (if anyone) do you think may be in a position to help you make these changes?

6. Do you think you will *actually make changes* to improve your health in your lowest-

scoring area? If yes, *when* do you plan to start? If no, why not?

***Health Journal***

Possible Entries:

\* Positive behaviors I currently engage in to promote *healthy eating* are . .

\* Positive behaviors I currently engage in to promote *healthy sleeping* are . . .

\* Positive behaviors I currently engage in to promote *healthy exercising* are . . . .

\* Other positivebehaviors I could engage in *without much effort* include . . .

\* Other positive behaviors I could engage in that would take a *lot of effort* include . . . .

*\* Negative* behaviors I currently engage in that are *unhealthy* include . . . .

*\* Negative* behaviors I could eliminate *without much effort* include . . .

*\* Negative* behaviors that would take a *lot of effort* of effort for me to eliminate include . .

*\* Safe* behaviors that I engage in that help me avoid injuries or accidents are . . .

*\* Unsafe* behaviors that I engage in that increase my risk of injury or accident are . . .

\* I engage in risky behaviors *because* . . .

\* Risky behaviors that I can *avoid* with *little effort* include . . .

\* Risky behaviors that would be very *hard* for me to give up include . . .

\* Exercises that I do *at least 3 times per week* are . . .

\* Exercises I do for *20 minutes or longer* at a time are . . .

\* Exercise that I get while performing my *daily routines or duties* (e.g., by walking from

place to place or climbing stairs) are . . .

Personal Health *Interviews*

**Peer Alcohol-Use Interview**

Directions: Interview two students you know well about their drinking habits and two who are merely acquaintances. Before interviewing them, make an estimate or guess about:

(a) how often they drink?

(b) how much they drink when they do drink?

\* Did you overestimate or underestimate the amount of drinking reported by your peers?

\* Do your friends drink more or less than other students you interviewed?

Health *Event-Planning* Exercises

**Healthy-Habit *Marketing Campaign***

Steps:

Form 3 or 4-member teams and ask them to devise a *television or newspaper advertisement* that is designed to either: (a) *increase* college students’ motivation for engaging in a *healthy* habit or (b) *decrease* their motivation for engaging in an *unhealthy* habit.

After the teams have completed their task, ask them:

\* Why they chose that particular habit?

\* What aspects or characteristics of their advertisement (form or content) do they think

will be most effective for motivating students to change?

\* Through what medium should their advertisement be delivered for maximum effect or

impact?

**Planning an *Alcohol-Free Party***

Ask students to form a 3- or 4-member planning team for an alcohol-free party. Have them consider details such as the following:

\* How would they advertise the party to generate the most interest?

\* What drinks would be available at the party?

\* What would they say to students who want to know why they are not allowing alcohol

at the party?

\* What would they do if someone came to the party drunk or with alcohol on their

breath?

Inventories of *Wellness Resources* Relating on Campus

***Health Services* Inventory**

Ask 4-member teams of students to visit the Health Center on campus. Each team member takes responsibility for reporting back their findings on one of the following questions:

\* What types of *services* are provided at the Center?

\* What types of health-service *specialists or professionals* are available to students at the

Center?

\* What *topics* are covered in the free *literature* (e.g., pamphlets) available at the Center?

\* What are the most common *reasons* why students visit the Center? (Obtained by asking

a representative of the Center).

***Exercise Opportunities* Inventory**

Ask 4-member teams to do an inventory of exercise opportunities available to students on campus, with one member on each team being responsible for gathering information on each of the following:

\* Exercise *equipment* available on campus

\* Physical education *courses* offered by the college on campus

\* *Intramural* sports programs offered at the college

\* *Health clubs* in the community that offer special discounts for students.

Case Study: ***Substance Use & Abuse***

Mike and John are first-year students who were close friends in high school. They both chose the same college because it was close to home and they arranged to be roommates in the same campus residence.

Both Mike and John began drinking beer in high school. When they were sophomores, they started to party occasionally, drinking 3-4 beers on whatever occasion they did party. By the time they were high school seniors, they were partying once or twice a week and drinking 5 or more beers per party. Both of them also had experimented with marijuana; John liked it, but Mike could take it or leave it.

When they got to college, they found it easy to get into the party scene. They were living on their own; their parents weren’t around to monitor them, and no school officials were notified if they missed a class or a whole day of classes. Being good-looking and sociable, the boys were very popular on campus and were frequently invited to parties. They got into the habit of partying every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. On one or two other nights during the week, they drank a six-pack of beer. John also started smoking pot several times a week.

As the term progressed, their habit of frequent partying began to take its toll on their academic performance. Mike’s GPA for the first term was 2.1 (barely escaping probation) and John earned a 1.8 (putting him on probation). Also, money was becoming a problem for John; his beer-drinking and pot-smoking habits were costing him almost $100 a week. To help solve his financial problems, John came up with the idea that he could buy weed in larger quantities, then divide the amount he didn’t use into smaller baggies and sell them to other students. Since he was very popular and had lots of friends who were users, he figured that he could sell enough to pay for his own use (and perhaps make a little extra profit on the side). John thought that this was such a good idea, he decided to talk to Mike about it to see if he might be interested in joining him as a partner.

(Courtesy of Dr. David Hill, former Director of Counseling Services, Marymount College, CA )

*Possible Student Exercises Relating to this Case*

\* Write what you think is likely to be a *bad or sad* ending to this story by constructing a

one- or two-paragraph conclusion, which indicates what will happen next to John and Mike

with respect to their future:

(a) academic performance,

(b) physical health,

(c) relationship with their friends, and

(d) relationship with their families.

\* Write what you think is likely to be a *good or positive* ending to this story by writing a

one- or two- paragraph conclusion, indicating what will happen next to John and Mike

with respect to their future:

(a) academic performance

(b) physical health

(c) relationship with their friends

(d) relationship with their families.

Additional Discussion Questions:

\* Do you think that illegal drugs can ever be used responsibly?

\* What current laws about illegal drugs do you think should be changed (if any)? Why?

Case Study: ***Sexual Assault***

Sue, Carol, and Jane all met for the first time during new-student orientation. Although they were from different parts of the country, they discovered that they had lots in common and quickly became friends.

While returning from shopping at one of the local malls, Jane found a flyer on the windshield of her car. The flyer advertised a raging party next Saturday, for which there would be live entertainment, unlimited beer, and no cover charge. Jane scooped up the flyer and couldn’t wait to share the news with Carol and Sue.

When Sue heard about the party, she was somewhat hesitant about going because she had heard that flyer-advertised parties could be risky. She was also reluctant to go because she had a bad experience with alcohol in high school and promised herself that she wouldn’t drink in college. However, Carol was excited about going and she and Jane pleaded with Sue to come along, promising her that they would leave by midnight and that they would not pressure her to drink; in fact, they would make sure she didn’t drink because they wanted her to be their designated driver for the evening. Not wanting to seem like a “party pooper,” Sue agreed to go the flyer party with her two new college friends.

When the girls approached the house at which the party was being held, they couldn’t believe how many people were there. When they went inside, they discovered they didn’t know a single person, but everyone seemed very friendly and welcoming, and there were lots of cute guys there, so they decided to stay.

At midnight, Sue went looking for Carol and Jane because they previously agreed this was the time they would all leave. Even though Jane was having a good time, she remembered her promise to Sue that they would leave by midnight, so she reluctantly went with Sue to find Carol. When they found her, Carol said she didn’t want to leave because she met a really gorgeous guy who happened to be the host of the party. Since Carol had been drinking and seemed a bit tipsy, her two friends tried to convince her that it would be best if she went home with them. However, Carol insisted that she was fine, and the guy she met (Paul) told the girls that he would give Carol a ride home later. Sue still wasn’t sure this was a good idea, but Jane persuaded her that it was Carol’s decision to make, so they both left without Carol.

As the night wore on, Paul and Carol continued to converse and continued to drink. Paul kept complimenting Carol on how “hot” she looked. After a few more laughs and a few more beers, Carol was beginning to feel drunk. Paul decided to give Carol a tour of his house; when they got to his room, he suggested that they go in. Carol hesitated for a moment, but after a little assurance from Paul, she went into his room.

They sat on his bed, but Carol began to fell dizzy and lied down. Paul began to kiss her; Carol resisted, but his kisses became more insistent. He then took off his shirt and told Carol that other women had told him that he really knew how to make love. Carol tried to get off the bed and get out of the room, but Paul easily climbed on top her, and said: “You know you want this as much as I do or else you wouldn’t have come in here with me.”

(Courtesy of Joanne Rotbart, former Associate Director of Counseling Services, Marymount College)

*Case-Related Discussion Questions*

\* What do you *predict* will happen next?

\* *Why* did you make this prediction?

\* What would have to take place for this case to be considered *rape*?

\* Rank the following characters in terms of their *personal responsibility* for Carol’s predicament

(1 = most responsible, to 4 = least responsible):

Paul \_\_\_

Carol \_\_\_

Sue \_\_\_

Jane \_\_\_

\* Why did you rank thefirst character as *most* responsible?

\* Why did you rank the fourth character as *least* responsible?

Additional Material Assignments Excised from the *First* Edition of the Text May be Used in Lectures or as Reading Assignments

Nutrition

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Using Nutritional Strategies to Strengthen Academic Performance

"To keep the body in good health is a duty, otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear."

--Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, a.k.a., Buddha; founder of Buddhism, 563-483 bc

Is there a "brain food" that can strengthen our mental performance? Can we "eat to learn?" Some animal studies suggest that memory may be improved by consumption of foods containing lecithin—a substance that helps the brain produce acetylcholine--a brain chemical that plays an important role in memory formation (Ulus & Wurtman, 1977). Fish contain large amounts of lecithin, which may account for why fish is sometimes referred to as "brain food."

Despite the results of some animal studies, there is not enough research yet available to conclude that there is any one miraculous food item humans can consume that will dramatically increase their ability to comprehend and retain knowledge. However, there is evidence that the following nutritional strategies may be used to improve mental performance on days when our knowledge is tested.

"No man can be wise on an empty stomach."

--George Eliot, 19th-century English novelist

1. **Eat breakfast on the day of an exam.**

Numerous studies show that students who eat a nutritious breakfast on the day they are tested typically attain higher test scores than students who do not (Martin & Benton, 1999; Smith, Clark, & Gallagher, 1999).

Breakfast on test day should include grains, such as whole-wheat toast, whole-grain cereal, oatmeal, or bran because those foods contain complex carbohydrates that deliver a steady stream of energy to the body throughout the day; which helps sustain your energy throughout the exam. Complex carbohydrates should also help your brain generate a steady stream of serotonin—a natural chemical that reduces your level of nervousness or tension on the day of the test.

2. **Make the meal you eat before an exam a light meal.**

You never want to take a test on an empty stomach, but the meal you consume nearest test time shouldn’t be a large one. Our blood-sugar level rises after we consume a lot of foot. To reduce this elevated level of blood sugar, our body release large amounts of insulin; this draws blood sugar away from the brain and slows down its activity, which makes us feel tired and mentally fatigued.

3. **If you feel you need an energy boost immediately before an exam, eat a piece of fruit rather than a candy bar.**

Candy bars are processed sweets whose sugar can offer a short burst of energy. Unfortunately, however, this short-term rise in blood sugar and quick jolt of energy is often accompanied by an increase in nervous tension and is followed by a sudden, sharp drop in energy (Haas, 1994). Thus, the key is to find a food that elevates our energy level without simultaneously elevating tension (Thayer, 1996) and that maintains our elevated state of energy at a steady level. One nutritional option for generating this sustained, tension-free level of energy is to eat a piece of *fruit* that contains *natural* sugar instead of consuming the processed sugar that’s been artificially slipped into a candy bar.

4. **Avoid consuming caffeine before an exam.**

Even though caffeine is a stimulant that increases alertness, it’s also a legal drug that can increase your level of tension and give you the jitters--not a feeling you want to experience during a test, particularly if you’re prone to test anxiety. Furthermore, caffeine is a diuretic that increases your urge to urinate—not an urge you want to have when you’re confined to a classroom and taking that requires you to sit on your butt (and bladder) for an extended period of time.

Nutritional Strategies for Managing Stress

Reduce or eliminate intake of alcohol and caffeine.

The substances we put into our body physically can affect us emotionally. Because alcohol is a sedative or “downer” drug that slows down the nervous system, people often turn to it as a strategy to cope with stress and promote relaxation (Carpenter & Hasin, 1998). However, if too much alcohol is consumed, it has just the opposite effect--it elevates tension because it triggers the release of cortisol—a hormone that activates and elevates the body’s stress response.

Since stress can cause fatigue, people may also be tempted to use caffeine to regain their energy. However, caffeine is a drug (a stimulant) that not only stimulates alertness; it also activates the part of our involuntary nervous system that’s associated with stress and arousal. Thus, caffeine is likely to increase feelings of nervous tension (hence, the expression, “coffee nerves”). If you already tend to get somewhat nervous or anxious in academic-performance situations, such as tests or speeches, the last thing you want to put into your system just before performance time is a substance that’s going to elevate your tension level even further.

It’s also a myth that giving caffeine (e.g., a cup of coffee) to someone who's drunk will help sober that person up. them. Caffeine is a stimulant that stimulates the nervous system, but it doesn't lower the body’s blood-alcohol level and, therefore, will not lower a drunken person's level of intoxication. Caffeine will make a drunken person feel less sleepy, but not any less drunk nor any more capable of operating heavy machinery, such as driving a car. In fact, all it will do is create a wide-awake drunk (which may even be more dangerous than a sleepy one).

Decrease your intake of simple sugars (e.g., chocolates, candies, sugary sodas) and increase your intake of foods that are high in complex carbohydrates (e.g., brown rice, potatoes, pasta, legumes, whole grain bread, and cereals).

Foods high in complex carbohydrates increase released of a brain chemical called serotonin that triggers feelings of calmness and serenity. Although it may be tempting to put something sweet in your mouth when you’re stressed and tired, simple sugars will only deliver a short-term shot of nervous energy.

If you like to eat when you’re stressed, chew on something other than high-sugar, high-calorie foods (e.g., chew on foods high in complex carbohydrates or a piece of sugarless gum), or try another way to relieve tension other than oral stimulation.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Healthy Eating Strategies

Minimize consumption of the following foods because their nutritional value is very low (or zero) and they increase your risk of heart disease and cancer.

l Minimize intake of fried and fatty foods such as pizza, hamburgers, French fries, donuts, butter, and margarine. These foods not only contain lots of calories; they also increase risk of heart disease because they contain *saturated* *fats* and *trans fats*—“bad” fats that tend to stick to blood vessel walls and increase our risk for cardiovascular disease. These fats also increase the risk of certain forms of cancer, such as breast and bowel cancer.

While saturated fats don’t have to be completely eliminated from your diet, their intake should be limited. They should comprise less than 1/10th of the total number of calories you consume (National Research Council, 1989). Even if you exercise and are physically active, you still have to be conscious of the food you put into our body. Well-conditioned athletes still can be at risk for heart disease and cancer if they consume foods containing high amounts of saturated fat.

l Minimize consumption of processed foods. Processed foods are natural foods that have been altered ("processed") so they can be preserved, packaged, jarred, canned, or bottled, and then sold to the public in large or bulk quantities. Processed foods contain additives that supplement its natural food in order to preserve its shelf life, make it look more pleasing to the eye, or make it more pleasing to the taste buds. These additives typically have no nutritional value and may have unknown and possibly unhealthy effects on the body.

Processed foods frequently contain added sugar and salt, which tend to promote weight gain and elevate blood pressure, respectively. Salt and sugar are often added to processed foods just to increase their taste appeal (and sales appeal). Why do many humans find sweeter and saltier processed foods tastier than natural foods? One theory is that such foods haven't been around for the millions of years that “natural” foods have. Thus, the taste buds of modern man may find the “newer” processed foods more stimulating (tasty) because they represent a change from the same “old” natural foods that are ancient ancestors consumed for millions of years (Eaton & Konner, 1985; Simopoulos & Pavlou, 1997). Ironically, humans may have developed or evolved a taste preference for the very foods that are the least nutritious, least healthy, and highest in calories. Thus, unfortunately, the foods that are most likely to stimulate our taste buds are also most likely to inflate our fat cells.

"Life expectancy would grow by leaps and bounds if green vegetables smelled as good as bacon."

—Doug Larson, American cartoonist

l Minimize consumption of high-fat dairy products (e.g., cheese, butter, margarine, cream, and whole milk). High-fat dairy products are high in saturated fat and sodium, both of which increase the risk of heart disease. The calcium contained in dairy products is good for us, but we’re better off getting that calcium from low-fat dairy products, such as low-fat milk, yogurt, and cottage cheese.

l Minimize consumption of animal meats, particularly red meat such as hamburger and steak. Many people believe they need to consume a substantial amount of red meat because it contains protein. It’s true that animal meats provide large amounts of protein, but protein should only constitute 15 percent of our daily calories; the fact is that Americans consume about twice as much protein as their bodies need (National Research Council, 1989).

Animal meats often contain a large amount of saturated fat, which increases our risk of heart disease. Thus, it’s probably best to minimize the amount of protein we get from animal meats and maximize the amount we consume from other sources that are lower in saturated fat, such as plants (e.g., beans and peas), nuts (e.g., peanuts and almonds), and low-fat dairy products (e.g., low-fat milk and yogurt).

If you do consume animal meat, you can reduce its health risk by eating lean meats that have less fat and by removing any fatty skin from the meat (e.g., removing the skin from chicken or turkey). Lastly, it’s healthiest not to fry meat because the oils used in the frying process increase the concentration of saturated fat in the meat. Instead of frying meat, it’s healthier to roast, grill, bake, or broil it.

Strategies for Weight Control

l Minimize or eliminate junk-food snacks. Replace sugary and salty snacks with healthier munchies, such as fruits, nuts, seeds, and raw vegetables. Many of these healthier snacks are as sweet, crispy, or crunchy as junk food snacks. For instance, natural fruits can provide sweetness with more nutrients and fewer calories than processed sweets (e.g., candy bars and blended coffee drinks). Unfortunately, advertisers are spending millions of dollars to convince consumers that processed sweets are “indescribably delicious.” From a consumer standpoint, nutritious snacks represent a better investment of your money because you get a bigger “bang for your buck”—i.e., more key nutrients (and less empty calories) for your snacking dollar.

Pause for Reflection

What type of junk food (if any) do you eat?

Do you think you need to reduce the amount of junk food you’re currently consuming?

l Don't pack most of your calories into one or two large meals per day. Most nutritionists recommend that we should eat large meals less often and small meals more often. There's no research evidence that the American habit of eating three times a day is the best nutritional practice. In fact, six smaller meals or healthy snacks per day may be a more effective way to fuel the body than consuming three, full-sized meals (Khoshaba & Maddi, 1999–2004). When foraging for food, it’s unlikely that our ancient ancestors ate three full meals three times a day; instead, they probably ate more frequently and in smaller portions, which provided them with a steady stream of energy throughout the day.

l Reduce the total number of calories consumed during your eveningmeal. The meal you eat closest to bedtime should be your lightest meal with the fewest calories, because you’re soon going to be lying down and not expending much physical energy for 7 to 8 hours. Remember that calories are measures of the amount of energy contained in food; one calorie may be described as one unit or degree of energy. If we consume that unit of energy, and don’t use it, we don’t lose it; instead, we save it and store it as fat. In other words, much like money, if you don’t spend your income (caloric intake), you tend to save it in your body’s bank of fat cells. Eating lots of calories in the evening, then lying down and sleeping soon thereafter, means those evening calories don’t get burned as physical energy; instead, they get stored as body fat.

Student Perspective

“I need to stop eating dinner then eating some more food before I go to bed at like 12.”

—First-year student

l Don't skip or skimp on breakfast. As its name implies, a good breakfast provides energy that enables you to “break fast” at the start of the day and sustain your energy throughout the day. (It also reduces your desire for unhealthy snacks later in the day.) Your first meal of the day should be the meal where you can consume your most calories because you need energy for the next 16 or so hours that you’ll be awake and moving. Unfortunately, most Americans (other than farmers) tend to do it backwards; they skip or skimp at breakfast and pile up most of their calories later in the day at lunch and especially at dinner—which is the time of day that the fewest number of calories are needed because most people spend their post-dinner hours in a sedentary position (e.g., reading the newspaper or watching TV) followed by going to bed and falling asleep.

Student Perspective

“I eat breakfast and try and make it healthy, and I try to eat [dinner] before 6.”

—First-year student

Make a conscious attempt to increase consumption of natural foods that have been available to humans throughout history.

The following foods are *natural* (unprocessed) and have been available to members of the human species long before processed foods were available. As a general rule, food that was best for our ancient ancestors and contributed to the survival of our species is best for us now. In fact, these are the foods that provide us with the best protection against the two leading killers of humans today: heart disease and cancer.

l Feed freely on *fresh fruit*. Fruit has multiple nutritional benefits, including high amounts of vitamins (especially A and C) and minerals. Many fruits also contain high amounts of *fiber*, which helps purify the bloodstream by lowering the type of cholesterol that can cause heart disease and rids the body of toxins found in the intestine. Other fruits, such as berries, are rich in *antioxidants*—substances that lower the risk of cancer by attacking oxidants (toxins) in the body that can damage genetic DNA and weaken the immune system. (Blueberries are thought to contain the most antioxidants, followed by black­berries, raspberries, and strawberries.) Keep in mind that fresh fruit is superior to canned fruit—which has been processed and artificially preserved. Also, fresh fruit is superior to dried fruit—which contains more calories.

l Go wild on *vegetables* (fresh or frozen). Fresh or frozen vegetables are superior to canned and processed vegetables. The natural oils in certain vegetables (e.g., olive, corn, avocado, and soy) are rich sources of unsaturated fat. *Unsaturated* fats, also known as “essential fatty acids,” are considered to be “good” fats because they don’t congregate or coagulate in our bloodstream but remain as liquid in our system; therefore, they don’t degenerate into fat on the walls of blood vessels (Erasmus, 1993). Unsaturated fats also help wash away or flush out bad fats from our bloodstream. In addition to containing unsaturated fats, many vegetables (e.g., raw carrots and green beans) contain fiber that reduces the risk of heart disease and certain forms of cancer.

Pause for Reflection

Do you eat fresh fruit and vegetables on a daily basis?

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

l Go for *grains*. Whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta, whole-grain cereals, oatmeal, and bran are examples of healthy grains. Note that the word “whole” should appear in the product’s name (e.g., whole-wheat bread and whole-grain cereal). This is the key to determining that the grain is natural and not processed; for example, whole-wheat bread is made from a natural grain, but wheat or white bread has been processed. Thus, make sure it says “whole-wheat” if you are looking for unbleached, non-processed grain bread.

Natural grains contain *complex carbohydrates* that the body uses to produce energy in a steady, ongoing fashion. Complex carbohydrates are called “complex” because their molecular structure is harder for the body to digest and break down into blood sugar. Since their more complex molecular structure slows down the digestion process, they are absorbed into the bloodstream more slowly, thereby delivering energy to the body more gradually and evenly over an extended period of time (similar to a coated pill or time-released capsule). Thus, grains are an excellent source of food for producing steady, long-term energy (e.g., for athletic and rigorous mental activities that require endurance or stamina). Grains are also high in fiber, which helps fight heart disease and certain forms of cancer. Lastly, many complex carbohydrates also contain an amino acid that helps produce serotonin—a brain chemical associated with relaxation and feelings of emotional serenity or “mellowness” (DesMaisons, 1998).

l Feed frequently on *fish*. Fish are high in protein and low in saturated fat. Also, the natural oil in fish is high in unsaturated fat, which flushes out and washes away cholesterol-forming fats from the bloodstream (Khoshaba & Maddi, 1999–2004). Thus, a diet high in unsatu­rated fats (and low in saturated fats) reduces risk for non-genetic forms of cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes. This explains why fish-eating Eskimos have a significantly lower rate of cardiovascular disease than non-Eskimos (Feskens & Kromhout, 1993). Be cautious, however, about eating excessive amounts of the types of fish that may contain high levels of mercury--such as shark, swordfish, red snapper, and orange roughy. Eating a variety of fish will help minimize this risk (American Heart Association, 2006).

l Consume lots of *legumes*. The word “legumes” derives from the Latin root “legumend,” meaning “to gather.” They include plants and seeds, such as beans (black, red, and navy), lentils, brussels sprout, peas, and peanuts. Such foods are great sources of fiber, protein, iron, and B vitamins; moreover, they're naturally cholesterol-free and low in saturated fat. In fact, the natural oil contained in these foods contains unsaturated fats—“good fats” that can reduce buildup of bad cholesterol in the bloodstream.

It’s noteworthy that in developing countries, which are poorer economically than the U.S., people rely mainly on legumes, grains, fruits, and vegetables. Despite their poorer economy and poorer medical care, people living in underdeveloped countries have significantly lower rates of heart disease and diet-related cancers than do people living (and eating) in the United States (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2000).

l Drink plenty of *water*. Most people don’t get the recommended amount of water (seven, 8-ounce glasses per day). We need to hydrate our bodies. Don’t only drink water when you're very thirsty; drink it regularly and try to consume 50 to 60 ounces a day. The human body uses water much like an automobile uses motor oil and transmission fluid to drive nutrients (fuel) to their proper destinations and drive waste products out of the system. Water also improves our nervous system’s ability to conduct electrochemical signals, which enables our brain to process information more effectively and rapidly. Besides all of its internal benefits, water has the cosmetic benefit of improving the appearance of your skin.

Student Perspective

“I always drink lots of water and I try to eat as much fruit and veggies as I can with each meal.”

—First-year student

l If you’re a woman, make a conscious effort to consume more *calcium*. Females should take in at least 1,200 mg of calcium per day (Gershoff & Whitney, 1996) to reduce their risk of *osteoporosis*—thinning of bones and loss of bone mass or density--which increases the risk of fractures and curvature of the upper spine. Although osteoporosis can happen in men as well as women, it occurs much more often among females. It’s estimated that one of three women over the age of 40 will develop osteoporosis (Bohme & Budden, 2001). Because societal pressures make women more weight-conscious than men, females may try to avoid high-calcium dairy products because they are high in calories. However, women can get lots of calcium without lots of calories by consuming low-fat, low-calorie, calcium-rich dairy products--such as cottage cheese and low-fat yogurt. Sizable amounts of calcium are also contained in other low-calorie foods, such as certain fish (e.g., salmon), vegetables (e.g., broccoli), and fruit (e.g., oranges) (Gershoff & Whitney, 1996). Taking calcium dietary supplements is another way in which women can get their optimal amount of calcium each day.

Exercise and Fitness

Developing an Exercise Plan

A comprehensive fitness plan should a balanced blend of exercises designed that promote three key characteristics of physical fitness: *stamina*, *strength*, and *flexibility*. The following forms of exercise can be used to attain each of these fitness goals.

Aerobic Exercise

“Aerobic” literally means “with air” and refers to physical exercise that requires increased consumption of oxygen, causing our lungs and heart to pump faster to take oxygen in and transport it throughout the body (Bailey, 1991; Cooper, 1982). Aerobic exercise is the best type of exercise for promoting stamina (endurance) and cardiovascular health. The following activities qualify as aerobic exercise: vigorous walking (a.k.a., “power walking”), jogging, long-distance running, bicycling, swimming, aerobic dancing, skating, cross-country skiing, and sports that require continuous movement (e.g., basketball, handball, racquetball, and tennis).

Different forms of aerobic exercise can vary in terms of the amount of *impact* or pressure that they exert on the body’s joints, ranging from *high* impact (e.g., running or jogging), to *moderate* impact (walking), to *low* impact (swimming). Low-impact activities put less stress on joints, ligaments, and tendons; therefore, they pose less risk of injury. However, moderate- and high-impact exercise is more effective for stimulating bone growth and provides better protection against osteoporosis.

Anaerobic Exercise

The term “anaerobic” literally means “without oxygen” and refers to physical activities that don't require a large increase in oxygen consumption. Thus, they don't force our lungs and heart to work as fast or continuously as aerobic exercise. Building body strength and tone (firmness) are the major benefits of anaerobic exercise.

Strength-building exercises include activities such as lifting weights (e.g., free weights), using strength building machines (e.g., nautilus training), push-ups, and sit-ups (Khoshaba & Maddi, 1999–2004). These exercises also help maintain bodily posture and tone, increase bone density, and reduce the risk of bone degeneration. Although strength-building exercises don't burn as many calories as aerobic exercises, they do increase the body’s muscle-to-fat ratio, which makes the body leaner and slowly raises its metabolism, thereby increasing the rate at which the body burns calories.

There are two major myths about strength-building exercises that need to be dispelled:

Myth #1: Extra muscle mass acquired through strength-building exercises will eventually turn into fat when the person stops training. This is false because muscle and fat are two entirely different types of body tissue, and one doesn’t change or get transformed into the other.

Myth #2: Strength-building exercise requires consumption of large amounts of protein (e.g., eating more meat). This is not true because muscles do not use protein for energy; they use calories for energy, just like the rest of the body.

Flexibility Exercises

Any physical activity that effectively stretches muscles and extends the range or degree of motion of the body’s limbs and joints will increase the body’s flexibility and agility. A body that becomes more flexible and agile becomes less susceptible to muscle stiffness or soreness and less prone to muscle and joint injuries. Exercises that promote flexibility and agility include yoga, tai chi, gymnastics, and Pilates. Many of these exercises also have other physical benefits, such as improving posture, balance, and bodily strength.

Pause for Reflection

What exercises or physical activities do you currently engage in that promotes the following forms of physical fitness?

1. Endurance (Stamina)

2. Strength

3. Flexibility

Exercise as a strategy for improving academic performance

Here are two simple strategies for combining physical and mental activity to improve your academic performance:

1. Take physical-activity study breaks (e.g., a short jog or brisk walk). Study breaks that include physical activity not only refresh the mind by giving it a break from studying, they also stimulate the mind by increasing blood flow to your brain, which helps your brain to retain what you’ve already studied and regain concentration for what you’re about to study.

2. Before exams, take a brisk walk. This will increase mental alertness by increasing oxygen flow to the brain, and it will also decrease nervous tension by increasing the brain’s production of emotionally “mellowing” brain chemicals (e.g., endorphins and serotonin).

Rest and Sleep

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Adjusting Your Study Schedule to Your Biological Rhythms

 When planning your daily work schedule of academic work, be mindful of your natural “biological rhythms”--your *peak periods* and *down times*. Studies show that humans vary in terms of when they naturally prefer to fall asleep and wake up; some are “early birds” who prefer to go to sleep early and wake up early, and others are “night owls” who prefer to stay up late at night and get up late in the morning (Natale & Ciogna, 1996). (Teenagers more often fall into the category of night owls.) As a result of these differences in sleeping patterns, individuals will differ with respect to the time of day when they experience their highest and lowest levels of physical energy. Naturally, early birds are more likely to be “morning people” whose peak energy period occurs before noon, while night owls are more likely to be productive in the late afternoon and evening. However, almost all humans (and members of other animal species) experience a loss of energy in the early afternoon, often referred to as the “post-lunch dip” (Monk, 2005).

 Be aware of your most productive hours of the day and schedule your highest priority work and most challenging tasks at times when you tend to work at peak effectiveness. For example, schedule your out-of-class work so that you’re tackling academic tasks that require intense thinking (e.g., technical writing or complex problem-solving) at times of the day when you tend to be most alert and energized, and schedule lighter work (e.g., light reading or routine tasks) at times when your energy level tends to be lower. Also, keep your natural peak and down times in mind when you schedule your courses. Try to arrange your class schedule in such a way that you experience your most challenging courses at times of the day when your body and mind are most ready to accept that challenge.

Schedule physical activity just before the time of day when you tend to experience your lowest levels of energy. The energizing aftereffects of exercise should carry into the time period when you normally feel most sluggish and should boost your energy and level of performance during that period. For example, if your mental energy tends to be low in the late afternoon, exercising in the mid-afternoon may be a good way to combat your usual late-afternoon sluggishness and enable you to use that time more productively.

Pause for Reflection

Does your energy level tend to vary at different times during the day?

If yes, do you tend to do anything in particular during your periods of highest and lowest energy?

Do you think you could make more productive use of your time during either of these periods?

Sleeping and Creative Problem Solving

Research evidence and numerous personal reports suggest that humans discover solutions to workday problems and experience creative ideas during sleep, particularly dream sleep (Wagner, et al., 2004). Research on highly creative people indicates that one of their distinguishing characteristics is their openness to a wide variety of experiences, including imaginative and fantasized experiences that occur during unusual states of consciousness, such as dream sleep (Ayers, Beaton, & Hunt, 1999). Musicians, artists, authors, and inventors sometimes rely on their dreams as a source of creative ideas and alternative solutions (Feldman, 1994).

Creative breakthroughs during sleep are best explained by the fact that our mind slips into a more relaxed, subconscious state. Also, during dream sleep, the front-right half of the brain is more active than when humans are wide awake and fully conscious. The front-right half of the human brain is responsible for visual imagination; greater activity in this section of the brain during dream sleep may enable the dreamer to “see” things from a different, more *visually imaginative* perspective (Joseph, 1988). In contrast, when we’re awake and fully conscious, the left half of our brain tends to be more dominant; it tends to think in words rather than visual images, and it specializes in logical rather than imaginative thinking (Ornstein, 1998).

Personal Experience

In high school, my most difficult subject was geometry. During my junior year, I took a final exam in this subject that counted for almost 50% of my course grade. Naturally, I was very nervous both before and during the exam. I took the exam   
in the afternoon and when I went to bed that evening, I woke up in a cold sweat at about 4:00 a.m. I just had a dream in which I “saw” the correct solution to one of the major problems I had struggled with on the test. I immediately got out of bed to check my test notes and, amazingly, I did solve the problem correctly in my dream but didn’t solve it correctly on the exam.

At the time, I couldn’t understand how I could possibly solve a complex problem correctly while I was deeply asleep, yet fail to solve it correctly when I was fully awake! I know now that it was probably because I was more relaxed while sleeping and that I was thinking about the problem from a more visual and imaginative perspective than when I was wide awake (and worried).

—Joe Cuseo

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Tips for Remembering Your Dreams

We have about five dreams per night and we're lucky if we happen to remember one of them. Recalling our dreams is difficult because they take place during a very deep stage of sleep, during which our level of conscious awareness is very low. This is unfortunate because dreams can sometimes provide us with self-insights, creative ideas, and unique problem-solving perspectives or solutions. The good news is that we may be able to improve our dream memory by engaging in certain practices, such as the following:

\* Just before going to sleep, tell yourself that you’re going to remember your dreams and think about what you’d like to dream about. Since we tend to dream about what’s on our mind, if we think about what we’d like to dream about before falling sleep, we’ll be more likely to have a dream about it.

\* Try to go to bed when you’re moderately tired, rather than completely exhausted. If you’re extremely fatigued, you tend to sleep more deeply, and the more deeply you sleep, the less conscious you are of your dreams and, therefore, the less likely you are to recall them.

\* Avoid alcohol and virtually all other types of depressant or sedative drugs before bedtime because they tend to suppress the amount of time we spend dreaming, and they also block memory for the dreams we do have.

\* Have pen and paper or a recorder within reach of your bedside. When you attempt to recall a dream, write it down or tape-record it immediately after you wake up. Even if it's fuzzy, you may still be able to slowly fill in some of the details when you start writing or talking about it. Dreams fade from memory very quickly, so it’s crucial to make a record of them as soon as possible after you’ve experienced them.

\* Use an alarm clock, not a clock radio, to wake you up. You’re more likely to remember your last dream if you wake up suddenly or abruptly from sleep. A clock radio allows you to wake up very gradually, which allows your dream to gradually fade from your memory or get replaced by the music or news you hear on the clock radio, which also can get mixed into the content your dream and distort it.

\* When you wake up, the first thing you should ask yourself is: “Have I been dreaming?” Immediately start thinking about the past (i.e., what happened during the night) and try to avoid the natural tendency to think about the present or future (e.g., what day of the week it is and what you have to do that day).

\* Keep a note pad or recording device with you during the day in case you encounter people or events that may trigger your memory of a dream you had the previous night. Sometimes, an event or incident that takes place during the next day can serve as a *memory cue* that reminds us of a dream we had the night before, enabling us to retrieve a dream that was previously forgotten. For example, if we dreamed about a particular person and happened to see that person the next day, the person’s face may serve as a retrieval cue that triggers our recall of the dream we had about that person the night before.

\* Keep a dream journal. By keeping track of your dreams, you may discover some interesting patterns across time that relate to different experiences or stages in your life.

Sources:

Cartwright, R. D. (1978). *A primer on sleep and dreaming*.

Faraday, A. (1974). *The dream game*.

Holland, M., and Tarlow, G. (1980). *Using psychology*.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Alcohol, Drugs, and Risky Behavior

Pause for Reflection

During the prohibition era (1920–1933) laws were passed in America that made alcohol illegal for anyone to consume at any age.

1. Why do you think prohibition laws were passed in the first place?

2. Why do you think that alcohol still continued to be produced illegally during the prohibition era (“bootleg liquor”), which eventually led to the abolition or elimination of prohibition laws?



Despite spine-chilling advertising designed to combat drunk-driving deaths, alcohol-related automobile accidents still kill more people between the ages of 15-24 than all other causes combined.

If you haven’t smoked cigarettes, don’t even think about starting.

The active ingredient in cigarettes, *nicotine*, is one of the most highly addictive drugs known to man (Jarvik, 1995). There are people who’ve been able to beat alcohol addiction and heroin addiction, but have not been able to kick their nicotine habit (Stolerman & Jarvis, 1995). In addition to its high potential for addiction, the health disadvantages of cigarette smoking are numerous and serious; they include increased susceptibility to our two leading killers: heart disease and cancer (Freund, Belanger, D’Agostino, & Kannel, 1993).

Women who smoke and use oral contraceptive pills develop a higher risk of heart diseases and stroke (Halperin, 2002). Cigarette smoking also sharply increases a woman’s risk of experiencing prenatal problems during pregnancy and giving birth to newborns with health problems. These risks are not eliminated if an expectant mother stops smoking at the start of pregnancy; instead, smoking needs to be stopped at least one full year prior to pregnancy before its health risks to the fetus are significantly reduced (Fingerhut, Kleinman, & Ken­drick, 1990).

It’s noteworthy that some women use cigarette smoking as a weight-control strategy because it elevates metabolism and burns calories. However, cigarette smoking produces only about a 7 percent increase in the rate of metabolism; in contrast, physical exercise increases the rate of metabolism by an average of 15 percent (Audrain, et al., 1995). You can do the math: Exercising burns calories at about twice the rate of smoking, which makes exercise a much more effective way of burning calories and managing weight than inhaling nicotine.

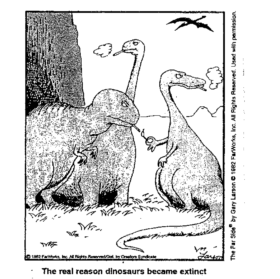
Pause for Reflection

Do you smoke cigarettes?

If yes, when and why did you start smoking?

Have your smoking habits changed since you’ve begun college?

If yes, why?



Cigarette smoking sharply increases susceptibility to our two leading killers: heart disease and cancer.

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Threats to Sexual Wellness: Aggressive Sexual Behavior

Sexual Assault, a.k.a., Sexual Violence

*Rape* is a form of sexual assault that is legally defined as nonconsensual (unwanted) sexual penetration obtained through physical force, by threat of bodily harm, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent due to alcohol or drug intoxication (Fenske, Miller, & Trivedi, 1996). Rape occurs in two major forms:

1. StrangerRape—when a total stranger forces sexual intercourse on the victim.

2. Acquaintance Rape or Date Rape—when the victim knows, or is dating, the person who forces unwanted sexual intercourse. It’s estimated that about 85 percent of reported rapes are committed by an acquaintance (Dobkin & Sippy, 1995). Alcohol is frequently associated with acquaintance rapes because it lowers the rapist’s inhibitions and reduces the victim’s ability to judge whether she is in a potentially dangerous situation. (Most acquaintance rape is committed by men against women; however, it also occurs in homosexual relationships.) Since the victim is familiar with the offender, s/he may feel at fault or conclude that what happened is not sexual assault.

Recommendations for women to reduce the risk of rape and sexual assault:

> Go to parties with at least one other friend so you can keep an eye out for each other.

> Don’t drink to excess or associate with others who drink to excess.

> Clearly and firmly communicate your sexual intentions and limits to male partners (e.g., if you say “no,” make absolutely sure that he knows what you mean and you say what you mean).

> Distinguish lust from love (e.g., if someone you've just met makes sexual advances toward you, that's much more likely to be lust at first sight than love at first sight).

> Take a self-defense class.

> Carry mace or pepper spray.

Recommendations for men to reduce their risk of committing or being accused of committing rape:

> Don’t assume a woman wants to have sex just because she’s: (a) very friendly or flirtatious, (b) dressed provocatively, or (c) in an uninhibited state due to alcohol consumption.

> If a woman says “no,” don’t assume that she really means “yes.”

> Don’t interpret sexual rejection as personal rejection.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is generally defined as unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors in exchange for a grade, job, or promotion. Harassment can take the following forms:

a. Verbal—e.g., sexual comments about someone's body or clothes; sexual jokes or teasing,

b. Nonverbal—e.g., staring or glaring at someone's body or obscene gestures, or

c. Physical—e.g., contact by touching, pinching, or rubbing up against someone's body.

Recommendations for Dealing with Sexual Harassment:

> Make your objections clear and firm. Tell the harasser directly that you are offended by the unwanted behavior and that you consider it sexual harassment.

> Keep a written record of any harassment. Record the date, place, and specific details about the harassing behavior.

> Become aware of the sexual harassment policy at your school. (Your school’s policy is likely to be found in the *Student Handbook* or may be available from the Office of Human Resources.)

> If you are not sure if you're being sexually harassed or what to do about it, seek help from the Counseling Center on campus.

Abusive Relationships

An abusive relationship may be defined as one in which one partner abuses the other—physically, verbally, or emotionally. Abusive individuals often are dependent on their partners for their sense of self-worth. They commonly have low self-esteem and fear their partner will abandon them, so they attempt to prevent this abandonment by over-controlling their partner. Frequently, abusers feel powerless or weak in other areas of their life and overcompensate by attempting to gain power, personal strength, and exerting power over their partner.

Potential Signs of Abuse:

\* Abuser tries to dominate or control all aspects of the partner’s life.

\* Abuser frequently yells, shouts, intimidates, or makes physical threats.

\* Abuser constantly puts down the partner and damages the partner’s self-esteem.

\* Abuser displays intense and irrational jealousy.

\* Abuser demands affection or sex when the partner is not interested.

\* The abused partner behaves very differently and is more inhibited when the abuser is around.

\* The abused partner fears the abuser.

Strategies for Avoiding or Escaping Abusive Relationships

\* Avoid isolation by continuing to maintain social ties with others outside of the relationship.

\* To help you see your relationship more clearly, ask friends for feedback on how they see it. (Love can sometimes be “blind”; it’s possible to be in denial about an abusive relationship and not see what's really going on.)

\* Speak with a professional counselor on campus to help you see your relationships more objectively and help you cope or escape from any relationship that you sense is becoming abusive.

References: ETR Associates (2000). *Acquaintance rape*. Santa Cruz, CA.   
ETR Associates (2001). *Sexual harassment*. Santa Cruz, CA.   
http://sexualviolence.uchicago.edu/daterape.shtml  
http://webpages.marshall.edu/~presssman1/rape.html  
http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu/home/healthtopics/sexual assault/saalcohol.shtml

**Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

STIs represent a group of contagious infections that are spread through sexual contact. The more sexual partners a person has, the greater the risk of contracting an STI. Latex condoms provide the best protection against STIs.

More than 25 different types of STIs have been identified, but the following bacteria and viruses account for the majority of infections. These infections are typically very treatable, but if they're ignored, they can lead to internal infections and possible infertility.

STIs Caused by Bacteria

*Gonorrhea*

A common STI with few symptoms but serious consequences if left untreated. Men typically experience creamy, yellow-colored, pus-like discharge from the penis, and burning when urinating. Women experience few early symptoms, but the disease can lead to later pelvic infections and possible infertility. The best way to detect gonorrhea, or any other STI that produces early symptoms that are not visible, is to have a laboratory test done by a doctor or healthcare provider. Gonorrhea can be treated and completely cured with antibiotics.

*Chlamydia*

This is the number-one bacterial STI; it’s estimated to infect more than 10 percent of college students. Symptoms include a clear, mucous-like discharge and a burning sensation when urinating. Men may experience pain in the testes, and women may experience pain in the abdomen. However, women typically experience few or no early symptoms.

*Genital Herpes*

This STI typically produces painful blisters on the genitals or in the anus, which may itch and burn, especially during and following urination. Symptoms may disappear and come back, but are never cured. Later attacks tend to be less severe than the first attack. The frequency and intensity of outbreaks can be reduced with prescription medication (e.g., acyclovir capsules).

*Syphilis*

Men with syphilis first experience ulcers (open sores) on the penis. Women may first develop ulcers in the vagina, but they can be overlooked, allowing the disease to progress. Syphilis is totally curable with antibiotics.

STIs Caused by Viruses

*Human Papilloma Virus* (HPV)

Overall, this is the most common STI among young, sexually active people. HPV is a virus that may cause warts in the genital area, but it typically does not produce noticeable symptoms in its early stages. Sometimes, the disease may also cause lesions (abnormal tissue changes) that are not visible, but when they appear, they look like small hard, cauliflower-like spots. Men can experience warts on the penis. HPV is treatable with laser or chemical treatment, which basically burns off the lesions. If untreated, HPV can lead to cancer of the cervix in women.

*Human Immunodeficiency Virus* (HIV)

Most cases of HIV are transmitted through sexual contact; however, the disease may also be contracted through the sharing of intravenous needles. Early symptoms include fever, night sweats, swollen lymph nodes, diarrhea, chronic fatigue, and weight loss. About one-half of people with HIV experience these flu-like symptoms, but one-half show no symptoms at all. Thus, the disease may go undetected until the person is given a blood test for some other reason.

The most serious form of HIV is *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)*, which is a life-threatening condition because the person’s immune system becomes so severely impaired, it leaves the infected person vulnerable to cancer and diseases of the nervous system.

*Hepatitis B* or *Hepatitis C*

About one-half of people with this form of STI experience flu-like symptoms, and one-half show no symptoms at all. Thus, the disease may go undetected until the person is given a blood test for some other reason.

*Pubic Lice* (a.k.a., “Crabs”)

Caused by tiny lice that are called “crabs” (because they look like sea crabs), which breed in pubic hair around the genitals. These creatures are not dangerous but can cause intense itching.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The Spiritual Dimension of Wellness

In addition to the physical and mental dimensions of wellness, there is a third dimension: *spirituality*. This is the most difficult dimension of wellness to define precisely because it is an abstract concept that has different meanings to different people. The National Wellness Institute defines spirituality as,

“Seeking meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes the development of a deep appreciation of the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe” (National Wellness Institute, 2005).

This definition will be used as the starting point or foundation for building a broader definition of spiritual wellness that includes multiple spiritual viewpoints or perspectives.

Elements of Spirituality

An inclusive definition of spirituality embraces three types of human searches:

1. An inward search for the meaning and purpose of life,

2. An outward search for connection between the self and the larger world or universe, and

3. A transcendent search for the mystical or supernatural*—*for someone or something that transcends the natural world.

What follows is a closer look at each of these components of spirituality, accompanied by an explanation of why each of them plays an important role in promoting total wellness and personal happiness.

Spirituality involves a search for the meaning and purpose of life.

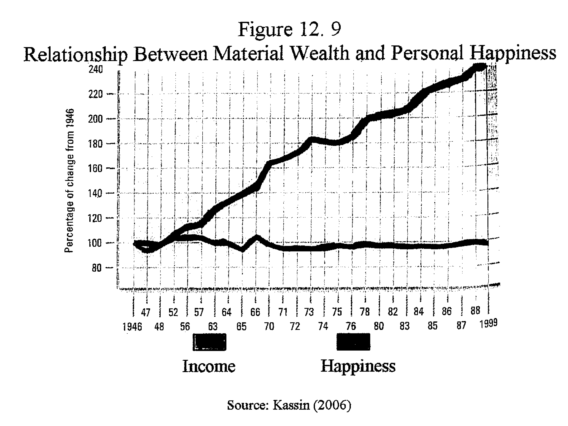
A spiritual focus draws our attention away from the exterior and material world toward our inner or interior life (Astin, 2004). We may have the drive to succeed in life, and use every possible success strategy and resource at your disposal, but we’re not likely to feel that we have attained success until we've pondered the larger questions about what it means to be successful, and what is our mission, purpose, or direction in life. This aspect of spirituality is an important component of our quest for personal identity (Tisdell, 2003).

Student Perspective

“You may think I’m here, living for the ‘now’ . . . but I’m not. Half of my life revolves around the invisible and immaterial. At some point, every one of us has asked the Big Questions surrounding our existence: What is the meaning of life? Is my life inherently purposeful and valuable?”

—College student, quoted in Dalton, et al. (2006)

Our need to focus less on the exterior or material world and more on an interior search for meaning is highlighted by research showing that although Americans grew progressively wealthier during the course of the last half-century, they did not grow progressively happier (Kassin, 2006) (See the figure below.)



According to the Beatles, “money can’t buy you love.” According to research, it can’t buy you happiness either.



Happiness and success are not synonymous.

Student Perspective

“How will I know if I am going the ‘right way’?” “How am I going to leave my mark when I finally pass away?”

—Questions raised by two college students during focus group interviews on the topic of spirituality (Higher Education Research

Institute, 2004)

Being rich, famous, or powerful doesn’t ensure happiness. While it's true that we need money to meet your basic material needs (e.g., food, shelter, and clothing), it doesn’t necessarily satisfy our “higher” spiritual needs for personal meaning and self-fulfillment. In fact, research indicates that people who have a stronger spiritual focus report higher levels of life satisfaction, i.e., happiness (Myers, 1993).



Happiness and success are not synonymous.

A spiritual focus can contribute to happiness by helping humans cope with “existential anxiety”—the feeling that life has no meaning or purpose and will simply terminate with death (Frankl, 1946; Tillich, 1952). Spirituality can also help people attain and maintain inner calm when the outer world is rife with unrest and uncertainty. Perhaps this aspect of spirituality accounts for the finding that even though alcohol consumption and abuse is increasing among college students in general, students who identify themselves as “spiritual” drink far less than their peers (Higher Education Institute, 2004).

Personal Experience

When my son was three years old and in preschool, his teacher talked about the Christian belief that Christ died on the cross and then rose from the dead on Easter morning. My son heard his teacher tell this story in the morning, held it in his head all day, and as soon as his mother (my wife) came to pick him up in the afternoon, he ran to her as fast as he could, and with a face full of tears, he blurted out: “Mommy, we’re all gonna die!”

That was my three-year-old son’s first awareness of his own mortality; it may also have been his first spiritual thought, and his first encounter with existential anxiety. Whatever it was, he certainly felt a strong need to make sense of death and find a way to cope with it before he could feel happy again.

—Joe Cuseo

Spirituality involves a search for connection between the self and the larger world or universe.

In addition to an inward search for meaning, spirituality may also involve an outward search to understand and connect with the world around us. This search may include looking for a connection between the self and the larger social world that is *humanity,* or a connection between the self and the larger physical world that embraces *nature and the universe*.

Finding a personal connection between ourselves and something larger than our self can reduce feelings of disconnection, isolation, or alienation. It may also promote wellness by enabling us to experience a common bond with the rest of humanity and a feeling of unity with the surrounding physical world that surrounds us.

"Mountains preserve the heritage of the past, enhance the beauty of the present, and inspire actions for the future. Near a sacred peak, everything reveals its most essential meaning."

—Constanza Ceruti, Argentinean anthropologist and the world’s only female, high-altitude archaeologist

Spirituality involves a search for the mystical or supernatural—for someone or something that transcends the natural world.

Spiritual questions launch humans on a quest for the mystical and mysterious, for what has not yet been or may never be fully understood. This involves a search for what might *transcend* human existence and the existence of the universe or a search for the *supernatural*—for someone or something above and beyond the natural world, and which may account for the origin of the universe and human life.

For some people, this form of spiritual quest has led them to become *theists* who believe in God or a Supreme Being. For others, this search has led them to a formal *religion*—an organized system of beliefs that they share with others, which often includes a set of worship practices and rituals directed toward a Supreme Being, as well as a set of moral guidelines for living an ethical life (Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1975).

Spirituality and religion are related, but are not synonymous. Religion represents one specific way to address or answer broad spiritual questions; thus, religion may be understood as a particular route or avenue (among other routes and avenues) through which humans experience spirituality (Dalton, et al., 2006).

Another important distinction between spirituality and religion is that spirituality represents an individual experience that is inner, personal, and private; in contrast, religion represents a more outward, external, and public expression of one’s inner spirituality (Palmer, 1999; Plante & Sherman, 2001; Spilka, et al., 2003).

Pause for Reflection

Would you characterize yourself as someone who is:

a. spiritual?  Yes  No  Why?

b. religious?  Yes  No  Why?

What experiences in your life do you think have influenced or led you to answer the above questions in the way that you did?

Strategies for Developing and Promoting the Spiritual Dimension of Wellness

Use your learning experiences in college to actively explore, examine, develop, or refine your personal philosophy about life’s meaning and purpose.

Surveys show that fewer students are entering college today with the idea that the college experience will help them “develop a meaningful philosophy of life.” More students are now entering college with the idea that its purpose is to help them get a job and make more money (Astin, et al., 2002). While it's true that college will help its graduates find gainful employment and meet their material needs, it’s also true that college plays a key role in helping students explore spiritual questions relating to life’s purpose and meaning. Liberal arts courses, in particular, are designed to answer these larger questions. Take these courses seriously, and, if your major permits, take more of them as electives—above and beyond the bare minimum number needed to complete your general education requirements for graduation.

Remain open to exploring and further examining questions relating to how humans conceive of and believe in a higher power or Supreme Being.

You can do so by taking courses in theology or religious studies, and by participating in co-curricular activities and organizations that focus on this element of spiritual development.

Practice meditation.

Meditation is a practice that was originated by the Buddhist religion. Briefly stated, it involves an intense focusing or narrowing of concentration on a single sound, sight, or thought while simultaneously blocking out everything else, such as distracting, stress-producing thoughts and feelings. Meditation has proven to be an effective stress-management technique (Davidson, et al., 2003), and recent research suggests that it can produce long-lasting positive changes in brain activity. Studies of Buddhist monks who are well practiced in meditation show that they have significantly greater activity in areas of their brain that are associated with learning and happiness (Lutz, et al., 2004).

It’s noteworthy that in Western cultures, such as America, creativity focuses on the production of tangible products that are displayed in public. In Eastern cultures, creativity is viewed as a personal process involving a spiritual quest for inner meaning or purpose (Lubart, 1999).

"Attention should be focused internally to experience a quiet body and a calm mind."

—Buddha, 563–483 bc; founder of the Buddhist religion

Build time into your schedule for spiritual matters.

Plan for periodic quiet time in a quiet place where you can engage in silent reflection.

Student Perspective

“I love to go to the public library to reduce stress. I turn my cell phone off and get away from everyone.”

—First-year student

We need to take time now and then to slow down, step away from the rat race, get off the fast track to success, think less about “getting ahead” and think more about where you’re headed. The things that are ultimately most important for your overall health and happiness often take a back seat to things that are “more urgent.” Research shows that the further away an event is in time, the less likely humans are to think about it and factor it into their day-to-day choices and decisions (Lewin, 1935; Loewenstein & Elster, 1992). This is unfortunate because our long-term life plans should be our first priority, rather than what we’re doing today, tomorrow, next month, next year, or even five years from now. You could say that spiritual thinking about our larger purpose in life and our eventual mortality is the ultimate form of effective long-range planning.

"Everyone is a house with four rooms: a physical, a mental, an emotional, and a spiritual. Most of us tend to live in one room most of the time but unless we go into every room every day, even if only to keep it aired, we are not complete."

—Native American proverb

The importance of spending some time in our “spiritual room” is especially true for human life in today’s high-tech, multitasking world. We are now fully wired with wireless tools (and toys) for electronic communication and sensory stimulation; we’re becoming more preoccupied with immediate consumption of information and with the delivery and reception of instant communication. Thus, more of our attention is being consumed by the virtual world that's currently engulfing us, which distracts us from the “inner” (personal) world within us and the “outer” (natural) world that surrounds us.

"Always being in touch means never being able to get away. The Wireless Man sits amid nature’s grandeur and says, “It’s beautiful. But it’s not moving.” He’s addicted to the perpetual flux of the information networks. He’s a speed freak, an info junkie. He wants to slow down, but can’t."

—David Brooks, “Time to Do Everything Except Think,” *Newsweek*, April 30, 2001

Just as we’ve taken time to develop our technological intelligence, so too should we take time to develop our “spiritual intelligence” (Gardner, 1999). Spiritual questions are powerful, intellectually stimulating questions that require us to use higher-level thinking skills to ponder “higher” issues relating to the meaning and purpose of life, how to place individual life in the context of something larger or beyond the self, and how to make long-range decisions about what life path is most meaningful for us to follow (Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

Pause for Reflection

As the last pause-for-reflection question in this unit, we ask you this final question:

Do you take time to periodically pause and reflect on the spiritual aspects of life?