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The 5 Keys to Living a Healthier Life

by Liz Stubbs

In the past two years, I have had the privilege of offering help and comfort to family members who have had to undergo surgeries and hospital stays for serious illnesses and medical conditions. All of us can relate to how scary it is to watch a loved one struggle with physical pain and illness or to be challenged ourselves with health issues. While at their bedsides, I had ample opportunity to observe how acutely frightening and costly it is to be sick. I generally live fairly healthily: I exercise regularly, eat foods that are organic, vegetarian and not processed, am a non-smoker, and focus on keeping my life balanced. But I haven't always lived this life. I allowed stress to take over (and stress kills). I didn't always eat well or exercise regularly.

The numbers indicate that most Americans struggle with serious health issues, costing us individually and nationally buckets of money we aren't always able to afford, and also ultimately our lives.

• 63.1% of adults in the US were overweight or obese in 2009.

- 18.3% of young Americans are obese.
- One-third of American adults — 74.5 million of us — had high blood pressure in 2006.
- 102.2 million Americans have borderline high cholesterol and 35.7 million of us have high-risk levels of cholesterol.

Everywhere we turn in the media, we are sold the idea of fixes to our health problems with this pill or that injection or this diet plan or that exercise machine. Yes, a nutritious balanced diet and regular proper exercise are essential to good health, but it's not always easy to maintain those lifestyles particularly when they are not yet our habits. And promises of quick fixes are generally too good to be true. When the weight comes off super quickly on radical weight loss programs, it usually piles back on just as rapidly.

No matter what health strategy is right for you, there are 5 keys to your success in creating and living a healthier life. The best news is:

- they are free,
- they work with any program that fits your lifestyle,
- you can start practicing them on your own right away,
- and they work for a lifetime of living your healthiest life.

The 5 keys to living a healthier life are values — think of them as the 5-to-Be-Alive values:

- Self-Respect
- Happiness
- Love
- Accountability,
- and Gratitude.

These five values, when we consciously think about how we nurture them in our everyday lives, have powerful effects. When we mindfully practice each of the 5-to-Be-Alive, they shift our way of being to one of positivity and progress.

Our foundation for success is **self-respect**. When we practice self-respect we insist upon what is best for us. The alternative is no longer a tempting option.

Happiness comes into play in that we all prefer to live each day being happy. When we know we are taking good care of ourselves, we feel physically, emotionally and mentally happier.

The power of **love** is profound and simple. When we practice love—of ourselves, our loved ones and our life—we can achieve not only our goals but our dreams.

Of course, we must practice **accountability** to keep us on track with our goals and dreams. Lying to ourselves only weakens our relationship with ourselves and others.

And lastly, when we are conscious about how many opportunities we experience in one day to feel **gratitude**, we are fueled by a potently positive power.

When we focus on the 5-to-Be-Alive values, there is no room for the old habits that might sap our commitment to living healthier. There is no room for doubt, fear, anger, frustration—all the enemies to living our dreams and being the best US we can be.

Don't we owe it to ourselves to live the healthiest and best lives we can? We invite you to further explore how the 5-to-Be-Alive values can help you live the healthiest life possible.

About the Author

The Values Gals, **Amy Bailey** and **Liz Stubbs** are authors of the new book, *Five-to-Be-Alive: The Values Plan for Living Your Best Life*. For resources and information, please visit <http://www.thevaluesgals.com/>.



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