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Choosing Health and Happiness

What defines wellness?

Being connected to our family - parents, siblings, spouse and children, having a roof over our heads, working and receiving validation for our capabilities and contributions, as well as gaining financial stability may all be different and essential aspects of that sense of well-being.

Therefore, we work hard in school to pass exams and better our choices in life. We work hard at our career to move up the ranks to get better pay or bonuses to provide for our kids so that they can have a better future. We work hard at our relationships to build a warm and loving family. These are common priorities in life.

Do we realise that health is also an integral contributor to our sense of wellness? It is hard for a person in ill-health to be happy. He or she would be taking time off to see their doctor, spending hard-earned money on medical bills, taking medications daily only to be reminded of their poor health, having fun activities like travel, games and exercises limited by inability, and sometimes relying on and “burdening” their loved ones to provide care.

On the other hand, can an unhappy person be healthy? Does happiness also impact health? Many people, sometimes even doctors, may blame some conditions on “stress” when they cannot pin down an obvious cause for it. I don’t believe that “stress” magically creates disease. “Stress” is often attributed to tangible physical events or processes with physiological outcomes.

If you’re feeling stressed or unhappy, it is likely that you’re unable to sleep well, which leads to a lack of energy the next day, resulting in reduced efficiency at work and an inability to complete your tasks. You may then need to rush or skip meals and abandon exercise programmes. All of these poor lifestyle choices and disruption of routines may compromise your immune system and natural healing powers, resulting in ill health.

We also need to work hard for health... and happiness!

If we don’t know that chronic excessive sugar intake can lead to diabetes or indulging in high cholesterol foods can lead to narrowing of blood vessels resulting in heart disease or stroke, we may not understand the importance of moderation. Understanding health is the first step towards better health. And, getting the right information is the key.

However, the next step is infinitely harder. Many know about various risk factors for diseases but do nothing about them. For example, many people know that smoking can lead to lung cancer but still choose to continue smoking! And their reason for smoking – because they are feeling stressed. I wonder if they realise what stress they may face should they be diagnosed with lung cancer?

While we are young and have good health, we must learn to treasure and preserve our health and not take it for granted. Scrambling for damage control after disease strikes often is too late. Like many other aspects of life, effort and hard work are necessary if we wish to choose health and happiness!