



OPTIMAL HEALING ENVIRONMENTS:



Your Healing Journey





For the past decade, Samueli Institute has worked to uncover how healing occurs among individuals, communities and health care systems. As a result, Samueli Institute developed the *Optimal Healing Environments* framework to show how the social, psychological, spiritual, physical and behavioral components of an organization can affect the inherent healing capacities of those within it. The framework was developed for, and has been successful in, hospital and health care systems.

Samueli Institute created this journal in collaboration with the Clinton Foundation's Health Matters Initiative. It is a personal resource for understanding the role of Optimal Healing Environments in your personal and professional quest for health and well-being. This is the first time it has been made available to the public for individual use. With it, you'll learn how to optimize your healing power.



Samueli Institute has published more than 550 journal articles, 26 books and 129 book chapters on the topic of integrated health care over the past 10 years.

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Your Healing Capacity

Each person has an inherent healing capacity. Through small changes in your daily life, you can increase your body's ability to heal. You also may foster that same healing capacity in your own community, school and workplace.

Once you are aware of the changes that you can make to improve your healing power, you can choose to embark on a path to health. Use this journal as a guide to help you optimize your own ability to heal. As you read each section and absorb the information, take time to note your thoughts, intentions, hopes and expectations for you and your family while on this healing journey. Use this book to inspire you and spark your imagination.

Use it to its fullest to guide you on your healing journey!



WHAT IS HEALING?

Healing is a dynamic process of recovery, repair and renewal. It increases endurance, well-being and synergy of mind, body and spirit. It is a natural process and is possible for anyone at any time. As we deal with daily stress and injury, our mind, body and spirit continually tap into the innate capacity of healing to move toward wholeness. It is a personal process that may occur even if a disease cure is not possible.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEALING AND CURING?

Healing gives us a sense of meaning in hardship, hope in suffering and peace at the end of life. Cure means that signs and symptoms of disease or injury are gone, which usually requires an outside influence, such as medication or some type of procedure. Healing and cure may happen together or separately. **Some may continue to experience distress or sadness even after their condition has been cured, which means that they have not yet been fully healed.**

For example, a person may have a complete recovery from injuries sustained in a car accident but continue to feel anxious and depressed when thinking about the incident. In fact, it can interfere with daily life. On the other hand, some may find meaning in suffering and experience healing, even though there is no possibility of a cure for their disease. That is, some with cancer in remission are not truly cured, but they find hope and meaning in being able to help others who share the same treatment and experiences. They feel a sense of peace and wholeness in helping others.



To live fully, it's important to have an inclusive view of curing and healing. This inclusive view is not new. From the ancient Greeks to Florence Nightingale, healers throughout history have understood the connection between the mind, body, the environment and health. The wisdom of the ages informs us today as we seek health, well-being and healing.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO EXPERIENCE HEALING, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

With changes you make today, you can create an environment in your life, at home, at work and in your community that supports your natural healing potential. In other words, you can create your own Optimal Healing Environment.



It is possible to be cured of a disease or injury but not feel whole. On the other hand, it is possible for you to feel healed, although your condition cannot be cured.



Optimal Healing Environments

Throughout the centuries and across cultures, certain components have influenced healing with individuals and communities. The following components can combine to create an Optimal Healing Environment: healing intention, personal wholeness, healing relationships, healing organizations, healthy lifestyles, integrative health care, healing spaces and ecological sustainability.

This journal will show you how to create an Optimal Healing Environment to boost all aspects of your life—your hopes, relationships, activities and places where you live and work—to spark your own healing abilities.

You can pursue optimal health and healing by creating Optimal Healing Environments for yourself, your family, your workplace, school and community. You will understand how to make the changes you need to stimulate and support your natural healing ability and live a healthy, vibrant, joyful life with purpose and meaning.

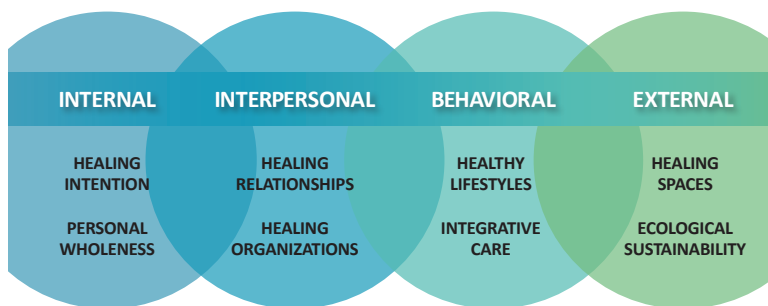
The Optimal Healing Environments framework is made up of



four environments that work together to support health, well-being and healing. Each works on a personal level, is important to the relationships in our lives and to the groups and physical environments where we live, work, play and receive care. If just one of these areas is out of balance, it can prevent you from achieving health. These areas of your life are called your internal, interpersonal, behavioral and external environments.

OPTIMAL HEALING ENVIRONMENTS

Surround the individual with elements that facilitate the innate healing process.



MAKING HEALING AS IMPORTANT AS CURING

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HOW TO BEGIN

On which parts of your life should you focus to boost your self-healing ability? Although each area or environment relates to and affects the others, change is best implemented in small, thoughtful ways. Start with just one of these areas. As you start to make changes in one area, you'll find that the positive effects will spill into others.

The statements below will help you to decide which area to begin with. When you agree with one, visit that section and read something that inspires you. You may decide to set a goal and make a change. To help you work toward those goals, we offer tips and resources to work these changes into your life. For a full experience, be sure to tap into the additional resources at the online portal www.SamueliInstitute.org/Inspire.

QUICK SELF-EVALUATION

I feel emotionally balanced.

Agree Disagree

When I think of my life, I feel hopeful or positive.

Agree Disagree

If you disagree with the statements above, then you may want to concentrate on your INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT.

.....
My relationships with others leave me energized rather than drained.

Agree Disagree



I feel supported and connected to my family and community.

Agree Disagree

If you disagree with the statements above, then you may want to concentrate on your INTERPERSONAL ENVIRONMENT.

.....

I avoid behaviors that I know are unhealthy.

Agree Disagree

I am an active participant in my medical care and wellness.

Agree Disagree

If you disagree with the statements above, then you may want to concentrate on your BEHAVIORAL ENVIRONMENT.

.....

I feel calm and relaxed in my surroundings.

Agree Disagree

I have a space at work or home for reflection.

Agree Disagree

If you disagree with the statements above, then you may want to concentrate on your EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT.

It does not matter which section you start with. What's important is that this is your journey to healing. Take it at your own pace. When you're ready to move into another area, go back to the questions and decide which area you wish to tackle next. Perhaps you want to start with the one that you need the most, or maybe you want to ease in and pick the one that will be easiest for you. Whatever is best for you is the right choice. What matters most is that you start.



Internal Environment

The internal environment is at your deepest inner level. It is made up of your mind, emotions, wishes and intentions. Healing and a feeling of personal wholeness only occur when the mind, body and spirit are in balance. Balancing them all is necessary for a happy and fulfilled life. All three are connected. A weakness or imbalance in one of these can negatively affect the others. For example, severe emotional stress of the mind can cause high blood pressure and other illnesses in an otherwise healthy body. Similarly, a physical illness or injury can cause depression in a usually healthy mind.

THE OPTIMAL INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS:

- Developing the intention and the expectation for healing.
- Experiencing the personal wholeness that comes from harmony of the mind, body and spirit.



DEVELOPING HEALING INTENTION

Healing intention is a conscious mental choice to improve your health or the health of another. It includes the expectation of improved well-being and the hope that a desired health goal can be reached. It also includes the understanding of the personal meaning in your life and work. Ultimately, it includes the belief that healing and well-being will occur. If you don't truly believe that you can be healed, or if some part of you is holding onto the disease or condition, you might disrupt or limit your own inherent capacity to heal on a subconscious level. Don't underestimate yourself! By developing healing intention, you set the stage for healing to occur.

What can I do to Develop Healing Intention?

AWARENESS

What goes on in our inner environment is profound and affects our bodies. Becoming aware of our bodies' subtle signals, such as changes in energy levels throughout the day, helps us be more attuned with our inner environment. Awareness of your body and mind and the inner aspects of your being—your spirit or soul—must be brought to the level of your conscious mind. This allows you to change behaviors that don't contribute to your healing process. Many balance their soul through religious practices and regular participation in religious services. Spiritual happiness can also come from secular sources, such as meditation. This awareness of how the mind, body and spirit work together gives you the information you need to make decisions that guide you on a healing path.



INTENTION

The challenge is to open up communication channels to your deep, inner self. Some do this through prayer; others do it through meditation or by sitting quietly and getting in touch with a calm space within themselves. By making this connection, it is possible to direct your intention to bring this sense of peace and healing to others in your life.



FIND RESOURCES

Learn more about meditation and mind-body practices online at

www.SamuelInstitute.org/Inspire

REFLECTION

By reflecting on your experiences, you can nurture awareness and bring a healing presence to others. Keep a journal using words and drawings to record your thoughts and dreams. Use it to tell your own self story. In doing so, try to answer these questions: *Who am I? What is my purpose? How do I fit into my family, my community, my life? What are my spiritual beliefs?* If you have an illness or pain, think and write about the meaning of the illness or pain in your life. Reflection may help you to understand some of the central themes of your life and find meaning in them.

EXPERIENCING PERSONAL WHOLENESS

Personal wholeness is the feeling of well-being that occurs when your body, mind and spirit are in harmony and balance. You can develop mind-body practices that support well-being and recovery from illness. We will explain how to develop these later in this section.



Integration of Mind-Body-Spirit

Think about a time when you felt most authentic. Perhaps it was a time when you were doing something that you felt was important and meaningful. It could include reaching a major milestone or completing a difficult task. It could also be something from daily life, like cooking a tasty meal or teaching a child to ride a bike. From a Western perspective, wholeness arises from a deep personal point from which caring, communication and a sense of completeness can emerge. In Eastern systems, this is sometimes known as a vital energy that is transmitted among individuals. Regardless, when an experience of complete wholeness arises, a healing presence or unity occurs.

When your internal environment is an Optimal Healing Environment, your physical body and the non-physical mind and spirit can be in tune. Activities that connect your physical body with your non-physical mind and spirit help to integrate your biological responses with your psychological responses. From these practices, you can experience a sense of wholeness that enhances recovery, resilience and the restoration of health.

Positive Thinking

Are you critical of yourself and others? Do you see life in a “glass-half-empty” way? If so, work to eliminate negative self-talk. Create a habit of thinking positively. Self-talk is the stream of thoughts running through your head from the moment you wake up until you fall asleep. If your thoughts are mostly negative, it’s more difficult to cope with stressful situations. Instead of expecting the worst outcome of any situation, focus on the best. When you deal with life’s difficulties in a positive and productive way, you’ll reap health benefits including a longer life span, better resistance to illness and better mental and physical well-being.



The Energetic Connection

The experience of wholeness can be enhanced by “energy” techniques. Two of the oldest of these are the Chinese practice of Qi Gong and the ancient Indian practice of yoga. Qi Gong is a practice of meditation and body movements that are thought to accumulate and move “qi” (pronounced CHEE), or energy, in order to produce healing. Yoga is practiced in a variety of ways. Generally, the practice of yoga is a series of breathing and body movements that help induce order and the feeling of unity in the body. Research studies of yoga have shown that it can induce strong psychological and physiological effects, including reducing the effects of stress.



In a study published in 2012, combat Marines receiving healing touch combined with guided imagery treatments showed a significant reduction in post-traumatic stress compared to their peers.

Military Medicine, Nov. 2012

Healing Presence

In medical literature, there is a phenomenon called “the healing presence.” Religious and spiritual traditions from all cultures and all times describe a spiritual or loving presence as a contributor to healing. Have you ever experienced a calming, safe and peaceful feeling in the presence of another? If so, that was a healing presence. Certain people exude or radiate a special kind of presence that creates an experience of recovery, wholeness, peace or well-being in people who suffer. Please note, the healing presence does not have to be exclusive to professionals, whether they are doctors, nurses or healers, or in fact any person other



than you. It is something you can cultivate and call upon when you suffer or are in pain. You may also use it for the benefit of others.

One of the first steps to developing your own healing intention is to be present in the moment with a clear and calm mind. Let go of all of the “noise in your head” and simply focus on the here and now. Being mindful of your thoughts and actions toward others and yourself is also a good way to begin to develop healing presence. Are you too hard on yourself and others? Letting go of negative self-talk and critical thoughts about others is an important first step.

What are the Practices that can Help Me Experience Personal Wholeness?

There are techniques that you can learn called mind-body practices that once you learn them, you can do anywhere—at home or at work. These encourage you to tap into the connection between your thoughts and your physical responses in a positive way. Research has shown that these practices can be effective in reducing the negative effects of stress.

Staff who participate in yoga and meditation programs show significant improvements on perceived stress, sleep quality and heart rate variability.

Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 2012





MANY COMMUNITY CENTERS, GYMS AND PRIVATE STUDIOS OFFER CLASSES ON THE FOLLOWING MIND-BODY PRACTICES:

- Breath work
- Relaxation
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Imagery
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Art
- Stress reduction

Commit yourself to developing a mind-body practice. If you are unable to take a class, take advantage of one of the mind-body examples at www.SamueliInstitute.org/Inspire.

SHARE YOUR INSPIRATION:

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Interpersonal Environment

Your personal support system consists of a number of relationships. These include your family, friends, doctor, pastor, neighbors, co-workers, boss and many others. They can support you, or they can add to your stress and burdens. An optimal interpersonal environment is made up of more positive relationships than burdensome ones. Those that are healing in nature are loving, kind, trusting and benefit everyone involved.

THE OPTIMAL INTERPERSONAL ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS:

- Cultivating healing relationships.
- Creating healing groups.



HOW CAN I DEVELOP HEALING RELATIONSHIPS?

The Social Connection

We are social beings. We need relationships with others, both individually and as part of a community. They provide us with a sense of belonging, caring and support for our health. In fact, it has been shown that physical illness can result from social isolation and depression. But as we all know, some relationships are better for us than others. And while some relationships may literally “make us sick,” love and support among family, friends or colleagues actually boosts our immune systems and can delay disease and death. Research published by Carnegie Mellon University in the past decade showed that social support and belonging can reduce stress, heart disease and improve quality of life.

Studies have tracked links between depression, anxiety and social isolation to chronic heart failure.

American Heart Journal, 2006



Positive relationships are healing relationships. Trust, honesty and compassion are the three elements of a healing relationship. Being loved, respected, understood and connected to others can have a profound effect on your health. By using the following checklist you can decide which aspects of your relationships are healing and which can be improved. For each relationship, ask yourself if the following statements are true.

**Trust:**

- I feel emotionally and physically safe.
- I don't have to be on guard against being hurt by the other person.

Honesty:

- Both the other person and I can reveal true feelings without harm to either of us.

Compassion:

- Both the other person and I have the ability and willingness to understand one another and express kindness.

If you find that a relationship does not contain all three of these aspects, don't feel like you must shut that person out of your life. It is possible to learn skills that infuse relationships with the healing qualities of trust, honesty and compassion. Following are just a few examples of how to create more healing relationships in your life.

Communication is Key

Honest and open communication is essential to healing relationships. Miscommunication often happens among family members, students and teachers, and patients and health care providers. Next time you have an important conversation, use simple communication techniques, such as repeating back to the person what you heard. To see if you understood correctly, say to them, "Let me see if I understand what you are saying," to help prevent misunderstandings.

Another technique is to use "I" statements that tell the other person, "This is how I feel." This helps to create open communication as opposed to saying, "You are wrong and this is why."

Good communication skills build strong relationships. They ensure that your interpersonal environment is one that optimizes your ability to heal.



Be a Friend

Having quality friendships is vital to well-being. Be a good friend by listening more than talking. Only offer advice when asked. By refraining from both judgment and persistent complaining, your friends will adopt the same positive behaviors. Value your friends for who they are and provide mutual support.

CREATING HEALING GROUPS

Whether it's a school, workplace, church or community organization, you are part of many groups that impact your life. Being involved in groups that are healthy and have healing qualities supports your health and well-being. These types of healing groups allow you to participate in making decisions that affect you. They promote open and honest communication, create a climate of trust and personal responsibility and inspire a sense of belonging.

Culture of Healing

Groups that foster a culture of healing have the following characteristics in common:

- Respect for individuals, including their inner lives.
- A system of values that is present at all levels.
- Honest and open communication at all times.
- A climate of trust.
- A focus on learning rather than blame.
- Opportunities for self-care, like exercise and yoga.

Ask yourself whether the groups that you belong to help you to heal or whether they impede it.



What can I do to Influence My Workplace or Other Types of Organizations that are a Part of My Life?

LEADERSHIP

Ask yourself: *Am I a good leader? Am I a good follower?* Good leaders and good followers “walk the talk.” They work on improving their communication skills, they treat others as they would like to be treated and they are good team players. Examine your role in the workplace or other types of groups that you may be a part of and explore your ability to shift it toward a healing culture. The best way to do this is to lead by example.

GET INVOLVED

Are you actively involved in an organization? Getting involved is critical if you want the organization to develop a healing culture. Opportunities such as PTA, committees and volunteer activities are ways to inspire change. As a part of these groups, set a good example for others in the ways previously mentioned. Build healing relationships with your co-workers. This can provide you with opportunities to practice your own self-care and to share with others ways to foster open communication and caring relationships that support greater personal well-being, both in work environments and in other social situations.

SHARE YOUR INSPIRATION:

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Behavioral Environment

The behavioral environment is made up of those actions we take to prevent illness, improve health and engage in self-care in a way that allows your natural healing processes to emerge.

THE OPTIMAL BEHAVIORAL ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS:

- Practicing healthy lifestyles.
- Applying collaborative and integrative medicine.



PRACTICING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Healthy behaviors can enhance your well-being. They prevent, treat or even cure disease. Making good food choices, exercising, relaxing and avoiding unhealthy behaviors are important to lifelong health and wellness.



DID YOU KNOW?

7 of 10 deaths are from preventable chronic diseases.

Health Affairs, Nolte and McKee, 2008

How can I Change to Healthy Habits?

MOTIVATION TO CHANGE

Living a healthy lifestyle is one of the most important things you can do to achieve and maintain well-being. Nutrition, exercise and controlling stress all play major roles in healing our bodies, minds and spirits. The problem lies not in knowing what you should be doing, but rather in getting motivated to actually lose that weight, stop smoking, get on that treadmill or even just take time out to relax. But for most of us, motivation to change is hard. Wanting to change our lifestyles is not enough. We need to change our environments so that we find satisfaction and rewards for our healthy habits. Making a small change, such as drinking water instead of a sugary soda or finding a buddy to walk with once or twice a week, can help support change.



NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

Instead of thinking about what you shouldn't eat, start with what you can add to your diet. A low-fat diet with moderate protein, high fiber, whole grains and at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day is best for your health.

It helps to write down what you eat throughout the day because we are often not aware of what and how much we eat. Some smart phone apps even help with this and provide motivation to eat a healthier diet. Remember that foods with sugar, corn syrup and unhealthy fats have been linked to heart disease, cancer and diabetes. High fiber diets can counteract some of these effects. Use the USDA's MyPlate system to help you choose the right amounts of the right foods.

BALANCE

It is important to balance your play and work. Hobbies can help. Find activities that are fun and rewarding so that you want to do them regularly. They can be anything from walking with friends, playing with your kids, playing a team sport or going on picnics to joining a club or religious organization, volunteering in your community or learning a new skill or craft.



\$1.2 trillion of our annual health care costs could be avoided by changing lifestyle practices.

Milken Institute, 2007



DEALING WITH UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Let's face it, we all do things that we know are not healthy. What is important is that these behaviors don't become habits. Once they do, they are very hard to break and sometimes require professional help. Use your healthy relationships to find support to manage unhealthy decisions before they become a habit or break bad habits so they do not become addictions. Find information on organizations that can help you from your church, community center, doctor and online. The important thing is to develop awareness of your behaviors and seek help. Some of the practices described in the inner environment are helpful as well.

EXPERIENCING INTEGRATIVE CARE WHEN YOU ARE SEEKING HEALTH CARE

When you need medical care, it is important that you understand all of your options to relieve your suffering and support your natural healing ability. Modern medicine has a lot to offer in terms of treatment for disease and injuries. It is important that you have choices beyond medication and surgical procedures. Some of these include chiropractic care, acupuncture, healing touch, massage therapy, Reiki, diet and nutrition counseling. Care that includes many of these options is called integrative medicine. It usually involves a team of practitioners who work with you to determine the best care based on scientific research. The best option for you may be care that blends complementary therapies with conventional medicine to treat you as a whole person. Integrative medicine and integrative health care are the terms often used to describe this whole person approach. They use the best that different curing-healing modalities offer to support your cultural healing preferences and natural healing abilities.



How do I Access Integrative Care?

Ask about alternatives to medication and surgical procedures that are supported by scientific evidence. It is important to tell your doctor about any herbal or vitamin supplements that you are taking. Also discuss your family history and health and healing traditions. Local medical practices that provide integrative care can be found on the Internet.

Your Health Care Team

When considering you and your family's health care needs, it is important and possible to collaborate with your doctor. No one knows your body, mind and spirit better than you do. While you need a doctor for medical expertise, you can and should be an active partner in planning your care. If you already have a good doctor with whom you have a good relationship, this is a good time to have a discussion with him or her about becoming more involved in your health care.

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External Environment

The external environment is the physical environment where you live, work and play. Many people don't realize the extent to which their surroundings and role within that environment affect their ability to find peace, rest and vitality. Instead of becoming numb to your surroundings, turn your awareness outside of yourself. See how your external environment makes you feel, whether it supports your healing and what you can do to improve the things that you have the ability to change.

THE OPTIMAL EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS:

- Creating physical spaces that facilitate healing and better quality of life.
- Fostering ecological sustainability by creating a healthy environment for future generations.



CREATING HEALING SPACES

Healing spaces minimize stress; they make you feel good; they bring your family and friends together; and they allow you to perform at your best. Physical space is one area of life over which most of us have some degree of control. So by using intention and purposeful creativity, you can design a space at work or at home that can become part of your Optimal Healing Environment.



DID YOU KNOW?

Contact with nature, natural light and soothing colors reduces stress and improves well-being.

Journal of Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, 2007

How do I Make My Work or Home into a Healing Space?

The physical spaces in which we spend our lives impact our health. Whether or not you consciously notice the elements of the space around you, the nature of that space has a powerful effect on your body, mind and spirit and therefore your healing journey. This physical outer environment also can have a powerful impact on the ways in which co-workers, families and friends in those spaces interact.

There are ways to create and enhance the healing powers of the personal space in your workplace or home, even in the middle of the demands of hectic daily life.



INSIDE SPACES

Where do you spend most of your time? In the car? At home, work or school? Take a moment to picture each place, one by one. What does each place look, sound, smell or feel like to you? What feelings do they evoke? Make a note of these and think about what you can control about each one. Even small changes like keeping the inside of your car clean and trash-free might make the two-hour traffic jam less stressful.

Recovering in a hospital room? If the sounds of the machines cause you anxiety, perhaps you can experiment with how listening to different genres of music makes you feel. Maybe you'd be better off listening to a book on tape or interesting podcasts. Take a moment to be mindful of how each activity makes you feel. Consider how it helps you react to your external environment.

Wherever you spend your time, make sure that the spaces around you don't add unnecessary stress to your days and nights. Focus on the spaces in which you spend the most time first and then move on to the others.

Having a dark, clutter-free bedroom at night is a great way to help improve your sleep, according to experts at the Mayo Clinic. You can purchase inexpensive blackout shades or curtains if streetlights keep your room too bright. Surround yourself with comfortable bedding that feels the best against your skin.



HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR AN OPTIMAL EXTERNAL HEALING ENVIRONMENT:

1. Surround yourself with nature:

- Natural light
- Nature views
- Art
- Flowers

2. Decorate with meaning:

- Photographs of family and friends
- Religious symbols
- Meaningful objects
- Furniture arranged to encourage interaction

3. Simplify your life:

- De-clutter
- Clean
- Create quiet spaces for reflection

As a last tip, choose colors to suit your mood. Reds, oranges and yellows energize and stimulate, while other colors (like blue, green and violet) evoke feelings of peace and restfulness. (*Journal of Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 2011).

OUTSIDE

In addition to creating indoor spaces that are uncluttered and peaceful, look for spaces outdoors that nurture you. Take time out to watch a sunset or find a green space to eat lunch during your work hours. Working in or simply enjoying a community garden can help you connect to the earth. If gardening is not an option for you, try walking in a local park or green space. Listen to the sounds of a fountain, watch birds in the trees or visit some



other natural setting. Whether you live in the city, country or somewhere in between, be aware of the life around you.

Even just exposing yourself to nature is good for your health. You can do this through artwork that depicts scenes of nature, a view of green and sky through a window or a YouTube video of waves crashing along the shore. In your own life, pick out and create spaces that involve all of your senses and promote feelings of peace, safety and connections with others.

Another way to connect with nature is to track how changes in nature affect you, your mood, your weight and your energy level. Being aware of these things can help you to make the best decisions. You can even try to change your perception of the situation. For example, if you find yourself becoming depressed or sad during rainy weekends, try to see the beauty in the rain drops or make something you love to do a rainy-day-only activity. (You might even begin to look forward to them!)

Although bad weather can make you feel down, nature frequently provides positive images for meditation. Just as winter turns to spring, one's self-healing capacity can move from sickness into health. The restorative quality of nature and your own body is an important image to hold onto throughout your journey.



MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

When in the throes of a busy life, it's easy to tune out to the plants, animals and natural world, especially when dealing with an illness. See how connected you are to the natural environment in which you live by trying to answer these questions:



- What are five different types of trees that grow in your area?
- Which birds live in your region all year and which migrate to it?
- How far away is the closest playground? Park? Forest? Body of water?
- How have the green spaces in your area changed over time?
- What foods are grown locally?

If, like most people, you're not in tune with the flora and fauna, take the time to get back in touch by experiencing a natural environment. If you're walking, slow down. Wear comfortable shoes and focus on each of your senses. Notice the varying shades of green; hear how each bird's song is different; feel the air on your skin; smell a flower's perfume. As your mind begins to wander, gently but firmly return to experiencing the moment so that you can make the most of this healing time.

You can add to your experience by researching—online or in the library—the plants, birds and animals in your local area. Discover the names of what's around you and find out which are native species. Try to take time each day to identify the living things that you researched, either by walking around your community or even by bird watching out the window.



As you start to look outside yourself and take more and more in, you will begin to expand your awareness of the diverse communities of life that surround you. By being aware, your appreciation for the hidden gems that are around you may grow, and you'll begin to feel more a part of the ecosystem rather than an outsider looking in.

FOSTERING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Healing also occurs within the larger landscape of the environment and the health of the planet that we all share. You can foster ecological sustainability by reducing your carbon footprint and supporting the health of the planet.

Being Mindful of Your Ecosystem

Just by being a living being, you are an integrative member of the ecosystem that sustains you. When you take part in cyclical work, like cooking, cleaning and even recycling, you're participating in a cycle of renewal. These cycles affirm that you are part of a larger design.

From the cleaning products you use to how you dispose of your trash, your choices affect the health of the planet. They eventually affect your own health as well. Take peace in knowing that you are an important part of the dynamic cycles of the planet. But know that with it comes responsibility. Your choices impact the entire ecosystem.



How can I Foster Ecological Sustainability?

Instead of being overwhelmed by the costs or efforts involved with being ecologically sustainable, reflect on how you impact the earth. Don't forget to give yourself credit for the ways that you give back.

Think about or research small ways you can improve: Reduce waste; recycle more; be a little greener. Personal conservation may not seem like it will save the planet, but you can make a difference. Even small things, like being mindful of how much time you spend in the shower or turning the faucet off when brushing your teeth, can add up.

Benchmark where you are now, and set a plan for where you want to be in six months or a year. Then make decisions one day at a time to reach that goal.

If you're already doing all you can at home, consider making an impact within your community. For example, volunteer for a campaign to "reduce, reuse and recycle." Get involved in local conservation efforts. Look for volunteer opportunities to clean or restore parks and green spaces in your own community. Avoid purchasing overly packaged products. If you don't already, bring your own reusable grocery bags while shopping.

If you use your own shopping bags to carry groceries, remember to wash them periodically.





If you think of yourself as part of the larger community around you, it is easier to foster ecological sustainability. The choices that you make today can help support the health of your community for generations to come.



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TAKE A STEP BACK

Now that you've seen how the internal, interpersonal, behavioral and external environments can affect your self-healing abilities, take a step back and see where your journey began and where it's taken you. Reflect on what you've accomplished. If you have kept a journal, then go back and read your first few entries. Have you learned anything about yourself or others along the way?

Note how a change in one area of your life affected other areas. If you resolved conflicts with others, how did that make you feel about yourself? If you started taking walks, how did it affect your sleep or stress levels?

You might have noticed that some of the changes you made affected those around you in a positive way. By looking deeply into one's life and your relationships with others, we can often work toward peace and healing. That peace and healing will spread to those around you. Amplify your healing by sharing your experiences with others along the same path.

Is there someone in your life who would benefit from this book? Share it with them and talk about what resonated for each of you. At www.SamueliInstitute.org/Inspire you can forward an electronic version of this book to a friend.





What you gained will be inside you, strengthening you and boosting your healing ability with each new struggle you face. Make a commitment to be mindful of how each area affects your body, mind and spirit. Commit to continuing the practices that you found helpful. Consider making them a part of your life—both in times of sickness and in times of health.

This book is available at no cost through a collaboration between Samueli Institute and the Clinton Foundation's Health Matters Initiative. Visit www.SamueliInstitute.org/Inspire and complete a survey to help us improve this book and present the information in a way to help others.



GLOSSARY

Acupressure is based on the principles of acupuncture. This ancient Chinese technique involves using finger pressure on specific points along the body to treat ailments.

Acupuncture is a treatment within traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), a system of healing that dates back thousands of years. At the core of TCM is the notion that the life force “qi” flows through energetic pathways (meridians) in the body. The proper flow of qi is thought to create health. An imbalance of qi (too much, too little or a blocked flow) results in disease. Acupuncture needles are inserted at points along the meridians to restore balance and flow of the qi.

Allopathic or conventional medicine is medicine as practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) or D.O. (doctor of osteopathy) degrees and by allied health professionals, such as physical therapists, psychologists and registered nurses.

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils from plants for healing purposes. The oils are typically inhaled or absorbed through the skin as a treatment for infections and stress.

Ayurveda is the Sanskrit word for the science of life. Ayurveda is considered the oldest healing science and has been practiced in India for more than 5,000 years. The basic principle of Ayurveda is the prevention of illness by maintaining balance in the body, mind and spirit through proper diet and lifestyle habits. A chief aim of Ayurveda, which is designed to help people live long and healthy lives, is to cleanse the body of substances that cause disease.

Biofeedback is a technique that involves training the mind so that a person can improve his or her health by learning to control certain internal bodily processes that normally occur involuntarily, such as heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and skin temperature. These activities can be measured with electrodes and displayed on a monitor providing feedback to the participant about the internal workings of his or her body. The person is then taught techniques to gain control over “involuntary” activities.

Breathwork involves a variety of techniques that use patterned breathing to promote physical, mental and spiritual well-being.



Chiropractic is a form of diagnosing and treating illnesses that affect the nerves, muscles, bones and joints of the body through spinal manipulation. One of the oldest healing practices, spinal manipulation, was first described by Hippocrates in ancient Greece. More recently, Daniel David Palmer founded the current field of chiropractic in 1895, when he cured a man of deafness and acute back pain by realigning a displaced vertebra in his back. Although the practice of contemporary chiropractic now includes other interventions, spinal manipulation remains the essence of chiropractic.

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices and products that are not generally considered to be part of conventional medicine, such as acupuncture, massage therapy, herbal supplements, etc.

Craniosacral therapy is a manual therapeutic procedure used to remedy distortions in the structure and function of the craniosacral mechanism: the brain and spinal cord, the bones of the skull, the sacrum and interconnected membranes. The procedure is used to treat chronic pain, migraine headaches, temporomandibular joint disease and a range of other conditions. It is performed by a range of licensed health practitioners.

Cure is an externally applied medical intervention that removes all evidence of the diagnosed disease.

Dance/movement therapies use expressive movement as a tool for personal expression and emotional healing.

Feng shui is the ancient Chinese practice of configuring home or work environments to promote health, happiness and prosperity. Feng shui consultants may advise clients to make adjustments in their surroundings—from color selection to furniture placement—to promote a healthy flow of chi, or vital energy.

Flower essences are intended to alleviate negative emotional states that may contribute to illness or hinder personal growth. Drops of a solution infused with the captured essence of a flower are placed under the tongue or in a beverage. The practitioner helps the client choose appropriate essences, focusing on the client's emotional state rather than on a particular physical condition.



Guided imagery involves using mental images to promote physical healing or changes in attitudes or behavior. Practitioners may lead clients through specific visualization exercises or offer instruction in using imagery as a self-help tool. Guided imagery often is used to alleviate stress and to treat stress-related conditions, such as insomnia and high blood pressure. The therapy also is used by persons with cancer, AIDS, chronic fatigue syndrome and other disorders with the aim of boosting the immune system.

Healing is the process of recovery, repair and return to wholeness.

Healing touch is used by nurses and other practitioners to accelerate healing, relieve pain, promote relaxation, prevent illness and ease the dying process. The practitioner uses gentle touch or works with his or her hands near the client's body in an effort to restore balance to the client's energy system.

Herbal medicine also called botanical medicine, or phytomedicine, refers to the use of any plant's seeds, berries, roots, leaves, bark, or flowers for medicinal purposes. There is a rich heritage of herbal medicine in healing systems throughout the world. In addition, important drugs used in Western medicine, such as digitalis, the cancer chemotherapy drug vincristine and ephedrine, have all been developed through research on medicinal herbs.

Holistic medicine is a healing philosophy that views a patient as a whole person, not as just a disease or a collection of symptoms. In the course of treatment, holistic medical practitioners may address a client's emotional and spiritual dimensions and the nutritional, environmental and lifestyle factors that may contribute to an illness.

Holistic nursing is embraced by registered or licensed nurses who seek to care for the body, mind and spirit of the patient.

Homeopathy is a medical system that uses minute doses of natural substances—called remedies—to stimulate a person's immune and defense system. A remedy is chosen individually for a sick person based on its capacity to cause, if given in overdose, physical and psychological symptoms similar to those a patient is experiencing.



Hypnotherapy uses an altered, relaxed state of mind resembling sleep, but one in which people can still concentrate, to help them change their awareness and intentions. Hypnotherapy is often used to help people learn to control bad habits, pain and stress.

Illness is the human experience of a disease, such as the manifestation of the patient's beliefs, fears and expectations. Illness is also the patient's influence on the cause, meaning and the course of the disease.

Integrative medicine is a multidisciplinary system of care that incorporates both biomedical and complementary therapies.

Magnetic therapy (also known as magnetic field therapy or biomagnetic therapy) involves using magnets, magnetic devices or magnetic fields to treat a variety of physical and emotional conditions, including circulatory problems, certain forms of arthritis, chronic pain, sleep disorders and stress. Treatments may be applied by a practitioner or as part of a self-care program.

Massage therapy has been practiced as a healing therapy for centuries in nearly every culture around the world. It helps relieve muscle tension, reduce stress, and evoke feelings of calmness by using touch to influence the activity of the musculoskeletal, circulatory, lymphatic, and nervous systems.

Mind-body medicine is an approach to healing that uses the power of thoughts and emotions to positively influence physical health.

Meditation refers to a myriad of practices that relax the body and calm the mind. In particular, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an approach based on a Buddhist meditation practice, is now used widely to relieve stress and enhance wellbeing.

Naturopathic medicine emphasizes the curative power of nature and treats acute and chronic illnesses in all age groups. Naturopathic physicians work to restore and support the body's own healing ability using a variety of modalities, including nutrition, herbal medicine, homeopathic medicine and Asian medicine.



Nutrition is the study of the relationship between food and physical health. It is the science of nutrients and how they are digested, absorbed, transported, metabolized, stored and discharged by the body.

Osteopathy is a complete system of medical care. Its underlying philosophy is to treat the whole person, not just the person's symptoms. Osteopathy emphasized the interrelationships of structure and function and the appreciation of the body's ability to heal itself.

Qi Gong is a traditional Chinese medicine practice that uses movement, affirmations, breath work, visualizations and meditation to improve the flow of qi (life force) and to restore both external and internal harmony.

Reiki is an ancient healing system that uses hand placements to channel healing energies to the recipient. Although practitioners may vary widely in technique and philosophy, reiki commonly is used to treat emotional and mental distress and chronic and acute physical problems and to assist the recipient in achieving spiritual focus and clarity.

Relaxation techniques are helpful tools for coping with stress and promoting long-term health by regulating the body's autonomic nervous system and quieting the mind.

Spiritual healing is practiced by healers who often regard themselves as conductors of healing energy or sources from the spiritual realm. They may call on spiritual helpers such as power animals, angels, inner teachers, the client's higher self or other spiritual forces. These forms of healing can be used as part of treatment for a range of emotional and physical illnesses.

Tai chi is a gentle exercise program derived from the martial arts. A traditional Chinese medicine practice, tai chi is composed of slow, deliberate movements, meditation and deep breathing, which enhances physical health and emotional wellbeing.

Therapeutic touch is practiced by registered nurses and others to relieve pain and stress. The practitioner assesses where the person's energy field is weak or congested and then uses his or her hands to direct energy into the field to balance it.



Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is a complete medical system that has been used to diagnose, treat and prevent illnesses for more than 2,000 years. TCM is based on a belief in yin and yang (opposing energies), such as male and female, winter and summer, and happiness and sadness. When yin and yang are in balance, a person is energized. Out of balance, however, yin and yang negatively affect health and well-being. In TCM, this state of balance is achieved through the use of multiple approaches, including herbal medicines, acupuncture and qi gong.

Yoga is a spiritual practice that uses physical postures, breathing exercises and meditation to improve overall health and well-being. Yoga began nearly 6,000 years ago in India as part of the classical healing science known as Ayurveda.



ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

Visit Samueli Institute online at www.SamueliInstitute.org/Inspire for resources and tools to help you create a healing environment for you and your family.

FOSTERING OPTIMAL HEALING ENVIRONMENTS:

You have within you the ability to heal. By making small changes in your daily life, you can increase your body's ability to heal and foster healing in your community.

Use this journal as a guide to help you optimize your own ability to heal. As you read each section and absorb the information, take time to note your thoughts, intentions, hopes and expectations for yourself and your family while on this healing journey. Use this book to inspire you and spark your imagination.

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