

Health Questions

The Appreciative Inquiry Simultaneity Principle suggests that change begins the moment we ask a question. Questions direct our attention, which influences the path we take and reality we create. Questions are one of the most powerful tools we have for intentionally creating what we desire in our lives.

Question Exercise

The following exercise is one example of how questions can be used to shift some aspect of our lives. In this exercise we focus on improving health. The purpose of this exercise is to use questions to begin shifting our automatic thinking and actions in small ways. We know that small shifts become major changes over time. This exercise can be done in a week's time by answering one new question each day, or over a month by staying with each question for a few days before going on to the next one.

Improving Your Health

The first wealth is health. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

There are several sayings to the effect that, "if you have your health, you have everything." In this exercise we take time to appreciate our bodies for the miracle that they are, and the ways in which they serve us. We focus on what is going well, and what we have to be grateful for. Then we look at how we can begin to expand our health in ways that will help us achieve more of what we want in our lives.

We each begin this journey in different places. Some of us feel vibrant and physically fit, and some feel weak with debilitating illness. Regardless of your situation, consider taking a few moments each day to reflect on the following health thought, and to answer one of the questions.

Health Thought:

In his book *Happiness is a Choice*, author and consultant Barry Kaufman writes on page 91 that:

Our bodies are undergoing continuous, miraculous change. Regardless of your current state of health, your body is doing amazing things to keep you alive every moment. Take a minute to appreciate the gift of each breath. Feel your heart beat, appreciate your ability to see, and take a minute to reflect on the continuous work of every organ and cell in an average moment.

Now consider how your life might change if you were to significantly improve your health. For some, this might mean improving the conditions of a debilitating disease. For others, it might be finding a whole new sense of energy and vitality that they never knew they had. How would a marked shift in health change your life? What would happen if you felt strong, agile, and full of energy throughout the day? How would things change if you consistently felt good? What would be different about your life? What would ideal health look like for you?

Now consider the potential opportunity available for change in this dynamic system. There are many choices we make in a given day that impact our health. We know that

choosing healthy foods and drinking plenty of water is good for our bodies. Walking or other doctor-approved exercise benefits us in a variety of unmet ways, and tends to make us feel better about ourselves in general. Adequate rest and relaxation keep stress at manageable levels, which is so important in our busy world. There is further research showing that optimistic thinking increases a variety of physical attributes including life expectancy (Kelm, *Appreciative Living*, pg 104). There are so many areas we can consider when we want to make changes in our health.

Taking all this into consideration, reflect on one or more of the following questions each day:

1. In every moment our lungs breathe, our heart pumps, and our brain thinks. For most of us, our ears listen, our eyes see, our stomachs process, our kidneys and liver cleanse, our intestines absorb and remove, our legs walk, our hands write, and our hearts feel. We often take all this for granted, and yet each aspect of our bodies is so miraculous. Each organ and cell is an intense area of study by itself. What aspects of my body can I notice and appreciate today that I often take for granted?

2. When do I tend to have the most energy, or feel the best during an average day? What is going on at this time? Why do I feel particularly good during this time and how can I incorporate more of this into each day?

3. Think back in the last two years to a period or experience when you really felt good physically. What was going on during this peak time and what was I doing, eating, or thinking? What can I learn from this to apply in my life now?

4. Who do I know that are role models for the health that I desire? Who are the people my age, or in my circumstances, that I admire in terms of their health? What do they do? What can I learn from them?

5. What do I believe is possible for me in terms of health? What is the best I believe I can achieve? These beliefs are my personal limits. Where did these beliefs come from? Would I be willing to consider shifting them in some small or large way? How? What could I shift them to?

6. Imagine for a moment that your health has miraculously shifted, and is now significantly better in whatever way is meaningful to you. Spend a minute imagining and feeling this new state of being, and ask yourself the following questions:

- In what ways is my health different? How do I feel?
- How does this new state of health impact an average day for me?
- What would change in my life if I were to consistently feel good?

7. What one thing can you do, no matter how small, to begin moving in the direction of the health you desire?

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