

The Wellness Opportunity... Where Do We Go From Here?

By Don Phin, ESQ

“Wellness programs don’t lower health-care costs.” – Wendy Lynch

The 2013 release of the [Rand Report](#) on the effectiveness of wellness programs gave the \$6 billion industry a black eye. It essentially concluded that while wellness programs may help some people to improve their exercise, eating, and smoking habits in the short term, with rare exception, the long term results are abysmal. In addition, there is scant evidence to conclude that these programs actually reduce health care costs. Little has changed since that report.

I believe in the idea of wellness. I personally live it. I have been seeking out the edge in nutrition and exercise for over 30 years. I can remember getting [Dr. Julian Whitaker’s Health and Healing Wellness Letter](#) when it started up in 1981 and then the [Berkeley Wellness Letter](#) when it was first published in 1984. [The Wellness Council of America \(WELCOA\)](#) also started up in the mid-80’s. I’ve been preaching it as an opportunity for employers since then. I’ve had high deductible health insurance policies and have built up my HSA to over \$45,000. I have seen doctors only twice in the last 10 years and lost no more than five days of work over that time. These are results 99% of us are capable of...**if we want it bad enough!**

Wellness is a balancing act between your health, spirit, relationships, finances and work. Out of balance in any one of those five areas and you are out of wellness. Of course, employers are focused on managing health care costs foremost. According to the government, wellness programs should be designed to improve health and prevent disease. Savvy employers look to it as a way to increase productivity as profitability as well.

The *idea* of wellness is a sound one, but logic does not dictate when it comes to poor habits. Emotions do. As I remind folks in workshops: **if it doesn’t make sense, don’t try to make sense out of it!** Give me one single logical reason for being out of health. Fact is, there is none! Does anybody really think you’ll stop somebody from smoking with a \$500 year penalty? Really? Heck, they cost themselves and loved ones wayyy more than that every year. And they already know that.

To understand the forces at play we have understand what drives us towards these bad habits in the first place.



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Under the Influence



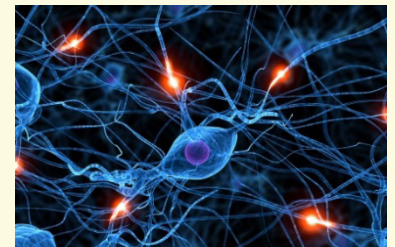
1. Cultural influence – from parents, peers, the culture at large. It is human nature to want to conform to this influence until we become domesticated in it. Culture is a very powerful force. It's why nobody smokes in church. Employers have to understand that the culture outside of the workforce has a greater impact than the one inside it.

2. Advertising – from the time we were born we have been pounded with thousands and thousands of images encouraging us to smoke, drink, eat and be merry. Of course there is the powerful message to watch TV and eat junk food—which we are doing at alarming rates. Advertisers aim at the subconscious with their TV ads, billboards, and the like. And the younger they can get to you the better. This messaging must be countered with your healthy advertisements!



3. Addictive properties – nicotine, caffeine, sugar, fat, and salt are like alcohol and drugs—highly addictive substances. Nobody drinks that Big Gulp or smokes that cigarette thinking “hey, this is really good for me.” Understand that getting people off junk food is like getting them off alcohol or pain killers—not an easy thing to do. What gives anyone the confidence that a corporate wellness program can do it?

4. Neurological programming – due to these additive properties our brains become hard wired towards poor habits. Getting employees to think and act logically requires moving enormous physical and emotional barriers. It is also important to understand the “triggers” associated with neuro-responses. For example, I’m tired right now so instead of working out I’ll have that frozen pizza. Or, I’m mad so I’ll drink a strong cocktail.



Experts tell us we can re-wire some of these poor habits by engaging in positive ones for 21 days. Many who have changed for the better will tell you those first few weeks can be like hell. When your mind and body screams “no, take me back”. One reason why support and coaching are essential tools in wellness success.



5. Inaccessibility to good food – it is a brutal fact that in many low income and remote communities access to good healthy food is difficult. Go to <http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97C6D565-BB43-406D-A6D5-ECA3BBF35AF0%7D/FINALGroceryGap.pdf> for an excellent report by The Food Trust. In addition, the mass produced food we eat is laden with corn syrup, the wrong fats, useless carbohydrates, chemicals, additives, preservatives and other not so healthy items. Most of the food eaten is in fact toxic. Fortunately local farmers are growing great organic food and bringing it into the city. There is also online shipping. An education on how to buy healthy food is a wellness must.

Next Steps

So, just how do we increase our personal wellness and that of our family and fellow workers? How do we leave these poor habits behind? Here are 20 powerful suggestions that come in no particular order. Focus on addressing one or two of these at a time. Remember this: wellness is a lifetime's journey!

1. Acknowledge the power of influence identified in 1-5 above. Talk about it. Journal it. The fears, habits challenges and opportunities. Then decide to do something about it.

2. Step outside of yourself and look at you!

Put that iPhone video and camera to work. Watch yourself smoke a whole cigarette. Watch yourself eat that fatty burger. Take a picture of yourself naked and from the front and rear. Seeing what others get to see is a scary start. It will humble and motivate you. Consider these your "before" pictures.



(What you see...what they see.)

3. Bring the future present. One of the most effective techniques is to look at the future self. What will my current pattern of health look like in 10, 20, 30 years? Spend some time in that place and have a conversation with the present self. For example, if you are a smoker see yourself lying in the hospital bed with the doctor showing you the x-ray containing a picture of the hole you created in your lung. Perhaps your loved ones can be in the room at the same time. Now bring that image present. Feel like lighting up? Few do. The point is we have to bring the pain of the future present so we can get some leverage on ourselves. Check out the app [AgingBooth](#) and take a look at the future you.



4. Acknowledge the precessional impacts of your poor habits.

Whether it's the way the food you eat is grown, how certain foods affect mood and energy levels, how it is affecting your career, or how your habits are affecting loved ones... like kids. It could be the cost of that drinking or smoking habit. Fact is, the health of only 20% of the population has created today's health care crisis and it is having a major precessional impact on all of us – especially young healthy workers, who have to pay for these poor habits disproportionately.



5. Disrupt the actions that lead up to the habit. For example, if you go home a certain way which takes you right past the yummy burger stand, drive home a different way that takes you past the organic food store. If you are crashing at 2:30, instead of grabbing more coffee and sugar, take a brisk walk around the block. Respond to these known triggers with the next logical move and you will avoid the negative emotional one.



6. Get support. It's tough to change habits alone. ***None of us are as tough as all of us.*** One reason why support groups like AA have been so successful for so long. You can find online support groups for changing any bad habit. For a great list of such groups

click here http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/find_support_group Another reason why individual coaching is a big part of successful wellness.



7. Focus on one day at a time. What you eat now. The exercise you'll do this morning. The shopping you will do on the way home today. The time you

will go sleep tonight. As ancient wisdom reminds us "be in the present" where the greatest power for change lies.



8. Keep a journal, calendar, chart or other way to show your progress. Journaling is a very powerful process. Some folks blog their journals; others like me keep them private. Your

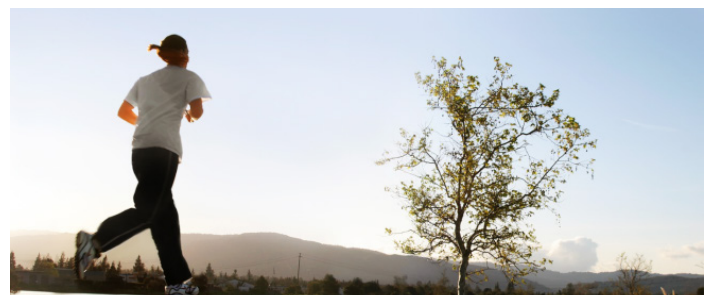
call. Buy your employees and yourself a cool leather bound journal to use for journaling.

9. Learn how to cook healthy food. Take a class if you have to. Then make sure to have a weekly shopping and eating plan and cook as many meals in advance as you can. As an employer you can have somebody come in at lunch once a month and show how to shop and cook ...and eat a healthy meal. See <http://deliciouslyorganic.net/>

10. Set a reasonable goal...and then publicize it. At least to your support group. Then get fired up about meeting that goal! Put reminders everywhere. I set my goals on a weekly basis and around athletic events.



11. Don't allow an excuse for not exercising. Get up 30 minutes early. Get ready the night before. Schedule a class. Go with a buddy. Do it on the road too. Do it for at least 15 minutes. You can do a whole bunch of exercises any place at any time with just your body weight. Like walking, sprinting in place, chin-ups, jumping jacks, pushups, and yoga. T-Tapp.com is a great no equipment, highly impactful exercise program. No excuses = great health!





12. Try hypnosis. Laugh all you want, but I know people who swear it has helped them stop smoking, eat better, exercise, etc. See <http://www.asch.net/>. You never know. I'm all about results, so experiment and do what works!

13. Brand it. Be your own marketing department. Put up motivational posters, successes, pictures of what you want to look like. Have a personal mantra or two. Create affirmations. Remember the importance of repeating new messages to drown out the old ones.

14. Try an exercise program. I love doing P90X, Tae Bo, Rodney Yee yoga videos, kettle ball training DVDs and the like. By mixing it up I never get bored. A lot of these programs have online support communities. See www.beachbody.com/ and <http://life.gaiam.com/>, two of my favorite resources.



15. Get Some Sleep. We are a sleep deprived nation. Try to get 7 to 8 hours sleep per night. Plan on when you will go to sleep and wake up. Turn the T.V. off. Keep it

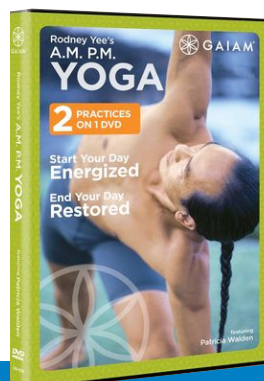


our of your bedroom. Make it a habit. You will sleep better in a dark, quiet and cool room. Make sure your bedding and environment are free from allergic materials. Lastly, do your best to have a consistent sleep schedule 6 days per week.



16. Get Tested. There is no reason to guess at your health levels. Get tested to find out. Most health insurance carriers and company wellness programs offer free testing. Take advantage of them. You can also go to the next level and seek out even more elaborate (and expensive) tests.

17. Supplements. I personally spend a good amount on supplements every year. Multi-vitamin, vitamin C, probiotics, resveratrol, amino acids and more! I take fish oil, chondroitin, cissus extra and other herbs for my aging joints. Best bet is to have a nutritional panel done so you can be more effective supplementing your diet.



18. Yoga. Yoga is amazing. After doing it for more than 20 years I can only begin to tell you how healthy it is for you. You can also easily get some starter videos from your local library.

19. Meditation. Stress is one of the greatest causes of illness. The ability to de-stress and be 100% in the moment is the greatest benefit of meditation. Start with 20 minutes of pure nothingness. Focus on your breath to get focused. Again, guided meditation CD's and DVD's are available from your library. There are also hundreds of videos you can learn from on YouTube.



20. Check out the tons of free and low cost info! There is a ton of great wellness information produced by NIH <http://health.nih.gov/category/WellnessLifestyle> as well as PBS www.pbs.org/topics/health/lifestyle/.

National Institutes of Health
Turning Discovery Into Health

Health Information
Grants & Funding
News & Events
Research & Training

NIH Home > Health Information

HEALTH INFORMATION

Resources
Wellness & Lifestyle

Health Info Lines
Health Services Locator
Talking to Your Doctor
Clinical Trials and You
Community Resources
Science Education Resources
MedlinePlus Health Info
NIH Social Media
NIH Audio

Acupuncture see Alternative Medicine
Addiction
Alternative Medicine
Chiropractic see Alternative Medicine
Complementary Therapy see Alternative Medicine
Dehydration
Dental Health
Diet see Nutrition
Dietary Supplements
Disease Prevention

If smoking is a problem, I'll bet nobody has helped cure more smokers than the late Alan Carr. His book *Easyway to Stop Smoking* and programs have been endorsed by Hollywood celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres and Anthony Hopkins. <http://allencarr.com/> Simply typing Wellness in a Google or Amazon search engine will reveal even more info. Lastly, take a visit to your local library where you can access a ton of free CD's and DVD's.

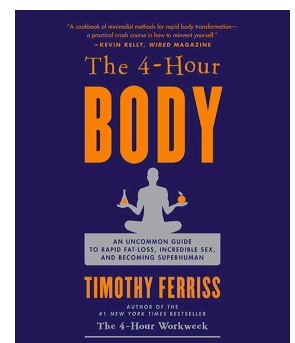
The Future of Wellness: Bio-Hacking?

I have been enthralled with the idea of "bio-hacking," first made famous by Tim Ferris' *4 Hour Body* (a great book). It has boosted my wellness to the next level!

The whole idea is to experiment and take nothing for granted. Try a million different exercises, diets, supplements, therapies, etc. and see what works - and what does not.

For example, bio-hackers prefer not to go on long runs but to either walk or do high intensity exercises like sprints. Many eat what is known as a "paleo" diet consisting of grass fed meats, low sugar, fruits, nuts, and lots of vegetables. Little or no grains, processed foods or low fat foods.

Bio-hackers aren't simply interested in losing fat. They want to raise their I.Q., have better sex, better athletics and live to 120. It's moving beyond wellness towards excellence.

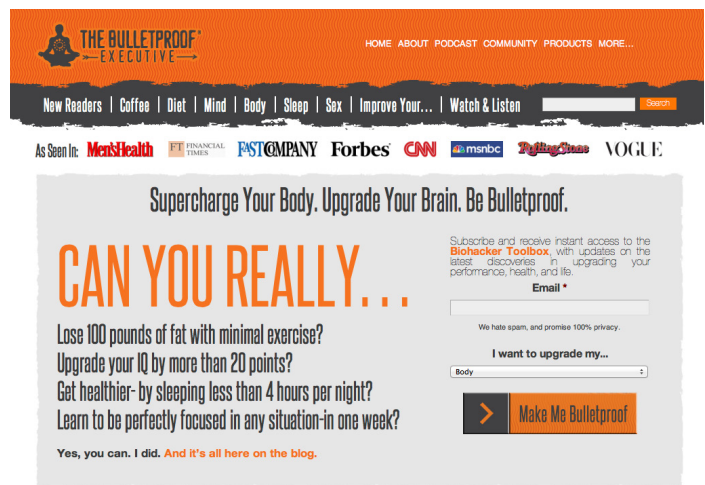


To learn more about bio-hacking I suggest you check out <http://www.bulletproofexec.com/>. I love listening to Dave Asprey and the guests on his podcasts. The learning is more powerful and insightful than anything you will ever read on most wellness websites. Here's a link to other resources in this area <http://biohackyourself.com/biohacking-101-sources-for-biohacks/>

A few favorite “cutting edge” books

- [Perfect Health Diet](#)
- [Body by Science](#)
- [The Blue Zones](#)
- [Becoming a Supple Leopard](#)
- Any Paleo Diet book

Try Asprey's bullet-proof coffee and it will help you generate an incredible level of mental clarity.



Conclusion

Wellness is a choice. A personal one. Company driven programs, while well intended, have built-in limitations. Remember this: the best wellness program is the one that produces results! Act like a leader. An inspiration. To loved ones, friends, co-workers, and family members. The best way to lead is by example. If you want a healthy company or a healthy family you will have to be the epitome of that wellness.

About Don Phin, Esq.

Don Phin, Esq. is a lawyer and a highly rated presenter on the emotional intelligence required to be great at leadership and sales. To learn more go to www.donphin.com

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Your Health is Wealth Shopping Checklist

Note: Buy fresh and organic when possible and affordable. Seek out “low impact” food sources. Always bring bags shopping, no plastic please! Keep the grains, dairy and sugar to a minimum.

Dairy (get regular fat)

- ☐ Cottage Cheese
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Milk
- ☐ Greek Yogurt
- ☐ Hard Cheese
- ☐ Keifer
- ☐ Mozzarella Sticks
- ☐ Sour Cream

Boxed Foods/Snacks (try to minimize anything that comes in a package)

- ☐ Beef Jerky
- ☐ Cliff Bars
- ☐ Protein Bars
- ☐ Oatmeal
- ☐ Whole Grain Cereal**

Fruit (whole fruit, eliminate most juice)

- ☐ Apples
- ☐ Bananas*
- ☐ Berries
- ☐ Coconut
- ☐ Dried fruit snacks
- ☐ Grapefruit (pink)
- ☐ Grapes (red, seedless)
- ☐ Lemons
- ☐ Limes
- ☐ Melon
- ☐ Oranges
- ☐ Pears
- ☐ Pineapple*
- ☐ Strawberries

Beverages

- ☐ Coconut Juice
- ☐ Coffee*
- ☐ Daily protein shake 30-40g
- ☐ Fruit Juices (small amounts or diluted)
- ☐ Homemade lemonade w honey
- ☐ Green tea
- ☐ NO soda or energy drinks
- ☐ Red wine
- ☐ Sparkling Water
- ☐ V-8 low sodium
- ☐ Water (from BPA free bottles)

Meat, Fish, Poultry, Pork (grass fed, where possible)

- ☐ Beef and Pork (lean)
- ☐ Bacon
- ☐ Buffalo
- ☐ Chicken
- ☐ Fish/ Shellfish/Canned tuna/2x week max.
- ☐ Lamb
- ☐ Turkey

Breads (whole wheat or mixed grain only)**

- ☐ Corn Tortillas
- ☐ Grain Bagels
- ☐ Live Breads
- ☐ Pita Bread
- ☐ Whole Wheat English Muffins

Prepared Foods (cans, jars, etc.)

- ☐ Almond butter
- ☐ Applesauce (low sugar)
- ☐ Black Beans
- ☐ Hummus
- ☐ Spaghetti Sauce and Salsa

Vegetables (Fresh is best. Frozen is better than canned).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocado | <input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asparagus | <input type="checkbox"/> Mushrooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broccoli | <input type="checkbox"/> Onions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carrots | <input type="checkbox"/> Peppers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celery | <input type="checkbox"/> Spinach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garlic | <input type="checkbox"/> Tomatoes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ginger | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other vegetable you love! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green beans | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kale | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaks | |



Dry Goods

- ☐ Black Beans/Lentils*
- ☐ Dark Chocolate (90%)
- ☐ Green powder
- ☐ Protein powder
- ☐ Wild Rice
- ☐ Spices (keep them fresh!)
- ☐ Vitamins

Frozen Foods

- ☐ Amy's Burritos
- ☐ Frozen Fruits and Vegetables
- ☐ Frozen Low-fat Yogurt
- ☐ Veggie Burgers
- ☐ Waffles (wheat or oat)**

Condiments

- ☐ Coconut Oil (unrefined)
- ☐ Honey
- ☐ Jelly/Jam
- ☐ Ketchup
- ☐ Maple Syrup (pure only)
- ☐ Mustard
- ☐ Olive Oil (extra virgin)
- ☐ Pickles
- ☐ Relish
- ☐ Salsa
- ☐ Sauce (low sodium)
- ☐ Vinegar (balsamic)



* Eat in limited quantities.

** Watch gluten sensitivities.