



Defining Wellness and the Freedom of Health

By Dr. Vincent Bellonzi

How important is your health freedom ?

One of the most important aspects of freedom that many people have ignored, is the freedom experienced when a person is healthy. Health and fitness are not something guaranteed. They are the result of a properly planned and executed lifestyle. Health insurance, managed care, and even health providers are not able to provide health, they can only identify disease and administer treatment. Health occurs when we effectively match our lifestyle to the adaptive abilities of our own bodies. The alternative to health is invasive and aggressive management of the signs, symptoms, and chronic disease which occur with biological system dysfunction.

Chronic diseases are rampant today, yet they are in fact, preventable. Lifestyle is more appropriately defined with epigenetics. The human body is a constantly adapting entity and DNA is now regarded as a control and response mechanism which allows us to adapt to the environment. The environment created by how we live our life. Epigenetics (meaning above or around the genetic code) is an integral part of the new sciences of genomics. Scientists must include the effect of internal and external environments acting upon human DNA in order to accurately predict results.

In studying the science of physics, a major theory used is called emergence. Emergence theory states that in a complex system, when there is a change in state, a different result will be produced. The human body is a complicated system in which genetic response does change with any change in conditions. Whatever your genes are exposed to will create a response. If exposed to the right things (lifestyle choices) then we will end up with one phenotype. However with a “change of state”, or different lifestyle choices there is different exposure, a different response, and a different phenotype.

In the 70s genetic sequencing was born while examining bacteria. By 2003 with the advent of supercomputers the human genetic sequence was mapped. It was theorized at this point that we would be able, with the aid of nanotechnology, to actually wipe out disease. Where Pasteur had been unsuccessful with his germ theory, we now thought that we could identify the gene for each disease, alter that gene sequence, and eventually eradicate every disease. On this basis, sequencing human DNA was practically a failure.

Not only was it discovered that there probably is not any monogenetic disease, it has also been realized that emergence theory, or epigenetic effects always have to be considered. In addition, even though we are all 99% the same, there is still enough variability to create vast differences in genetic response. On top of that recently it has been discovered that there is actually a DNA sequence beneath the DNA and that “junk DNA” also plays a part in variability as epigenetic marks. This does not even consider the actions of RNA and mRNA.

Aggressive medical management of chronic diseases is relatively ineffective. Naming the disease and thinking we are done is a trap. It leads us to simply waiting until people get sick enough for our tools and expertise. Taking the approach of functional medicine, we examine the antecedents, triggers and mediators to form a better picture of the actual problem. Diagnosis is after the fact, we have to teach and practice prevention. Prevention is not early diagnostics. Prevention occurs when the environment for

disease is not created, let alone identifiable disease itself. Of course, we can and do want to help people when disease is underway. The only answer for the future though is keeping more people in a state of wellness. There's not enough money or resources to treat our entire population.

People who are healthy have the freedom to physically, mentally, and socially participate in activities of their own choosing. When health degrades people are intimately tied to a system of diagnosis and ongoing treatment. Disease-free, pain-free, and to be uninhibited in our pursuit of the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint, is a goal worth the effort. What we choose to eat will make a difference in whether we experience health, or disease. The frequency, intensity, and duration of physical activity all act to create different responses and levels of health. Our whole being responds by adapting and adjusting to everything it is exposed to from the internal and external environments.

How is it possible to have a good day? In fact, let's not short change ourselves, my wish for you is that you have many wonderful days. To experience those spectacular days in our lives the first thing that we have to consider is the status of our own personal health. In order to be healthy, the human body must be working properly. If our primary focus is upon function, then we will create health and wellness. We all know that health is a form of wealth. However, the only way to accumulate health is to maintain what scientists refer to as *organ reserve*.

The only plausible answer to the health care crisis will be to create a generally healthy population. If we minimize the fraction of people who require intervention, then we might just have a chance. It must be understood that screening for existing disease will never be as effective as the prevention of disease. Screening tests tend to be very expensive and many times simply are indicators for even more expensive procedures. Prevention is just that, an absence of disease occurrence.

The biological systems of the body are constantly performing a symphony of responses to our choices. The stimulus (stresses or allostatic load) can create a good response (adaptation) or a bad response (maladaptation). Even our DNA has the capability to respond differently. In my book, *HEALTH RECKLESSLY ABANDONED*, I discuss planning a lifestyle to create health and wellness. It is not possible to provide adequate care for all the people currently experiencing chronic disease. What will we do if the number continues to rise?

Lifestyle planning

- Number one, consume real food.
- Number two, get the right frequency, duration, and intensity of physical activity.
- Number three, be aware of your environment, internal as well as external.

This "reserve" gives us all the resilience to stay healthy in the face of stress. Stress itself is neither good or bad, but it is the final effect that we have to be concerned about. When there is a stress, either mental or physical, what follows is a response which is considered either good or bad. When the mind, or the body experience a stress, the response then can be a positive "adaptation" or a negative "maladaptation".

When we consume good choices of food, then the body gets necessary nutrients to function properly. If we eat "real food" we tend not to get the foreign chemicals and altered molecules in the processed, adul-

terated, convenience foods (which are stresses themselves) which will create a negative response. When we are physically active, the body systems begin to run better because of available energy, circulation and adaptation. If we are careful about what our bodies are exposed to, there is less to cause damage or interference.

REAL FOOD

To enjoy and multiply the good days, the body needs *nutrient dense* foods. Consume more color instead of so many white foods. Green leafy vegetables are loaded with vitamins, minerals and important phytonutrients. Grain processed into flour is primarily sugar(starch) and the nutrients are thrown away. Strive to consume the recommended 5, and up to 13 servings of vegetables and fruit. These should be whole intact foods, prepared raw or steamed with a ratio of three times as many vegetable servings as fruit.

Consume sufficient lean protein, enough to make up close to 1g per pound of body weight. Choose only good fats, unaltered by processing. Also get up and move frequently and consistently. Do everything you can to keep the internal and external environment as clean as possible. It is not that we can't celebrate and enjoy life, but keep the treats restricted to festivals. Finally, remember to take time for yourself and design good rest and sleep.

THE FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE APPROACH

Functional medicine is a system of examining patterns of function and dysfunction. What pre-existing issues are in place? What is a "trigger" or "event" that leads to dysfunction which is often exhibited as signs and symptoms. Often "the last straw" or final one of many is blamed. What mediates the disease, is palliative or provocative? Disease is dysfunction, health is established when the body is working.

LIFESTYLE FACTORS FOR THE BENEFIT OF WELLNESS

Disease is multifactorial. The more factors we address, the broader and more effective the strategy. For example I may identify food allergy and eliminate that food. I will also many times notice a decrease in airborne allergies and perhaps asthma. If I eliminate a bacteria or yeast, there will often be even more effect on allergic response.

THE FORCE

Dealing with stress (the force) is something we must do. Stress is really not good or bad. It is how it is used or applied and the amount. Stress is required to get better, to respond is to be alive. To "be stressed" is to be overwhelmed.

EXERCISE AND STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES

The best way to control stress is exercise, hands down. Yes, you can do too much. However there is nothing better than physical activity to alleviate stress damage and reap benefits.

BREATHE

Since stress takes us into sympathetic dominance we need to have tools to allow us into parasympathetic for recovery. Exercise completes this cycle. Breathing does too because it is both voluntary and involuntary. (sympathetic and parasympathetic). Try this:

The Candle

Envision a candle in front of you. The flame vertical and smoke rising. Breathe in through your nose forcefully enough to slightly draw the flame and smoke toward you to a slow count of four. Hold your breath for a slow count of four while you watch the candle flame recover to vertical. Now breathe out through your mouth enough to force the flame and smoke away but not enough to blow out the candle. Do this exercise 3 times and check your state. I have done this with young children with great success. This and other breathing are used for veterans with PTSD.

For more information on creating a good life, get the book **HEALTH RECKLESSLY ABANDONED** by Dr. Vincent Bellonzi. The book describes how to design a lifestyle that prevents disease and even helps resolve health problems. There is a discussion of the science of epigenetics, which demonstrates how our daily choices give us the power that we all have to change our lives.