

# Living in freedom



**CARING FOR  
YOUR SPIRITUAL  
WELLBEING**



**O**ur overall health and wellbeing has many facets—physical, emotional, spiritual to name a few. In these booklets we've been looking at our health, so let's look at some other equally important aspects as well.

## WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

In recent years researchers have been exploring the questions of life satisfaction and happiness, and researching into the measure of wellbeing as a mark of the quality of life.<sup>1</sup> According to research, life with a purpose produces a sense of meaning and accomplishment, and also contributes to the overall wellbeing of a person.<sup>2</sup> It's been found that a greater meaning in life is gained when our accomplishments are centred in service for others. Dr Martin Seligman states that meaning in life is the "feeling of belonging and serving something larger than self."<sup>3</sup>

Since you are uniquely designed with a special set of abilities, why not use your talents to help others and experience real satisfaction. Various studies report that looking out for others boosts life satisfaction. A recent study on socially anxious individuals found that engagement in kind acts causes anxious individuals to have higher levels of positive emotions.<sup>4</sup> A pilot study of retirees who volunteered more than 10 hours per week showed a higher score on a Purpose in Life test compared to those who volunteered 10 hours or less per week.<sup>5</sup> Even heart surgery patients with high levels of social engagement showed increased recovery six months after surgery.<sup>6</sup> In addition, a study on mortality risk involving over 309,000 people showed that those with good social relationships have a greater than 50% survival advantage.<sup>7</sup> This cumulative evidence shows the clear benefits of engaging with and serving others.

The wise man Solomon said, "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."<sup>8</sup>





## HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?

In the pursuit of health and happiness, a positive relationship with others is a vital component. These positive relationships involve giving and receiving, reaching out to connect, and listening and sharing.

Many life stressors emerge from relationship breakdowns within the family, marriage, workplace, social clubs, religious groups, or with our closest friends. Dr Dean Ornish, a physician in the area of heart disease, comments in his book *Love and Survival*, "Anything that promotes a sense of isolation often leads to illness and suffering. Anything that promotes a sense of love and intimacy, connection and community, is healing."<sup>9</sup>

The Framingham Heart Study, a 20 year study by Harvard researchers, reported the significance of how a happy mood has a major impact upon others up to three degrees of separation.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a good mood resulting from interpersonal relations with others induces healthy immune functions, and conversely a breakdown in relationships debilitates the immune system. Research has found that unhappy marital relations increases the onset of illness by 35%, and shortens the lifespan by four years.<sup>11</sup> Unmarried patients have 8-17% lower survival rate than patients who are married and receive care and support.<sup>12</sup> Keicolt-Glasser's group study in psychoneuroimmunology showed that stressors such as troubled relationships can be translated into physiological changes with impairment of the immune system.<sup>13,14</sup>

Because good interpersonal relationships promote positive moods and boost the immune system, we should actively seek to create meaningful relationships and also cultivate our existing ones. To find and build friendship, why not join a sporting club, and/or church group! Also, make it a priority to maintain your current relationships, and invest time with others (spouse, children, friends and family) by taking part in activities that build relations, lend a hand, listen to the needs of others and show empathy during their time of need. In doing this, you are already on your way to boosting your health.

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## *Moving forward*

**A**nger, bitterness and resentment—are these familiar to you? All of us know what it is like to be angry at someone or something, but not all of us know how to let go of anger.

Our body is engineered to respond to stimulus such as anger. Anger causes the body to undergo a fight-or-flight response, which is similar to when you face great fear or excitement. A string of hormones, including adrenaline, cortisol and catecholamines, are elevated, and the brain commands blood to be concentrated in the muscles for a physical response of fight or flight.<sup>15</sup> The heart pumps faster, and in turn the blood pressure, breathing, body temperature, perspiration, glucose and fat level in the blood stream increase dramatically.<sup>16</sup> Even though this is the body's natural response, if it is prolonged and maintained the body is unable to have sufficient time to heal and recover. This can lead to high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke and may contribute to insomnia and depression.<sup>17,18</sup> The increased level of catecholamines can promote fatty deposits in the carotid arteries, and in time can cause arrhythmia and coronary spasms.<sup>19</sup> A 36-year study has shown that young men between the ages of 36–48 who reacted to stressful events with high levels of anger were three times more likely to develop early cardiovascular disease, and were five times more at risk of developing early heart attacks.<sup>20</sup>

However, being angry is not the issue. It is staying angry and allowing the resentment and bitterness to grow that causes the unavoidable, detrimental consequences to your health. Not only are you affected, but those close to you will also be affected and become victims. Nelson Mandela once said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."<sup>21</sup> The choice is really up to you.

On the other hand, you can choose to release yourself from the imprisonment of anger and resentment. The only real remedy is forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn't make the wrong actions right or excuse them. Forgiveness is about liberating one's self from the misery of anger and resentment. The first step towards forgiveness is not to forget about the painful event, but to remember it in a different way by reforming your perspective. Reforming your perspective involves taking the challenge to evaluate the offender's position during the painful event. This enables you to realise that you could possibly

cause as much or more pain if you had been in the same position. Reforming your perspective helps you to develop an appropriate approach to people's mistakes. In Christianity, there is an even greater experience of release by submitting it to God as the Higher Power and allowing Him to work in your mind to be able to let it go. God can turn the anger and resentment into care towards the offender.

Considering the links to disease that are associated with anger, would you take the challenge and release yourself from anger and forgive? You can only be free by choosing to let go of the resentment. Life is too short to allow anger to consume you!

## TIME OUT!

Quiet time alone has been shown to provide healthful benefits and solutions to stressful events, thoughts and feelings. Let's face it, we are all exposed to stress at various points in our life.

Today many people look to meditation, with the majority employing various forms of Eastern meditation such as transcendental meditation or yoga which emphasises emptying the mind and looking inward for guidance.<sup>22,23</sup> This inward focus can provide a level of relaxation. Another form of mediation, practiced by some of the most enlightened thinkers in history including Solomon and Christ himself is called Meditation Scripturanum. This form of meditation, also called Christian Meditation, is prolonged, prayerful, deep thinking on the revealed truths of God given in the ancient scriptures. This is said to allow one into "communion with God, thinking of God's thoughts, sensing His presence and knowing His will."<sup>24</sup> When it comes to stress, we don't need a form of escapism but a solution to our problems. Christian meditation provides a good solution because the reasoning powers in the frontal lobe of the brain remain active.

What about the benefits of prayer on its own? In a study of 393 coronary care patients, the prayed-for group showed significantly better health outcomes with lower incidences of cardiopulmonary arrest, congestive heart failure, intubation and pneumonia along with lower usage of diuretics and antibiotics.<sup>25</sup> A group of 60 undergraduate students aged 17-39 were given a stressful task, and participants with higher religiosity, levels of forgiveness and frequency of prayer had lower stress hormone response and blood pressure.<sup>26</sup> Meditation and relaxation can provide positive health benefits when practiced intelligently.

Perhaps you may consider taking time to relax in a quiet place to enable your body to be relieved from stress and anxiety and to find peace away from the everyday demands of life.

## THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

Just like electricity and magnetism, rhythm is invisible, but we know it exists because its operation can be experienced and observed as patterns in its regularity. Our planet works in a rhythmic fashion. The cycles of the earth constitute the daily 24-hour cycle due to the rotation of the earth on its axis; the monthly 30-day cycle from the orbit of the moon around the earth and the yearly 365-day cycle of the earth orbiting around the sun. Curiously, there is no explanation in nature's movement for the origin of a weekly 7-day cycle.

Rhythm Cycle	Period	Physiological System
Circadian	Around 1 day	Temperature, <sup>27</sup> sleep-wake cycle, <sup>27</sup> cell division <sup>28</sup>
Circaseptan	Around 7 days	Organ transplant rejection, <sup>29</sup> blood pressure fluctuation, <sup>30</sup> blood clotting mechanism, <sup>31</sup> common cold, migraine, <sup>32</sup> heart attack, <sup>33</sup> stroke <sup>34</sup>
Circatrigintan	Around 1 month	Menstrual cycle <sup>35</sup>
Circannual	1 year	Seasonal depression <sup>36,37</sup>

However, our body has a series of rhythms for maintenance and response to different stimulus in a regulated manner, and this includes the rhythm of the 7-day cycle, known as the circaseptan rhythm. In fact, just like the earth, our body has 24-hour, 7-day, 30-day and 365-day rhythms.

Halberg's research group investigated the timing of human mood, and discovered a daily and weekly cycle, with the highest peak on the positive mood scale to be at the 7th day of the week (Saturday), and the lowest level on the negative mood scale at the 7th day of the week.<sup>38</sup> This means that to reach optimal wellbeing our weekly and daily lifestyle, with our sleeping and dietary habits and working schedule, should be adjusted to the time structure of the 7-day mood cycle.

The 7-day cycle was established in the earliest Biblical records, making it a very ancient rhythm. This pattern has been adopted and passed down to today's generation, with a 7-day cycle that begins with six days of work and then one day of rest. Some countries have tried to eliminate and change this



7-day cycle to a different timeline. France, for example, adopted a 10-day weekly cycle in the years 1793–1805.<sup>39,40</sup> Also Russia, during the communist regime of 1929–1940, enforced a 5-day, then a 6-day weekly cycle.<sup>41,42</sup> However, these changes did not last because it was not conducive to human health and family social life.

Since our physical and mental faculties are engineered to be in a 7-day cycle, our lifestyle should also be synchronised to a 7-day cycle. Research also suggests that the stress hormone cortisol has a 7-day cycle, with an increased level of cortisol at mid-week and a reduction around the 7th day.<sup>43</sup> Various researchers have also found health benefits in the attendance of weekly religious worship. One U.S. study reported that those who attend weekly religious services had a 25% reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease.<sup>44</sup> Another study reported a 19-times higher risk of death over an 8-year period for those who never attended religious services.<sup>45</sup>

Considering the general rise of stress levels from work pressures, family dynamics, study performance expectations, and high-productivity demand in business, we need to maintain regularity for our emotional, physical and spiritual health. We recommend the adoption of 1-day-off per week plan combined with regular exercise and good dietary habits for optimal health/stress management.

All of us experience stress at some point in our lives. Perhaps you can consider your body cycle and implement a rest day for every week to recharge physically, to spend time with your family, and to connect spiritually. After all, life is too short. Why not make the best of life by looking after your body?

## YOU ARE VALUABLE!

You are unique! There is no one else in the world that is the same as you in both personality and appearance. Though we are genetically very similar, we are all unique individuals because of the variable gene activation and environmental exposures. You are in fact designed to be an individual, not a mere random copy of another person, or an accident. Since you are unique, you are therefore valuable.

Take, for example, the 1884 De Dion Bouton Et Trepardoux<sup>46</sup> collector car which was sold for \$3.5 million. You would probably not want to drive this car on a regular basis and may not see its worth, but to a collector it is highly valued. The value of this car is based primarily on the fact that there is only one in the world.

There is only one of you in the world too, and therefore you are valuable. Since you are valuable and worth it you deserve wholeness and health, so why not apply changes for a new happier you!

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Written by Julie Hoey, Maddison Fox, Dr Darren Morton, Dr Christiana Leimena, & Dr Ross Grant.  
Edited by Christina Hawkins, Lyle Southwell, Sue Robinson, Maddison Fox & Jade Guest.

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## JULIE HOEY

BSc (Nutrition and Food Science),  
Grad Dip Dietetics, Grad Dip Ed

A qualified dietitian and science teacher, Julie loves reading the latest research into the amazing human body. With her husband and six-year old daughter, she lives on 100 acres of bush in New South Wales, and works at Avondale College of Higher Education.



## MADDISON FOX

BSc (Nutrition), Hons (Dietetics), APD, AN,  
BAppSc (Exercise and Sport Science), Sports Dietitian

Maddison is passionate about healthy food and its interaction with the health of body, mind, heart and spirit. She utilises the latest nutritional science to teach others how to create healthy food, reduce obesity and the risk of disease and chronic conditions.



## DR ROSS GRANT

PhD (NeuroPharmacology), MAppSc (Clin Chemistry)  
BEd (Sc) (Biochemistry/Chemistry)

Dr Grant is a Biochemical Pharmacologist in the School of Medical Sciences University of New South Wales, Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Sydney Medical School and Head of the Australasian Research Institute at Sydney Adventist Hospital.



## DR DARREN MORTON

PhD (Human Physiology), MAppSc (Human Movement),  
BEd (Distinction), Senior Lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education

Darren is passionate about empowering others to live more. He has delivered hundreds of presentations on lifestyle related topics all over the world, written numerous publications and is a key presenter on the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP). He enjoys family time, triathlon and hang gliding.



## DR CHRISTIANA LEIMENA

PhD (Cell Biology and Inherited Heart Disease),  
BSc Hons (Biomedical Science)

As a medical science researcher, Christiana has worked in the field of inherited heart disease for over a decade, and continues to research the latest in medical health. Christiana loves to be active in the outdoors and is passionate in sharing with others on how to live a healthy, abundant life, both physically and spiritually.





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