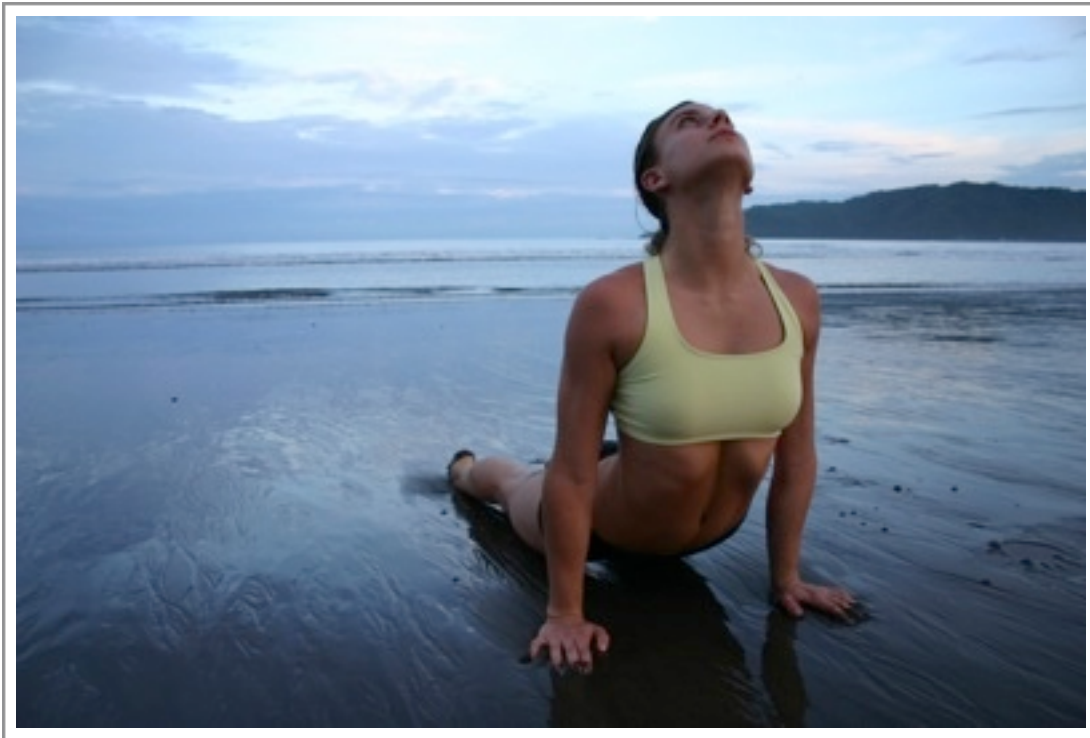


## SUSTAINABLE WELLNESS



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# Sustainable Wellness

## Limits of Reductionism

For the past ten years I have been investigating a career in the healthcare professions. I have been disappointed to realize that the reductionistic approach to medicine frequently misses the most important factor in health – human nature. Individuals cannot simply be reduced to a set of scientific facts. There is a symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment that, if properly understood, improves the health of an individual and benefits the environment. As stewards of the earth, we have a responsibility to treat it with respect. I would like to discuss a few specific examples of lifestyle changes that I hope to help people make as a future healthcare provider. These simple steps that we can take to improve our health can be summed up in the triad “Eat Well, Move Well, Think Well.”



Eat Well



Move Well



Think Well

## Eat Well

Michael Pollan has written extensively about the relationship that humans have – or more correctly, *don't* have – with the food that they eat. The American diet is largely based on processed, packaged food driven all across the country. “The food industry burns nearly a fifth of all the petroleum consumed in the United States,”<sup>1</sup> which contributes substantially to carbon dioxide emissions. If families and individuals return to a dietary pattern similar to our ancestors, we could reduce the negative impact on our environment. Up until only fairly recently, the human diet consisted primarily of fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, and wild game such as fish, poultry, and some beef. Interest-

ingly, this diet is in line with the Word of Wisdom, in which the Saints are instructed to make use of wholesome herbs, fruit, and to consume meat sparingly.<sup>2</sup>

### **Move Well**

Dr. John Medina observes that over the past few hundred years there has been a drastic decrease in how much humans move on a daily basis.<sup>3</sup> This decrease in movement is largely due to the advent of automobiles as well as the transition to a more sedentary lifestyle as a result of technology (computers at work, television in the home, etc.). We could significantly reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions if we as a people decided to use cars for short distances. A quick drive to the grocery store, for instance, could be done by walking or riding a bicycle with a little planning.

### **Think Well**

Americans are stressed. Our lives are so rushed that we rarely have time to stop and think, and this is killing us. Depression, ADHD, general anxiety disorders have all increased sharply since the 1950s, and for many of the same reasons that our physical health has decreased. Children do not play outside in nature as they used to, but spend more of their time in front of a television or computer. Research shows a correlation between amount of time spent in front of digital entertainment and attention disorders as well as obesity. We need to turn the computers off and get outside to rejuvenate our minds. Not only does outdoor recreation improve our health, the Department of Energy estimates that it is possible to save up to \$90 a year when we reduce the use of our computers.<sup>4</sup>

One of the largest determining factors of emotional well being is social life. Electronics have isolated individuals. Direct interpersonal communication has decreased as digital forms of communication have become more common. If we improve our social lives, it is likely that we will decrease our impact on the environment. Most people arrive at activities alone or with one other person. Carpooling is a very effective and social way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

## Conclusion

As our American society has progressed through the industrial and technological ages, we have become comfortable enjoying an abundance of resources. Unfortunately, we have become unaware of the excess that we are consuming. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, many countries in the world consume more energy than they produce.<sup>5</sup> In Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" he explains that the U.S. is responsible for 30.3% of the contributions to global warming – more than all of South America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia combined. We must be careful to use our resources responsibly. The warning is given in the Doctrine and Covenants that "if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."<sup>6</sup>

By making small changes in my own life, I can have a nearly insignificant affect on climate change. That affect can be multiplied and even increase exponentially if I teach others how to change their life to improve their health and environment.

# Footnotes

1. Pollan, Michael. "The Omnivore's Dilemma." New York: Penguin Groups, 2007, pg. 183.
2. D&C 89:10-13
3. Medina, John. "Brain Rules." Seattle: Pear Press, 2008, pg. 10.
4. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/contents.html>
5. <http://www.thedailygreen.com/going-green/tips/energy-efficiency-turn-computer-off>
6. D&C 104:18