

Mistakes are a common occurrence in life. It is impossible to conceive a life without any mistakes. They, in their own right, are a characteristic of the day to day life we live. With regards to the computer, whenever a person makes an error it is easy to reverse it.

It is literally as simple as pressing a single button. In this case, all someone has to do is to select the “undo” button and magically their problem disappears. However, there is no similar solution regarding a person’s health problems.

For there to exist such a capable “undo” button, we would have to be living in an extraordinary science-fiction movie. So extraordinary with advanced technology that contemporary science could only dream of achieving such a feat in its prime.

To make such an achievement even more inconceivable than it already is, one has to understand that some diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, are the products of longstanding mistakes and errors we made while living.

That is the failure in properly taking good care of ourselves. There the “undo” button required to reverse such a longstanding process would need to be extraordinarily powerful. Definitely, it should not be that easy to reverse such a process, right?

Wrong! There happens to be an exceptional answer to this remarkable problem. Unlike what you may think, the solution does not lie in drugs, medicine, a magic pill or some form of surgery performed by an expert doctor. It’s all a case of altering one’s lifestyle. Changing your approach and perspective of the life you live in.

Through changing your point of view and attitude towards exercising, managing stress, work, dieting, and your social relationships with those around you, you can alter your reality and reverse the chronic diseases that are harming so many people in modern society.

**Lifestyle changes leading to preventing and reversing chronic diseases is a growing medical and scientific consensus.**

In the modern day medical world, there is already so much conflicting advice and counseling being given out by different medical practitioners, websites, consultants. To add on to this, the presence of grifters, cons, swindlers, and charlatans in the field makes it even more difficult for a person to trust yet another 'medical miracle'. If you are skeptical, your skepticism would be rightfully justified.

This skepticism could rightfully be forwarded to the lifestyle change medicine program which claims to have the ability to not only reverse but also prevent severe chronic problems through simple lifestyle changes. However, there's some backing offered by scientific evidence and an escalating agreement in the medical world that supports the idea that even these 'simple' lifestyle changes can cause a huge difference in one's health.

Beginning with the evidence, we can find studies in which the authors have based their programs have been published in medical journals reviewed by their contemporaries. An example of this is the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The authors' defense and support of the program's efficiency through evidence they gathered is even more spectacular. Clinical results data have been collected, by them, from tens of thousands of people who reside from various socioeconomic, multicultural, ethnic and age groups.

The results collected by the authors and other scientific investigators show that the program has the ability to end, slow down or even reverse a vast variety of chronic diseases which include; type 2 diabetes (as earlier mentioned), high blood pressure, serious coronary heart disease, obesity, early-stage non-aggressive prostate cancer, depression, anxiety, a specific range of autoimmune conditions and early-stage dementia.

A considerable figure of American hospitals, clinics, physician communities, private and governmental health insurance suppliers, top members of the medical community, for instance, the Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health have all welcomed this program.

For the people who have a keen interest in health and medicine, and supplement this by following the trends and developments in the medical world, the enthusiasm as a result of the recent advancements in the field of medicine comes as no surprise.

The field is in the process of a notable change in its perspective towards chronic related illnesses. The point of view is shifting from utilizing costly, innovative drugs and medicine to the practically free lifestyle changes notion.

However, this is not to eradicate the significance and need of the drugs or the surgeries as they are still important especially when it comes to emergency situations such as a person experiencing a heart attack.

But research and studies from esteemed sources such as the Harvard School of Public Health, the Finnish Diabetes Prevention Study Group, and the Mayo Clinic display rising evidence that lifestyle changes alone can be more effective in treating chronic diseases.

## Slow and steady does not guarantee success when the topic is lifestyle changes.

Even though one may consider that taking slow and steady changes is a good way of going about lifestyle changes, this is not exactly the case. It actually proves to be easier to make a significant and thorough shift in all areas simultaneously. This works better as compared to taking a gradual approach.

For instance, in the case of dieting, if a person decides to cut out sugars such as ice cream or chocolate, or red meat from their diet, and goes about it gradually they are just denying themselves habits usually they would enjoy. This proves to be difficult and this process is not as effective as a person may think. There will be no signs of major improvements in terms of their health.

Making sacrifices and not seeing major improvements can damage one's esteem and may prompt them to quit the whole process altogether. Losing motivation in the process. But what if one encounters a major issue such as a heart attack?

Authors state that after such a scary encounter the patients tend to follow the medical practitioner's, whom they sought help from, advice but only for about a month. After this period, their lifestyle changes usually gradually fade away.

This is due to the fact that fear is such a weak motivator. Sure it may capture a person's attention quite significantly but it proves to be futile as a source of motivation in the long run.

A heart attack is something that is difficult to ignore as it is a prospect of death. However, death in itself is such a scary idea that the mind tends to push it away in order to enjoy life. Since the mind cannot inhabit the thought for a long time, as the fear flies out through the window so does the motivation and all you are left with is the unhealthy lifestyle you once had.

On the contrary, feeling good is a much better alternative as an efficient and sustainable motivator. Once your well-being starts improving as a result of your lifestyle, then using fear as a motivator becomes useless.

This would also encourage you since feeling good healthwise which came as a result of your lifestyle changes, would, in turn, make you feel good and make you continue this glorious cycle.

Therefore, we can see that radical lifestyle changes serve us better than a gradual approach since we will experience major self-motivating and self-improving changes in our health.

To make it even better, we can see these changes taking place within a shorter time period than those that would occur with the gradual change approach. Within a few days to a few weeks, we can witness these changes. These changes range from specific aspects of your health to more general ones such as overall well-being.

As you can see, it is more recommendable to completely dedicate yourself to a radical lifestyle change as opposed to slowly shifting your habits.

**Our modern lifestyles can not only show us the latent causes of chronic illnesses but our problems can also be removed from them.**

There's no simple solution that serves everyone, especially when dealing with a large audience it is practically impossible to find a universal solution. This warning extends to

when handing out lifestyle changes advised as well since there's already a large variety of chronic diseases as well as various ways in which people react to drug-based treatments.

Shockingly, nonetheless, for lifestyle medicine, there's a universal solution since most of the chronic diseases that we try to prevent or reverse have the same underlying mechanisms of biology. These include mechanisms such as; gene expression, inflammation, and oxidative stress.

When a person's body is triggered by a health threat and his/her body responds through the evolutionary designed defense systems, it can be too much of a bad thing. The sweet can turn sour. But how? When the designed defensive measures are temporarily turned on by threats, they are healing. However, once they are recurrently turned on by consistent threats, they lead to chronic illnesses.

A large number of these consistent threats arise from the common aspects of our lives to which our bodies have not yet fully evolved gotten accustomed to from an evolutionary point of view. These include the large amounts of refined carbohydrates, animal proteins, fats and sugar in our diets; our sedentary work and leisure habits; our stressful environments, schedules, and social pressures; and our lack of strong social networks.

For example, if we take inflammation into consideration, this is actually a defensive mechanism that has a number of positive effects. By itself, it's the body's way of healing tissues damaged by bacteria, trauma or toxins. Moreover, acute inflammation, which increases the flow of blood to an infected area, provides the body with positive effects.

However, chronic inflammation leads to a number of problems which normally the body shouldn't suffer. These are the problems we are discussing in this topic and they include blood flow obstructions in your arteries, which can eventually lead to pains in the chest, heart attacks, strokes, and vascular dementia. Diabetes, heart disease, cancer, dementia, and depression are examples of chronic diseases that are a result of the initial condition.

Chronic inflammation is caused by the lifestyle factors discussed earlier. This can be seen as a good thing because we now know we can shift our lifestyle. Therefore, unhealthy diets, lack of exercise, chronic stress and social isolation can be seen as aspects in one's life that

they need to look after and improve. Changes in these lifestyle factors mean one can slow down, reverse or completely halt inflammation.

The mechanisms related to these diseases are quite a number and they form a complex chain of interrelated causes and effects. For instance, one can suffer from emotional stress which leads to depression which leads to inflammation which is another cause of depression.

Again, when viewed from a completely different perspective, this can be a good thing since identifying one source of the problem can help cut one link of the problem and in turn help cut all the links of the chain.

## One of the pillars of long-term health is a plant-based diet.

Diet is a very important aspect of the lifestyle change program. We really are what we eat. And the authors recommend a radical shift especially for those who enjoy eating meat, cheese, and eggs.

In the medical field, the growing agreement is that whole-foods and a plant-based diet is the healthiest way to eat while the meat and dairy diet is typically unhealthy. There is no surprise in where the author's advice lies.

Firstly, let's take a more detailed look at what the authors are recommending. We will go about this as what to eat and what not to eat.

The first component, what to eat, is easy: one's diet should contain mostly plants which contain healthy proteins and carbohydrates. Examples of such are vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, soy products, nuts, and seeds. Better foods are those that are less processed and contain higher nutrients.

Organic options are always better and three grams of omega-3 fatty acids are recommended for its health advantages such as avoiding blood clots.

Simultaneously, one should avoid eating foods with are full of unhealthy carbohydrates, proteins, and oils such as meat, sugar and white flour. Overall consumption of fats should be

reduced especially trans fats and saturated fats which are specifically unhealthy. Nuts and seeds are high in fats but they are also a rich source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Therefore their consumption should be reduced but they are still in the “what to eat” list.

To further support this, research in 2016 published by the Internal Medicine Journal of the American Medical Association combining information from 130,000 grown-ups, found that the intake of animal proteins was related with higher rates of premature deaths from all causes, including cancer, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. On the other hand, under the same circumstances, a plant-based diet showed a lower death rate.

**A plant-based diet gives substances that boost one’s health while on the contrary, meats, dairy and refined carbs hinder this.**

It’s actually an exaggerated simplification claiming that plant-based diets are all healthy and meat, dairy, and refined carbs are unhealthy, even though this is a useful idea to utilize. To be fair, it is not the proteins or carbohydrates that are unhealthy. On the contrary, it is the substances that are present or absent beside them.

The substances that assist in preventing aging, cancer and other chronic diseases are present in the plant-based diets. However, in the meat, dairy and refined carbs, these substances are either absent or there is a presence of substances that introduce harmful materials to the human system.

Consider antioxidants, for instance. As their name suggests, these substances are meant to prevent oxidation from taking place. Oxidative stress is a result of these substances and your body’s cells end up being damaged. Cancer, high blood pressure, heart attacks, impotence, diabetes, blood clots, dementia, and strokes are examples of various health problems resulting from oxidative stress.

Plant-based diets normally contain antioxidants while on the contrary meats generally do not or even worse contain oxidants which damage the body by causing oxidation.

There is an oxidant known as AGE which is an acronym for “advanced glycation end product”. AGE is a molecule that contributes to aging by limiting the production and synthesis of anti-aging proteins called sirtuins. They generally are related to health problems which include dementia, hypertension, anemia, kidney disease, cataracts, and osteoporosis.

As expected, plant-based diets are really low in AGE while meat-based diets which are high in proteins, fats and animal-based products contain large quantities of AGE.

For instance, if one prepares a turkey-burger using vegetable oil, it'll end up containing 7,171 units of AGE. However, if one prepares a soy burger with the same quantity and quality of vegetable oil, it could end up having 30 units of AGE. What a huge difference!

The disadvantages of eating meat do not end there. It also affects other aspects of our health such as the flow of blood, creation, and development of new blood vessels – angiogenesis – and the healthiness of our microbiomes (the populations of microbes that live inside our bodies).

It is quite an obvious choice for a sane human being who cares about his health which diet to choose.

## **Become healthier, happier and smarter by exercising.**

The impact of exercising and its effects on a person's health are quite obvious. It has plenty of advantages however a vast majority might not understand the extent of these benefits. Let's discuss them below.

Firstly, exercising can increase a person's lifespan. An experiment conducted showed that walking for 20 to 30 minutes per day can end up turning this to a 20 to 30 percent chance of increasing your chances of avoiding premature death.

Another research showed that changing from a sedentary lifestyle to a more active one provides people with about three extra years of life. This does not necessarily mean that you have to run hundreds of miles a day but even a five minute run at a speed of about six miles an hour can go a long way in increasing one's lifespan.

An explanation to this is the lengthening of one's telomeres which prevent cell damage and aging. When they are shortened, they are weakened leading to cell aging and death. This, in turn, exposes you to the risk of getting cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and hence premature death.

Secondly, a review of 23 studies in the Journal of Happiness Studies in 2018 showed that exercising can raise one's happiness levels. The research gathered information on 500,000 people from various of age, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. As per the review, just ten minutes of aerobic, stretching or balancing exercises per week was related to higher happiness levels.

We may be accustomed to endorphins which are feel-good hormones released when we're exercising but there's some information that may not be common to all of us. This is an increment in the number of advantageous bacteria in one's gut.

Norepinephrine and serotonin are some of the good feeling neurotransmitters produced by these bacteria. Did you know that 90 percent of your serotonin is produced in your gastrointestinal tract?

Lastly, an increment in one's intelligence can also be a product of exercising. Exercising stimulates neurogenesis, the creation of new neurons, which are the main type of brain cell. This is as per research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and Neurobiology of Learning and Memory.

Furthermore, it assists the brain in making new connections as well as strengthening old ones. This doubly assists the brain to not only learn new things but also to encode new memories.

**Stress can be hazardous but the good thing is that it is avoidable.**

Emotional stress is not only a contributor to psychological torture but it also contributes to negative effects on our physical health. Stress cannot be limited to just yet another biological mechanism. On the contrary, it is a super-mechanism that could trigger oxidative stress,

inflammation, angiogenesis, the shortening of our telomeres and the overall health of our microbiomes.

Furthermore, as if these effects were already not bad enough, it has negative effects on gene expression, cellular metabolism, and apoptosis - the process by which cells die.

Stress also causes depression, and the effects of depression are not only psychological but also physical. For instance, the body's immune system is weakened by stress and depression.

On the other hand, treating stress can help in solving a vast variety of health problems. Stress management exercises include meditation, stretching, deep muscle relaxation, breathing, and guided imagery exercises. When someone is stressed, generally their muscles tense up and their breath becomes fast and shallow.

As discussed earlier, breathing, stretching, meditation and deep muscle relaxation exercises can help you to stop or even reverse these physiological responses to stress and depression.

It is practically impossible to remove all stress causing effects in a person's life, therefore there arises the need for a mechanism to not only deal with but also attempt to prevent future stresses. One cannot do away with all tragic events or bad days that could potentially occur in their life but how you react to these events is completely in your hands. This in turn how you limit the level to how much you will be stressed by a particular situation.

Meditation is a good technique that can assist in differentiating between your kind and the events occurring around you.

By meditating for 30 minutes a day for eight weeks you can reduce the size of your amygdala which is the more emotional part of your brain and prompts you to feel anger and fear.

**A fundamental part of a healthy life is having strong social connections.**

Most of the time we deal with managing our health, we monitor our physical and psychological health. However, what we don't realize is that one of the most basic factors of our overall well-being is social connections. In truth, there aren't many things that can have adverse effects on our health much more than loneliness. The importance of social connections is pretty much very evident when it's missing.

Loneliness affects both our biological mechanisms and our organ system. The results, and not exaggerated, include; inflammation, chronic emotional stress, over-activation of the sympathetic nervous system, cell proliferation, the deactivation of anti-inflammatory genes and the activation of more than 1,000 genes linked to chronic diseases.

To the contrary, healing and boosting of the body's immune system are a result of strong social connections. Creating and deepening already existing social connections are vital in maintaining good health. The advantages of having strong social support are apparent and one of the best ways of getting support is by providing support yourself.

A 2013 research published in the American Journal of Public Health displayed that stress affected different people differently on the basis of how much support they had offered their social circle over the previous year. It raised the likeliness of death for those who had not assisted over the previous year. On the other hand, it had no effect on those who had assisted.

We can conclude that helping a friend or a family member with as little work as possible can end up making a huge difference. So big that it is a matter of life and death. Both society and your body will benefit from this interaction.

## **Undo It!: How Simple Lifestyle Changes Can Reverse Most Chronic Diseases by Dean Ornish, Anne Ornish Book Summary.**

Chronic diseases, as a matter of fact, do share the same latent biological mechanisms which are triggered by our modern lifestyles. The vital way to deal with this is reverse or shift one's

lifestyle. The ways we can do this is by switching to a plant-based diet, exercising, limiting our stress and making our social relationships stronger.

It is very important to smile, laugh and have a good time. It goes a long way than just feeling good. It also improves our overall well-being, tremendously. The feel-good hormones produced such as serotonin and endorphin help increase the flow of blood through our bodies. This is just an example of the many various positive effects of living happy and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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