

A WELLNESS COMMITMENT

by Reverend Margaret Shepherd, MBA

Because you are reading this, I know that you want better health; and you are ready take a more active role in creating it. This means you are already half way there because you are motivated, and because you know you have the power to improve your health. Let's start by replacing the word "health" with "wellness" - a full sense of well-being that goes beyond the absence of pain or illness.



Wellness is a sense of comfort and ease in your body, feelings of vitality, confidence that your physical self supports anything you want to do in life.

You can build the *wellness* you deserve by making a Wellness Commitment.

Your Wellness Commitment is an agreement with yourself to:

1. Change or eliminate whatever is *not* supporting your wellness.
2. Add thoughts, words, and actions that *do* support your wellness.

In this issue you'll learn six ways to help you turn your commitment to wellness into wellness itself. In order to make them work, you'll have to be willing to change, and willing to take action.

Change

Change is an ongoing process, not a single event. We live in a society that doesn't like accepting this, but it doesn't change the truth. You have to keep your foot on the gas, never let up. There is a scientific principle called *hysteresis* – the

tendency of materials to return to original shape when pressure is removed, like a rubber band when it is stretched. This is what happens when you make a new year's resolution and by February you're back to your old ways. Change is a process, and you must grow into it. It may seem strange but you change only to the extent of what you can handle now. You progress only at the speed for which you are ready. When you come into bright sunlight out of a darkened room – it hurts your eyes, disorients you, so you squint and shade your eyes and put on your sunglasses until you are ready for the full impact of the sun. Creating change in your life is no different. Have faith that you can make any changes you want, and know that patience will be part of the process.

Change is usually uncomfortable, which is why we resist it so much. The better life you want is always just outside your “comfort zone” – your familiar habits of thought, word, and deed that are comfortable, even if you know they aren't really good for you anymore. Use your comfort zones to rest in, not to live in.

Action

Nothing changes unless and until you do. If you want wellness, you must realize there is no magic – only a plan and *you* applying yourself to that plan. Make the change. Do not analyze it or have an opinion about it – just do it. Keep focused and keep doing it. This is how change is created. Strike the match as slowly as you need to. It will still ignite. Take two steps-forward-one step backward if you

need to. It's a common dance that still gets you across the floor to the other side of the room.

I am a great believer in affirmations – positive statements about you that you are willing to experience. Examples for you might be: “I am feeling stronger every day.” “All the resources I need to heal are here for me now.” “My positive attitude, my faith, and my strength support my wellness.” Affirmations work *only* when they are supported by action. Action begins to make them true. Action puts you *in* the experience of what you want. Action places you on the ground where you want to stand. If you want to learn a new computer program – you can say affirmations about how easy it is to learn, and how skilled you are becoming; but those affirmations are only powerful if you take action to learn the program.

Five Ways to Wellness

1. Create Systems

A system is a routine method or a set of steps that leads to an accomplishment. Every aspect of the Universe has systems; they are a natural part of all life - creation, procreation, healing, and evolution. In business, systems are even more critical to success than skills and motivation. Systems can add power to your Wellness Commitment. What

systems could you create or improve to support your Wellness Commitment? Perhaps you want a system for keeping away from conversations that make you feel depressed or sap your energy. You create the system of automatically saying “Im sorry, but I can’t talk about that right now.” whenever someone starts such a conversation, and if they persist, you automatically say “I really mean it that I can’t have this conversation right now. I have to ask you to respect that”. Perhaps you want a system to keep you on track with an exercise program. You create the system of scheduling exercise on your weekly calendar. You schedule it at times you know you are most likely to be rested, motivated, and free of potential sabotage. Maybe you have a friend to call when you feel your resolve failing who has agreed to support you (like a 12-step program sponsor). Maybe you write a list of the benefits of exercise to your Wellness Commitment and tape it to your bathroom mirror. Together these steps make up your exercise support system.

2. Immerse Yourself in Motivation.

It stands to reason that the more you have in your daily environment to keep you on track, the easier it is to keep your commitment to yourself. Create a symbol of the change you want – perhaps a photo of you looking vibrantly healthy, or a picture of someone playing golf or enjoying an activity that represents better health to you. Use music – make yourself a tape or CD of

your greatest inspirational and motivational hits. Mine includes “What a feeling” from the movie Flashdance. Read biographies of people who inspire you, read about people who have overcome physical challenges; read to learn skills, attitudes, and information that help your path to better health. See movies that uplift you. If you have a spiritual bent – and I hope you do because I believe that is the path to all healing – read spiritual books. This can mean anything from sacred texts to contemporary writings on the relationship between spiritual practice and health. Go to the theatre, concerts, museums and galleries – but steadfastly apply the criteria of supporting the changes you want.

3. Align Your Life with your Wellness Commitment.

You will succeed when you have congruence of your thoughts, words, and deeds - not one instant before! When you line them up to reflect the same ideal, you ‘re getting somewhere! It’s the difference between believing you have uncontrollable “fat genes”, telling the waiter you’re on a diet, then ordering six desserts. None of it lines up and you won’t get the results you want. Your wellness commitment will get results if you organize your life so that it is congruent with your commitment. What is the structure of your world? How do you spend your free time? What is your environment? What are your commitments to family, community, work, friends, church,

recreation? Evaluate them all ruthlessly. What do you need to add, change or eliminate? Have the courage to re-structure your life to support your commitment.

4. Strengthen Your Support Team.

You need a good support team if you want to have a higher level of well-being. That team probably includes your spouse or partner, family, friends, medical professionals, spiritual counselor, holistic health practitioners, health insurer, exercise trainer, nutritionist, chiropractor, health food stores, your bookshelf, etc. Look at yours, evaluate it, and fill in any gaps. Be willing to replace any members that are less than excellent. This is your health. Be sure everyone on your team supports your Wellness Commitment.

5. Develop Physical Power –

It is possible to be physically strong even if you have a health challenge such as dystonia. Physical strength helps you have more energy, emotional well-being, mental power, and a positive attitude. There are ways to strengthen your body that your health care professionals will support. You can learn more about yoga, better breathing, pilates, mental exercise, chiropractic, self-

hypnosis, massage, aerobic exercise, weight training, nutritional supplements, systematic health care, better food, sufficient hydration. Work with your support team on a plan to strengthen your body, and your Wellness Commitment will reap the results.

6. Create a Celibacy list

Yes, you read it right - celibacy! Create a list of people, places, things, beliefs, habits, and exposures - everything that is *not* furthering your Wellness Commitment. Then *just say no*. It's a binary system. On or off. You create or react. You are positive or negative. Tonic or toxic - creating better health or not. You can choose supportive input or permit random negative input. What excuses are keeping you from your Wellness Commitment? What habits of thought and of action? What negative beliefs? Whom in your life are you allowing to keep you from moving forward? You have two choices - eliminate them from your life *or* eliminate their power over you. Here's a hint. If you've got the courage, start with your television habits.

Remember that your Wellness Commitment has the power of your willingness to change, and to take action. Even if you think you can't do it, or you don't want to, go ahead anyway. Why? Do I need to remind you - miracles happen every day!

As always, I send you my love and support, and encourage you to tell me how you're doing. www.reverendmargaret.com or 800- 264-9690. Get on the list to receive my free weekly inspirational email message, and other free writings. Be well, and keep smiling!

Love, Margaret