

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL HERBALISM

VITALIST PRACTICES

The foundation in all of the Vitalist approach to healing is to raise the expression of the Life Power in an individual. This is the Power that causes plants to burst from the earth, for trees to grow tall, fruit to come forth, and for growth and reproduction on all levels of our being. The Life Power brings forth Spring every year, and it is fully present in every living being, even if it appears to be weak. We see in case after case in a Vitalist teaching clinic, that the Life Power which appears to be dormant, by establishing the proper conditions of diet and life, can burst forth and resurrect a patient to a level they did not know was possible. A complete vitalist approach requires establishing the basic habits of health, and exploration to find the diet best suited to each patient. Herbal medicines can be profoundly useful for this, supporting natural functions such as digestion, rest, activity, and supporting the body's natural attempts to heal. In additions, certain practices and exercises can increase the vitality in profound ways.

The following list of practices is from a seminar offered by the NAIMH, with the instructions given to participants. Try some of these yourself and see what results you might get. Select **at least one** practice for each of **at least six** categories. Don't pick more than 10 things total. Try to do each of the practices each day. Try to persist in each practice for at least seven days. Its OK to drop or add a practice, but try not to do too much hopping around

WATER

Note, if you have a cold constitution or cold extremities, warm them up with warm water before applying cold or cool water. Prefer cool water to water that is shockingly cold. If you are very cold, use selection A only.

- A) Drink 12-16 ounces of water upon first arising in the morning.
- B) First thing in the morning, Run cool water in the bottom of the tub, with the drain open, and walk around in it for 30-50 seconds, until you feel a vital response
- C) First thing in the morning, stand nude in the bathtub and run the tap with cool or cold water. Splash little bits of the water all over you, but not enough to soak you. Rub yourself dry with a rough towel.
- D) First thing in the morning, take a warm shower for 3 minutes, followed by cool water for 30-40 seconds. Repeat the cycle 1-2 times. Rub dry with a rough towel.
- E) Before going to bed at night, take a cool sitz bath for 3 minutes. Rub dry with a rough towel and get under the covers to sleep.

STRETCHING/RELAXING

- A) On arising in the morning, to a thorough set of stretches, according to any system you know.
- B) Do this on coming home after your work/school day
- C) Do this a half hour before bed.
- D) Once a day, either when coming home from work, or just before bed, practice progressive relaxation, where you work up from the feet, and flex and relax each set of muscles.

BREATHING

- A. As part of your morning routine, practice a deep breathing exercise of your choice for 3-5 minutes (examples demonstrated in class).
- B) Repeat this when you come home from work

POSITIVE MENTAL AFFIRMATION

- A. Select a positive mental affirmation that is acceptable to your unconscious reactive mind. Repeat it rhythmically for a while, speaking it mentally with confidence and feeling, during the period as you are waking up from sleep. Repeat it also during the period when you are going to sleep. (Extensive discussion in class)
- B. Select a second affirmation.
- C. Select a third.

PRAYER

- A. If you don't pray regularly, select a set prayer from a Tradition, and sit with it for 3-5 minutes each day, for at least 3 sessions.
- B. Devise a prayer of your own that you like and have feeling for and do the same as above.
- C. Upon arising in the morning, do a prayer of gratitude, thinking of as many things that you can that you are grateful for.
- D. Upon going to bed, make a prayer of forgiveness, a) making the intention to forgive anyone who has harmed you in any way b) asking forgiveness for any harm you may have done and c) asking for healing of the injuries other may have caused you. You can also then close this with a gratitude prayer.

VITALIST MEDITATIONS

- A. Sit in contemplation, relaxed, and meditate on the life flowing through you, your heartbeat, your breathing, your warmth. Then feel the reality that you are surrounded by a Great Life that also runs through all things. Affirm: "The Spirit that Moves in All things Lives in me."
- B. Sit in contemplation, and breathe in, saying "I breathe in Life" and exhaling, say "I relax into Life."
- C. Devise any similar meditation that is appealing to you.
- D. Do this sitting on the earth in a natural setting (counts for two items).

ACTIVITY/EXERCISE

- A. Do 2-5 minutes of burst-type or resistance exercise on arising in the morning, and/or in the evening 1-2 hours after the evening meal
- B. Add 30 minutes of walking to your daily routine (in addition to any other exercise you do)
- C. If you already exercise vigorously for more than 40 minutes, cut down to 30 minutes per session.

EATING/DIGESTION

- A) If you don't already do so, at least one meal per day, eat in silence, peacefully, in a state of vitalist contemplation.
- B) Take a small dose of digestive bitters 20 minutes before meals.
- C) Take a half cup of warm peppermint-chamomile tea twenty minutes before meals
- D) Take a formula of peppermint-chamomile-licorice-fennel twenty minutes before or two hours after meals, as a tea or powder.

REST

- A) Go to bed 30 minutes earlier than you are used to, to increase the hours of sleep before midnight.
- B) Stay in bed 30 minutes longer than you are used to, even if you are awake. Try to doze and dream.
- C) Take an afternoon nap for 20 minutes if possible
- D) If you can't nap, at least lie flat and do the progressive relaxation for 10 minutes in the afternoon or early evening, while breathing deeply.

NATURE

- A. At least 5 times during the week, sit quietly in a nice natural setting for 10-20 minutes. This would be a good time to do your vitalist meditations or breathing exercises. It can be your back yard.
- B. Do the same thing, sitting with your back against any tree in any setting you can find.

North American Institute of Medical Herbalism

Training professional herbalists since 1989

P.O. Box 83097

Portland, OR 97203

Contact us: inquiries@naimh.com

Call us: 720-279-4824