

DEVELOPING A PRACTICAL

THEOLOGY OF ORAL HEALTH

AN INTER-RELIGIOUS STUDY GUIDE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONS



Blessed Day, Beautiful People!

Thank you for your interest in the Developing a Practical Theology of Oral Health study guide!

Black congregations nationwide are increasing their awareness of and commitment to practicing a holistic health and wellness theology that includes oral health! African American people in various congregations — i.e. mosques, churches, and multi-religious groups use the Guide toward more deeply integrating health and wellness practices into congregational life. Comprising this guide are five lessons that are about ninety minutes each. However, the lessons can be adjusted easily to accommodate your study group's needs.



To assist study group leaders in preparing to lead the lessons, group leaders are invited to participate in interreligious leader trainings and easy-to-use tools are provided. Please keep in mind that the group study is intended to be engaging and interactive, so be prepared to help cultivate a sacred and supportive space that encourages everyone to share their perspectives, questions, and experiences..

Course Objectives:

Given contemplation/prayer, regular attendance, participation in class, reflection, and life-application, participants will:

- develop a personal theology of oral health/health based on sacred texts, spirituality, religious traditions, family teachings, and so on;
- develop an awareness of oral health/health that includes social justice realities;
- strengthen practices of holistic wellness (mind, body, and spirit) so as to improve personal oral health/health care while promoting practical integrated care in your family circle and religious setting.

The Developing a Practical Theology of Oral Health study guide includes opening meditations, discussion prompts, group activities, and engaging homework. Our hope is that study group sessions are enlightening and positively transformative. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the African American Religious Communities Consultant, Rev. Dr. Dawn Riley Duval at dawnrduval@gmail.com.

In Peace,

Rev. Dr. Dawn Riley Duval

Throughout this study guide, Black and African American are used interchangeably.

This study guide was created by Rev. Dr. Dawn Riley Duval (dawnrduval@gmail.com) in collaboration with Oral Health Colorado and Oral Health Florida.

For more information about Oral Health Colorado please visit: <http://oralhealthcolorado.org/>.

For more information about Oral Health Florida please visit: <http://oralhealthflorida.org/>.

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STUDY GUIDE OVERVIEW

Welcome to an interreligious study course on health and wellness!

This is a historic moment in history. Converging social justice movements seek to celebrate, respect, and protect all lives so that we all thrive. As people of deep religious convictions, many of us are interested in increasing our knowledge of holistic approaches to improve our quality of life. We want to be good stewards of the sacred, God-given gift of life by living our best life.

To ensure that this study guide is a good fit for various religious settings, study leaders are encouraged to adapt the curriculum and utilize the easy-to-use tools provided so that the study sessions are religiously relevant to each congregational group.

Throughout the study sessions, there are several opportunities for discourse—opportunities to learn from each other, broadening and deepening understanding rather than becoming preoccupied with finding the “right” answer. (Usually there will be several reasonable answers and perspectives.) To ensure an engaging and transformative experience, all participants are invited to cultivate a sacred and supportive study group setting for sharing perspectives, questions, and learnings, and unlearning any misinformation.



This study course is not exhaustive. Oral health/whole-body health is vast and complex. The main goal is to establish a strong foundation on which to continuously build a practical and holistic theology of oral health/whole-body health for personal, family, and congregational health and wellness.

“Every day, think as
you wake up, today I am
fortunate to be alive,
I have a precious
human life, I am not going
to waste it.”

~ DALAI LLAMA



STUDY GUIDE OVERVIEW

Study Leader

Thank you so much for leading this study course on health and wellness! The hope is that this will be a fruitful learning and sharing experience for all, including yourself. The first task as the leader is to help the study group determine the dates, times, and location for the study group sessions. Overall, the responsibilities of the leader are as follows:

- Help cultivate a hospitable, sacred space where all are welcome, and all are encouraged and supported in sharing perspectives.
- Prepare for each session by reviewing all materials before the session, and have a plan for the flow of the session.
- If possible, help ensure that participants receive a meal or snack during each session. Table fellowship is nourishing for participants, especially as they engage in thought-provoking conversations.
- To honor the sacred time together, begin each session with group prayer, meditation, or music. You and the participants are encouraged to take turns leading this opening phase of each session.
- So as to honor time commitments, help keep track of time and assist the study group in focusing on the session topic.
- Help ensure that all study group members have a chance to participate in the conversations.
- Develop a joy of learning as well as positive transformation in beliefs and behaviors.
- Remind the participants to attend the study group through email reminders and notices in congregational bulletins.



Should you need additional resources regarding oral health, please visit:
www.dentaquest.com/oral-health-resources/

Have fun!

“You have to fight for your health and stay on top of it. Our bodies are meant to be healthy.”

~ ANGELA DAVIS



1

OUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

What do we know?

1. Group Introductions

a. Each participant is encouraged to share:

- name and hometown;
- something about the congregation that encourages the soul;
- something each participant aspires to learn during the course.

2. Prayer, Meditation, or Music

a. This is a time to get centered and focused, individually and collectively.

b. Sample Prayer:

*Most High, so merciful and beneficent,
As we open this study about full body health and wellness,
We also open our hearts so that words of truth may fall upon the very fabric of our lives.
May your teachings come alive within us to inspire, to heal, to cleanse, to teach,
To restore, and to guide our hearts and minds.
Spirit, come weave your words of life in us. Amen.*

3. Group Exercise

a. Together, alternating readers, read aloud the Study Guide Overview (page 4).

- This ensures that participants have similar understandings and expectations of the study guide.
- This ensures that participants have an opportunity to ask questions and receive responses.

b. Collectively develop group agreements/rules concerning the flow of the sessions

(for example, one person will speak at a time, assume the best intentions, and so on).

- Record agreements/rules on flip chart paper.
- Place agreements/rules in a visible place in the room for future reference.

4. Guide study group participants to take the pre-program survey. *(Participants should keep survey for future reference.)*

5. Guide the participants in reading and discussing the pre-program survey responses. *(The survey answer sheet can be found on pages 16 and 17.)*

6. Provide a brief overview of the topics to be discussed in the upcoming sessions.

7. Provide instructions for the homework.

- Ask each participant to bring a scripture, poem, quotation, and so on, that exemplifies their perspective concerning oral health/whole-body health. All participants should be prepared to share.
- Instruct each participant to ask two or three loved ones, “Is oral health important to total body health? Why or why not?” All participants should be prepared to share.
- Let’s brush our teeth! Commit to brush your teeth with fluoridated toothpaste after each meal or twice each day for two minutes.

* Sample Study Session Slogan: Groups are encouraged to create their own slogan for each session.

8. Study Group Closing—Sample Prayer:

*Almighty One, may your peace and love
Be with us now and always. So be it.*

PRE-PROGRAM HEALTH SURVEY

1. Does your religion or faith inform your beliefs and behaviors concerning oral health/whole body health?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Please explain your response: _____

2. Our divinely created bodies are comprised of at least 60 percent water. Let's drink more water!

Where do you primarily get your drinking water?

a. Tap/faucet water

d. Water with fruit packs or infused with fruit

b. Bottled water

e. Other _____

c. Filtered water

3. Black American women have a substantially lower incidence rate of oral cancer compared to

a. white women

d. b and c

b. black men

e. all of the above

c. white men

4. During these highly charged times, living a quality black life matters. Let's live our best life!

What are you doing to live your best life? Circle all that apply.

a. Exercising regularly

d. Visiting your doctor for regular check-ups

b. Visiting your dentist twice each year

e. Getting adequate sleep

c. Eating fewer fast foods

f. Other _____

5. More and more people are brushing their teeth regularly. How often do you brush your teeth?

a. After each meal

c. Twice each day

b. Once each day

d. Weekly

6. More and more people are flossing their teeth regularly. How often do you floss your teeth?

a. After each meal

c. Twice each day

b. Once each day

d. Weekly

7. On average, the United States spends 250 percent (two and a half times) as much per person on health care compared to the average of other industrialized countries. However, health outcomes in the United States are among the worst in the industrialized world even as our medical costs continue to escalate. Please explain these realities:

PRE-PROGRAM HEALTH SURVEY

8. In your congregation, what health effort are you involved in? What health effort would you like to see in your congregation?

9. What population of children views 50 percent more advertisements for sugary drinks than other children?

- a. Latino children
- b. Black children
- c. White children
- d. Multiracial children

10. On average, how many more supermarkets are there in predominantly white neighborhoods compared to predominantly black neighborhoods?

- a. Two times as many
- b. Four times as many

11. The hardest material in the human body is:

- a. Enamel
- b. Bone

12. Dentists recommend that we brush and floss our teeth how many times a day?

- a. Once a day
- b. After each meal
- c. Twice a day

13. What is true about fluoride? (Circle all that are true.)

- a. Fluoride is a natural occurring ion of the periodic element, fluorine.
- b. Fluoride is the thirteenth most common element in the earth's crust and has been present as an element since the earth formed.
- c. Fluoride causes cancer.
- d. Fluoride occurs naturally in our water, food, bodies, and environment.
- e. Fluoride is the compound used to fluoridate drinking water to promote oral health.
- f. Water fluoridation is mass medication.
- g. Fluoride is used in toothpaste to prevent tooth decay.
- h. Approximately 75 percent of US residents currently receive optimally fluoridated drinking water.

PRE-PROGRAM HEALTH SURVEY

14. Social justice is often defined as “promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity.”

Do you believe oral health is a social justice issue? Please explain

15. Please describe your most memorable oral health experience:

“Of all forms of inequality,
injustice in health is the
most shocking and the most
inhuman.”

~ MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



OUR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

What do scriptures, religious traditions, family teachings, etc. teach us about healthy living?

1. Group Check-In

- a. Encourage each participant to share a scripture or quotation that reflects how they are feeling today. Include your own contribution.

2. Prayer, Meditation, or Music

3. Group Exercise—Share Sacred Teachings

- a. Ask each participant to share a scripture, poem, quotation, and so on, that exemplifies their perspective about oral health/whole-body health.
- b. Share additional sacred teachings about health.
(Scriptures and teachings can be found in the back of the study guide.)
- c. Encourage participants to note scriptures and other readings that are personally impactful.



4. Leader-Led Discussion

- a. Lead a discussion concerning the question: *“What did your loved ones say when you asked two or three of them the question, ‘Is oral health important to total body health? Why or why not?’”*
- b. Encourage each participant to share.
- c. Ask the same question to each participant: *“Do you believe oral health is important to total body health? Why or why not?”*
- d. Encourage each participant to share.

5. Group Exercise—Develop Personal Theology of Oral Health/Whole-Body Health

- a. Invite participants to develop their own personal theology of oral health/whole-body health based on sacred texts, religious traditions, family teachings, loved ones’ perspectives, personal perspectives, and so on.
 - *“Theology”* is derived from two Greek words, *“theo”* and *“logos.”* *“Theo”* is the Greek word for God and *“logos”* means word, study, or logic.
 - Theology means the study of God.
- b. An example of a personal theology of health: A sacred text about health that is meaningful to me states that we are to have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). Also, a saying that my family holds dear is *“The greatest wealth is health.”* So since my loved ones and I believe that God wants all people to be healthy, I am striving for total body health. This does not only mean the absence of sickness. Total body wellness includes spiritual health, physical health, oral health, psychological health, and emotional health toward living a flourishing life.
- c. Give participants five to ten minutes to develop their personal theology of oral health/whole-body health.
- d. Encourage each participant to share.

6. Provide instructions for the homework.

- a. Ask participants to share with two or three loved ones some of the interesting aspects of this session.
- b. Create group study session slogan.

7. Study Group Closing

SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES RELATING TO BLACK AMERICANS' ORAL HEALTH/HEALTH

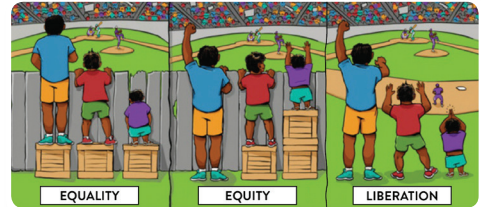
1. Group Check-Ins

- Encourage each participant to share a scripture or quotation that reflects their attitude concerning health today. Include your own contribution.

2. Prayer, Meditation, or Music

3. Group Exercise—Watch or Listen to Videos

- If the group has video and Wi-Fi access, show the video, *"The Death of Deamonte Driver—A Call to Action."*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvSd8aWlO54>
- If the group does not have video and/or Wi-Fi access, you can do the following:
 - Connect a small portable speaker to a phone or tablet that has Wi-Fi access.
 - Use the internet on the phone or tablet to go to YouTube.com.
 - Search for *"The Death of Deamonte Driver—A Call to Action."*
 - Have participants listen to the video.
- After watching/listening to the video, encourage participants to share points in the video that are impactful.
- Play the video, *"A Doctor's Memoir Shows Race Matters in the Hospital Room."*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TJa3_F0Ldw
- After watching/listening to the video, encourage participants to share points in the video that are impactful.



4. Discussion about Social Injustices

- Lead a discussion concerning the following statement: *"Social justice is often understood to be promoting a just society by working to provide all people with access to what is good and calls all people to collectively work together in designing and reforming institutions and systems to be tools for liberation."*¹
- What social justice issues (such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, opportunity, access, classism, environmental racism) were discussed in the videos?
- Ask participants, *"What social justice issues are affecting you and your family?"*
- Black people frequently discuss the realities of social injustices in the United States. However, we rarely have an opportunity to discuss in a sacred space how we feel regarding the social injustices that affect us and our loved ones. Ask, *"How do the social injustices affecting you and your family make you feel?"*
- After participants share concerning their feelings, invite each participant to share one or two ways they can care better for self, given the personal impact of social injustices.

5. Provide instructions for the homework.

- Ask participants to share with two or three loved ones some of the interesting aspects of this session.
- Assign the reading *"Holistic Living—Mind, Body, and Soul"* compilation of articles (on pages 18-23).
- Create group study session slogan.

6. Study Group Closing

¹Jamie Washington and Nancy J. Evans, "Becoming an Ally," in *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals on Campus*, eds. Nancy J. Evans and Vernon A. Wall (Alexandria: American College Personnel Association, 1991), 195.

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Let's Talk About Integrated Health and Wellness

1. Group Check-Ins

- a. Encourage each participant to share a scripture or quotation that reflects their attitude concerning health today. Include your own contribution.
- b. Share any reflections concerning the previous session.

2. Prayer, Meditation, or Music

3. Group Exercise—Summarize the Homework Readings

- a. Ask participants to engage in conversations about the compilation of articles to help provide a brief summary.
- b. Ask the following questions:
 - In the opening reading regarding emotional, physical and spiritual health, what are some points that resonate with you?
 - Concerning the “*Oral Health Realities*” readings, where there any realities that surprised you?
 - In the “*Nine Tips for Holistic Living*” section:
 - Are there recommendations that you will integrate into your life?
 - Are there tips with which you disagree?
 - Are there any recommendations that you want to add?

4. Small Group Discussion—Brainstorming Practices of Holistic Wellness

- a. In small groups of two or three, have each participant answer the following questions:
 - Is leading a healthy life—mind, body, and soul—important to you? Why or why not?
 - What are three things you can do to live a healthy life—mind, body, and soul?
 - What are three things you can do to help your loved ones live a healthy life—mind, body, and soul?
- b. There is no large group sharing at this point. Group sharing will happen during the next session.

5. Provide instructions for the homework.

- a. Ask participants to share with two or three loved ones some of the interesting aspects of this session.
- b. Give each participant two flip-chart sheets of paper and a marker. On one sheet, each participant will write three personal mind, body (including teeth), and soul goals and actions they will engage in toward achieving the three goals. Encourage them to be specific.
- c. On the second sheet, each participant will write three mind, body (including teeth), and soul goals and actions to help loved ones live a healthy life.
- d. Present your own mind, body, and soul goals sheets.
- e. At the next session, all participants will present their mind, body, and soul goals sheets.
- f. Let's brush our teeth and let's make it a family affair! Commit to brush your teeth after each meal or twice each day for two minutes with loved ones in your home.
- g. Create group study session slogan.

6. Study Group Closing

HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE

Self, Family, and Congregation

1. Group Check-Ins

- Encourage each participant to share a scripture or quotation that reflects their attitude concerning health today. Include your own contribution.
- Share any reflections concerning the previous session.

2. Prayer, Meditation, or Music

3. Presentations to the Group—Mind, Body, and Soul Goal Sheets

- Ask each participant to share their mind, body, and soul goals sheets.
- Encourage the group to offer celebration and ask questions for clarification.

4. Leader-Led Discussion

- Invite participants to add points to their own goal sheets after hearing the other presentations.
- Encourage participants to hang the mind, body, and soul goals sheets in a place at home where they will see the sheets each day and others can help hold the participant accountable.
- Ask participants, *“In journeying toward health and wellness, what are one or two things that you want other participants in this study group to do to support you along the way?”*
- Review the study group sessions, expressing your gratitude to everyone for their participation.
- Distribute an evaluation form to each participant. Give them time to fill out the form.
- After collecting the evaluation forms, serve healthy refreshments to celebrate the completion of the study.

“Beloved, I pray that
all may go well with
you and that you
may be in good health, just as
it is well
with your soul.”

~ 3 JOHN 1:2 (NRSV)



EVALUATION

Thank you so much for participating in the Developing a Practical Theology of Oral Health study sessions. We pray that the information shared deepened your knowledge of and commitment to practicing a total body health and wellness theology.

To help improve this study guide, please answer the questions below:

1. What aspect(s) of the study sessions did you appreciate most?

2. What did you learn that you will always remember?

3. Were the homework assignments helpful? Why or why not?

4. What aspects of the study sessions could be improved?

EVALUATION

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. The objectives of the study sessions were clearly defined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The facilitator was knowledgeable about total body health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The information I learned during the study sessions is helping me improve my oral/whole-body health practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I am confident that our congregation will take action toward promoting healthy oral/whole-body health practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The time allotted for the training sessions was sufficient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The meeting room and facilities were adequate and comfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Below, please share other comments or expand on previous responses:

PRE-PROGRAM SURVEY RESPONSES

1. Open answer

2. Open answer:

Drinking tap water with fluoride can prevent 25 percent of cavities throughout life.
<https://ilikemyteeth.org>

3. d. b and c

Black American women have a substantially lower incidence rate of oral and pharyngeal cancers compared to black and white American males. Also, women from all racial/ethnic backgrounds tend to visit the dentist more frequently than men (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/portals/1/Documents/Pubs/160-001-OralHlthBurdenDisparities.pdf>).

4. Open answer

5. Open answer

6. Open answer:

Flossing is an important part of oral hygiene to prevent bacteria from causing cavities and tooth loss.
<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/f/flossing>

7. Open answer:

The United States spends over \$110 billion a year on dental services; approximately 40 percent is paid out of pocket. <http://www.chcf.org/publications/2015/12/data-viz-hcc-national>

8. Open answer

9. b. Black children

Black children see 50 percent more ads for sugary drinks than white children—sugar is a leading cause of cavities.
http://www.sugarydrinkfacts.org/resources/sugarydrinkfacts_report.pdf

10. b. Four times as many

Compared to predominantly white neighborhoods, predominantly black neighborhoods have fewer stores that offer fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables. Black neighborhoods have more fast-food franchises and liquor stores. Also, residents of black neighborhoods are more likely to rely on public transportation, compounding problems of access to grocery stores that provide healthy options.
http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/assets/uploads/file/quiz_answers_only.pdf

11. a. Enamel

Enamel is so hard, it helps teeth last longer than any other part of the body, including the bones. The enamel layer protects the sensitive nerves and blood vessels inside the tooth from bruises and the bacteria that cause cavities. However, the tooth's enamel can be eroded by bacteria that turn the sugars not cleaned away into acids. Brushing and flossing removes the food and acids and helps keep the enamel strong.
<http://www.dentaquest.com/oral-health-resources/oral-health-iq/>

PRE-PROGRAM SURVEY RESPONSES

12. c. Twice a day

Dentists recommend brushing at least twice a day, and after each meal if you can, for two minutes. One minute isn't enough to remove plaque and tartar and brushing for more than two minutes risks bruising gums. Divide your mouth into quarters and spend thirty seconds on each one. Your hygienist can show you the best way to brush. Don't forget to floss too. If you brushed but haven't flossed, the job is only half done! Finish off the job by rinsing for thirty seconds with a mouthwash.

<http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/b/brushing-your-teeth>

13. a, b, d, e, g, h are true

Fluoride is a cost-effective method for eliminating oral health disparities, benefiting everyone despite age, race/ethnicity, social, or economic status. Please drink tap water and learn more about water fluoridation.

<https://www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/>

14. Open answer

15. Open answer



ORAL HEALTH REALITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

The health of our mouths, teeth and gums can affect our quality of life. To help ensure oral health is included in personal total body health planning, and to have full-body health discussions with loved ones, faith community members, and people in the greater community, we need to know oral health realities. Sharing this information assists in raising awareness, hopes, and can help in developing proactive health plans while reducing fears, anxieties, and disproportionate health challenges related to Black people and oral health.



Oral Health and Pregnancy

- **Gingivitis** (tender, swollen gums that bleed easily) is not uncommon in a pregnant women because of high hormone levels of pregnancy. Usually, this condition reverses after the pregnancy. If you still have puffy, bleeding gums after you've delivered your baby, talk to your dental care professional.
- **Ideally, a woman should have her teeth examined and cleaned before she becomes pregnant.** She should take extra care to brush and floss twice a day during pregnancy using fluoride toothpaste and paying special attention to cleaning along and just below the gum line.
- **Dental care is safe for expectant mothers throughout pregnancy.**
- **If you have a dental emergency, let your dentist know that you are pregnant.** He or she will know what precautions to take in solving your dental problem.
- **Most dental treatments are safe throughout pregnancy, including radiographs (x-rays), pain medication and use of local anesthesia.** Tooth whitening and other cosmetic work should be delayed until after the baby is delivered.
- **Research is showing that women who had moderate-to-severe periodontal disease during pregnancy can have an increased risk of premature delivery.** Premature babies have an increased risk of serious medical problems such as cerebral palsy, underdeveloped digestive system and/or lungs, challenges in brain functioning, and vision and hearing problems.
- **Stop smoking during pregnancy.** When you smoke, the toxins from the tobacco get into your bloodstream which is your baby's source of oxygen and nutrients.
- **Recognizing the connection between a healthy mouth and a healthy pregnancy.**
- **Cavity-causing bacteria in your mouth can be passed to your child through saliva.** This can happen through something as harmless as sharing a spoon or passing a pacifier from your mouth to your child's. Be sure to clean anything that's been in your mouth before giving it to your baby. Bring your baby to the dentist for a first check-up by his or her first birthday. At this point, your baby will already be developing teeth. The dentist can determine the risk your child's risk for developing dental disease.

We will provide loving care for mothers and babies by encouraging healthy oral care practices!



Children

- Tooth decay is the most common disease in children. It is more common than asthma.
- Black children are twice as likely to have untreated dental cavities as other children.
- Daily dental care is critical to everyone's good health and wellbeing—children, adults and even babies. For babies, gently clean teeth with a soft cloth or baby toothbrush. Help young children brush to be sure they clean all their teeth, even the ones in back!
- Avoid putting babies and children to bed with a bottle or drink of anything other than water. Check teeth regularly for spots or stains. Let your dentist know if you see any.
- Untreated tooth decay can cause pain and infection that may lead to difficulty eating, speaking, socializing and sleeping, as well as poor overall health.
- More than **51 million school hours** a year are lost due to dental disease.
- A 2011 study in North Carolina found that students with poor dental health were nearly **three times more likely** than their healthy peers to miss school due to dental pain.
- Children who said they had recent tooth pain were four times more likely to have a low grade-point average when compared to children who did not have dental pain.
- Black children see **50% more advertisements** for sugary drinks than children from other ethnic groups—sugar is a leading cause of cavities.

With regular oral health rituals, we will help our children have healthy teeth and gums!



Heart Disease

- Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States.
- Researchers find a strong connection between gum disease and heart disease—people with gum disease are two times more likely to have heart disease. **91% of people with heart disease have gum disease.**
- Black women have a **50% greater risk of heart failure** than women from other ethnic groups.
- Black men have a **70% greater risk of heart failure** than men from other ethnic groups.

With regular oral health rituals, healthy meals, and exercise we will have healthy hearts!



Diabetes

- There are approximately 319 million people in the U.S. —30 million people have diabetes.
- Researchers find a strong connection between gum disease and diabetes—gum disease weakens the body's ability to control blood sugar; controlling blood sugar is key to controlling diabetes.
- People with diabetes have three times the risk of gum disease. Diabetes reduces the body's ability to fight infection, so it's easier for the gums to be infected. Increased glucose levels help bacteria thrive in the mouth.
- Black people are **77% more likely** than people from other ethnic groups to be diagnosed with diabetes.
- **57% of Black people have gum disease.** If you're living with diabetes, brush your teeth gently, twice a day. Floss at least once a day. Check your mouth regularly for any issues including dryness, soreness, white patches or a bad taste. Get regular checkups. And let your dental care provider know of any changes in your condition.

By eating healthy meals, refusing sugary snacks and drinks, and drinking plenty of water we will prevent or control diabetes!



HOLISTIC LIVING—

MIND, BODY AND SOUL

A COMPILATION OF ARTICLES

Living a holistic lifestyle is any lifestyle which makes you feel like a whole person. This includes any way of living or being that allows someone to feel as if they are being nurtured and are given the freedom to grow. For most, this would involve knowing what would make you happy and feel complete. There is no right or wrong response as everyone is different! For most people, there are key areas we all want to improve; these being our health, our relationships, financial and spiritual connections, as well as our ability to create.

Emotional Mind

The mind controls the body. Therefore, the “mind state” is the key to assessing the energetic balance of the heart and soul. The most profound realization is to understand that energy follows thought. Keeping our energy positive and enlightened can help to encourage our wellness, just as negative thought patterns can continue to make us sick. Since the main cause/instigator of illness is stress, understanding how to control your stress levels is imperative. The mind is comprised of your Mental health - encompasses peace of mind, optimism, work that you love doing, the ability to forgive, and a sense of humor. The mind is also your Emotional health- identifying, expressing, experiencing, and accepting all of your feelings.

Physical Body

The body follows the mind. When the body is energetically out of balance, it is important to access what is causing the imbalance and how to remedy it. The body is comprised of your: Physical health - a state of heightened energy and vitality; freedom from pain, disability, and disease; the ability to perform challenging physical feats. The body is also attuned to your Environmental health - living in harmony (neither harming nor being harmed) with and feeling nurtured by your environment; a condition of respect and appreciation for your home, nature, and the earth.

Sacred Spirit

The spirit is our deepest healing resource. To recognize a power that is greater than our own is to recognize our spirituality. When we are spiritual we consciously strive to live with awareness, love, faith and devotion. Our Spirit is comprised of Spiritual health - a condition marked by a diminished sense of fear and the daily experience of unconditional love, joy, gratitude, and a personal relationship with God (or an awareness of an inner source of infinite power and compassion.) Our spirit also comes through Social health - and consists of a strong, positive connection to others in community, family, and intimacy with one or more people.¹



¹“Your Mind Body Spirit Journey,” <http://www.peacefulmind.com/holistic.htm>



9 TIPS FOR HOLISTIC LIVING

MIND, BODY AND SOUL

The health of our mouths, teeth and gums can affect our quality of life. To help ensure oral health is included in personal total body health planning, and to have full-body health discussions with loved ones, faith community members, and people in the greater community, we need to know oral health realities. Sharing this information assists in raising awareness, hopes, and can help in developing proactive health plans while reducing fears, anxieties, and disproportionate health challenges related to Black people and oral health.

1. Take time each day to quiet your mind and meditate.

Meditation is one of the most powerful tools for restoring balance to our mind and body. In meditation, you experience a state of restful awareness in which your body is resting deeply while your mind is awake though quiet. In the silence of awareness, the mind lets go of old patterns of thinking and feeling and learns to heal itself. Meditation has numerous benefits including a decrease in hypertension, heart disease, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and addictive behaviors.

A groundbreaking study by Massachusetts General Hospital found that as little as eight weeks of meditation not only helped people feel calmer but also produced changes in various areas of the brain, including growth in the areas associated with memory, empathy, sense of self, and stress regulation. Meditation brings us home to the peace of present moment awareness and gives us an experience of profound relaxation that dissolves fatigue and long-standing stresses ... the most powerful benefits of meditation come from having a regular, daily practice.

2. Each day eat a healthy diet that includes the six Ayurvedic tastes and a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.

Next to breathing, eating is our most vital bodily function. To create a healthy body and mind, our food must be nourishing. Ideal nutrition comes from consuming a variety of foods that are appropriately prepared and eaten with awareness. A simple way to make sure that you are getting a balanced diet is to include the six tastes (sweet, salty, sour, pungent, bitter, and astringent) in each meal. The typical American diet tends to be dominated by the sweet, sour, and salty tastes (the main flavors of a hamburger). We do need these tastes, but they can lower metabolism especially if eaten in excess.



The pungent, bitter, and astringent tastes, on the other hand, are anti-inflammatory and increase metabolism. These tastes are found in food such as radishes, ginger, mustard, peppers, spinach, mushrooms, tea, lentils lettuce, and so on. In addition to including the six tastes in each meal, focus on eating a variety of fresh and freshly prepared foods, while eliminating or at least limiting items that are canned, frozen, microwaved, or highly processed. These are “dead” foods that weaken health and accelerate aging.²

3. Visit your dentist every six months and practice daily oral care.

Make a habit of brushing your teeth correctly. Brush with fluoride toothpaste for a minimum of two minutes, twice a day. Use a toothbrush with soft bristles, brush each tooth in a small, circular motion and gently clean under the gum line. Brush your teeth after eating sugary or starchy foods. Try to use a straw when drinking sugary or acidic beverages. Replace your toothbrush every two months, after a cold or illness, or when the bristles begin to wear down. And, don't forget to brush your tongue!

Remember to floss daily. Flossing removes the food that gets trapped between your teeth. Flossing helps your gums stay healthy by reducing plaque build-up.

²“7 Tips for Mind Body Balance,” The Chopra Center <http://www.chopra.com/ccl/7-tips-for-mind-body-balance>

9 TIPS FOR HOLISTIC LIVING

Drink plenty of water—especially fluoridated water. Bottled water usually does not contain fluoride so this is not the best option. Foods that contain fluoride are good for you. These include fish, unsweetened tea and green leafy vegetables. Eat fruits—many contain a natural sweetener called Xylitol that helps fight cavities. Watch the amount of sugar that you/your children consume. Children in the United States consume an average of 19 teaspoons of sugar a day! In its first-ever guidelines on added sugar, the American Heart Association called for a daily limit of less than 6 teaspoons for children between ages 2 and 18, and none at all for kids younger than 2 years old.

Visit your dentist every six months for an oral exam and cleaning. This way, if cavities are beginning to form, you and your dentist can catch them early. What are cavities? A cavity in its simplest form is a hole in the tooth. Cavities are formed by acid on your teeth. When you eat sugary or starchy foods, bacteria collects on your teeth. The bacteria produce an acid that damages your tooth enamel, which is the hard outside surface of your teeth. Over time, the acid forms a cavity.

Ask your dentist about fluoride and sealants. Fluoride makes tooth enamel strong and resistant to decay. Your dentist can treat your teeth with fluoride varnish or prescribe fluoride supplements. Children can benefit from having sealants—a plastic material that can be quickly and easily placed onto the chewing surfaces of molar (back) teeth.

4. Move your body: Engage in daily exercise.

Regular exercise offers incredible benefits for your body and mind. Drs. William Evans and Irwin Rosenberg from Tufts University have documented the powerful effect of exercise on many of the biomarkers of aging, including muscle mass, strength, aerobic capacity, bone density, and cholesterol. Not only does exercise keep the body young, but it also keeps the mind vital and promotes emotional wellbeing. In his book *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, Harvard University professor John Ratey, M.D. describes research showing that physical activity sparks biological changes that increase the brain's ability to learn, adapt, and perform other cognitive tasks. Exercise can reverse the detrimental effects of stress and lift depression.

A complete fitness program includes exercises to develop flexibility, cardiovascular conditioning, and strength training. Find an aerobic activity that you enjoy and will be able to do three to four times each week for twenty to thirty minutes. After your body is warmed up, spend five to ten minutes stretching. Be sure to include strength training in your program to systematically exercise the major muscle groups of your body. The key is to start off slowly, find physical activities you like, and do them regularly. You will be surprised how quickly you increase your endurance and enthusiasm for moving and breathing.



5. Visit your primary physician regularly.

The Affordable Care Act requires that certain preventative services be covered by insurance plans without your having to pay a copayment or co-insurance or meet your deductible and differ for children, pregnant women and adults. The types of services included are various health screenings, vaccinations, and in some cases health exams. We encourage everyone to partake of these preventative services to maintain their health. To learn more about the specific preventative services, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts-and-features/fact-sheets/preventive-services-covered-under-aca/index.html>

²⁴"7 Tips for Mind Body Balance," The Chopra Center <http://www.chopra.com/ccl/7-tips-for-mind-body-balance>

9 TIPS FOR HOLISTIC LIVING

Other things to consider when trying to figure out how frequently you should be seeing a doctor.

- Has anything changed since the last time you went to a doctor? Maybe you've always received a clean bill of health and don't really want to miss work to go to the doctor this year. But there is that one symptom that's been bothering you. That pain in your stomach you've been trying to ignore for months, or the mole that's larger than when you first noticed it. If there's something that's been bugging you and just doesn't seem to be getting better, it's time to see your doctor.
- Was there something you should follow up on with the doctor? If your blood pressure was borderline high at the last visit, your doctor may have recommended ways to change your lifestyle to try and bring it to normal. Or maybe you were "pre-diabetic" at your last visit, or your weight was in the overweight category and you were going to try and lose a few pounds. If that's the case, it's good to follow up, even if you haven't met your goals for lifestyle change.
- Has something in your family medical history changed? Knowing your family history is important; it can impact your risk of certain diseases and the suggested screening tests to undergo. For example, if a parent or other first-degree relative was diagnosed with colon cancer, it may change when you should start being screened for the disease.

6. Take time for restful sleep.

Restful sleep is essential key to having health and vital energy. When you're well-rested, you can approach stressful situations more calmly, yet sleep is so often neglected or underemphasized. There is even a tendency for people to boast about how little sleep they can get by on. In reality, over time, inadequate sleep disrupts the body's innate balance, weakens our immune system, contributes to weight gain and depression, and speeds up the aging process. Human beings generally need between six and eight hours of restful sleep each night.

Restful sleep means that you're not using pharmaceuticals or alcohol to get to sleep but that you're drifting off easily once you turn off the light and are sleeping soundly through the night. If you feel energetic and vibrant when you wake up, you had a night of restful sleep. If you feel tired and unenthusiastic, you haven't had restful sleep.

7. Release emotional toxins.

Many of us harbor emotional toxicity in the form of unprocessed anger, hurt or disappointment. This unprocessed residue from the past contributes to toxicity in our body and needs to be eliminated. You can begin by asking yourself, "What am I holding onto from the past that is no longer serving me in the present?" Once you have identified what you want to release, spend some time journaling about how your life will be different when you change. Then you can do a specific releasing ritual that declares to yourself and to the world that you are letting go of whatever it is you've been holding on to ... and then filling the newly created space in your heart with love and self-nurturing behaviors.

8. Cultivate loving relationships.

Research shows that a good social support network has numerous physical and mental health benefits. It can keep you from feeling lonely, isolated or inadequate and if you feel good about yourself, you can deal with stress better. Friends and loved ones can be a good source of advice and suggest new ways of handling problems. But they can also be an excellent distraction from what's bothering you. If your network of friends is small, think about volunteering, joining an outdoor activities group or trying an online meet-up group to make new friends.



9. Enjoy a good belly-laugh at least once a day.

From the scientific perspective, laughter is an elegant mind-body phenomenon that reduces the production of stress hormones and boosts the immune system. Researchers in Japan found that people with rheumatoid arthritis who watched "rakugo" or comic storytelling experienced a significant decrease in their pain and stress hormone levels as well as an increase in two immune-enhancing.

A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The miswak (a twig used for tooth brushing) cleanses and purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord."
(An-Nasa'i and Ibn Khuzaimah; authenticated by Al-Albani)

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Were it not that I might overburden my followers, I would have commanded them to use the miswak before every prayer."
(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Usamah ibn Sharik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: I came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions were sitting as (quiet as) if they had birds on their heads. I saluted and sat down. The desert Arabs then came from here and there. They asked: Messenger of Allah, should we make use of medical treatment? He replied: "Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age."
(Abu Dawud and authenticated by Al-Albani)

Al-Miqdam (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "A human being has not filled any vessel worse than [his] stomach. A few bites are sufficient to support his back. If it is inevitable (i.e. eating a lot because he likes eating), then a third for food, a third for drink, and third for his breath."
(Imam Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi and authenticated by Al-Albani)

"Do not make your stomach a graveyard for animals." Imam Ali (may Allah be pleased with him)



SCRIPTURES ON HEALTH AND HEALING

Oh Mankind there has come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the disease in your hearts—
and for those who believe a guidance and mercy.

Quran 10:57

And we sent the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing
but loss after loss.

Quran 17:82

Fasting is prescribed for you.

Quran 2:183

O Mankind eat of what is lawful and good on earth.

Quran 2:168 (Pork, blood, and alcohol are forbidden—5:3, 2:219)

Eat of the good things we have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess.

Quran 7:31

And from the fruits of date palm and grapes you get wholesome drink and nutrition.

Behold in this is a sign for those who are wise.

Quran 16:67



BIBLE VERSES ON HEALTH AND HEALING

Jeremiah 8:15 (NRSV)

We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there is only terror.

Samuel 25:6 (NIV)

Say to him: “Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!”

Proverbs 3:7, 8 (NRSV)

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.

Proverbs 12:18 (NIV)

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 16:24 (NIV)

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Isaiah 38:16 (NRSV)

O Lord, by these things people live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh, restore me to health and make me live!

Jeremiah 8:15 (NRSV)

We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there is only terror.

Jeremiah 8:22 (NRSV)

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

Jeremiah 33:6 (NIV)

Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.

Matthew 8:13 (NRSV)

Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.

Matthew 8:16 (NRSV)

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick.

Matthew 9:21 (NRSV)

She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”



BIBLE VERSES ON HEALTH AND HEALING

Matthew 9:22 (NIV)

Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.

Matthew 15:30–31 (NRSV)

Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Luke 7:21 (NRSV)

Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

Luke 9:6 (NIV)

So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Luke 9:11 (NIV)

But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

Luke 17:19 (NIV)

Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

John 10:10 (NRSV)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Romans 12:1 (NRSV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 (NRSV)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

3 John 2 (NRSV)

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.