



The General Conference  
Sabbath School &  
Personal Ministries



TO

# HEALTH EVANGELISM

SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH



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# HEALTH EVANGELISM

## *God Blesses Health Ministry Endeavors in Reaching People*

It is the privilege of the Seventh-day Adventist church to share with the whole world a special message to prepare as many people as possible for the Second Coming of Jesus. In many parts of the world the public can be reached quite easily with direct personal Bible studies and evangelistic meetings. However, there are many who do not respond to that approach. The same was true over a hundred years ago in Ellen White's time, and it is even more true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. White stated that "In almost every community there are large numbers who do not listen to the preaching of God's word or attend any religious service. . . . Often the relief of physical needs is the only avenue by which they can be approached."<sup>1</sup>

Here is a way to attract people. If we want to reach the unchurched, we need to provide programs that appeal to people through means other than religious topics. The desire for good health is a personal need or concern of essentially every person. It provides a means of contact and ministry that circumvents prejudice. After community members receive practical guidance in healthful living, and they have been helped to feel better, the door is open, with prejudices broken down and friendships established, to invite them to explore spiritual health issues as well.

God blesses health ministry endeavors. Here are five examples of its effectiveness:

- A mobile health van in a city reached about 14,500 people per year. It was a personal ministry to each individual about personal health concerns. Each was invited to take further material on health including a study of the Bible. Each week 30-50 people requested Bible study materials. This ministry also appealed to small towns, university campuses (300 students in one day), and special events.

- In a resort city about 250 people from the community attended a health screening program in an Adventist church. This was followed up with a monthly “Life and Health Club” that met in the church. Although at first some felt uncomfortable to meet in the church, over 100 people who were not Adventist church members attended monthly for a year.
- In a small community, one church mailed brochures to 4,500 homes around the church to invite people to attend an evangelistic series. Two attended. A few months later a mailing was made to the same group and six times that number attended an eight-week series on health. Several of these attended the church on their own after attending the health classes.
- One church attracted about 100 people to a health series that included both a nutrition and a stop smoking program. They followed this with evangelistic meetings, which resulted in baptisms. One woman being baptized was asked how she got acquainted with the church. She said she read in the newspaper about the community health programs the small Seventh-day Adventist church was doing in that town. She also noticed that the “large church” wasn’t doing anything for the community. She said she never attended any of the health classes, but when the evangelistic meeting was announced she decided she wanted to know more about what that “little Seventh-day Adventist church on the hill” taught that made them so involved in community service. God blesses when we follow His directive to minister to the whole person.
- A husband rarely attended church with his wife, but when she invited him to a health-emphasis weekend, he decided he wanted to hear what the church taught about health and nutrition. He attended every meeting, became very interested, became a vegetarian, started attending church, was converted, joined the church, and God impressed him to do more. He went back to college, took theology, and became a minister in that area.

Yes, a health ministry will reach many people that no other approach will.

## *Biblical Basis for a Health Ministry*

Christian churches should be involved in health ministry because:

- This was Christ's chosen method of ministry, to demonstrate what God is like. He stated that His purpose in coming to earth was "that they might have life . . . and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10, KJV). When He announced His ministry, "recovery of sight to the blind," (both physical and spiritual) was one of the four reasons He gave for coming to earth (Luke 4:16-21).
- Large crowds came to Him and He healed them (Matthew 15:30). "Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching."<sup>2</sup>
- Christ commissioned His disciples to go to the cities and "heal the sick" and preach. Preaching was to include ministering to physical needs. (Luke 9:2; 10:1-10).
- John was concerned that people "be in health" physically as well as spiritually—just as their "soul prospers" (3 John 2, NKJV).
- Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus illustrated how we are to show compassion and meet the physical needs of others. He told those present to do the same (Luke 10:37).
- A health ministry demonstrates the love of God. It is more powerful than just the theological teaching that "God is love." In the parable of the judgment, Jesus illustrates that theology is not enough. Those who are saved are those who demonstrate God's love by feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and clothing those in need (Matthew 25:31-46).

## *The First Angel's Message and Health Ministry*

God created mankind healthy—in His image. The “gospel” of the First Angel’s Message (Revelation 14:6, 7) that is to go to all people on earth just before Christ returns includes their restoration to His image.<sup>3</sup> Christian health workers should never be satisfied with simply helping sick people overcome pain or recover their previous level of health. Their goal should be to help everyone to reach ever higher levels of health, to take steps toward increased development of body, mind, and soul—toward the restoration of God’s image.

David clarifies that God is as interested in people’s physical health as in their spiritual health. In one breath both forgiveness and healing are proclaimed: “Praise the Lord . . . who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit . . .” He is the God “who satisfies your desires with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psalms 103:1-5, NIV). Isaiah says those that wait on God “will renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31, NIV). Peter indicates that the “restoration of all things” has been the theme of the prophets (Acts 3:20). The blessings of “restoration” must be our goal. People must be taught to turn away from Satan’s way of disobeying God’s physical laws which leads to disease and death, and turn to cooperating with God in following those laws which He established for our good, and that lead to life.

The “fear” or reverence of God in verse seven of the First Angel’s Message can be enhanced as people are led to understand more clearly that we are truly “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, KJV). Worshiping Him as Creator of our bodies can be looked upon with delight as people are led to realize that a Master Engineer is positively evident when we show that the eye, for instance, could not possibly have evolved. A brief study of DNA, blood cells, etc., can show clearly that we did not evolve through chance or random evolution. Showing glimpses of God’s design inspires people with awe and respect for their Creator and their bodies, giving them a desire to “give glory to Him” by caring for their health.



In addition to the emphasis in the First Angel's Message concerning giving glory to God, Paul makes it clear that we should eat, drink, and do all to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31). The biblical and scientific evidence of the advantages of a balanced vegetarian diet can be taught. The proper selection and preparation and consumption of food can be included in giving glory to God in the body.

In the same text mentioned above, Paul also makes it clear that we should "drink" to the glory of God. The sufficient use of pure water internally and externally and abstaining from the use of alcohol and other harmful drinks such as tea and coffee can be emphasized.

Our text concludes with doing "all to the glory of God." In addition to eating and drinking, that can include a health emphasis on physical fitness, exercise, fresh air, sunshine, recreation, rest, moderation and self control, and a balanced life style.

A very vital and solemn part of the First Angel's Message for everyone in our time is: "The hour of his judgment is come" (Revelation 14:7, KJV). Each life will be examined. The standard of the judgment is God's Commandments, which include the physical laws He has created within us. If we love God He will empower us to joyfully keep these laws as well, both to honor Him and to keep our minds healthy and clear. This enables Him to communicate His love to us more clearly.

The devil uses many tools to dull the higher brain powers, thus making humans less able to hear the voice of God, discriminate between right and wrong, and make correct decisions. Teaching and adhering to the eight laws of health can counteract his efforts.

A central focus of the First Angel's Message is the call to worship our Creator who made us and "heaven, and earth, and the sea and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7, KJV). What could contribute more to physical and mental health than to experience the rest of the seventh-day Sabbath and enjoy the realization that each of us is very special? We are not accidents of millions of years of unpredictable life and death and the survival of the fittest. We are created in the image of, and sustained by, a loving Father who is God of the universe. Worshipping and

proclaiming God as Creator will counteract Satan's evolutionary theory that separates us from Him and only makes us victims of chance.

Note: There are lessons that could apply to health ministry found in the Second and Third Angels' Messages as well.<sup>4</sup>

We will now look at health ministry from differing perspectives apart from just the biblical basis and the First Angel's Message mentioned above, although there will be some correlation. First, to operate a successful health ministry one should have and incorporate in presentations the following:

## *A Holistic View of Health*

### **Life:**

As mentioned above, Jesus came to give us life in its fullness (John 10:10).

### **Healing:**

The Greek word for heal is *sozo*. It is translated as "heal," "make whole," and "save." Mark 5:25-34 renders the story of the woman who had a bleeding sickness that lingered for 12 years. Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. You have been healed" (NLT). Referring to Jesus' name, the word *sozo* is translated "save." ". . .and you shall call his name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21, NKJV).

"Heal," "make whole," and "save" are all varying meanings of the process of restoring God's original purpose for humanity. This purpose includes abundant life, wholeness and salvation. Loma Linda University has taken this principle as the motto of its school: "To make man whole."

### **Health:**

The World Health Organization defines health to be more than just the absence of disease, but "physical, mental, spiritual, and social well being." *The Oxford Concise Dictionary* defines health as "physical, mental, and spiritual soundness."

The Bible also teaches a holistic view of man, including the physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of life. In

Matthew 22:37 (NIV), Jesus said, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” (This is taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 where “mind” is “might” or “strength.”)

In Luke 2:52 (NLT), where Scripture tells of Jesus’ development, it says, “So Jesus grew both in height and in wisdom, and he was loved by God and by all who knew him.”

God’s instruction to those taking the urgent Three Angels’ Messages to the world to prepare a people for Christ’s return is exemplified in our Example’s method: “The Savior ministered to both the soul and the body. The gospel which He taught was a message of spiritual life and of physical restoration.” <sup>5</sup> On page 115 our work is pointed out: “In His written word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the principles of life. It is our work to obtain knowledge of these principles, and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul.” <sup>6</sup>

### **Mind-body connection:**

For optimum health, all dimensions of life need to be developed and working in harmony. There is a close connection between mind and body. The relationship of the two is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize.

“Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death. . . . Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul.” <sup>7</sup>

Proverbs 17:22, (NKJV) says, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” And in the NLT it says, “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.” C. M. Pentz declares, “To be healthy, one must have a happy mind.”

## **Social health:**

Many studies show that social ties are vital to health. Here are six examples:

- In the Alameda County (California) study of over 6,900 people, researchers found that people who lacked social ties, such as frequent contact with family and friends, marriage, church attendance, or being members of a social group, were 1.9 to 3.1 (approximately two to three) times more likely to die during the nine year follow-up study than those with strong social support systems. They were more likely to die from heart disease, stroke, cancer, respiratory diseases, or digestive system diseases. In this study, a simple question was the second best predictor of how long people lived. The question was, "How happy are you? Very happy, pretty happy, not too happy?"
- The Tecumseh (Michigan) study followed 3,000 men and women for up to 12 years. Men reporting higher levels of social relationships and activities had significantly lower mortality rates. When these social ties were broken disease rates rose two to three times in the next 10-12 years.
- In a Swedish study 17,000 healthy men and women were followed for six years. Those who were the most lonely and isolated had almost four times the risk of dying prematurely.
- Duke University studied 1,400 men and women who had coronary angiography and at least one coronary artery severely blocked. Men and women who were unmarried and who did not have a close confidant were over three times more likely to die after five years, compared to those who were married or who had a close confidant. Those who were married had the lowest mortality rate.
- Dr. L. F. Berkman and her colleagues studied the survival rate of men and women hospitalized for a heart attack. Men and women who had little or no emotional support had three times as many deaths as those with close family and friends who provided good social support. Of those who survived, after six months 53%

of those with no emotional support died, compared with 36% for those with one person to provide emotional support, and only 23% of those with two or more people who provided social support.

- University of Texas Medical School studied the relationship of social support and religion to mortality in men and women undergoing heart surgery. They asked two questions:
  - (1) Do you participate regularly in organized social groups such as clubs, church, etc.?
  - (2) Do you draw strength and comfort from your religious or spiritual faith?

They found that those who lacked regular participation in organized social groups were four times more likely to die six months after surgery. Those who indicated they did not draw strength and comfort from spiritual faith were three times more likely to die six months after surgery.

In this study religion had an independent effect apart from social interaction. Those who had neither group interaction nor drew strength or comfort from their religion were seven times more likely to die six months after surgery.

We conclude: Love and intimacy have a powerful affect on our health and survival. Love promotes survival. Social support and interaction have as powerful an influence on health and longevity as not smoking, not exercising, and not eating healthfully.

### **Abundant life:**

The message of good health should encompass all aspects of health—mental, social, physical, and spiritual life in its fullness. This includes:

- Creating healthy communities of friends and family
- Learning to communicate in ways that enhance intimacy with loved ones
- Developing empathy and love for ourselves and others

- Developing a spiritual connection with God that brings comfort, strength, and joy in life

To broaden this perspective, let's consider "total health."

## *Total Health*

Total health comes about by developing and balancing the physical, mental, social, and spiritual components within your life. (When teaching this concept, use a graphic for the following four. Spiritual health should overlay and touch the other three which form a triangle). The indicators of the four health components are:

- Physical health = physically fit; high energy reserves; well nourished; healthy weight; free of disease; and high resistance to disease.
- Mental health = happy, positive outlook; copes well with life; motivated to achieve; good self image; interested in life; adaptable to change; shares feelings; gives and receives love; and intellectual fulfillment.
- Social health = good relationships; communicates well; gets along with others; values community; supportive to family and friends; and handles conflicts and problems well.
- Spiritual health = inner peace; meaning in life; values-directed life; mentors others; responsive to a Supreme Being; and inner strength.

Each of the well-being components has a profound effect on the others. They are integrated and cannot be separated, except conceptually to better understand how to achieve health and wholeness. For example:

- Physical activity contributes to a healthy weight, good self-image, high resistance to disease, and increased life span with greater opportunity to mentor and encourage others in life.
- Depressed, unhappy people lose their appetite, have no energy to enjoy life, are more susceptible to disease

and have a shorter life span. They become dispirited and lose hope.

- Poor relationships can lead to hostility, isolation, loneliness, distress, decreased immunity, and greater risk of disease. On the other hand, good social interaction and support lengthens life.
- Persons with spiritual depth have direction, purpose in life, and an inner drive and motivation to take good care of their health. Research shows that they handle stress and crisis better, and live longer than those without commitment to spiritual development.
- Spirituality is the unifying force that brings together the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of life. Spirituality is the foundation that supports who and what one is.
- Paying total attention to all components of well being for optimum lifelong total health is vital.

## *Ten Steps to Optimum Health*

Health studies have identified the following major predictors of health and longevity. Incorporate these principles into your life for optimum health and then share them with others.

### **1. Be physically active.**

Activity builds energy reserves, enhancing both physical and mental health. It also protects against heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and even cancer. The new guideline for fitness is quite simple: Accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderately-intensive physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. If you need to break up your time into two 15-minute or even 10-minute sessions in a day, that's fine. Choose activities you enjoy, such as walking, biking, hiking, swimming, golfing, or gardening. Invite a friend or your spouse to join you. Set goals and log your daily activity. Remember, it's regularity that counts.

### **2. Get adequate rest.**

It is during sleep that the body's physical and mental reserves are replenished. If you frequently feel grouchy, tired, and

unmotivated, maybe you need more sleep. Research shows that people who get at least 7-8 hours of sleep daily live longer and enjoy better health than those who don't. Most people feel and function at their peak when they get 8 to 8 ½ hours.

### **3. Eat a healthy diet.**

The following eating practices are proven contributors to good health:

- Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Eat at least 3 servings of whole grain breads and cereals daily.
- Eat a good breakfast daily.
- Limit animal fats, solid fats, and fried foods. Choose healthier fats: non-hydrogenated vegetable oils, avocados, nuts, olives, seeds, and nut butters.
- Limit refined and sugary food: soft drinks, snacks, desserts, candy, etc.
- Eat salt and salty foods moderately.
- Drink 6-8+ glasses of water daily.

In summary, eat a wide variety of unrefined foods, primarily from plant sources, in sufficient amounts to maintain a healthy weight.

### **4. Maintain a healthy weight.**

- Avoid fad diets. Develop healthy habits you can live with for a lifetime.
- If you need to lose weight, choose a realistic goal—1-2 pounds per week.
- Limit high calorie foods such as desserts, fatty meats, cheese, snack foods, pop, alcohol, margarine, etc.
- Eat high fiber foods—vegetables, fresh fruits, legumes, and whole grains. Research shows these foods help prevent weight gain.
- Maintain an active lifestyle—30-60 minutes of moderate activity daily.



## **5. Stay in control.**

Being dependant on smoking, alcohol, or drugs is the number one cause of preventable deaths. Determine and seek help to eliminate these from your lifestyle.

## **6. Get regular health exams.**

- Blood pressure—keep below 135/85.
- Cholesterol level—keep below 200.
- Blood glucose level—less than 110.
- Weight: BMI—25, Waist—35 inches for women, or 40 inches for men.
- Colorectal cancer checks yearly after age 50 (sooner if high risk).
- Women: PAP tests every 1-3 years, mammograms every 1-2 years after 50, or as doctor directs.
- Keep immunizations (pneumonia, flu, tetanus) up to date.

## **7. Environment**

Pleasant, clean, sanitary surroundings, pure water, fresh air, and adequate sunlight are essential for good health. Support a healthy environment in your community. Protect against over-exposure to the sun outdoors by wearing protective clothing, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen—especially from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## **8. Community**

People with strong social connections cope better with life, are happier, and live longer. Take time to nurture relationships in your life. Build friendships. Participate in church programs, community groups, and clubs. Volunteer your time and talent to help worthwhile projects. Friendship and support from others is an important ingredient for health and healing.

## **9. Mental outlook**

A cheerful, optimistic outlook promotes good health. Balance stress with relaxation, recreation, and adequate rest. Do fun things daily. Laugh. Take walks. Listen to good music. Visit with friends. If

you are very unhappy with life, or problems look insurmountable, get help from a pastor, counselor, doctor, or a trusted friend.

## **10. Spiritual health**

Spend some quiet time each day to contemplate and find direction for your life. It might be a secluded place in nature, or a quiet study. You may read the writings of spiritual leaders, or simply meditate or pray. Make yourself open for God or your understanding of a higher power, to provide strength, direction, and peace to your life. Find a faith community that exhibits real love and concern for others and that brings hope, love, comfort, and inner peace to your life.

Finally, good health is not an accident. Plan for good health!

## *Teaching Health Principles*

### **Scripture:**

“Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster, between life and death. . . . Oh, that you would choose life. . . !” (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19, NLT).

“Teach me how to live, O LORD” (Psalms 27:11, NLT).

### **Prevention:**

“It is far better to prevent disease than to know how to treat it when contracted. It is the duty [privilege] of every person . . . to inform himself in regard to the laws of life.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Health and spirituality:**

“The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. . . . Whatever injures the health, not only lessens physical vigor, but tends to weaken the mental and moral powers.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Grace and growth:**

“Apart from divine power, no genuine reform can be affected.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Provide a choice:**

In spiritual matters, Jesus saves none against their choice. Peter said, “Show proper respect to everyone” (1 Peter 2:17, NIV). It should be the same with health. Invite people to good health.

Make it attractive, appealing, and desirable. But never teach using coercion, guilt, or pressure. If it is to be a personal value, people must choose freely. People tend to be more receptive if they feel accepted and not judged.

### **Teach personal responsibility:**

Who is responsible for your health? You are. Healthy living is a personal responsibility. Teach people to think and make decisions for themselves and to not be dependent upon someone else.

“God will not work in a miraculous manner to preserve the health of persons who are taking a sure course to make themselves sick by their careless inattention to the laws of health.” <sup>11</sup>

Let people decide what they want to change, then help them make those changes successfully. The educator’s role is not to tell them what to do but to help them reach their own goals.

### **Principles:**

Teach from principles, not rules.

“Instead of looking upon an observance of the laws of health as a matter of sacrifice or self denial, they will regard it as it really is, an inestimable blessing.” <sup>12</sup>

### **Priorities:**

Look at the big picture of health. Don’t major in minors.

Major health issues (as stated above):

- Social and emotional support
- Smoking
- Drugs and alcohol
- Physical activity
- Healthy spiritual views and a relationship with God that provides comfort, support, direction, motivation, and meaning in life
- Good eating habits
  - Eat primarily a plant-based diet

- Choose primarily unrefined foods (e.g. whole grains, unprocessed)
- Choose healthy fats
- Eat regular meals (eat breakfast, don't skip meals) in a pleasant setting
- Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily
- Drink 6+ glasses of water daily
- A healthy weight
- Adequate rest, relaxation, and recreation (stay balanced)
- Health and wellness checkups, including preventive tests for your age group

### **Be positive:**

Emphasize positive changes more than negative changes.

Example: A person may not be willing to stop smoking, but might be willing to start a walking program. Walking and talking with other non-smokers, or those who have gained the victory, and experiencing shortness of breath may convince him/her that life would be better without cigarettes.

"It is of little use to try to reform others by attacking what we may regard as their wrong habits. Such efforts often results in more harm than good . . . Christ presented something better." <sup>13</sup>

### **Gradual change:**

Start where people are and encourage them to make changes gradually—one step at a time. Example: A mill worker who was 100 pounds overweight and wanted to change was first only asked to add one serving of fruit per day to his diet.

"To reach people, wherever they are, and whatever their position or condition, and to help them in every way possible—this is true ministry." <sup>14</sup>

### **Timing:**

Use James Prochaska's six stages of change to bring the right message at the right time. Here they are in brief: 1. Not really

ready, 2. Getting serious, 3. Have a plan, 4. Take action, 5. Keep at it, 6. Done.

Remember to combine these tactfully with dependence on the Lord. We will return to these in detail below under the title “The Health Ministry Cycle.”

### **Teach in love:**

A loving approach is much more effective than a condemning approach. Don't do as the pastor's wife did when asked to give the blessing at a potluck of ministers from many denominations. She refused because there was pork on the table.

### **Teach by example:**

The strongest sermon you will ever preach is the life you live. Current research is documenting the positive effect of role models. Maintain an appropriate weight, eat nutritious food, handle stress adequately, etc. In other words, practice what you preach.

### **People first:**

Remember, people are more important than rules. Social activity may be more important than snacking between meals.

### **Accountability:**

People are more likely to make changes if they are accountable to someone than if they are left entirely on their own. Example: At a one-on-one counseling session help the participant set goals and develop a plan of action. Then, set a future date when you will get together again to check on progress. You may need to set new goals and evaluate with the person regularly.

### **Goals:**

Help participants set their own goals. Behavior change needs to be something they want to do. Help them establish realistic goals, and divide tasks into meaningful parts that will not overwhelm them. For example: “Here is a list of identified needs. Where would you like to start?”

## **Incentives:**

Reinforce good behavior! Plan incentives for reaching benchmarks. Recognize and praise even the smallest positive response.

## ***The Health Ministry Cycle***

Here again are Prochaska's six stages of change in detail with brief ideas or strategies for meeting each stage:

### **1. You are not really ready to change.**

#### **"Precontemplation." (Most people are here.)**

You're simply not aware of the need.

- Or you're denying the need. You react defensively when somebody brings up the subject. ("I'm doing enough exercise as it is; besides, the benefits of exercise are overrated.")
- Or you feel overwhelmed by what it would take to make a change; so you feel change is not a realistic option.
- Or you think you want to change, but in fact, it's only a "should" that you don't really believe in deep down.

#### ***What it takes to move you from this stage:***

It will probably take a rude awakening to jolt you out of your complacency or fear of change.

*Strategies:* Self assessments; awareness campaigns; show needs/benefits; use statistics—"Did you know. . . ?"

### **2. You are getting serious. "Contemplation."**

- You're no longer sidestepping the issue. You've become conscious of the problem.
- You're aware that what you do (or don't do) has consequences.
- You have the intention to do something about it, not right now, but perhaps within the next 6 months.
- This is a sort of incubation stage, a transition toward doing something. You internally become more open to the possibility of change.

### ***What it takes to move you from this stage:***

Paying more attention to the consequences of not making the change will motivate you to start doing something about it.

*Strategies:* Show benefits; talk to people who have changed; list benefits/costs.

### **3. You have a plan. “Preparation.”**

At this point, you’re getting ready to do something within the next few weeks. As you’re getting closer to actually doing something, you’re paying more attention to the specifics. It’s not just “exercising,” it’s what kind of exercise, where, how often....You’re also more aware of the “cost” of making this change: it entails some sacrifices, a loss of something (even if it’s just losing some free, unscheduled time). As you become more aware of this loss, there’s an internal negotiation going on about what you’re willing to let go and what you’re not.

A plan takes shape, taking into consideration your goals as well as the realities of your life.

### ***What it takes to move you from this stage:***

Understanding that your plan need not be perfect, and setting a date to actually start acting on it.

*Strategies:* Talk to other people who have made the change successfully. Read, research, find out what works best. Look for classes or support groups. (As the health minister, help provide them.) Write out an objective and action plan. Set rewards for reaching the goal. Select support persons.

### **4. Do it! “Take action.”**

Now you’re actually doing what you said you would. As you’re doing it, you’re probably assailed by all kinds of negative thoughts, fears, and doubts. They are part of the process: a normal resistance to change. What did you expect? If it was easy, you’d have done it before. The more you’re aware of this, the more you can go on despite the resistance. The more specific your plan, the easier it is to follow. This is a good time to adjust your plan to be more specific (e.g. “exercising on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at lunch,” as opposed to “3 times a week”).

### ***What it takes to make this stage work:***

Treat your goals as a priority, so you don't get sidetracked by all the excuses that will inevitably come your way. Plan rewards for yourself as you go along. You're not celebrating the big success prematurely; you're just acknowledging success in each little step.

*Strategies:* Get support from family and friends. Participate with others making a similar change. Record progress in a self-monitoring system. Review benefits, reasons why you want to change. Tell people you are changing and why.

## **5. You keep working at it. "Maintenance."**

You've been at it for a while—several months, half a year, more. . . . You feel good about what you've done. The temptation is to believe these new habits are so ingrained that you no longer have to pay attention to what you do.

This is when a relapse happens. You had stopped smoking, or stopped drinking, and you think you can handle having a cigarette or a drink in a social situation. You were eating healthy, and you think a donut in times of stress is OK once in a while.

An important part of making lasting changes is not taking these changes for granted. Keep working at it.

### ***What it takes to make this stage work:***

Changes are more likely to last when your whole lifestyle supports them (e.g. spending time with people who smoke or drink a lot is not going to make it easy for you to stop). Being aware that the temptation to relapse is normal will help you better deal with relapses. When you do have a relapse, remember that it's not an "all or nothing" proposition. You have not failed—you have just had one relapse. Keep working at it.

*Strategies:* Continue self monitoring. Enlist ongoing support from friends and family. Read, study, and confirm your decision to maintain these goals. Review benefits. Do periodic tests to make sure you are progressing and doing well. Help others make this change, and be a supporter and encourager to them. Look at reasons other people quit making progress and encounter road blocks. Think of solutions proactively.



## **6. You've done it. "Termination."**

Your new habits have now become second nature. You no longer feel tempted to go back to your old ways, under any circumstances. Congratulations, you've done it!

Is this a realistic goal? Maybe, in some cases. In many cases, however, the power of habits is such that you may always be fighting against temptation. It's human nature. Success does not necessarily mean having a personality transplant. What counts is that you are able to maintain your good habits and that you're feeling good about your ability to do so.

### ***What it takes to make this stage work:***

Don't be obsessed about getting "there." Just keep working at it. Change is a creative process.

Of course, incorporate God and His changing power in all of this. Help people to praise and thank Him for the change He brings about when they are willing to trust and depend on Him.

### ***A little more on "Relapse:"***

Sometimes things happen and you revert back to your old ways. Here's a common example: 1. You get emotionally upset and revert to smoking. 2. You gain weight and decide to go back to smoking. 3. You go on a trip, get off the routine, and fall back into old ways.

*Strategies:* Don't become discouraged. Most people try multiple times before becoming successful permanently. Review reasons why you want to make the change. At the right time, develop a new plan of action, one that addresses the reason why you stopped last time, and then try again. Get help from a health professional. Join a support group. Have someone to counsel with and be responsible to. Never give up. You may lose a battle but that doesn't mean you've lost the war.

### **An agent of change:**

As a health minister, God has called you to be an active agent of change in people's lives. Your role is not to point out people's problems and hope they change on their own. Instead, your job is to help each individual progress to the next stage of change from a specific unhealthy behavior.

A complete, fully effective health ministry in a local church will regularly go through the cycle of: Awareness, assessment, education, change, and follow-up. You will include activities targeting people in each stage of change to help move them from one stage to the next.

### **Suggested ministry activities for each of the six parts in the health ministry cycle:**

- Awareness (raise awareness of a particular health issue): Ideas include a health newsletter; church bulletin insert on health; health posters/flyers; health segment on news shows.
- Assessment (provide an opportunity for people to assess their personal health): For example, provide computerized health assessment at a county fair or mall; a self-scoring assessment in a magazine; assessment handouts.
- Education (offer a formal educational opportunity): Regularly offer information through events such as an evening, eight-week class on general health, a three-night class on stress management, a lunch-time lecture on heart health, or a weekend seminar on fitness.
- Change (an opportunity for a formal public commitment to change): Activities could be throwing cigarettes in the trash at a Stop Smoking Clinic; signing a pledge card to stop drinking; getting a walking “buddy;” support groups; logging progress; reporting on progress to a support group; experimenting with new health practices (eating, activities, relaxation techniques, spiritual support, etc.).
- Follow-through (holding your participants accountable to the changes they’ve made): Options include monthly health meetings; telephone or e-mail follow-up; informal inquiries into progress; getting successful individuals involved in helping others; reinforcement through church activities, newsletters, web sites, potlucks, small groups; wellness and fitness challenges and recognition for achieving goals; commit to lifelong health; joining a lifelong health foundation.

## *Planning Your Health Ministry*

There are seven principles to keep in mind while you are planning your health ministry:

1. Plan the process. Think through how you will plan. What is your timeline? What key groups in your church and local community want to give input? What resistance do you expect, and how will you overcome it?
2. Plan with other people. Don't try to do it all alone. Involve your pastor, key members of the church board, members of the community you intend to reach, and the volunteers who will work with you.
3. Plan for data. Consider analyzing data on diseases, disorders, and other vital statistics from your local community. Gather data on existing programs in the community to avoid unneeded duplication of services and to facilitate joint programming. Local hospitals, health departments, social and marketing research organizations, and the National Center for Health Statistics (where available) are good sources of data. Most libraries have data. Business networks, such as the local chamber of commerce, may have information on available services.
4. Plan for permanence. An effective health ministry will be ongoing. Most of the problems you intend to address are never ultimately solved. If you are planning a stress seminar, you need to plan to do several over the course of a year. Learn from each experience, and improve each succeeding one.
5. Plan for priorities. Spend time developing a program that meets the highest need and has the greatest opportunity to make an impact. On the other hand, even though a great need may be evident, the necessary resources or support may not be present to successfully address that need. You may not have the support to run a successful program addressing teenage pregnancies in your community, but you may be able to offer a class on healthy pregnancies.

6. Plan for measureable outcomes in acceptable formats. How many people do you want to successfully move through your program? How does that impact the broader community?
7. Plan for evaluation. Evaluation should be built into the program design. Evaluation should also be a continuous process. Are your goals appropriate? Are you measuring the right parameters? Could you be more efficient with your resources?

## *Getting the Church to Buy In*

- Build your team with:
  - Church partners, such as community services; health ministries; women's and men's ministries; health professionals within the church (physicians, nurses, physical therapists, dentists, dietitians, social workers); pastor; church school; anyone interested in helping.
  - Community partners, such as social service agencies; local health department; local hospital; health professionals; heart associations; cancer society; Red Cross, fitness centers.
- Do your homework:
  - Do a "SWOT" analysis by analyzing the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats.
  - Obtain a list of current community needs and a demographic assessment.
  - Make appointments with your local church pastor to discuss ideas.
  - Develop a strategic plan based on the results of the "SWOT" analysis.
  - Obtain a network of supporters through personal contacts and through church and/or bulletin announcements and meet in a planning session.

- Keep the health cycle concept in mind when planning.
- Set goals and objectives and work through the health program planning sheet (below):
- Health program planning sheet:
  1. Intention: What do you intend to do or want to happen?
  2. Target: With whom, for whom, to whom, and with what permission?
  3. Planning: Who will plan the ways and means to achieve the intention?
  4. Timing: By when shall the plan be developed?
  5. Assigning: Who shall implement the chosen ways and means for achieving the intention, and with what authority and resources?
  6. Accomplishment: By when shall the work be accomplished which the objective envisions?
  7. Evaluation: Who shall say when the work is done and what has achieved?
- Sample budget:
 

Income: Church appropriation; sale of participant materials; special donations; value-based tuition/registration.

Expenses: Advertising (newspaper, radio, TV, brochures, window posters, etc.); meeting room; participant materials; training manuals and CDs; photocopies.

## *Promoting Your Health Program*

### **Publicity doesn't just happen; it requires careful planning.**

- Narrow your target audience. There is no such thing as "the general public." Who exactly do you mean?

- People who live in your city or county; homeowners within 1/4<sup>th</sup> mile of the church; all residents within three doors of any church member; professionals who work within two miles of the church; parents with young children; single and working mothers; young adults; low income families?
- Determine where your target audience gets its news and information.
  - City or community newspaper; radio stations; TV; web sites, etc. The most effective promotion is endorsement or positive reviews from a trusted source. Try to get stories placed in local news media.
  - Determine other effective methods of communicating with your target audience.
- Posters (in supermarkets, community center, schools); flyers; mailings; word of mouth; billboards; banner in front of church.
- Determine the specific messages that are needed for your target group.
  - Create awareness; raise interest; call for action (“Come to our seminar” or “Call now to register”); must persuade the target audience that:
    1. The condition will likely affect them
    2. It will have serious consequences when it does
    3. The recommended action will reduce their susceptibility or severity of the consequences.
- Get out of the church building and into the community. Do a blood pressure screening or health assessment at: shopping malls; a county fair; a city festival; local schools; a community center; other churches.

- Other points:
  - What we are speaks louder than what we say. Publicity will not produce lasting results unless the program being publicized is a quality one. Good public relations results from good performance publicly acknowledged and appreciated.
  - It is best to have one person handle all publicity. Ideally, this person should be involved in planning from the start, with no other responsibility but publicity.
  - A thoroughly prepared publicity timetable should be followed carefully.

## *Follow-Up Strategies for Lifelong Health*

Maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout one's lifetime. Personal actions for yourself and for sharing with others:

- Stress a commitment to lifelong health. It may have taken you years to get out of shape. Don't expect to reach all your health goals in just a few weeks or months.
- Always have goals to work toward. You only lose when you give up and quit trying.
- Continue self-monitoring. Keep a health journal, have goals, record progress toward these goals.
- Enlist ongoing support from friends, family, and your church family.
- Continue to read, study, and explore new ways to maintain good health.
- Review the benefits you gain from healthy living. Keep in mind how your healthy lifestyle benefits your life goals.
- Complete periodic self-tests to see how you are progressing toward your goals (blood pressure check, cholesterol level, weight and BMI level, health practices check, eating habits check, etc.).

- Get involved in helping others adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Be a supporter and encourager of others.
- Look at the reasons why many other people quit or fail to maintain their health goals. Anticipate roadblocks or hazards to your own goals and think of solutions proactively. For example, ask, “How will I maintain my exercise or good eating habits on this upcoming trip?”
- Join a support group or health/fitness club in your church or elsewhere. Meet regularly to support and encourage one another.
- Look for health activities and events in your community in which you can participate, such as: walking/running events, biking events, health classes, screening programs, etc.

Actions churches can take to encourage good health in its members and community:

- Hold health programs periodically throughout the year (monthly, quarterly or yearly).
- Print a monthly “Health Events Available in Your Community” flyer.
- Offer a wellness newsletter or Web site on health that people can read to help them stay motivated and educated. Regularly enclose a health insert in church bulletins to keep people focused on health.
- Sponsor health screening events or health fairs.
- Sponsor health challenges and programs periodically throughout the year. Incorporate health values into regular church activities (potlucks, socials, sermons, and newsletters).

## *Remember the Spiritual Emphasis*

In all our efforts we want to lead people to Jesus and to understand and respond to the advent message for the most important health—eternal health. It is easy to get so preoccupied just with physical health that we fail to take advantage of every



opportunity to share Jesus. At all events always have Bible study lessons or enrollment cards and other spiritual literature displayed, and offer it personally as appropriate. Don't force it but make sure people are invited and welcomed to attend church and other Bible-based seminars. Everyone should at least be presented with a brochure that lists all our planned church activities. Those should include biblical seminars or evangelistic meetings after a series on health. Many people respond to these after we have assisted them with health issues. And how rewarding it will be to see them in heaven!

Remember Christ's purpose for every person: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10, NKJV).

## *Endnotes:*

<sup>1</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Dysinger, William, *Heaven's Lifestyle Today*, "General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19 - 131.

<sup>5</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>11</sup> *Medical Ministry*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

This book is your key to unlocking the benefits of a health ministry in your church. It shares the biblical support behind the Seventh-day Adventist Church's health message and outlines a holistic view of health. Discover useful steps to optimize your health, tips for teaching these steps to others, and ideas for planning and promoting your ministry. This book is a must-read for all health and personal ministries leaders.

For lots more Personal Ministries resources visit [www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org](http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org). This website has an extensive library of downloadable articles and activities to enhance the preparation of Personal Ministries leaders.

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