

Energy Express: Health care reform begins at home - 10 steps to happier times

by Marilyn_Preston

I was unfolding into my morning yoga routine the other morning while listening to the TV news. It's not the purest form of the practice, but it's acceptable on a busy day. I began scribbling notes when I heard President Obama's budget guru Peter Orszag answer questions about health care reform.

"Health care reform is the key to our country's fiscal future," said OMB Director Orszag, justifying the White House's \$634-billion budget item best he could, given the size and shape of his pompadour.

What part of health care reform did Orszag single out for discussion? "Greater efficiency," he said, as in electronic medical records, improved systems and sharper pencils.

"Nice job, Pete . . . You blew it!" I belted back at the screen, transforming my TV-watching into an interactive, Wii-like experience. "Health care reform begins at home! Tell people to ride their bikes, eat more fruits and veggies and send their kids outside to play and . . ." It was a rant, but a healthy one. I felt revitalized.

Sure, improved government efficiency is a big piece of health care reform, but a more significant piece involves getting Americans to adapt healthier, happier lifestyle: daily physical activity, smarter eating, greener and more conscious living, and my favorite, sufficient Lunestra-free bed rest. That's what being responsible for your own health looks like. Two-thirds of adults in this country are obese. Do you really think electronic medical records will eat away at that enormous challenge?

So we must help ourselves and each other. It's the patriotic thing to do. Here are 10 healthy-lifestyle action steps you can take starting today! to reform your own health care and help save this president's dream of more competent, more compassionate, more affordable health care for all:

1. Be more active. You will develop more strength and energy, look better without drugs or surgery, and feel happier and healthier in your everyday life if you enjoy some physical activity every day. Sitting still hour after hour, day after day, is a nasty thing to do to your body, and your mind isn't happy with it either.

2. Don't diet. Learn to enjoy eating and preparing real food in sensible amounts to lose weight and keep it off. Replace the drama of dieting with the joy of growing some of your own food or buying from local farmers.

3. Stretch more. Release muscle tension every day to reduce stress and ease pain. Just 10 minutes a day can

make a profound difference. More is better.

4. Don't overdo workouts. Too much intensity takes the fun out of being active and raises your risk of injury. Moderation is the path to lifelong fitness. Seek the pleasure in your workout, not the pain.

5. Develop inner body awareness. Yoga teaches you to use your breath to link body and mind. So do many of the martial arts. Find your own path to inner awareness, and travel down it daily to clarity, to calm, to greater joy.

6. Spend time in nature. Outdoor adventures will calm you mentally and revitalize you physically, if you are prepared for the challenge. The lessons we learn in nature are unlike all others. Go, bring family and friends, and have your best time.

7. Embrace new challenges. When times are tough "as they are now for many people" you have to be fluid and flexible and stay in the game. Set new goals, seek out different experiences, and "call me cliché crazy" become the change you want to see in the world.

8. Keep a personal journal. This is a powerful tool for helping make change happen. Keeping track keeps you on track, whether you want to lose 10 pounds, stick to a strength-training program or find a new job.

9. Overcome all excuses. Make time to exercise. Get up earlier, write it into your calendar, find mini-breaks in your day to walk, meditate, do yoga-style sun salutations. Take control of your day, and a more balanced life will follow.

10. Stay positive. Your mind and your body are linked. Anger, envy, self-pity and other unhealthy emotions sap your strength and lower your resistance to illness. Learn to live in the moment.

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"Ask yourself what 'problem' you have right now, not next year, tomorrow or five minutes from now. What is wrong with this moment?" "Eckhart Tolle

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