

St. Luke's Health Center

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On Being Healthy

What does it mean to be healthy? This may seem a simple or silly question, but take a minute to think about it. You've just had your physical. This can sometimes be a good time to think about this question—really think. In my own life I think about this question a lot. We all want to be healthy—but what does it mean?

Physical Health: This is obviously an important part of being healthy. This is what we most often think about when we go to the doctor for a physical. Do I have cancer? Will I have a heart attack some day? How can I control my high blood pressure? Do I take care of my body? Do I eat well, get proper exercise and rest? These are all aspects of physical health.

Mental Health: This is also an important part of being healthy—though not so often considered. Am I depressed? Do I feel stressed, overwhelmed? Am I anxious or angry all the time? Am I getting along with my family and other people in my life? Do I feel good about myself? Am I struggling with some form of addiction—cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, food? Am I loved and do I have someone in my life to love? These are aspects of mental health.

Spiritual Health: We often don't think about spiritual health—yet it is the foundation of all health. If our soul is sick—we are sick indeed! Just like a house—the roof, the walls, the floors, the walls can be perfect—but if the foundation is rotting, the house is in danger. How is the state of my soul? Do I feel at peace with myself and the world? Is there joy in my life? Do I have a sense of purpose, of meaning to my life? Do I have faith in God, or does God seem absent or unreal to me? What will happen to me when I die? Am I angry with God? Am I having trouble with persistent guilt for mistakes I've made? Do I feel un-loved, empty inside? These are all aspects of spiritual health.

On being healthy: When we go to the doctor for a physical, the focus is on our physical health. Family physicians and other medical doctors dedicate their lives to helping treat physical illness and promoting good health. Sometimes when we go for our physical, we need to talk about aspects of our mental health. For further help with mental illness, we may need to see a counselor, a psychologist, or psychiatrist. Where do we turn for problems with our spiritual health? If we are members of a church, the logical person to approach is our priest or minister. Spiritual problems are their specialty—they have dedicated their lives to helping people be spiritually healthy.

What if I have no place to turn for help? During the course of your recent physical, we discussed many different aspects of your health. Was there something that we overlooked? Was there an issue that you wanted to discuss further? Was there something you wanted to talk about, but couldn't bring yourself to mention? If you have a physical, mental, or spiritual problem that you would like to discuss further—just let us know. We will try to help. If we can't help, we will try to point you in the right direction. Give us a call and schedule a time when we can get together.

With best wishes,

Jane Doe, M.D.