



Vital Health e-Book #2



Principal of Ancestral Health

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Principal of Ancestral (evolutionary) Health¹

The 4 Pillars of Health include: (1) Stress Management; (2) Sleep; (3) Exercise; (4) Nutrition. The 4 pillars are essential to health in general, and specifically to help fortify our immune systems against the coronavirus (Covid-19). The 4 Pillars of Health will be further discussed in forthcoming emails and in our website blog posts.

This e-Book presents an organizing principal that unifies the 4 Pillars. One principal that unites them all. This is the Principal of Evolutionary and Ancestral Health. The basic idea is that humans have evolved over 67,000 generations (millions of years) living and eating in certain ways². Multiple lines of evidence show that our evolutionary ancestors and even modern hunter-gatherer groups have *significantly* less of the chronic diseases that plague modern man.

Humans have evolved eating “real food”, being active and spending much time outdoors in tune with nature, following natural cycles of light/dark, and actively cultivating pleasure and social connection in their lives.



Consider this a general template and starting point. A powerful lens to view health though. For example, when contemplating a diet or lifestyle choice, such as “should I eat processed food or live a sedentary lifestyle?” ... we can ask ourselves “did our ancestors evolve living this way?” Of course, our evolutionary ancestors did not eat processed food nor did they live a sedentary lifestyle. This viewpoint is not meant to be rigid or dogmatic. It can certainly be adapted to allow for modern, scientifically proven aspects of diet and lifestyle.

“As a general guideline and template... consider living as much as possible like our evolutionary ancestors. This is the way our bodies evolved. This is a great way to optimize our health & well-being, and to help fortify our immune system.”

Consider this principle a simple, yet powerful lens to view health choices through. It unifies the 4 Pillars to help create your own “temple of health and well-being”.

Ancestral Health Details

First, what it does *not* include:

Eating **processed and refined foods**. Avoid refined sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, flour, trans fats, and industrial seed oils (corn, cottonseed, soybean, safflower, and sunflower oil). Among several other bad consequences, these substances cause systemic inflammation, insulin resistance, and bad bacteria overgrowth – which are root causes of many symptoms and diseases.

Excessive screen time, especially two hours before sleep. The blue light from the screen disturbs our sleep quality and circadian rhythm. Minimize screen time as much as possible. Choose live and in-person human interaction whenever possible. Smart phones, computers, and social media are designed to be highly addictive (more to come on this in future blog articles).



A **sedentary lifestyle** of sitting for extended periods of time during the day. This has become so common with office jobs and sitting in front of a screen (computer, smartphone, television) for extended periods.

Living a **socially isolated life**, spending too much time on social media and technology. Not having close friends and confidants. The number of Americans who report having no close confidants has increased *threefold* in just the past two decades alone. This is *alarming*. Socially isolated people have higher blood pressure, more inflammation, and a higher risk of disease and death.

What Evolutionary & Ancestral Health *does* include:

Eat. Real. Food. (details in a forthcoming email on nutrition)

Go outside in nature and **move your body**. Stay outside often and get enough sunlight. I generally define this as being outside for about *half* the time it takes to turn your skin pink³. Sunlight is a natural source of Vitamin D, which most people do not get enough of. Among several other benefits, Vitamin D is essential for your immune system to work properly.

Consider **creative ways to move**, like a 7-minute dance party. If possible, go to a beach, river, or a lake. Stretch your body, run around, dance, play, practice yoga, and so forth. For extra credit (optional), jump in the water and swim for at least 7-minutes.

Aim for 30 minutes a day of **moderate to vigorous activity**, and at least 10,000 steps-per-day. Stand up at least every 40 minutes and walk around. Consider investing in a stand-up desk. Among other benefits, just standing up burns 2.5 times as many calories as sitting.

Follow the **natural cycles of light and dark** (circadian rhythm). Generally, **sleep** when it's dark, and be awake when it's light. Aim for at least 8 to 9 hours of actual sleep each night, at roughly the same sleep and wake times. Make your bedroom as dark



as possible. Consider having no screen time in your bedroom. Make your bedroom for sleep and sex only.

Community & Connection. For most of our evolutionary history, humans lived in tight-knit extended family groups with regular social contact. We are inherently social animals. We thrive when we feel a sense of connection and belonging, and we suffer when we feel isolated and alone. Again, one of the greatest indicators of success and happiness in life is the strength of our personal relationships. Having a positive social support system has been shown to increase lifespan and improve immune, cardiovascular, endocrine, and mental health. Join our Santa Cruz Functional Medicine (SCFM) community via our website email opt in. Learn about local Vital Health events like farmer's markets, food-as-medicine dinners, functional medicine lectures, and other community events. Have you ever been sitting around wanting to do something awesome, but not knowing where it's at? Well we got you covered with our forthcoming website Vital Health event calendar. Stay tuned (note: most events are virtual during these challenging times).

Pleasure & Play are vital to our health and well-being. The experience of pleasure releases potent endorphins and neurotransmitters that enhance health and prevent disease. In addition, pleasure helps alleviate the harmful effects of stress and strengthens the immune system. On top of it all, pleasure brings forth the experience of happiness and joy. Pleasure and play are as essential to life as sleep, dreams, movement, and social connection. What are your favorite forms of pleasure and play? Consider scheduling them into your calendar now. =)

Summary

Our evolutionary ancestors ate “real food”, followed natural cycles of light/dark, were active, spent much time outdoors in tune with nature, and actively cultivated pleasure and social connection in their lives. A nice lifestyle to model, especially considering that it's how our physiology evolved over millions of years (prior to the agricultural & industrial revolutions). The principal of ancestral health is a powerful lens to view our



health through. The next time you are contemplating a diet or lifestyle choice, such as ask yourself: “did our ancestors evolve living this way?” This question will greatly simplify and clarify many choices you are faced with. May it serve you well

“Take a moment and recall your top takeaways from this e-Book. How might you apply the lens of ancestral health to your life?”

Again, keep in mind that diet and lifestyle changes aren’t always easy. You can ease into it, and don’t need to make changes all at once. An intent of this e-Book is to summarize ancestral health, so it’s in one place when you are ready to move forward. And if you would like some support, we here for you with effective Functional Health Coaches that specialize in diet and lifestyle changes. As you may realize, knowing what to do (as presented in this e-Book) isn’t always enough. We can help you find your own motivation, inspiration, and direction for change. All you need is already within you, and together we will find it.

In Vital Heath,

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Notes

1. Note that the recommendations presented in this e-Book are not intended to diagnose, treat, or prevent any *specific* symptom, disease, syndrome or health condition. The recommendations are general in nature. For specific and personalized recommendations, schedule an appointment with Dr. Angelica Salazar MD.
2. There certainly was variation in how our ancestors lived and what they ate. However, we're interested in the similarities and the general trends as presented above.
3. Note that I say *half* the time it takes to make your skin turn pink. So, do not let your skin turn pink from the sun, and go inside well before that happens.

Disclaimer

The information presented in this e-Book is general in nature. In our experience, people who follow this guidance *generally* have better health outcomes compared to those who do not. This e-Book is not meant to diagnose or treat any specific condition, symptom, or disease. For the treatment of a specific condition, symptom, or disease you should book an appointment and receive a personalized treatment protocol from Dr. Angelica Salazar, MD. This disclaimer also applies to all the content language on our website, our blog articles, and email correspondence.