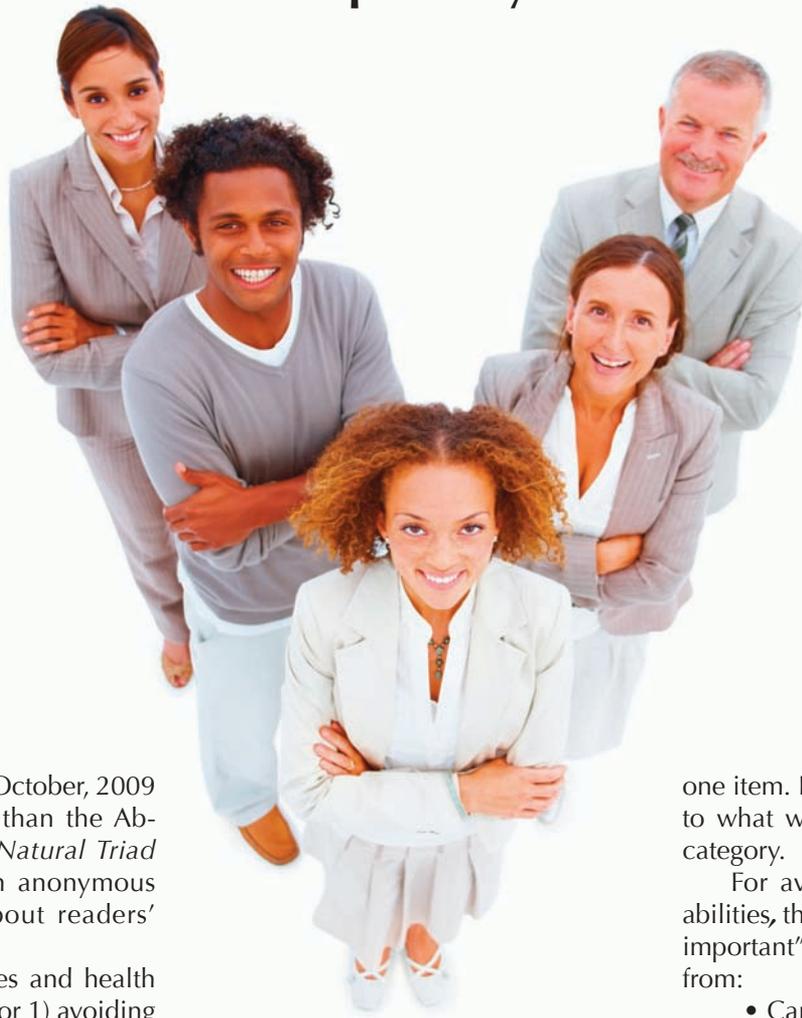


Readership Survey Results



In conjunction with the October, 2009 article, "Health: More than the Absence of Disease" in *Natural Triad Magazine*, we created an anonymous survey to learn more about readers' health values.

We asked about values and health goals in 6 domains: goals for 1) avoiding diseases/injuries/disabilities; and optimal health for 2) physical; 3) emotional; 4) spiritual; and 6) social well-being.

What were the characteristics of those who responded?

Most (83%) respondents were women, 85% were European-American, and 95% were from the Triad; there were a few from other states and 2 from Canada.

Most were in their 40's and 50's (58% of respondents). About 18% were between 20 and 39 years old and 24% were in their 60's and 70's. None were under 20 years old.

Nearly 1/3 of respondents (29%) were licensed health professionals.

Over half described their health as good and nearly 1/3 rated their health as excellent. Only 15% rated their health fair or poor. Very few indicated that their overall health limited their ability to interact with friends or family, bathe or

HEALTH: What Do YOU Value?

dress themselves, carry groceries, walk a block or go to work or school. However, 60% indicated that their health limited their ability to exercise vigorously and 35% said their health limited their ability to exercise moderately.

Bear these characteristics in mind as you read the results. Results would likely be somewhat different for different kinds of respondents.

For each kind of health goal, what was most important?

In each of the six categories, for each question, we asked which was Most, Quite, Moderately, Somewhat, A little or Not at All important. Respondents could answer "Most" important to more than

one item. Let's just look at the responses to what was MOST important in each category.

For avoiding diseases/injuries/disabilities, the highest percentages of "most important" responses were for being free from:

- Cancer: 48% and Stroke: 41%

Those rated as most important by 30 – 39% of respondents included: Heart or circulatory problems (37%), Pain (34%), Fatigue (33%), Hypertension (33%), Infectious diseases (32%), Anxiety (31%), Obesity (31%), Diabetes (31%), Disabilities (30%), and Depression (30%).

Less important items included injuries, headaches, attention deficit disorder, itch, nausea, vomiting, injuries, arthritis, back pain, and asthma.

Bear in mind, that if we surveyed younger people, they might be more concerned about injuries or infectious diseases. If we surveyed mothers of young children, we might have received higher responses about ADHD.

For PHYSICAL HEALTH, the most commonly cited "most important" goals were:

- Feeling well rested and energetic:

66%

- Vigor and vitality 53%

Items rated as most important by 40% - 49% of readers included: Stamina/energy: (47%), optimal weight (44%), resilience in the face of physical challenges (43%), Comfortable body (43%), Breathing easily (42%), Balance (41%), and Flexibility (40%)

Next most important were: feeling of physical ease (39%); optimal blood pressure (37%); strength (36%); optimal blood tests such as normal cholesterol (34%).

Less important items included: gracefulness; beauty and physical power. Again, if we had been surveying Olympic athletes, the answers might have differed from these.

For EMOTIONAL HEALTH, the most commonly cited as “most important” goals were:

- Being resilient in the face of emotional stress: 59%
- Being cheerful, joyful or happy: 53%

Items rated as most important by 40%- 49% of readers included: confident (47%), content (43%), hopeful (46%), passionate (44%), and secure (48%).

Next most important were: feeling patient (39%), relaxed (38%), being balanced or fair (36%), calm (34%), adaptable (32%).

Less important items included feeling: courageous, deliberate, and practical/prudent.

For MENTAL HEALTH, the most commonly cited as “most important” goals were:

- Clarity (thinking clearly): 66%
- Having an excellent memory: 59%
- Being resilient in the face of mental stress: 55%
- Being alert (50%)
- Focused (50%)

Items rated as most important by 40%- 49% of readers included: being skillful (such as having good problem-solving, reading, math, music, spatial relationships, or other special skills: 48%); insightful (45%).

The next most important items were: being discerning (37%), organized (37%), realistic (33%), consistent (32%), innovative (32%),

Less important items included feeling: being curious and intentional.

For SPIRITUAL HEALTH, the most commonly cited as “most important” goals were:

- Having integrity: 72%
- Connection with something greater than self, such as Nature, God or principles: 71%
- Being loving: 66%
- Ethical: 65%
- Having a meaningful, purposeful life: 63%
- Being kind: 62%
- Presence – being present in this moment: 58%
- Forgiving: 54%
- Generous: 51%
- Compassionate: 50%
- Wise: 50%

Items rated as most important by 30%- 49% of readers included: being accepting (43%) and being value-driven (37%).

Less important items included feeling: artistic or musical, idealistic, and visionary.

For SOCIAL HEALTH, the most commonly cited as “most important” goals were:

- Being responsible: 65%
- Being respectful: 64%
- Listening well: 56%
- Reciprocal (able to give and receive by the golden rule): 50%

Items rated as most important by 40%- 49% of readers included: thoughtful (48%), harmonious (getting along well with different kinds of people: 47%), loyal (47%), accountable (45%), empathetic (43%), and communicating well (41%).

The next most important social health goals were: being friendly (38%), fiscally responsible (35%), inclusive (33%), team player (32%), and being a good role model (31%).

Less important items included being: civic-minded, neighborly, powerful, par-

ticipating, and being a volunteer.

Overall, which types of goals were most important?

After reflecting on those many individual items, we asked readers to rate which of the 6 categories of goals were very, moderately, somewhat, a little or not at all important. For overall health goals, here's how they ranked (the percentage indicating this was VERY important, the highest possible category):

- Being free of disease/injury/illness/disability: 91%
- Spiritual goals (See below for details about goals): 83%
- Emotional health goals: 80%
- Mental health goals: 76%
- Physical goals: 67%
- Social goals: 40%

Who were role models of health?

We also asked readers to reflect on who they thought were role models of overall excellent health. You can imagine that we had a lot of different responses to this question. The biggest winner was Lance Armstrong (“he overcame a debilitating disease with healthy lifestyle and now works to that end for others”), followed closely by Jack Lalanne (“...an inspiring person who exemplified the value of exercise at every age. He ate lots of vegetables and promoted what we are learning more and more is a healthy diet before it was fashionable. I also think he was a faithful and loving husband and lived his values in many ways.”).

A number of readers cited nationally known leaders in integrative medicine such as Drs. Andrew Weil (“he takes charge of his own health and spiritual well-being”), Joel Fuhrman, Doug Kaufman, Mark Hyman, Mehmet Oz (“healthy physically, emotionally and spiritually”), Joseph Mercola, Tieraona LowDog, Asa Andrew, and Mitra Ray (“vibrant, youthful, intelligent, intentional, committed, fun”). Some readers named teachers such as BKS Iyengar (who taught yoga internationally).

Political and spiritual leaders from all ends of the spectrum who were named included George Bush, Michelle Obama (“she's fit emotionally, physically and spiritually.”), Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Harry Truman. Gwyneth Pal-

trow (an actress) was named for being “spiritual, physically fit, eats clean and loves and respects the world we live in. She is grounded and generous.” Chesley B Sullenberger (pilot who landed a plane safely on the Hudson River) was named for being “focused, trained, always aware of his job and working with others, and because of this, when the chips were down, he did his job to the utmost.”

A number of people named family members and friends whom they admired – those who eat well, exercise regularly, are energetic, and are kind to others, especially those parents, aunts and grandparents who are caretakers of ill or disabled family members. Examples include:

“My mother is 91 year old and in spite of severe physical limitations, she still is able to bathe and dress herself. She takes very little medication and has used nutritional supplements for many years. She still travels and gets out as much as possible. When faced with the possibility of depression (due to death of family members or friends), she chooses to engage in some type of activity that might change the way she feels, such as a chair exercise or a jaunt around the block on her scooter.”).

“My dad, who at 75 still trains and participates in marathons, he cycles, walks and works out in the gym. He enjoys part time work, traveling, participating in church activities and spending time with friends and family. Most importantly, he is interested in absolutely everything.”)

“At 74 years old, a dear friend of mine eats well, looks in and helps her older friends, does yoga 3-5 times per week, lifts weights 2-3 times a week, reads about other religions and spiritual aspects of life constantly to keep learning about herself and others, accepting of all people no matter age or color. She takes care of her mind, body and soul. She believes everything in moderation and tries hard to be happy even in the face of adverse conditions. She is my hero and I aim to be like her as I grow old myself.”)

Readers also admire those who face serious illness with determination and continue to exercise, eat well, and exhibit a positive, can-do attitude.

What does all of this mean?

Natural Triad readers are committed to health in all its dimensions. Your responses will be helpful to clinicians who are working to improve health. Clinicians need to remember that we can hold many different health goals and feel that all of them are important! In fact, for some people, feeling more energetic, vigorous, and clear thinking may be more highly valued than having a normal blood pressure if that comes at the expense of taking

a medicine that causes a mental fog or fatigue.

So, for those who are NOT clinicians, speak up about what’s important to you! It could make a big difference in what kind of prescription you get.

For clinicians, remember to ask about ALL the kind of health goals your patients have – you may find that both you and the patients are more satisfied with the long-term outcomes of care.

Thank you to everyone who completed a survey! And special thanks to Dr. Kathi Kemper, Director of the Center for Integrative Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Natural Triad Advisory Board member, for her help and expertise in conducting the survey.

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