

AS A young college student I became quite attracted to the concept of health. Something clicked internally and I was into it. In class, I learned that the vast majority of what an individual might encounter in the hospital was lifestyle related. My healthy mindset centered on freedom from sickness and disease. If others had a cold or the flu was going around, and I managed to avoid it, I proclaimed myself healthy.

Then I got into nutrition and as I read and researched, my eating habits changed. I cleaned out the kitchen cupboards and fridge. My new definition of health meant eating only what I thought was good for me, and denying myself that

which was not. After following the advice of a well-meaning landlord, I went through a “cleanse” from which I returned to school with sagging jeans and the questioning glances from friends. I may not have looked like it, but in my mind, I was valiantly pursuing health.

Sometime later, exercise came to the forefront. I realized that in my preoccupation with diet, I had, to some degree, neglected building my body up by working out. I knew that exercising for a certain amount of time per week and combining cardio and weights was the best and so now I was really feeling good, feeling healthy.

My passion extended even to my family. I fed my kids a certain way, had them exercise outdoors, and got them to bed on time.

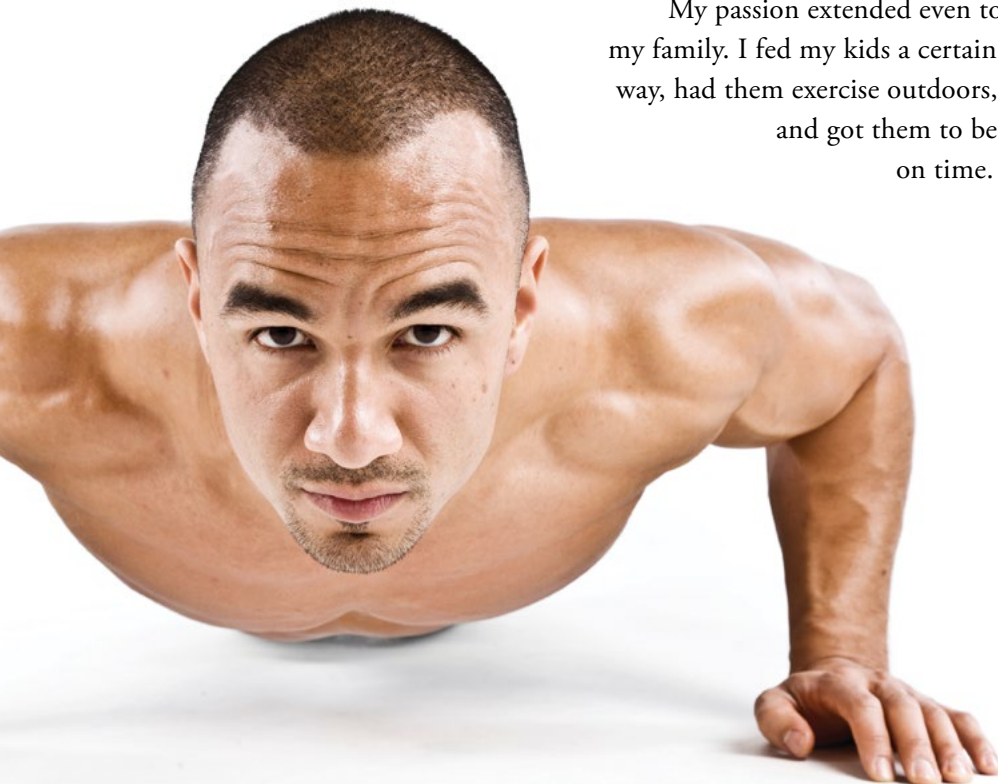
We were going to be a healthy family! Are you getting the picture?

For some, health is based on how one feels, what one looks like, how much energy one has, or the numbers that come back on blood lab reports. Life has its way though of challenging our views and opinions. After cancer and disease struck our home, I still value health just as highly, but my definition of what that means has changed. My

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understanding of what it means to share the “health message” and its role as the right arm of the gospel has correspondingly broadened.

A source of inspiration for my health fetish is Scripture. Jesus highly valued health. He was constantly healing and making people whole. I find it quite significant that the words health and wholeness are one and the same in origin. From roots meaning something divided, to whole, and uninjured, came the Anglo-Saxon words *hal* and *halig*. Old Norse words *heil*, and *heilige* have similar root meanings. *Hal*,



meant wholeness, being whole, sound, or well. It is the root from which the words health, whole, and holy were derived. At one time, hal was the only word used for all three concepts. The Anglo-Saxon expression, *wes hal*, expressed “may you be in good health,” which migrated to the greeting hail. According to linguist David Crystal, many related words come from the Germanic root of both hal and heal. These include: whole, holy, hallow, heal, and health.

UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGIN AND CONTEXT OF HEALTH ENLARGES ITS DEFINITION TO BE MORE THAN FREEDOM FROM DISEASE.

In our modern vernacular we have separated the concepts of health, wholeness, and holiness as we have given varying arranged letters and sounds to these experiences. In our efforts to specialize these concepts though, have we allowed something to go missing? Could these three terms be branches or components of a complete life that was originally intended for us? Ellen White defines holiness as wholeness to God. Scripturally, to be restored to a state of wholeness is the definition of true healing.

The Pharisees understood this concept to some degree. However, it led them to equate disease with personal sin and guilt. The individual practices of

what was eaten or not became markers of holiness. Jesus, however, continually demonstrated His healing power as the missing element needed to restore man to wholeness. As the Designer and Creator of wholeness, He knew what needed to be supplied.

Understanding the origin and context of health enlarges its definition to be more than freedom from disease. There is a picture of life-enhancing balance, equilibrium, psychological, and relational

prosperity, vitality, well-being, strength, security, endurance, and happiness. But these were all to

remain connected, intertwined in physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions. This understanding has altered my mindset.

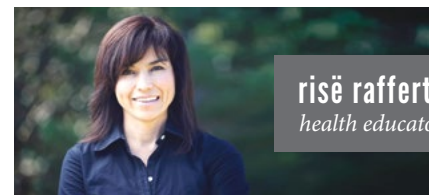
Health isn't eating or not eating certain things. It's not jogging for 10 miles a day, or being the perfect weight, or having well defined muscles. There is so much more to health. Sure, I cleaned out my cupboards, but I now recognize things that were missing. I didn't have the whole picture. I hadn't figured out that health wasn't found in a bottle of green powder, or a certain exercise routine and diet plan.

The subject of health seems exhaustless. What you think, see and do; your attitude, impulses, and emotions; colors and sound, as

well as what you put in your body, affects your health. Yet health is a choice. Yes, there are the daily choices of living in harmony with natural law, yet more than this, the will recognizes the need of healing that no natural remedy or right living can rectify. It surrenders the whole life to the touch of the Source of Health, allowing the Great Healer to make us whole. The promise is, “As many as touched him were made whole” (Mark 6:56). You see, “Heaven is all health; and the more deeply heavenly influences are realized, the more sure will be the recovery. . . . We should cooperate with God in the care of our bodies. Love for God is essential for life and health. Faith in God is essential for health. In order to have perfect health, our hearts must be filled with love and hope and joy in the Lord.”¹

Jesus is asking you and me today just as He did centuries ago, “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6).

¹ Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, p. 149.



Risë has been writing on various health subjects for over 20 years. She has inspired many through her research and down-to-earth writing and speaking style. She believes that healthy living is intimately tied to happiness and wholeness.