





Healthism and its Impact on College Health

#Fitspo #NoExcuses #CleanEating #NoPainNoGain

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What assumptions do we make
about people based on their
health choices and behaviors?

Defining “Healthism”

Healthism: noun

a lifestyle that prioritizes health and fitness over anything else

Collins English Dictionary

Robert Crawford, 1980

Healthism is "the preoccupation with personal health as a primary – often the primary – focus for the definition and achievement of well-being; a goal which is to be attained primarily through the modification of lifestyles."

“Like medicine, healthism situates the problem of health and disease at the level of the individual. Solutions are formulated at that level as well. To the extent that healthism shapes popular beliefs, we will continue to have a non-political, and therefore, ultimately ineffective conception and strategy of health promotion. Further, by elevating health to a super value, a metaphor for all that is good in life, healthism reinforces the privatization of the struggle for generalized well-being.”

Source: Robert Crawford, "Healthism and the medicalization of everyday life," International Journal of Health Services 10(1980):365-88.

Petr Skrabanek, 1994

“The pursuit of health is a symptom of unhealth. When this pursuit is no longer a personal yearning but part of state ideology, healthism for short, it becomes a symptom of political sickness. **Extreme versions of healthism provide a justification for racism, segregation, and eugenic control since 'healthy' means patriotic, pure, while 'unhealthy' equals foreign, polluted.**”

“In the weak version of healthism, as encountered in Western democracies, the state goes beyond education and information on matters of health and uses propaganda and various forms of coercion to establish norms of a 'healthy lifestyle' for all. **Human activities are divided into approved and disapproved, healthy and unhealthy, prescribed and proscribed, responsible and irresponsible.**”

The Death of Humane Medicine and the Rise of Coercive Healthism, 1994

Temperance Movements of 19th & 20th Centuries



The Drunkard's Progress: A lithograph by Nathaniel Currier supporting the temperance movement, January 1846.

Sylvester Graham (1794-1851)


- Sylvester Graham was an Evangelical minister who lectured widely on the evils of the American diet.
- According to Graham, meat, alcohol, and fatty foods led to gluttony, lust, and materialistic urges.
- His devoted followers, called “Grahamites,” followed their charismatic leader on a restricted diet of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- He did not invent graham flour, graham bread, or graham crackers, but those products were inspired by his preaching.



John Harvey Kellogg, MD (1852-1943)

- John Harvey Kellogg was an American medical doctor in Battle Creek, Michigan, who ran a sanitarium using holistic methods, with a particular focus on nutrition, enemas, and exercise.
- Corn Flakes were invented as part of his health regimen to prevent masturbation. His belief was that bland foods would decrease or prevent excitement and arousal. Those experiencing temptation were to avoid stimulating food and drinks, and eat very little meat, if any.
- Kellogg also advocated hydrotherapy and stressed the importance of keeping the colon clean through yogurt enemas.
- He warned that many types of sexual activity, including many "excesses" that couples could be guilty of within marriage, were against nature, and therefore, extremely unhealthy.





“To preserve one's health
by too strict a regime is in itself
a tedious malady.”

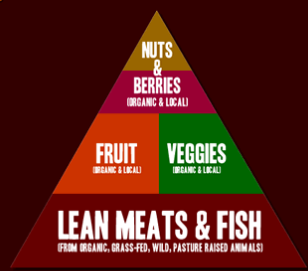
-Due de la Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)





**THIS IS WHY
EATING
HEALTHY
IS
HARD**





THE PALEO PYRAMID

CrossFit
FORGING ELITE FITNESS



10 HEALTH BENEFITS OF A GLUTEN FREE DIET

Ultimate Kidney Flush Juice Cleanse Recipe!

- 3 cups cucumber
- 1 cup radish
- 1 lemon



WAIST TRAINERS

- REDUCE THE WAIST 1-3 SIZES
- SMOOTH THE ABDOMEN
- ACCELERATE WEIGHT LOSS
- IMPROVE POSTURE
- CREATE IMMEDIATE RESULTS



THREE DAY



DETOX



CLEANSE

HIYMALAYAN SALT LAMP

Reasons To Have One In Every Room In Your Home

1. Cleanse & Deodorize the Air
 2. Reduce Allergy & Asthma Symptoms
 3. Ease Coughing
 4. Increase Energy Levels
 5. Neutralize Electromagnetic Radiation
 6. Better Sleep
 7. Improve Mood & Concentration
 8. Treat Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Reduce Static Electricity in the Air
Environmentally-Friendly Light Source

25 REASONS **SUGAR** IS BAD FOR YOU



The Ketogenic Diet



EATING CLEAN

whole, **REAL FOOD** real food rots
real food *exists in nature*

eating clean means to adopt a sustainable lifestyle that emphasizes the consumption of whole, real foods that are grown or raised organically, while limiting intake of highly-processed and refined foods in order to achieve optimal health and wellness

ORGANIC + non-GMO
eating clean *is a lifestyle*
it is **NOT A DIET**

real food is free of genetically modified organisms, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals including artificial sweeteners, preservatives, pesticides, herbicides, growth hormones, and antibiotics.

hormone + antibiotic free
NATURAL ingredients

rebelcleftitian.us

- ### Top 10 Health Benefits of Coconut Oil
- Boosts Immunity
 - Controls Blood Sugar
 - Lowers Cholesterol
 - Treats Candida
 - Nourishes Hair
 - Aids Digestion
 - Removes Stretch Marks
 - Increases Bone Strength
 - Combats Alzheimer's Disease
 - Promotes Weight Loss

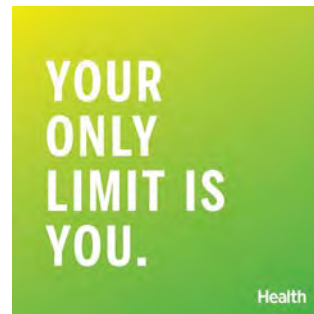


WHOLE30





IT'S NEVER
TOO EARLY
OR
TOO LATE
TO WORK
TOWARDS BEING THE
HEALTHIEST
YOU



Complicating the Narrative: Mindfulness

Benefits:

- Evidence-based

Risks:

- Trendy/fad
- Offered as a fix in place of actual medical care for mental health
- Guilt - another thing one feels pressured to do in order to be “healthy”

Everything you need,
your courage, strength
compassion and love;
everything you need is
already within you.



Healthism & Privilege

“Healthism ... has evolved into the often unspoken idea that there is a moral value to health; it emerges as the assumption that people should pursue health. It’s the contempt in the non-smoker’s attitude toward smokers; it’s the ubiquitous sneer against couch potatoes. **Healthism includes the idea that anyone who isn’t healthy just isn’t trying hard enough or has some moral failing or sin to account for.**”

“**It seems to me that healthism is reflective of deep privilege**; it is (in my opinion) a classic ‘first-world’ problem. Healthism can only thrive in a culture where the dominant groups do not have to worry about such things as famine, infectious disease, war, poverty, and hatred as factors that affect their health. It’s privilege that allows us to make health a ‘project’ that we can judge others for not taking up.”

-Fall Ferguson, JD, MA <https://healthateverysizeblog.org/2013/11/19/the-haes-files-speculations-on-healthism-privilege/>



Table Discussion:

How does healthism affect students on your campus?



Impacts for College Students

- “Naked” section in dining hall
- Fraternity/Sorority group bonding through group workouts
- Health obsessions
- 24-hour fitness centers
- Dissatisfaction with meal plan
- Fat stigma, shame, and “concern trolling”

Does this lead to negative health outcomes?

- “Fat talk”
- Eating disorders & disordered eating
- Orthorexia
- Body image issues
- Over-exercise and overuse injuries
- Anxiety and Depression



Table Discussion:

How does this impact our work in
Health Promotion?

What strategies might you use to
combat healthism in your work?

Impacts on our work in Health Promotion

- Sleep hygiene education: is your advice realistic or reasonable?
- Is your advice trendy?
- Linking weight to health/prescribing weight loss
- “Wellness Challenge” programs/fitness challenge programs
- Employee Wellness initiatives
- Are your activities/programs inclusive? (for example: a 5k “fun run” fundraiser)
- What sets our messaging apart from “fitspiration” and the cacophony of health messaging students receive in the media?
- **Are we adding to the perceived pressure to always be “healthier”?**

Strategies for combating healthism

1. Confront your own biases. How and when do you judge others for their health behaviors? Recognize that “healthy” can mean different things to different people.
2. Remember that for some people, the absence of illness and suffering is *healthy enough*, and that’s their choice and it’s valid.
3. Do not focus your work solely on individual behavior change. Make sure that you’re spending equal, if not more, time and resources on addressing social determinants through policy and environmental approaches.
4. When you share health tips & guidelines, make them reasonable for the average person. Some students may want tips for becoming elite athletes and excessively nutritious eaters; don’t assume all students are prioritizing health & wellness to this degree.
5. Do not impose your beliefs about health and morality on your patient/client/student by automatically assuming they want to devote time & resources to fitness, nutrition, wellness, or weight loss.
6. Remind people that their health habits have no bearing on their worth, their moral “goodness,” or their human and civil rights.



e horne and j comeau



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