
STEPS
TO
Health

Martina was in trouble. Acute pain in her jaw brought her to the dentist, and it was not good news. Her loose teeth and infected gums needed treatment. Moreover, she was on multiple medications for diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and anxiety. She had plenty of trouble but few solutions and little courage. Change the details, and her story is the same as millions of others worldwide.

Have you found yourself feeling increasingly alone, addicted, or ill—with nowhere to turn and no one to help? That was Martina. She needed God's help, power, and plan. Her dentist introduced her to the following eight keys to a hope-filled, abundant life. As a result, just one year later, Martina was off many of her medications, had achieved a healthier weight, and felt stronger mentally, physically, and spiritually. Most of all, she had found hope—which is the heart of health.

NUTRITION. When it comes to better health, plan on plant power. Over the years, deaths from obesity and related chronic ailments, such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, have risen dramatically on a global scale.[1] Processed foods, fast food, animal products loaded with saturated fat and cholesterol, and sugary drinks are major

causes of many preventable illnesses today—and those illnesses are not inexpensive! On the other hand, the healthiest people in the world base their diet on colorful, fiber-rich plant foods that are low in calories but packed with flavor and nutrition.[2] That includes delicious fresh fruits; fresh greens and other vegetables; beans and lentils; whole grains like brown rice and whole wheat bread; and healthy fats from avocados, olives, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. TRY THIS: Follow the plan of addition: Add more plant foods to your meals, and you will naturally subtract more of those empty and unhealthy calories.

WATER. For energy and alertness, enjoy pure water and ditch the energy drinks and sodas, which are linked to heart problems, stroke, anxiety, sleeplessness, fatigue, dental problems, diabetes, and a host of other mental and physical ailments.[3] Alcoholic beverages and caffeine-spiked drinks do not solve problems—they cause them. Drinking plenty of water primes the digestive system, improves alertness, reduces brain fatigue and false hunger signals, and helps deliver nutrients to every system of the body. TRY THIS: Start your morning with a tall glass of water. Then, hydrate between meals with at least eight glasses of water

throughout the day, or as needed, to stay refreshed. Water is so important that when the Bible speaks of the grace of God that refreshes the soul, it calls it the "water of life" (Revelation 22:17), of which we are invited to drink deeply and freely.

EXERCISE AND FRESH AIR. Whenever possible, get out into the fresh air and sunshine for exercise. Daily exercise, especially outdoors, has a mood-elevating, stress-lowering effect.[4] It also promotes deep sleep. Daily exercise indoors or outdoors boosts creativity and improves learning and memory. It increases physical endurance, balances blood sugar, improves muscle mass, and helps regulate weight. "What is the best exercise?" you might ask. It's the one you do—whether working in the garden, walking, bicycling, or swimming. So when you're feeling down, get up and get moving! TRY THIS: Exercising with friends is a great way to enjoy social time and improve your health. Create a plan that will help you build strength and immune health, beat a bad mood, and enjoy time with friends.

POSITIVE CHOICES. Over time, little positive choices beat big, bad habits and build a brand-new you! A term used in the Bible for positive choices is "self-control" (2 Peter 1:6). Self-control means living a life guided and empowered by our Savior, Jesus

Christ. He died to give you a new mind, new motives, and a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). He wants to help you and heal you. TRY THIS: Make a list of several positive choices you want to practice. Keep track of your progress and don't let mistakes discourage you. Practice makes progress! And a simple prayer to God for help will never go unanswered.

SLEEP. Healthy sleep habits are important for deep and restful recovery of the brain and body systems. Sleep is essential to avoid the terrible consequences of sleep deprivation and enjoy the benefits of restorative rest. It's key for controlling blood sugar and stress while promoting better moods, more energy, and stronger immune health. Sleep specialist Gregory Belenky, MD, says that "complex mental operations," including critical thinking and problem-solving, "are impaired by sleep loss."[5] TRY THIS: Establish a routine that provides you with seven to eight hours of sleep per night. Avoid screens before bed, don't eat late, and spend some time with God to relax your mind at the end of the day.

MINDSET. A bad attitude is like a flat tire—you won't get far until you change it. It is God's plan to turn your worst misery into your greatest miracle. Chronic negativity, self-pity, resentment, and anger destroy mental and physical health. But God

heals the brokenhearted and sets the captives free (Luke 4:18). Psychiatrist John Ratey explains: "Experiences, thoughts, actions, and emotions change . . . our brains. But one necessary precursor to change . . . is often a change of attitude."[6] You may have had a dark past, but you can have a bright future. You can learn to love and live again. TRY THIS: Start memorizing Bible promises and watch God work. Start with Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV): "I know the plans I have for you . . . to give you a future and a hope."

RELATIONSHIPS. Friends—who needs them? We all do! God's Word tells us that "it is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Positive social relationships, where mutual love and friendship are shared, are linked with a longer life and better overall health.[7] In today's digital world, it takes effort to connect with people face-to-face, but it is worth the time and effort. When you find yourself alone and in need of a friend, the Bible tells us, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). That friend is Jesus Christ, who will never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). TRY THIS: Don't be shy—show up for a group meal or activity. Volunteer on a regular basis. Make yourself available to help those in need, and you will reap a harvest of

joy. Take an interest in others. Kindness and attention will brighten anyone's day, as well as your own.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH. Let's not overlook this vital component of health. Research has found that faith in God impacts both mental and physical health, especially when people relate to God as a friend.[8] Listen to the loving voice of God through His Word, the Bible. Allow Him to bring hope and strength into your life on a daily basis. God's power, combined with healthy lifestyle choices and a positive, thankful mindset, will help you *grow*—and not just *go*—through the challenges of life. Your friend and Savior, Jesus Christ, died and rose again to open the door to a new and better life here and a future immortal life where evil will not exist. You are invited to accept God's amazing gift of a new life today. Like Martina, you can experience hope and a better life, beginning now and lasting forever! So choose Jesus and choose life.

Note: Always work with your health care provider when making lifestyle changes. This is general information, not meant to replace individual medical counsel.

For references, visit our website: t.awr.io/ref/eng/sh

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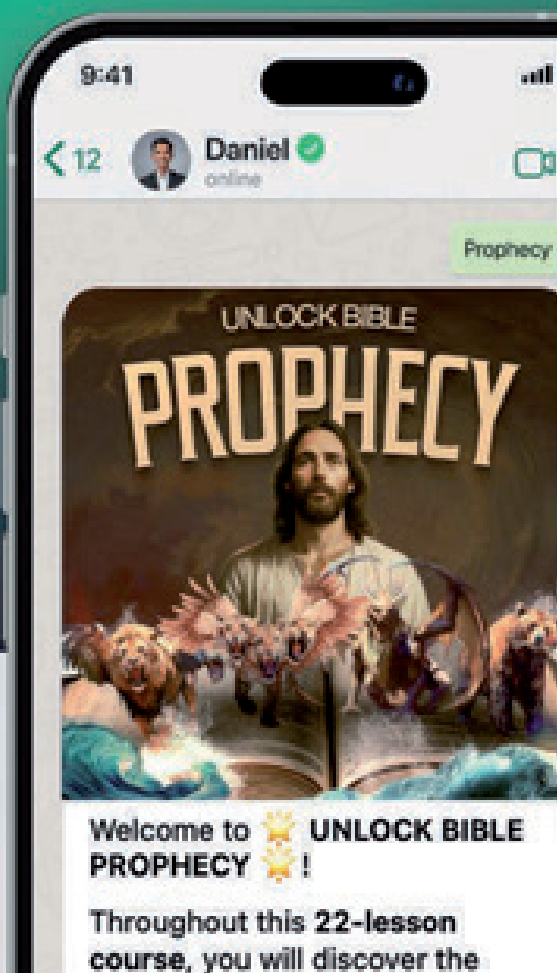

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