

Introduction

Each week about 20 million Americans visit a doctor. You may be one of them, or your spouse, or a family member, or a friend. Mostly the visit will be for a follow-up of treatment of a disease common to American life: heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, or a treatment of a common infection: colds, flu, or for diagnosis of a bothersome symptom: pain in the foot or neck, or belly.

These Hope and Healing Healthnotes are for you to use as a reference for your own information or for you to use as a point of discussion with the doctor or for you to make a copy for someone you care for — for them to use at or after their doctor's visit or for you to send to them as a sign of your love.

Each Healthnote emphasizes taking care of yourself, taking responsibility for yourself and caring for one another.

As a society, we take great care of our lawns, our automobiles, and our television sets. Yet we know very little about our bodies, about whether "gas pains" signal an impending heart attack, about whether two alcohol drinks will produce cirrhosis of the liver, about how to talk with your doctor.

Centuries ago, in the Great Era before Primetime TV, people talked to each other. They read good books. Libraries teemed with avid readers, who discovered and remembered interesting tidbits for conversation. They displayed wisdom and promoted an intelligent point of view. In that era doctors also talked with their patients. Then we entered the age of Managed Healthcare and we were all sold a bill of goods in order to contain Healthcare costs.

That era is now passing and we are into the era where medicine is housed in large institutions. We are offered an institution to care for us at the expense of having a personal physician direct our care. Unless you can become your own advocate and help your friends and family become their own advocates, you and I will find ourselves someday wondering who is in charge.

Let me ask you — When that day comes — who will argue for you?

Who will bang on the door of the Inner Sanctum for you and your family? Who will give you the knowledge you need? Who will ask the right questions and get the best answers for you and help you feel in control.

This one thing you cannot do.

You cannot expect your non physician friends, when you are deep in crisis, to help you very much at all in sorting out medical options, choices of therapy, or selection of physicians.

Medicine is a funny business. Everybody talks about it. So, you will hear quackery, gimmickery, myth and even claims of magic and miracle before you can bat an eye, from biased, honest, and ill-informed friends.

Remember, your body is not a hermetically sealed machine. It needs maintenance. It demands of you, a knowledge of how it works and an understanding of what might go wrong and attention to symptoms which might suggest the beginning of an unwanted problem.

It asks that you undergo certain periodic inspections, preventive maintenance. And it begs you not to

undertake certain risks. It also asks you to find a bright, knowledgeable, and caring physician to help you.

You must expect and demand quality in the care of your body. You are never arrogant in doing so but you are being a discerning and shrewd keeper of the temple. After all health is your most prized possession.

And most physicians are hard-working, dedicated human beings who still, even in these times, find it easy and fulfilling to care for their fellow human beings. I hope then you will find the right one for you.

9 Things To Remember

1. Take responsibility for your own health and well-being.
This is what you should and must do. You do not have to be your own doctor but you must make informed choices about the doctors you consult, the hospitals you entrust your body to, and the treatments and medications you take.
2. Stand up for your right to ask questions.
Persistence pays off. A doctor may not want or be prepared to answer all your questions. Ask them anyway. If he or she is too busy at your best moment, ask for a good time to call, or make an appointment for a consultation.
3. Be curious.
Don't be afraid to admit you don't know. Ask what, when, how, why, where, and how much. Probe.
4. Consider your options.
Options give control. Weigh the doctor's recommendations about treatments for serious illness on the balance of lifestyle, cost, probability of a good result, probability of serious complications, your philosophy of life and death, and the season of life you're in.
5. Reduce fear and worry through knowledge.
Don't waste energy on fantasy, illusion, and imaginary concerns.
6. Check your assumptions. Think!
You could be misinformed. Your doctor could be mistaken. Your friends could be wrong. Your family could be ignorant. Think.
7. Build a relationship of trust with your doctor.
8. Ask and you shall find out.
9. When you find out — share. And you will be blessed.

I encourage you to use these Healthnotes in innovative ways for your own good and for the good of those around you.

Take action!

Taking action will bring forth genius, magic, and power. Theory is good for the intellect, but action is good for the soul. It's also good for your health and for your mental health.

Forget about taking action next week. Forget about taking action tomorrow. Forget about taking action in one hour.

Begin thinking right now of someone who can use help and encouragement. Take action now. Make a copy of one of the Healthnotes pages, send it out.

It's okay if you start small, but do it now. Then, keep right on taking action – bigger and better action each step of the way – so long as you are able to breathe.

Remember, it's a certainty:

You will never find true happiness
without taking action
that will benefit someone else.