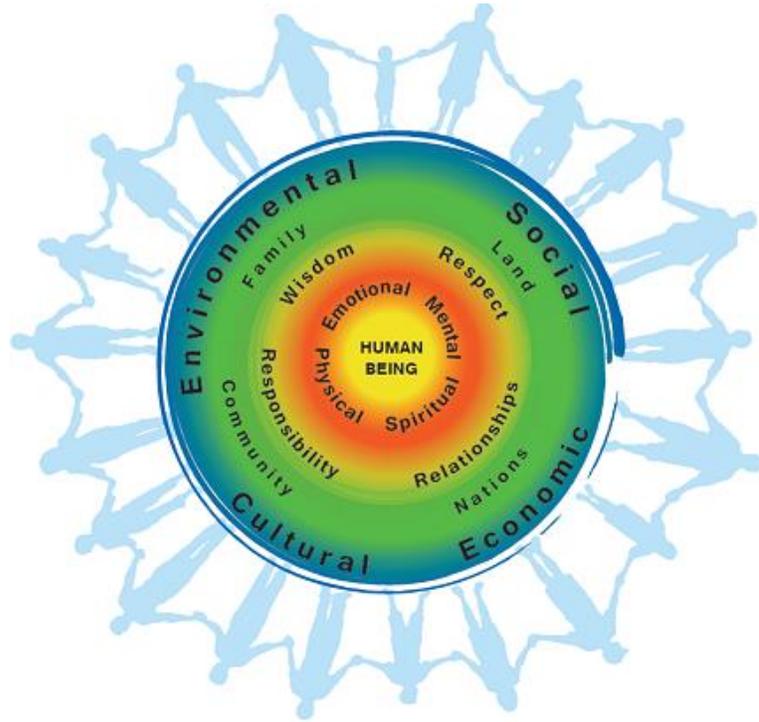


# Achieving Optimum Mental Health

The First Nations Health Authority holistic wellness through this visual depiction. It was created based on other models, suggestions, ideas and concepts from traditional teachings and approaches shared by First Nations healers and elders at gatherings convened by the FNHA and its predecessor - the First Nations Health Society. This representation was developed by the FNHA with input from Federal and Provincial government partners to create the Wellness Streams.<sup>1</sup>



This approach to achieving a healthy lifestyle, includes four wellness streams:

- ✚ Being Active,
- ✚ Eating Healthy,
- ✚ Nurturing Spirit,
- ✚ Respecting Tobacco.<sup>2</sup>

For more information on the wellness streams, go to: [Wellness Streams \(fnha.ca\)](https://www.fnha.ca/wellness-streams).

**Video Resource: Eight Principles to Achieve Optimum Mental Health**, Dan Banos (TEDx Rockhampton, 21.22 minutes)

1. Nutrition – go plant based, limit meats to 5 times per month
2. Exercise – diminish anxiety and depression
3. Water – drink water to support brain functioning and greater clarity of mind
4. Sunshine – appropriate amounts for better concentration, greater levels of sound sleep
5. Temperance – balance, reduce or eliminate mind changers (alcohol, addictive drugs) for better mental health performance
6. Air – oxygen cleanses the blood, happy brain
7. Rest – strive for 8 to 9 hours per night for mental clarity, to think objectively
8. Trust – gather regularly with those you love and trust, live longer, live happier<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [First Nations Perspective on Health and Wellness \(fnha.ca\)](https://www.fnha.ca/wellness-streams). Accessed 27 April 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> [8 principles to achieve optimum mental health | Dan Banos | TEDxRockhampton - Bing video](https://www.tedxrockhampton.com/2022/04/21/dan-banos-8-principles-to-achieve-optimum-mental-health/). Accessed 25 April 2022.

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*Friendship, good social relations and strong supportive networks improve health at home, at work and in the community.*  
~Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003:22 (Reading, 2013)

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## **The 10 Most Important Actions to Insure Optimum Health, Article by Alan Goldhamer, 2020**

Goldhamer suggests, “optimum health cannot be bought, it must be earned and it comes with a price and the price is healthful living.”



**1. Avoid the use of drugs and exposure to environmental toxins.** (Including alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, other recreational drugs, over-the-counter and prescriptions drugs whenever possible, and environmental toxins including radiation, pesticides, herbicides, volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, etc.)

The use and abuse of recreational drugs, including nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, cocaine, methamphetamines, etc. results in the artificial release of the pleasure chemicals in the brain, including dopamine. This can result in a habitual pleasure trap (abuse and addiction) that can undermine the health and happiness. In addition, the use and abuse of over-the-counter and prescription medications and environmental toxins and radiation all contribute to a state of toxicity that must be minimized if optimum health is to be achieved.

**2. Adopt a health promoting Vegan diet.** (avoid meat, fish, fowl, eggs and DAIRY products.)

Adopting a health promoting Vegan diet (free of all animal foods including meat, fish, fowl, eggs and dairy products) is one of the most important actions someone can take to promote optimum health and avoid the diseases of kings. These diseases include cancer (including breast, colon, prostate and lung), heart disease (including heart attack and stroke), diabetes and autoimmune disorders.

**3. Avoid the use of highly refined foods.** (including: added oil, salt, sugar and refined flour products)

Highly processed foods, including oil, flour, sugar and added salt artificially stimulate the pleasure chemicals of the brain, including dopamine, resulting in an addictive-like pleasure trap analogous to drug addiction. The overconsumption of calories that is a major contributing cause of the epidemic of obesity in industrialized countries.

**4. Engage in regular aerobic exercise** (20-60 minutes of moderate aerobic activity most every day)

We must overcome our innate energy conserving mechanisms and obtain 30-60 minutes, most every day, of aerobic activity, including, walking, hiking, biking, dancing, swimming or similar activity. It is wise to combine this aerobic activity with stretching and strengthening and the use

of sound ergonomics in order to maximize fitness and functional capacities so critical to optimum health.

**5. Insure plentiful high-quality sleep** (7-9 hours of high-quality sleep is needed to wake spontaneously, feeling refreshed)

One of our frequently overlooked health promoting actions is a good night's sleep. Much of the body building and repairing associated with healing are powerfully stimulated during the deepest phases of sleep. Most people sleep best in a cool, dark, and quiet place. How much sleep is enough? In general, it is desirable to get enough sleep (7-9 hours for most adults) such that you wake spontaneously, feeling refreshed.

**6. Obtain appropriate exposure to sunshine and fresh air** (20-40 minutes of generous skin exposure while avoiding burning)

Essential nutrients, including vitamin D are formed when the skin is exposed to sunlight. This is necessary to insure optimum calcium absorption and bone health as well as optimum immune function. By avoiding excess exposure to the sun, particularly at mid-day, we can avoid the damaging effects of sunburn. If adequate sun exposure is not possible, vitamin D supplementation may need to be considered.

**7. Create a supportive social network** (amongst the people you meet, like and love)

Human beings are social creatures who need to effectively deal with 3 kinds of relationships; with the people we meet, the people we like and the people we love. Cultivating emotionally supportive interpersonal relationships can minimize the consequences of social isolation that is common when people step outside the social norms, especially as they relate to dietary and lifestyle issues.

**8. Insure adequate vitamin B12**

Hygienic practices help to protect us from parasites, toxins and consequent disease and also minimize our exposure to bacteria, which are the sole source of vitamin B12. Although our need for this essential nutrient is small and it stores well in the human body, whole body depletion can occur in long-term vegans, leading to elevations in homocysteine and increased risk of heart disease. B12 deficiency can also be associated with neurological disorders (neuropathy) and megaloblastic anemia (pernicious). Periodic testing for methylmalonic acid (MMA) and supplementation if indicated will prevent one's health from being compromised by vitamin B12 deficiency.

**9. Fast when appropriate** (seek guidance)

Fasting involves the complete abstinence of all substances except pure water in an environment of complete rest. Fasting gives the body an opportunity to rapidly do what it does best: cleanse and heal itself. Fasting should be undertaken with the guidance of a doctor trained and experienced in fasting supervision.

**10. Educate and inspire yourself using the best quality materials available.<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> [The 10 most important actions to insure optimum health \(nutritionstudies.org\)](https://nutritionstudies.org), Article by Alan Goldhamer, 12 December, 2010, updated 24 March, 2020.