

What Makes Us Healthy?

Sixteen Topics on Our Health and Well-being

Christofer Bullsmith

Toshiyuki Kimura

Satomi Yonekawa



TSURUMI SHOTEN

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Toshiyuki Kimura
Satomi Yonekawa

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Preface



One goal of this book is to introduce some of the important health-related issues currently facing us as individuals and as a society. Against a background of environmental problems and demographic changes, familiarity with these areas is an essential basis for making informed choices about health and well-being.

The second and equal goal of these chapters is to provide learning opportunities for students of English. Many English texts in Japan have unnaturally difficult vocabulary with a glossary in Japanese, and unnaturally restricted grammar and sentence length making the logical structure unclear. Readers used to this style struggle with authentic English texts: sentences will seem too long, and grammar too varied. Readers may also be unused to guessing or learning the meaning of new words by using information in the text, and unused to following or evaluating the logical structure. This book is therefore written in a style closer to those authentic English texts, providing readers with opportunities to get used to reading longer sentences, understanding logical structure, and discovering the meaning of new words by using information in the text. These skills are vital for anyone needing to read English materials published outside Japan.

Christofer Bullsmith

UNIT 1



What is “Health”?



There is a flood of information these days pushing us to be healthy . . . to eat healthy foods, exercise healthily, and make healthy lifestyle choices. We hear debates about public health and worry about health expenses. The governments of most countries have a ministry just for health. And of course the United Nations has a special agency for health: the World Health Organization or WHO. Although we all spend quite a lot of time thinking about health, have you ever taken a moment to think about what health is? 5

The definition that your dictionary will probably suggest is simply that health is “absence of disease”. Someone with a disease is unhealthy; someone with no disease is healthy. This seems reasonable, provided we understand “disease” in a wide sense that includes any kind of pain, injury, or problem. It also needs to include not just physical problems, but also mental ones. After all, if someone is severely depressed, or has such strong phobias that they can’t leave the house, then we can’t call them “healthy”. Mental and physical are both important dimensions of health. On this understanding of “health”, then, the job of the health professional is to help people be free from disease, both physical and mental. 10 15

However, the constitution of the WHO defines health differently, as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and *not merely the absence of*

disease or infirmity". 61 countries adopted this constitution in 1946, just after the end of World War II. Though the world has changed considerably and the WHO constitution has been amended four times since, the definition has not been changed and is still very influential. 20

There are two main differences between our first definition and the WHO one. Firstly, the WHO recognizes a "social" dimension in addition to the physical and mental ones. "Social health" often means the factors in society that affect health: 25 for example, access to healthcare, education, and the distribution of wealth. These political issues are a priority for the WHO, but probably not what is meant by "social well-being" here. For individuals, social health is about having good relationships with other people.

Secondly, the WHO definition mentions "well-being". This is a positive word 30 that suggests happiness. If we accept this definition, then, someone with a disease, or who is not generally enjoying their life, is unhealthy; someone with no disease who is generally enjoying their life is healthy. On this understanding of "health", the job of the health professional is to not only help people be free from disease, both physical and mental, but also to help people be happy. 35

Ultimately, the WHO definition of "health" is probably a little better than our first definition. Social health is very important: relationships are vital for mental health, and also for the support of physical health. A good social life helps us enjoy life more and live longer, not only by keeping us active, but also simply because friends can help us notice and recover from health problems. Happiness is very important too: 40 long-term unhappiness is linked to mental and physical health problems.

The lesson for health professionals is clear: just fixing a disease isn't very useful if the patient is very unhappy and has no social life. When appropriate, good health care should include not only helping patients recover from disease, but also helping them with lifestyle choices that could improve their social life and overall happiness. 45 Long-term, an introduction to a support group or good relationship advice could be just as important as the bottle of pills.

Notes

line

- 1 **pushing us to be healthy** 「健康であるよう私たちが急^せき立てる」
- 5 **the World Health Organization or WHO** 「世界保健機関、すなわち略して WHO」(1948 年創設；本部 Geneva)
- 9 **absence of disease** 「病気に罹^かっていないこと」
- 10 **provided** 「もし~とすれば」(= if)
in a wide sense 「広い意味で」
- 13 **phobia(s)** 「恐怖症」
- 14- **On this understanding of “health”** 「『健康』をこのように捉えれば」
- 15 **health professional** 「医療従事者」
- 17 **constitution** 「憲章」
- 17- **a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being** 「肉体的にも、精神的にも、そして社会的にも、すべてが満たされた状態にあること」 well-being は「満たされていること(状態)」、「安寧」、「福祉」、「幸福」などの意。
- 22 **is still very influential** 「今でも大きな影響力をもっている」
- 26 **access to ~** 「~を得るための権利、~にあずかる手段」
- 26- **These political issues are . . . probably not what is meant by “social well-being” here** 「これらの政治的懸案は、WHO にとって取り組むべき優先事項であっても、おそらく、(そうした政治的懸案は)ここ(WHO の憲章)で謳^{うた}われている『社会的安寧』(社会的に満たされた状態)の意味する内容とは違うだろう」
- 42 **just fixing a disease isn’t very useful** 「病気を治すだけではあまり役立ったとは言えない」
- 43 **When appropriate** 「(良き医療が)適切に施される場合は」

Exercises

I Vocabulary

- Which word can best replace the word “debates” (line 2)?
 (A) fights (B) arguments (C) advice (D) worry
- Which word can best replace the word “vital” (line 37)?
 (A) important (B) useful (C) positive (D) special

II Reading Comprehension

1. What is the main point of the passage?
 - (A) Health professionals should give out relationship advice and bottles of pills when they meet patients.
 - (B) Health professionals should take a moment to think about what “health” means.
 - (C) We should probably think of “health” as including not just absence of disease, but also happiness and good social relationships.
 - (D) We should probably think of “health” as meaning absence of disease, including all pain, injuries, and problems.

2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)?
 - (1) Few countries have a government ministry concerned only with health.
 - (2) The WHO is particularly interested in political issues like education and the distribution of wealth.
 - (3) Having friends helps us be happy but doesn't help us live longer.

3. Fill in the blanks using the words in the box.

When we visit a ⁽¹⁾ _____, we don't usually think that we will be asked how many good friends we have! But if we accept that good ⁽²⁾ _____ help keep us free from disease, and also ⁽³⁾ _____ more quickly from disease, then perhaps doctors and nurses should be asking questions like this. Do you think health ministries should ⁽⁴⁾ _____ money to help people make friends and ⁽⁵⁾ _____ their relationships?

suggest	constitution	relationships	spend
health professional		improve	recover