



TOWARDS WELLNESS:

Exploring Alternative Therapy

By Jana Panter, ND, CCST

Ah, Wellness! We all seek it, but how do you find it? We've heard the stories - the coworker whose special diet healed their arthritis, or the neighbor who swears acupuncture cured their back spasms. It sounds great but how do you decide which approach is right for you and find a qualified practitioner? The choices can be overwhelming. Here are some guidelines to help on your path to wellness.

First, be proud that you're committing to taking better care of yourself! Then take a deep breath and recognize that it may take some time, research and a little patience to plan your best path forward.

Begin by defining your goals and motivations and your concerns and limitations; what are your primary health concerns, what kind of changes are you willing to/want to make to your life, where do your curiosities and fears lie, and what kind of resources (time and money) can you invest?

What kinds of practitioners do you want to work with, and what approaches are most appealing?

Think of wellness as a progression instead of an absolute; I'd like to sleep better vs. I must get 8 hours every night. If wellness is only achieved once you're as fit as a professional athlete, as smart as Einstein and spiritual as the Dalai Llama then you'll miss all the little improvements that will accumulate into big ones.

Living in Seattle you're fortunate to have excellent and diverse therapies and therapists. Learning about the different types of practices requires research as there isn't one comprehensive source. The Seattle Natural Choice Directory, Find a Natural Doctor, and The International Association of Healthcare Practitioners are excellent resources. Additionally, explore options close to your home in case you need many sessions, are tired after a session, or you have an urgent problem.

Before you decide about a practitioner check out their online presence: are they licensed, trained and qualified to practice this technique or approach, how much experience do they have, what is their success with your concerns? Many practitioners offer a free consultation. Your friend's enthusiastic recommendations might be wonderful but remember it's your path, be sure to make your own decisions.

To avoid feeling overwhelmed by the process keep a health journal. It will enable you to track your research, assess the methods and the practitioners, how it's all feeling, and your progress. It's easy to forget resolved issues and give up on some technique that's working.

After collecting all the data take time to listen to your intuition or gut feeling. What method/practitioner feels like they'll provide the best guidance for you on your pathway to wellness?

What is the value of feeling healthy and happy? Like most worthwhile endeavors—your path to wellness may take some effort but the rewards are vast. As the old saying goes—when you have your health you have everything.

