

# Health psychology

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Health Psychology Understanding and Improving Personal Health While it is important to study the way people respond to issues relating to health in general, and the ways in which the overall health conditions can be enhanced for all individuals; it is equally important to understand the value of the different domains of health for a single individual. Knowledge about one's own possible areas of concern is useful in identifying and responding to any issues as they come up, as well as to take preventive action such that one's overall health is enhanced.

After having completed and scored the test, I found that my lowest scores were in the domains of:

Spiritual & Psychological Health

Fitness

The score for fitness was the lowest at 31 out of 80; while the score for Spiritual and Psychological health was the next lowest at 46 out of 80.

Although these scores were not extremely low or bad, they do highlight the areas that need to be looked at to ensure that preventive steps are taken.

Fitness

The lowest score I obtained was in the area of fitness, meaning that I am not as physically fit as I am emotionally. Cognitively, I understand the value of Fitness, and the benefits it affords. Behaviours that lead to physical fitness reduce the chances of cardiovascular disease, delay mortality, reduce the chances for hypertension, enhance mood while reducing anxiety and depression (Taylor, 2006; p 82-3). Fit persons also show better endurance, improved muscle tone and strength, and lowered risk of diabetes (Taylor, 2006; p 82-3). Such lowered risk of physical illness reduces stress related to health, as well as enhancing mental health. People who are physically fit

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often have a better self image, higher self efficacy, along with lower perceived susceptibility to illness and faster recovery (Lafreniere & Cramer, 2005; p. 183, 190).

In order to enhance my physical fitness, I have decided to focus on some behaviour that I scored very low on in the scale. For one, I plan to include aerobic activities into my daily routine. I plan to start with adding a 20 minute brisk walk to my routine 3 times a week to start with; and shall then increase intensity and time as possible. I plan to make small lifestyle changes rather than only major ones; like walking to a location when possible, taking the stairs, and doing breathing exercises and stretches during long periods of sitting. I also plan to expand my reading to include a better understanding of the means to and importance of physical fitness, so that I am able to internalise the value of fitness.

#### Spiritual & Psychological Health

My score on Spiritual and Psychological health was 46 – slightly above the halfway mark; and again, though not a bad score, I appreciate the room for personal growth and development. On further observation, I realize that my score on items for spiritual health were the lowest scored. I recognise the value of healthy spiritual and Psychological attitudes in the development and maintenance of overall health. Spiritual and psychological health goes beyond the absence of a disease, and these concepts deal with achieving a state of health that encompasses the mind as well as the body (Taylor, 2006; p. 244). An individual's thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and emotions shape the way that individual views and responds to changes in their bodies and in their health.

Simply making changes in my physical exercise or diet will not improve the  
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attitudes and thoughts that I find uncomfortable. Thoughts about death and disability worry me, and I still need to understand and resolve my own spiritual stand. It is important that I be able to question, and thus understand my own belief system. I also need to be able to find a way to express my emotions properly. In order to enhance these areas, I believe that I need to read literature on belief systems similar to my own, particularly in areas that I am confused about. I also need to understand other belief systems, so that I am able to understand their importance for others. I also plan to engage in discussion with others about these topics so that I am able to formulate my thoughts about spirituality and living. I often find that I am unable to adequately express my emotions, and I believe that I need to practice doing so with others I trust. If necessary, I also plan to take help so that I can practice exhibiting difficult emotions in a safe environment.

#### Works Cited

Lafreniere, Kathryn D. & Cramer, Kenneth M. "Applying Social Psychology to Health". *Applied Social Psychology*. Ed. s Schnider, Frank W., Gruman, Jaime A., and Coutts, Larry M. London: Sage, 2005. Print.

Taylor, Shelley E. *Health Psychology*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. Print.