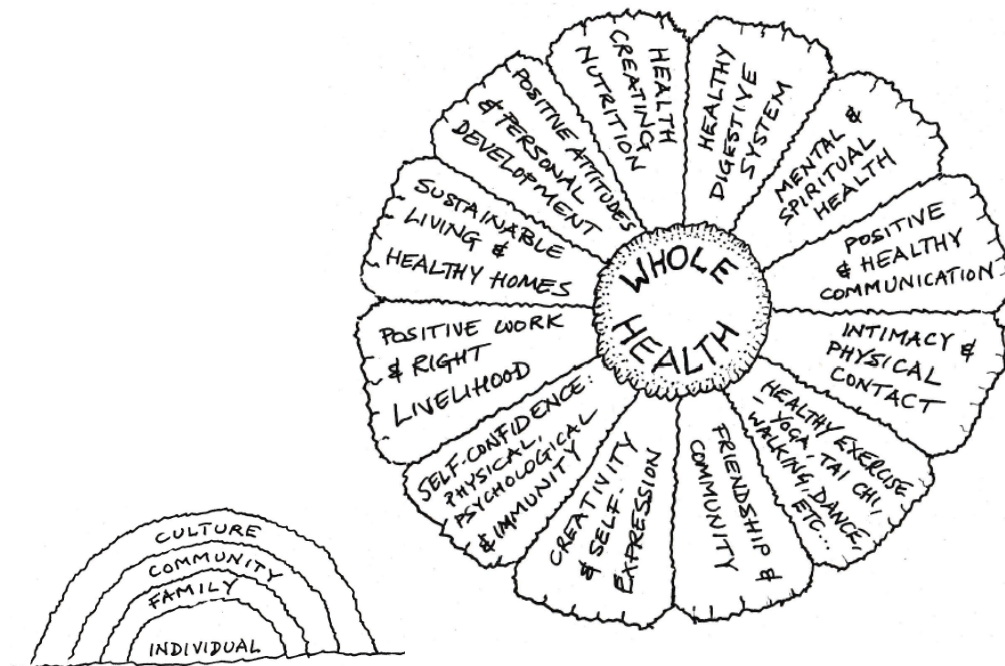




by Steve Charter – at www.eatmoreraw.org

THE TWELVE PETALLED FLOWER OF HEALTH

Whilst there is a lot more to food than meets the eye, there is also a lot more to health than diet or nutrition. So it's very important to consider the dimensions beyond diet, food and assimilation that contribute to a natural process of creating more complete, whole health for yourself and others. Overall 'real health' will arise naturally for individuals, families, communities or for a whole culture from bringing together the pieces of the whole health zigsaw puzzle, which work together beneficially to create real health. This is permaculture design of real health:



1. Health creating nutrition
2. Digestive health: healthy assimilation, elimination and detoxification
3. Exercise: Yoga, Five Tibetans, Tai chi, Aikido; walking, cycling, gym work or dance
4. Mental & spiritual health: meditation, spiritual practice/mental exercise & improvement
5. Positive communication e.g. using practices such as nonviolent communication (NVC)
6. Intimacy and physical contact e.g. loving intimate relationships, massage, etc
7. Friendship and community
8. Creativity and self-expression, plus laughter and enjoyment
9. Self-confidence: in physical and health terms, and in spiritual or psychological terms
10. Right livelihood: work that contributes to creation of health or sustainability
11. Sustainable living and healthy homes
12. Positive attitudes & a personal development path, towards whole health and fulfillment



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To achieve 'Whole health' or 'Real Health', ideally all the above can work together – however, for many, realistically *3-6 of the above together will make a real health difference. This is also a realistic and achievable goal for most people – think about it for yourself.*

Physical exercise, relief of tension and body movement is required for excellent health. In particular, it keeps the lymphatic system active and helps our breathing - as 60% of our energy is said to come from the air we breathe (via the burning of oxygen in our cells) this is very important. This is one reason why physically active people on a poor diet can maintain excellent fitness ... until they become less active, when they 'crash'. Then the effects of a bad diet often hit them hard, and suddenly they become ill.

As well as Yoga, The Five Tibetans, Tai Chi or Aikido (particularly the Ki school), dancing is excellent - and for the more physical and 'sporty' types the Royal Canadian Air Force 5BX programme was designed to get pilots to peak fitness with just 11 minutes of very carefully designed exercise per day. Mike Nash's *Aggressive Health* is ideal for the fitness junkie who likes a lot of detail, combining a health creating diet with a powerful exercise regime.

Deliberate exercise is an area in my life where I have not been consistent. I remain a generally active person, and in the past (up to my late 20's) playing a lot of sport, plus plenty of cycling and walking kept me generally fit. I have practiced Tai Chi and the Five Tibetans for extended periods with very significant effects, and now do yoga on a regular basis. I briefly dabbled with the 5BX programme, enough to know that it can generate high levels of fitness in a very short space of time.²

In a world which we are told is 'dangerous', where we are told to constantly fear attack and physical violence, learning some form of self-defense (physical and psychological) can help bring greater freedom in our lives, creating a feeling of greater self-confidence. Survival skills can also be very beneficial, building confidence that you can survive living simply in the great outdoors. Living very simply made a big difference to me, and for about for 5 years I lived close to nature, 'off-grid' without mains water and electricity – in a large ex-army tent, as part of a low impact healthy living project, with a beautiful river to bath in, and many other benefits from not having the things that most people consider essential, until they experience that they are not!

For me, going raw has strengthened my psychological confidence because I feel a strong immunity to normal humdrum illnesses. But, on the physical defense front I still need work. Aikido – 'The Way of Peace' - is a powerful form of self-defense - it does not teach attack. The Ki Aikido school emphasises nature, peace and harmony, as well as giving and mutual benefit –the dramatic and centering effect it has had on a good friend of mine has been obvious. To tackle and transform the challenges of the world and daily life, we need power but not aggression. Aikido and other spiritually-based martial arts are powerful parts of the personal web-of-health, bringing more confidence and direct positive action, as well as more health and joy into our lives.

In designing whole health, it can be a challenge to juggle the various balls in one's life and keep them going all together. It's a challenge to try to spin the complete web. Personally, I am not there and don't pretend to be. I have explored many of these elements in isolation and in combination with several others. As well as being all raw for lengthy periods, from time to time I have even managed seven or eight at the same time. These explorations have all had positive effects on my life, so I am hoping to share knowledge and enthusiasm, without giving myself a hard time for 'not being perfect', or not bringing all these elements together at the same time in my life consistently. I have made choices about my priorities, according to the time and the place I'm at in my life.

With significant life changes, it's often not a linear progression from one step to the next. What I see is a beautiful spider's web of health and sustainability, with each segment connected by any number of finely spun strands. You can enter into the web from any number of the 12 anchoring strands that connect it to the world it is a part of. Imagine such a web for yourself, where you might choose to enter, and what strands to your web you might have ... Imagine.

¹ A small, neat book - *The Royal Canadian Air Force 5BX Programme*, Penguin (1986).

² See the small and fascinating book *The Five Tibetans*, Christopher Kilham, Healing Arts Press (1994) – also *Just Eat An Apple*, Jan – Feb 2001 edition (issue 15) for an excellent summary by Frederic Paténaude.



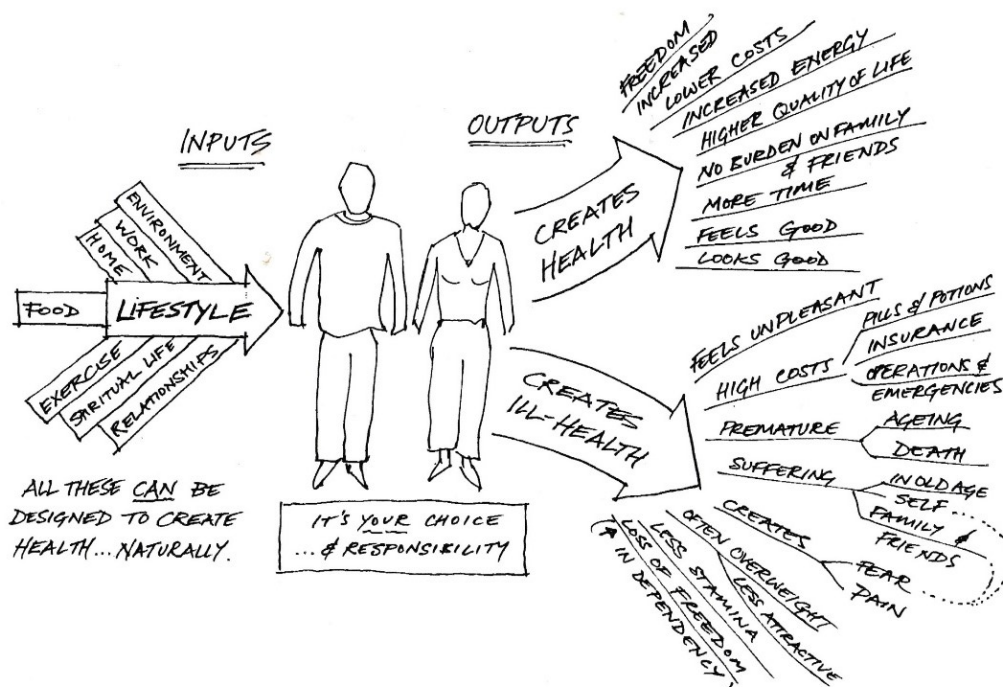
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For example, you might find that gradually rising environmental or climate change concern leads you to an understanding of the interconnectedness of Earth Care – People Care – Fair Share issues ... which then may lead you to change your shopping, food buying and eating habits, for ethical and intellectual reasons. Then you may realize that health and ecological issues are intimately linked... leading you on to vegetarianism, veganism or raw food; doubling the amount of 'raw' in your life, and halving or cutting out the 'meat, wheat 'n' dairy' in your life.

With these changes you may discover it doesn't feel like you thought it would. In fact you find that it feels easy, positive and liberating. This then opens new doors for you... which you push wide open and stride through with greater confidence. It leads you to more understanding and empathy for yourself and others - which again feels good. So with a confident spring in your step and a smile on your face you start off down the personal development path. This in turn leads to yet more self-confidence, greater exploration and more life-changes, letting go of old blockages about what 'spiritual' means. So you freely choose to start to meditate... and a whole new world is opened up to you that you never realized existed before.

Just imagine a little longer how things can change, how one thing can lead to another... and how good that might feel.

All these life changes add up, and they can happen one by one, or in a cluster, creating positive ripple effects in the 'outside' world. You can start by passing through any one of these 'doorways'. Any one of them can lead you to other areas of discovery and growth. Like a stone thrown in a pond, the ripple effects can spread through your life and change your thinking and behaviour in other areas.



For me meditation was the doorway into all the other areas of concern – where some doors were ajar, suddenly they started flying open. This led to a raised level of general awareness, with my underlying interest in nature growing into fully blown environmental concern, with an eco-spiritual seed sown which has grown strongly ever since. My



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opening eyes led me to do a 2 week permaculture design certificate course back in '94 where, by chance, I met a knowledgeable and experienced raw fooder (when few of these were about!). Being an ecologically minded vegan already, that got me into the raw food thing. In turn all these things led me to want to live in a health conscious ecological community, with like-minded others, sharing similar concerns and visions. That created Ecoforest, which helped hundreds of people to experience a different kind of life. What I came to see through Ecoforest was that the changes in my life then directly enabled and created significant positive changes in other people's lives ... which then directly enabled and created significant positive changes in yet more people's lives ... and so it goes on ... the ripple effects flow on and on, even now.

The spider's web we each weave is the heart of our own personal 'web of life'. Each web has interconnected segments for your diet, shopping patterns, your work, exercise, meditation, food growing and so on. And your web is connected to a wide chain of effects in the outer world. It's also connected to a chain of effects in the inner world of mind, body, emotions and spirit. The web of internal effects is connected to the web of external effects. All these aspects of your life you can design to be mutually beneficial as part of a personal plan to redesign or fine tune your life.

So if you want to change the world, and to experience whole health, you have to start by changing and respinning your own web of life.

DESIGNING WHOLE HEALTH

The point of bringing permaculture into our work on natural health is reflected by the insight that underlies the *Real Health* philosophy - which is that real health in any part of a system can only be created if the whole system is healthy. So *individual health can only be created at its deepest level if the local-to-global system we are part of is healthy and naturally health creating*. Therefore *designing and creating naturally health creating human habitats* has to be fundamental to any wise approach to *environmental and human health creation*, which goes beyond just the 'me' mindset and attitude.

In addition to this there are two particular points about the role of permaculture in all this – one coming from the theory side, and the other from the totally practical side.

Firstly, in many ways there's a hidden hypothesis in this book – which is that:

If anyone truly applies the ethics, principles and practices of permaculture, or action-based approach to natural ecological thinking and design, to whole health, diet, natural nutrition and lifestyle then the most logical conclusion (and imperative) is the 'eat more raw' lifestyle.

Equally, if anyone truly 'gets' the deeper understanding of natural nutrition, and the supreme intelligence of nature and its pursuit of health, they should be growing food for themselves using permaculture systems, and be supporting ecological food supply chains.

Secondly, on the practical side, the most vital and nutritious foods are those that are eaten completely fresh. So growing and eating your own fresh food really does make a great deal of difference – even if it's just a little, but more so if it's a lot. So if you're looking to change and improve your diet and you're not already growing some of your own food then I encourage you to start growing some when changing your diet. And if you really understand the underlying reasons why eating more raw is beneficial, then you should also really understand the benefits of growing and eating more home-grown food, and act on that, even if it is on a small scale. And if you don't understand it yet, then contemplate it for a while longer, and contemplate through trying it.

In essence, permaculture is simply a way of embodying the principles and practices of nature – or the laws of nature - into a form of thinking and a practical system that we humans can apply to our lifestyles, the way we grow food, what we eat, and how we live. A practical example of this thinking is a 'fedge' - or 'food producing hedge' (i.e. fruits plus hedge-row salad plants such as hedge garlic) - is also a boundary, a sun-trap/wind break and a wildlife habitat, as well as a teacher and a thing of beauty. A forest garden is a multi-layered food producing system and a



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wonderful example of permaculture thinking and practice. For example, through careful design of a forest garden you can:

- protect and improve the soil and water resources;
- create a diverse supply of foods, timber and other outputs (fibre, medicines, etc);
- create an excellent habitat for wildlife;
- create a partially self-managing ecosystem - with plants, insects and other wildlife working together to meet each other's needs.

These are simple examples of permaculture thinking that are explained in more detail in the coming pages. The key point to get across is that permaculture is most easily learnt by applying its philosophy and techniques to our gardens, food growing systems and our homes. However, its principles, thinking and tools *are equally relevant and powerful if applied to our health*. So the following pages are intended to give you a feel for permaculture thinking, and are intended to expand the way you apply it in your life.

THE IDEA AND PRACTICE OF CREATING MANY BENEFITS

Permaculture empowers us to take greater control of our lives. It can be applied at the level of the individual, the household, the neighbourhood / community or the farm. It takes knowledge of self-seeding plants, perennial vegetables, fruiting trees and shrubs, herbs, companion planting, soil life, energy efficiency, composting, ponds, ground cover plants, climbing plants, water use, waste, renewables and appropriate technology, ecological building and much more, and gives you a method of enabling them to work together. Wherever permaculture is applied, a basic principle is to seek to create several benefits at the same time - not just one.

Whether you have a window sill or balcony, a medium-size garden, or a thousand acre farm, permaculture helps get more out, putting less in. It offers real opportunities to create healthy, sustainable lifestyles and living environments in urban, semi-urban and rural situations.

And permaculture thinking and design can help in any aspect of your lifestyle - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual nutrition, health and personal development. It involves developing the skills of working with nature, by generating a sense of interconnectedness, mutual-benefit and oneness. It sees everything that you are part of as a single extended system of trees, herbs, insects and wildlife - all working together for the health of the whole system, through living relationships. It is not a 'fluffy' perspective. Permaculture can be used in a very scientific or engineering-minded way too, to great effect. In fact, such an approach has massive potential. When you sense nature's diversity, dynamic stability, intelligence, abundance and creativity you can start to really work with that to create true health and sustainability.

So if you apply permaculture thinking in a concerted way to health, nutrition and your lifestyle then you'll probably end up significantly healthier.