

# Get Happy and Boost your Health

## Preface

Imagine you're going on the adventure of a lifetime. You have been granted six months leave from your job and responsibilities and you're going to do something truly adventurous and entirely different. Perhaps you have volunteered to help delivering food aid after a hurricane, or offered to work in an animal rescue centre for an endangered species. Perhaps you're being paid to crew a luxury yacht partway round the world, or photograph rare orchids in the Amazon. It's the sort of adventure that will be tough at times and you'll be stretched to your limit mentally, emotionally or physically - but you're excited about all that you will learn and experience. Before you leave, you get interviewed by the press who ask you, 'what will be your personal gain, considering the risks and dangers that you will be entering into?'

Now think about it in terms of any health condition. It is still the adventure of a lifetime but with one difference: you did not volunteer into it. There will be difficult times, dangers or depression but there is much to be experienced. But if we ask what you will gain from this adventure, how will you answer?

You might want to improve your physical well-being and fitness, discover emotional healing, develop your mental insight or reach towards spiritual enlightenment. It could be a chance to make peace with those around you or drop your inner critic and make peace with yourself. You could understand yourself at a deeper level and clear some of the garbage you inherited from previous generations. It is your opportunity to gain insights into yourself and others, and become a wise woman or sage, whatever age you are.

In my work as a homeopath for over twenty years I saw many hundreds of cases from children with eczema to the elderly with arthritis. As homeopathy treats the whole person I would ask about their thoughts, beliefs, moods and feelings and I saw a lot of grief, anger, anxiety and depression linked to ongoing disease. Sometimes these came as a result of the illness but more often they were there before the illness began.

When a homeopathic remedy works well - and there are 4000 to choose from so I didn't always get it right - the mind improves as well as the physical symptoms. In most cases, the negative beliefs, thoughts and feelings improve *before* the physical. This has been observed so often in clinic that homeopaths rely on it to understand the remedy reaction and to direct their next prescription.

I have come to understand that no illness will be truly healed until the emotional and belief patterns are transformed as well. There are many different and effective ways of doing this. You can go to counselling or therapy to understand yourself, you can go to a holistic practitioner like a homeopath, you can read self-help books, you can learn meditation to quiet your mind, you can study one of the many helpful courses on the Internet, or you can pray for forgiveness and practice forgiving others. All of these will work to a much higher potency if you record your insights and explore them further in a healing journal on a regular basis.

Simply thinking about your condition creates a looped tape in your mind that dwells on your symptoms, judges yourself and others as failures and then strives to justify some of your failings! It's not until you bring these issues out of your mind and into the present world, that you can really see them for what they are and make changes. This can be done by talking to someone like a friend, a counsellor or a therapist; or it can be done through self-examination in a journal.

A journal is something that you can add to at any time, in any style, in any location and it's cost free. It keeps a record of your previous insights and provides a safe space for quiet reflection. It does not even have to be written. If you are a visual person you might prefer to work with images rather than words. The issue is that you do the work on yourself and record it - *how* you put it in your journal is up to you.

You might predict that dwelling on and documenting your 'stuff' will make you feel even worse - and I agree, this will happen if you're recording events indiscriminately. It is far more beneficial to keep notes about the good things that have happened and forget about the down days. *Get Happy and Boost your Health* teaches you how to work safely with your issues and become more positive. You will learn how to deliberately and purposefully become more cheerful and flood your body with healing hormones.

I have been working with reflective journals, my own and other's, for over 20 years within the caring professions. Many health practitioners keep a working journal in which they can analyse and improve their work with patients or clients. I taught, supervised and wrote books on reflective practice; and when I was asked to help set up an international online college, I initiated a weekly journal assignment.

I developed the Positive Journal over several years and in this book I have explained it in full for the first time. You can use it as part of your general health and fitness regime or as part of a healing package alongside any medication or therapy that you are doing. You will be making it for yourself, creating a personal handbook that provides comfort, support, forgiveness and increased self-understanding. You will learn to prioritize your own self-care and self-compassion, becoming more kind to yourself and letting go of old destructive patterns of self-blame and negative expectation.

I use the word journal instead of diary. They mean the same thing but diaries can suggest a simple record of dates and events within a set year, while journals are more reflective and less tied to dates. They are as personal and individual as you want and will never be complete. The word journal is similar to journey, and I see the writer as someone who goes on a journey of self-discovery, without having to reach a fixed destination or goal.

You can read *Get Happy and Boost your Health* starting at the beginning and working your way through the chapters, or you can dip in and read what interests you most. I have put the details on how to set up your journal in chapters 8 and 9 and you might prefer to read these first. If you like to work creatively instead of using the written word, start with chapter 9. There is no right or wrong way to work with the material in this book, as long as you keep in mind that ultimately it ought to make you feel good. It's the same as going on your amazing adventure holiday: you go for the fun but you need to be willing to experience the tough times.

My aims in writing this book are to give you hope, optimism and autonomy about your health. It is not about sudden miraculous cures, but about making small changes step-by-step to improve your chances of better health and happiness. Even the smallest changes can have a positive impact on your health. You are more powerful than you think.