

Health and Well-Being

Sustainable Development Goal 3

Issues for Discourse with Youth

Bahá'í Discourse - Health

Sustainable Development Goal 3

3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



What is Health?

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States. ([World Health Organization](#))

Top 10 global causes of death

Global life expectancy in 2019: 73.4 years

Top 10 global causes of death in 2019

Ischaemic heart disease (8.9 million)

Stroke

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Lower respiratory infections

Neonatal conditions

Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers

Alzheimer disease and other dementias

Diarrhoeal diseases

Diabetes mellitus

Kidney diseases

Health and Environment

- 24% of all estimated global deaths are related to environment
- 3.2 million deaths every year from indoor air pollution from cooking fuels
- 4.2 million deaths every year from ambient air pollution by fine particulate matter
- Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress alone. The direct damage costs to health is estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion per year by 2030. (WHO)

Good Health

Make ye then a mighty effort, that purity and sanctity... shall distinguish the people of Bahá; ...that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, par. 129.14)

Purpose of Health

If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; and if it be expended to the benefit of the human world in general—even though it be to their material (or bodily) benefit—and be a means of doing good, that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane, and in devilish pursuits—then disease were better than such health; nay, death itself were preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era: An Introduction to the Bahá’í Faith*, p. 127)

Purpose of Health

Looking after one's health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or, he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [Star of the West](#), Vol. VIII, No. 18, p. 230; [The Throne of the Inner Temple](#), p. 19)

Contentment

It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread than to enjoy a sumptuous dinner of many courses, the money for which comes out of the pockets of others. The mind of a contented person is always peaceful and his heart at rest. He is like a monarch ruling over the whole world. How happily such a man helps himself to his frugal meals! How joyfully he takes his walks, how peacefully he sleeps!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era, p. 102)

Health for All

Issues of food, nutrition, health and shelter are central to the challenge of providing an adequate standard of living for all members of the human family. These issues cannot, however, be tackled solely as technical or economic problems. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition; establishing food security; providing adequate shelter; and achieving health for all will require a shift in values, a commitment to equity, and a corresponding reorientation of policies, goals and programs.

(Baha'i International Community, 18 Feb.1998, [Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development](#))



Cleanliness

It hath been enjoined upon you to pare your nails, to bathe yourselves each week in water that covereth your bodies, and to clean yourselves with whatsoever ye have formerly employed.... Immerse yourselves in clean water; it is not permissible to bathe yourselves in water that hath already been used.

(Bahá'u'lláh, [The Kitab-i-Aqdas](#), para.106)

Cleanliness

If the bather, instead of entering the water, wash himself by pouring it upon his body, it shall be better for him and shall absolve him of the need for bodily immersion. The Lord, verily, hath willed, as a bounty from His presence, to make life easier for you that ye may be of those who are truly thankful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, [The Kitab-i-Aqdas](#), para.106)

Cleanliness

*Wash your feet once every day in summer,
and once every three days during winter.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.152)

Physicians

Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas*, para.113)



World Health
Organization
Organisation mondiale de Santé

Healing by Material Means

The contagiousness of disease is rapid and violent.... If two bodies are brought into contact with each other, it is certain that microbial particles will be transmitted from one to the other. ...that disease is rapidly and violently transmitted from one body to another.

Should someone contract a grave illness or be physically injured, [spiritual] means will neither dispel the illness nor soothe and heal the injury ...unless assisted by the constitution of the patient, for a strong constitution will often ward off an illness.

Healing by Material Means

The science of medicine is still in its infancy and has not yet reached maturity. But when it reaches that stage, treatments will be administered with things that are not repulsive to the senses of taste and smell, that is, through foods, fruits, and plants that have an agreeable taste and a pleasant smell. For the cause of the intrusion of illness into the human body is either a physical agent or a nervous excitement and stimulation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, 73)

Healing

At whatever time highly-skilled physicians shall have developed the healing of illnesses by means of foods, and shall make provision for simple foods, and shall prohibit humankind from living as slaves to their lustful appetites, it is certain that the incidence of chronic and diversified illnesses will abate, and the general health of all mankind will be much improved.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp.153-156)

Healing by Material Means

As to physical agents, which are the primary cause of illness, their effect is due to the following: The human body is composed of numerous elements according to a particular state of equilibrium. So long as this equilibrium is maintained, man is preserved from sickness, but should this fundamental balance, which is the central requirement of a sound constitution, be upset, the constitution will be disrupted and illnesses will supervene.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, 73)

Healing by Material Means

...the equilibration of these bodily components can be accomplished by one of two means, either through medicines or with foods.

When this science reaches perfection, treatments will be administered with fragrant fruits and plants as well as with other foods, and with hot and cold waters of various temperatures.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [Some Answered Questions](#), 73)

Spiritual and Material Healing

Illness caused by physical accident should be treated with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of remedies should be considered. Moreover, they are not contradictory, and thou shouldst accept the physical remedies as coming from the mercy and favor of God, who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also.

(Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 587)

Spiritual and Material Healing

Bahá'u'lláh has ordained that in case of illness we should always consult the most competent physicians.... For prayer alone is not sufficient. To render it more effective we have to make use of all the physical and material advantages which God has given us. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes: spiritual and physical.

(From a letter dated 12 March 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Avoid smoking, alcohol, drugs

Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p.150)

Avoid smoking, alcohol, drugs

There is today a people who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p.150)

Visiting the Sick

We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering, it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill. In the East it is the custom to call upon the patient often and meet him individually. The people in the East show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted.

Prayer for Healing

Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.