

Pilar's Top 10 Tips on  
THE ART OF **Being**  
**Healthy**  
In an Unhealthy World

**By Pilar Gerasimo**

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, we live in a society where the idea of health and fitness is wildly popular, but where actually becoming a truly healthy person can be mighty tough to pull off.

There's a reason so many of us are struggling: We are living in a world that makes it a whole lot easier to be sick, overweight and depressed than to be healthy, happy and resilient.

We can change this mixed-up reality. We can reclaim our well-being and create a better, more blissful world. But it's going to take some revolutionary moxie to make it happen.

So here's my collection of practical suggestions and perspective shifts for setting your own healthy revolution in motion, and helping it grow. Starting with you and your body, right here, right now, one day at a time ...

## **1. Know what you are up against.**

Our culture currently produces more sick, overweight and depressed people than it does healthy, happy ones. There are many reasons for this, but the biggest is that global corporations and public institutions — from Big Food, Big Pharma, Big Healthcare and Big Media to the USDA, FDA and EPA — have established a deeply entrenched, politically enmeshed, corrupted status quo that is completely counter to health and vitality.

In other words, the reason so many people are now sick and fat is that our society and environments are WIRED UP to make people sick and fat. Some very wealthy and powerful special interests are making billions off this status quo, and they aren't going to stop anytime soon.

If you go along with the norms these interests have established, you will eventually become sick, fat and depressed, perhaps without even realizing what is happening to you, because it all looks perfectly normal and is likely happening to a lot of people around you, too.

Until you see this madness for what it is, you are destined to be part of it. So start seeing it.

## **2. Delight in being a deviant.**

It is possible to opt out of the sick status quo and begin creating a better world. Just know that if you choose to do what it takes to be healthy and thriving in our current crazy-unhealthy world, you are quickly going to join the ranks of a small but powerful minority — one that currently represents a single digit percentage of the adult population.

In essence, you will become something of a freak. You have to get comfortable with that, take pride in it, and on some level make it a part of your identity.

To become one of the healthy-happy few, you'll need to develop the capacity to make unconventional choices, to go against established norms, to question conventional wisdom, and to quickly recognize when the forces of our unhealthy society are messing with your mind and body.

You'll need to begin to take pleasure in your healthy deviance and find strength in the knowledge that you are refusing to be assimilated. You'll need to repeatedly wake up and

remember that you have got better things to do with your life energy than be sucked into the conventional vortex of doom.

Is any of this easy or convenient? Not at first, but it gets easier as you go, and particularly as you find other renegades like you. With time and practice, it actually turns out to be pretty fun. It is much easier than being chronically ill and miserable. And the more of us who do it, the easier and more automatic it will become.

### **3. Question authority.**

Some very official sounding sources (USDA, FDA, AMA, ADA, AHA) have been putting out some very bad, very outdated information for a very long time. (How long were trans fats totally okay and even recommended before they were officially not, and how long were they known to be dangerous before the FDA even considered banning them?).

Some very respected news and media organizations deliver that bad information and advice (in a serum of deceptive, manipulative advertisements) without hesitation. The net result is mass confusion and an endless stream of health-fracturing noise.

Don't be whipsawed by headlines or sucked in by a stream of endless articles and advertorials. Don't believe everything you read in the paper, in magazines or online, or in those official-looking brochures at your doctor's office, or that you're taught in high-school health class.

Who should you believe? Consider taking advice from healthy experts you deeply respect, and from other healthy people who have sustained long-term health and happiness themselves (but take their advice with a grain if they are trying to sell you on a magical fix or anything that sounds like a ponzi scheme). Then experiment on yourself to see what works for you.

## **4. Connect with your bigger “whys”.**

You probably have a lot of great reasons for wanting to be healthier and more fit. But obsessing about six-pack abs and buns of steel and thigh gaps is a dead end. These “aspirational” symbols have been plastered all over our media landscape because they are great at getting our attention, but mostly they breed dissatisfaction and self-loathing. And they largely ignore the biggest real payoffs of becoming healthy and fit.

There’s nothing wrong with wanting a great body. But we tend think that when we have that dream body, our life will suddenly be dreamy too. In fact, it works the other way around: Getting our life (values, vision, priorities, goals, time, choices, energy, relationships) in order is the most effective way to make our best bodies (and our best world) a reality.

*Ask: Why do you want to live in your best possible body? What does that body represent or say about you if/when you have it? If you had a high level of health, vitality and body confidence, what possibilities would open up for you? What resources would that free up? What would it be like if the whole world got healthier and happier, and optimal vitality was the norm rather than the exception? What if, due to popular demand, our society made healthy, sustainable choices easy, fun, affordable and convenient?*

Start digging into that stuff and you’ll start seeing some way bigger whys.

## **5. Learn the skills of the healthy person.**

Healthy, fit people get and stay that way not by luck or magic, but by gradually developing a serious knowledge and skill set and then doing the work. A sampling of areas where you’ll need skills and smarts:

- **food and nutrition** (choose, assess, shop, prep, cook, assemble, wrangle [and maybe grow] whole foods; read and understand food-product labels)
- **activity** (active pastimes, pleasures and pursuits; hobbies and adventures; fitness and athletics; body awareness and confidence)
- **quality of life** (time and stress management; input/output balance; self-care; community; scientific, media and environmental literacy)

- **personal development** (boundaries, beliefs, self-confidence, integrity, values, vision, goals, conscious choices, relationships, sense of purpose/spirit, continuous learning)

You can go as basic or deep as you like in any or all areas, and you certainly don't have to learn it all at once, but you do need to start where you are, the sooner the better. There's no shortcut for learning. Focus on developing healthy skills and taking healthy actions, and the outcomes will take care of themselves.

## 6. Simplify your approach to eating.

Our culture's approach to food is totally nuts, and this makes sane eating way harder than it has to be. Here are the basics that will change your body, mind and life forever:

- Reject most of what passes for "food products" and eat real, actual, unadulterated whole foods.
- Learn to cook. Assume that most of what you will see on menus and shelves is *not* made of actual food; learn how to discern and combine your best available options in any set of circumstances, and to avoid toxic food environments.
- Abandon quick fixes (miracle pills/powders). Quit playing numbers games (calories, carbs, grams, points).
- Make at least half of what you eat plants. Don't confuse "plant-based" foods (corn chips, pasta, fruit pops) and processed plant components (flour, sugar, vegetable oil) for *actual plants* (kale, arugula, chard, cucumber, cauliflower, sweet potato). Plants contain powerful phytonutrients and "information" (chemical instructions for your cells and DNA) that your body needs to create and defend your health.
- Avoid extruded foods (flakes, puffs, chips, fluffs, crisps, nuggets, clusters, sticks, tubes, "O"s, etc.). Also avoid any foods that prominently feature flour, sugars, starches, vegetable oils or that contain artificial flavors, colors or preservative additives of any kind.
- Eat plenty of fats and proteins sourced as selectively and as close to their original form as possible. (They will satisfy your appetite, balance your blood sugar and help

you avoid carb and sugar cravings.) Butter, olive oil and coconut oil are all fine. Egg yolks, too. Really.

- Don't be afraid of natural fats (even saturated fats) if they come from whole or very minimally processed (pressed/melted, not chemically altered) animals or plants. Sugar, flours, starches and industrially processed vegetable oils (NOT whole-food fats or dietary cholesterol) fuel the inflammation and hormonal chaos that lead to disease and obesity. Translation: You'd be better off eating pasture-raised pork belly than low-fat Pringles.
- Focus on quality. Seek out joyful, colorful, high-integrity sustenance. Prefer fresh, local, pasture-raised and wild over factory-sourced. Prefer intense, bitter, complex, aromatic and brightly colored over bland and boring.
- Insist on satisfaction. Learn how to be healthy *and* supremely sated. Pleasure counts, and is an essential factor in sustaining healthy eating over the long haul.
- Investigate and respect your food intolerances (gluten, dairy, corn, soy, eggs, nuts, nightshades, etc.). Watch your skin, guts, joints, mucus membranes and brain for clues about problem foods.
- Ditch dogma. Don't develop a superiority complex about your preferred way of eating (vegan, Paleo, grain-free, gluten-free, local-tarian, etc.; and avoid investing energy judging and converting others who haven't sought your counsel. Do share what is working for you, if asked. But don't preach or shame people who aren't eating the way you do.

## **7. Put your body in motion.**

Initially, fitness can seem even more confusing than food. Cardio, strength, balance, flexibility, interval training, recovery — aaaggh! Plus it sounds like work. That is part of why less than 10% of the U.S. population gets even 30 minutes of activity a day. Don't be one of the 90% just sitting there. It's not about the calories. Your body needs movement to function properly, period. Sitting = illness, depression and death.

Start noticing how many places people sit when they could stand, stand when they could move, move sloppy/sloggy when they could move with energy and precision, use

automation when they could use their own steam, settle for passive vs. participatory entertainment.

Find fun ways to move your own body, and to redefine yourself as an active person. Then surround yourself with other active people who have fun moving their bodies.

If you are sedentary and out of shape, make simply putting your body in motion your first priority. From there, to build strength and endurance, you'll need to move intensively enough or with enough resistance that you feel challenged, even for a few seconds at a time. If it's all *super* easy, it's not going to provoke any significant fitness change.

Choose a fitness approach that syncs with your personality, fitness status and access. Look into your options, learn some basic skills (start with bodyweight exercises like pushups, planks, lunges, squats, jumps and stair climbing), then keep on experimenting.

## **8. Find your tribe.**

Revolutions happen when people band together around a common sense of purpose (and/or outrage). Getting and staying healthy is substantially easier and more rewarding when you are hanging out with other healthy people — people who are choosing to make their health a priority, and especially those who already seem to have it pretty well figured out (see #5, above). Within their ranks you will find mentors, buddies, role models, collaborators, co-conspirators.

Where to find your tribe? Where healthy people hang: yoga studios, health clubs, CrossFit gyms, martial arts studios, dance spaces, running clubs, amateur sports leagues, food co-ops, community gardens, outdoor activity areas, meditation groups, athletic events, healthy cooking classes, etc.

Increasingly, workplaces, churches and other community centers are helping health-motivated people connect and support each other. But beware “blind leading the blind” situations. Conventional health promotions are often watered down and rife with misinformation.

## **9. Redefine your role.**

You are not a healthcare consumer. You are a human being — one whose natural state is one of vibrant health. The current healthcare system is not designed for humans, though, so proceed with caution any time you enter that system.

Recognize that within the conventional system, most so-called health professionals (while well intended and very confident in their expertise) know very little about you, or how to help you be optimally healthy. They are better at diagnosing and treating acute injuries, traumas and infectious diseases. They are not so good at preventing or reversing chronic health challenges of any kind. Nor are they good at helping you upgrade your health and fitness from so-so to super.

So if you want help with that stuff, start elsewhere, or trade up. Because if you go into the current, conventional healthcare system as a passive consumer, you are likely to find yourself on a downward spiral of symptom-suppressing prescriptions and procedures. Insist on dealing with [the root causes of your health challenges](#) instead.

## **10. Make it a party.**

Refuse to buy into the notion of health-seeking as a miserable slog or exercise in self-denial. Instead, consider it an extraordinary adventure, a conscious practice, a glorious exercise of your first and most essential human right.

Take this challenge on as a renegade mission, a kick-ass (s)hero's journey, a stealthy ninja foray. Decide to make it feel and look so seductive and fabulous that everybody wants a piece of what YOU'RE having.

You don't have to be perfect all the time. And trying will only leave you exhausted, bitter and more of a social outcast than you are already destined to be. So aim for 85-90%. Embrace flexibility when necessary. Allow for and seek out pleasure.

Occasionally indulging is great way to remember why you don't do this all the time. It's also helpful in warding off the kind of extremist self-denial that inevitably boomerangs. If and when you play outside your healthy practices (food, activity, sleep, etc.), stay aware. Notice how and why you are doing it, and what kind of satisfaction it is bringing you (or not).



In all things, emphasize willingness over willpower. Focus on going from good to great, not bad to good. Focus on actions vs. outcomes. Live a life you are proud of, and enjoy having a body that reflects the care, respect and appreciation you give it.

## **Bonus Tip: Pass it on!!**

Revolutions are WAY more fun (and more powerful) when more people are invited to the party. And if enough of us start living and demanding healthy change, we'll get this party rockin' in no time.

When people ask why you are looking so great, share what you are doing and why. As you learn and experience healthy change, speak your truth. Invite others to join you on the journey. But don't be surprised if they aren't all ready to come along for the ride quite yet. Remember, "normal" still has a whole lot of not-well people in its grip. And that's why this revolution is so necessary in the first place.

## **Want more good stuff?**

Get yourself on my mailing list at [PilarGerasimo.com](http://PilarGerasimo.com) so I can send you regular infusions of renegade wisdom and share sneak peeks of my forthcoming book, *The Art of Being Healthy in an Unhealthy World*.

Meanwhile, check out my *Manifesto for Thriving in a Mixed Up World*. Visit [RevolutionaryAct.com](http://RevolutionaryAct.com) to join the healthy revolution. And definitely nab your FREE and fabulous "101 Revolutionary Ways to Be Healthy" mobile app (available for lots of devices from their respective app stores).

You might also enjoy my one-hour video course, "[How to Be Healthy in an Unhealthy World](#)," which is based on this essay, and offered via the en\*theos Academy for Optimal Living.

Ooh! And connect with me via Facebook ([PilarGerasimo](#)), and on [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#) (@pgerasimo for all of those). Then we can stay in touch!