

In Pursuit of Wellness

-Holistic Health Mantras from the Experts to Heal our Mind, Body & Soul

- Anupama Sajeet

There is no greater wealth than good Health. And just like with all things precious, we realise the value of health only after losing it! But the good news is it's never too early or too late to work towards being a healthier you. And what better time than the New Year to work towards becoming the healthiest version of us! - Healthier by the mind, body and the spirit.



Dr. Nandita Shah



Dr. Kamna Chhibber



Dr. Sujata Shetty

A balanced life is like a three legged stool. Each leg - nutrition, fitness and wellness- is necessary and supports the other." - Ellie Krieger

For achieving an absolute and holistic feeling of wellness it is no longer enough to superficially treat or cure our bodies of physical malaises. We met up with three renowned Health experts, who specialise in each of the triad zones of **mind, body and spiritual wellness**, to explore what is it that ails our populace, especially the fairer sex.

Nutrition expert **Dr. Nandita Shah**, Mental Health specialist **Kamna Chhibber** and Wellness & Life coach **Dr. Sujata Kelkar Shetty** talk about the areas of concern in our modern living, the common health hazards faced by today's woman and how best to deal with it without having to swallow too many bitter pills. So read on for simple but helpful, life-altering tips to incorporate into our daily lives...

BODY SUTRAS - Going Back To Nature



Dr. Nandita Shah- Nutritionist, Founder of SHARAN (Sanctuary for Health & Reconnection to Animals & Nature) and Author of 'Reversing Diabetes in 21 days'.

From being a practising Homoeopath to an advocate of "Health without Medicines" Dr. Nandita Shah has come a long way. Having discovered the powers of whole plant-based foods in healing lifestyle ailments she went on to found SHARAN, an organisation devoted to spreading awareness about holistic health and reconnecting people to their natural state of perfect, vibrant health. Her mission: To empower one and all to make long-term lifestyle changes by going back to grassroots literally!

Q . From being a practising Homoeopath, how did you get started into the "Health without Medicines" approach to diseases?

A. While I was practicing, I realised that people get better with medicines but they come back with the same problem after 3 weeks or 3 months or 3 years. Medicines only control the symptoms. I realised that the main cause of any malady is our lifestyle, even modern medicine calls these diseases "Lifestyle diseases"- it's our faulty lifestyle. Just like all other living beings in nature, we must also eat according to our instinct. For instance, every mammal produces milk only for their young, we know that. We are the only species that drinks another species' milk because we have grown up believing that drinking milk is very good for us. Both vegetarians and non-vegetarians get the same diseases, because meat and milk have the same properties – high protein, high fat and no fibre.

Q . You claim in your book 'Reversing Diabetes in 21 days' and in your retreat programmes that diabetes and other lifestyle diseases are reversible through diet and lifestyle changes. Can you tell us about the retreat programmes held at SHARAN- like the '21-day Diabetes reversal' and 'Peas Vs Pills'?

A. The truth is the body always heals. For instance, if you get a fracture the body heals itself. If you get a fever or cough and you don't take any treatment you would still heal. Our body is always acting in self-preservation, and speaks to us through symptoms. Symptoms indicate that there is a problem and that we should take action to remove the cause. So the body always works to heal; as long as we get out of the way, we can be healthy! But, in general people don't

want to change anything. Do you want to stop what you are eating? And diabetes is not a life-threatening situation.

Our retreat is a 21-day retreat and the reason for this is **it takes 21 days to change a habit**. At the retreat we only eat and live as we have been designed by Nature to eat and live. That means eating whole plant based foods. We make people realise that making a conscious effort to eat healthy can be more fun than being sick. In this manner, we can treat many kinds of diseases - from auto-immune diseases, high blood pressure, migraine, asthma, joint pains to even cancer.

Q . Why do you think we humans have reached such a stage where the majority of what we eat causes more harm than good to us?

A. See, every single industry today is commercial. Be it the Food industry or the Pesticide industry- it is not looking into the health of people. But animals in Nature know how to heal themselves, then why do we as humans choose to be ignorant? We don't need to fall into the trap. The reason we are falling for the trap is we are conditioned from a young age. The very first thing our parents teach us is how to eat, and one of the first things they give us is cow's milk. Then by the time we grow up we think it's one of the best foods, so when we have children we also give it to our children without thinking, isn't it? Like we are living a conditioned behaviour. We are no longer connected to our basic, natural instincts. So we have to first get out of the conditioning. If we want anything to change, if we want to get better we must start thinking.

Q . What advice would you give to a layperson, if they wish to take control of their health ?

A. See, if you wish to get rid of a problem you need to understand the underlying cause of the problem and remove it. So all we are doing is understanding the root cause of the problem and removing it. For this we follow certain guidelines like:

- 1. Eating only plant-based food-** That means whatever one eats must only come from plants.
- 2. Avoiding refined white rice, white sugar, white flour, oil etc;** we can do all of our fabulous cooking without any of these products. We are the only species that makes our food less nutritious by refining it! And nutrients are the spare parts for healing. Also, try not peeling the vegetables or fruits as much as you can, because the maximum nutrition is found just under the peel.
- 3. Eating only organic food-** We are the only species that sprays our food with poison so other animals don't eat them! And other animals are smart (not to eat the pesticide-laced food).
- 4. Also, keeping in check and supplementing one's Vitamin B & D levels.**

So eat more of foods that are naturally available on earth like vegetables, fruits, seeds, beans and wholesome grains. For every single chemical that we put in our body has to be broken down by our liver and excreted by the kidney; it is a load on our body. Ultimately, it all depends on us, if we want to get better we should eat food which will heal us.

So folks, there is the writing on the wall! Switching over to a whole plant based diet is what Dr. Nandita Shah recommends to kick-start and boost our innate immune-system and take us on the road to healing.

MIND MANTRAS



Our mental health can affect our daily life, relationships, and even physical health. Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Even so, as a society we're yet to come to terms with seeking help from therapists or counsellors for any problems pertaining to our mental or emotional well-being.

Kamna Chhibber, Head – Mental Health, Department of Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, and a trained Psychotherapist shares her thoughts here on the importance of emotional health as much as our physical wellness:

Q . Why do you think stress and depression are on the rise today?

A. Today, stress is a modern day reality, regardless of the gender of the individual. For women the complication arises more so on account of the multiple roles they need to play, which oftentimes create an additional source of pressure. This can cause a woman to experience more anxiety, more pressure; feel like she constantly needs to meet unreasonable deadlines and expectations from different sources. In terms of stressors, for women it can become more difficult due to the expectations that surround them. Of course, now there's a shift happening where balancing of gender roles is being talked about. However it's a fairly recent and, probably, more of an urban phenomenon and it may take time to whittle down to a larger percentage of the population. Furthermore, biologically too, women are more susceptible to depression. According to statistics 1 in 4 women experience a depressive episode, in contrast to 1 in 10 men. For instance, during pregnancy our bodies constantly undergo a lot of changes- postpartum blues, postpartum depression are now known realities that affect women.

Q . Is there any relation between mental illness and our physical health disorders?

A. The more chronic or more severe a physical health related illness, the more likely it is to impact your mental health. The frequent occurrence of a health condition too can impact a person's mental health. Further, an illness in which you are struggling to identify the cause of, or treatment for, or struggle to come to terms with- these are critical factors that can contribute to mental health related issues. For instance a chronic and life threatening illness like cancer or even an illness like diabetes, which requires one to make many lifestyle and diet-related changes –may make one prone to having mental health issues leading to an increase in worry, anxiety or causing mood disturbances.

Q . Why do you think there is still a stigma attached to Mental illness?

A. For generations mental health related conditions have not been understood or have been largely misunderstood. And somewhere the stigma arises from there- one doesn't have an understanding of the underlying issue and hence this causes stigma. Secondly, people are fearful of sharing their mental state. It relates to their apprehension

of how they will be perceived after they were to disclose their diagnosis of having mental health related issue. An additional factor involves a lack of awareness of the causes of mental health related illnesses and an understanding that these are treatable. Hence people may want to distance themselves from the diagnosis, not want to acknowledge and accept it, or share it with others.

Q . Are there any early signs to reliably tell whether someone close is developing a mental health problem so as to have a timely intervention?

A. Each disorder is different but what could be an indicator is if it's been occurring for a few days continuously and its beginning to affect your relationships and functionality in your social, relational and occupational spheres. It is important to know that when you see a friend or loved one overly disturbed and continually staying so, not being able to bounce back, acting very differently from what they usually do, indicating that they feel very helpless, hopeless, wherein their relationships and functionality are getting impaired, then it can warrant the need to consult an expert.

Q . So when is the right time to take professional help or approach a professional?

A. Most situation-related issues can be resolved by talking to a friend or loved one. But if a situation continues to persist in a person's mind and **it's impacting one's thinking or functionality for an extended period of time, one may need external or professional intervention.**

Q . How can we as a society help overcome this biased mindset?

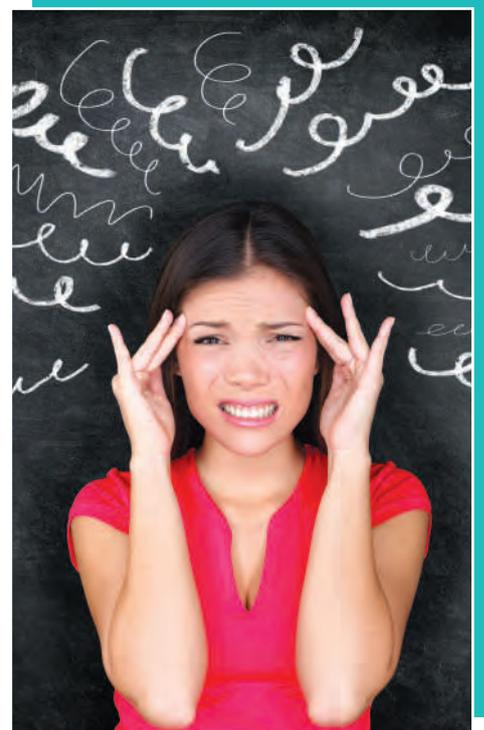
A. We need to understand that a significant proportion of the population is affected by mental health related problems. Surveys place prevalence rates at 12% of the population. Hence, it's crucial that these be identified and resolved as early as possible. It is equally important, that as a society we encourage talking openly about mental health related problems. We must provide the right information and educate people about what mental health problems are and that they are treatable. We need to cultivate sensitivity in our approach towards those who have mental health issues and consciously steer away from using language which is prejudiced against them.

Q . What are the kinds of treatment one can expect to deal with mental health problems?

A. Depending on the severity of the problem, it could involve Psychotherapy which involves working on thoughts or errors in thinking, building coping mechanisms, improving emotion regulation, or working to resolve issues of the past. Or the treatment can involve psychiatric medications. My suggestion is not to worry if you are not sure what the right treatment methodology is for you. Go to any health professional and they will guide or refer you to the right person. But it is important to seek help.

Q . Can you share a few tips with our readers to manage stress & incorporate mental wellness into their daily lives without making major upheavals in their day-to-day routine?

A. One thing we need to understand is that you need to get comfortable with who you are. One needs to let go of comparisons with others as to 'why am I like this' or 'why are others like that' etc. Let it go and bring some amount of contentment. It is very crucial to focus on relationships, focus on family and friends. Also, incorporate exercise & relaxing hobbies and mindfully engage in activities while stepping away from our digital devices and avoiding addictive substances like drugs, alcohol etc. Choose to talk and share if you struggle with something and don't bottle up. These little things if we can keep in mind broadly we can keep our minds healthy and happy. These are not treatments for a mental health illness but are critical in ensuring a good quality of life.



SOUL TANTRAS



And finally, after we have resolved our physical and mental health concerns it's time to take into account our holistic wellness, which encapsulates the wellness of our mind, body, as well as, spiritual wellness.

Dr. Sujata Shetty is a certified Life coach, Wellness consultant cum biological scientist who has been researching and writing on wellness for the last decade. Author of book '99 Not Out! - Your Guide to a Long and Healthy Life'.

Q. What exactly is Wellness and what does a wellness coach do?

A. Basically 'Wellness' means taking responsibility for the health of your mind, body and spirit. Wellness is about recognising that in the health of these 3 aspects lies your happiness and your ability to function at your best. Whether it's about functioning well at work or in your relationships at home- at the crux of it lies a strong mind, body and spirit. Recognising that is the first step. Knowing that this process of strengthening is in your control and that there is a lot that you can do for it, is the second. A wellness coach can help you with that. He or she can support you in achieving the wellness goals you set for yourself.

Q. Why do you think stress and lifestyle diseases are on the rise today?

A. In most people, quite a few lifestyle diseases are preventable. Research has shown us that 90% of the risk of Heart disease is attributable to behaviour risk factors. Research in GeroScience (Science focused on the biology of aging) has also shown us that lifestyle diseases and aging share common pathways. In other words, when we get lifestyle illnesses like diabetes and heart disease in our 40s and 50s we are ageing faster. One of the reasons that this is the case is because our whole lifestyle is stress inducing, rather than stress relieving, including the supposedly relaxing activities like binge watching TV or partying till late. It's no wonder then that the incidence of lifestyle illnesses is on the rise. Our bodies and minds are not made for this pace of life. We have to understand that while our bodies and minds are exquisite in their architecture and they work very hard to keep us healthy, they can only do so much to keep us as a whole in balance.

Q. What can one do to prevent falling prey to lifestyle ailments and how can we conquer them in a healthy manner?

A. Intermittent fasting (IM) is one Wellness principle that comes to mind which can help us prevent lifestyle illness, it helps your body clean out all the junk on a cellular level. A diagnosis of diabetes, thyroid disorder or heart disease however requires that a doctor be consulted before IM is practised. With IM you'll find that on the days you fast, your mind will be clearer too.

Q. Tell us more about your debut book '99 Not Out'. What was the idea behind penning this book?

A. The idea behind penning this book was to create an anthology on wellness. The idea was to share with my readers evidence based principles that when put into practise can strengthen our mind, body and spirit so that we do not encounter lifestyle illnesses and lead happier and healthier lives as a consequence. So that we add life to our years, not just years to our life; because it's not just about living a long life, it's about living a meaningful and joyful life.

Q. Can you share a few tips with our readers to imbibe & incorporate wellness into their daily lives?

A. Sure. I am going to suggest a few tips here, pick one that resonates with you.

So first for the MIND:

- Find a way to laugh every day, either read a funny joke or share it with a friend; find a way to laugh every day because it's very therapeutic.
- Consciously make a choice to perform acts of kindness towards people and animals every day. It could be something small or big, it doesn't matter. But choose to be kind
- Write down 5 things that you are thankful for; this is before you go to sleep every night. It could be anything- it could be something as simple as the coffee you had that tasted good. It could be

the new slippers you bought that are comfortable. Because when you are grateful you feel happy, and that relieves our stress.

For the BODY:

- Switch off all your devices an hour before bedtime.
- Focus on getting at least 6-8 hours sleep at night. If you can't, and you work from home allow yourself to take a nap in the afternoon.

• Find a way to move more, even if you can't take time out to exercise, walk while you are on the phone, take the stairs, stand more- have standing meetings instead of sit down meetings. Just find ways to move more- because that's what actually adds up. You'll find that when you are active your mind works better too!

• Only eat food that is freshly made, not processed or out of a box!

For the SPIRIT:

- Spend more time with your friends, people who make you feel happy & positive about yourself.
- Engage with your family more in real time in their presence
- Enjoy your music or activities that inspire you, like reading
- Explore your creative energy- Take time out to do things that made you happy as a child!

So there you have it! Holistic health Mantras and simple lifestyle tweaks from the experts! In the process we also gained valuable life hacks and tips from these "Women In Wellness" on how to take our health into our own hands. By making these tiny everyday changes we can considerably improve our overall well-being. So three Cheers to a healthy, glorious YOU in 2020!



Self-care is taking the necessary time to relax, refocus and regain your physical, mental and emotional strength. It means not only taking care of your health but also taking the necessary breaks and self-fulfilling actions you need to re-boost your mental and emotional energy. So are you taking care of "YOU" the way you should? Take the quiz below to find out!

1. My favourite thing to do when I get home from work is:

- A. Reflect on the day I've had and take time to breathe or exercise. 3
- B. Quickly finish outstanding work so I can sleep early. 2
- C. Watch TV for hours or go on the internet. 1

2. After a rough day at work, I always:

- A. Try to understand why it was rough and spend time clearing my head. 3
- B. Chat with friends/family to uplift me. 2
- C. Spend a lot of time stressing about my day and try to do things to distract myself. 1

3. I spend time on social media because:

- A. I want to connect with my friends and share positive memories & messages. 1
- B. I like to catch up with news and trends. 2
- C. I want to escape the real world. 3

4. After hanging out with my friends, I feel:

- A. Refreshed, rejuvenated and affirmed. 3
- B. Fine 2
- C. Unhappy/ despondent that everyone else seems happier/ more successful. 1

5. My favourite way to relax is to:

- A. Meditate / Do breathing exercises. 3
- B. Every chance I get, I like to read or watch a movie or listen to music. 2
- C. Distract myself by doing work or generally keeping busy. 1

6. Do you exercise regularly?

- A. I'm too tired for any workout on weekdays & there's no time on weekends! 1
- B. Yes, I work out at the gym/ do yoga everyday 3
- C. Not really, but I try to walk everywhere I go 2

7. What do you usually eat?

- A. Anything fast and simple 1
- B. Lots of fruits, veggies and whole grains 3
- C. I'm a picky eater but try to stay away from junk food 2

8. Do you eat breakfast?

- A. I manage to drink a cup of coffee or juice 2
- B. Yes, I eat a full breakfast with eggs, toast, fruits 3
- C. No, there's no time to grab a meal in the morning rush 1

9. What does your night routine look like?
- A. I remove my makeup, shower, moisturize, and brush my teeth **3**
 - B. I usually just crash on my pillow and go straight to sleep **1**
 - C. I wash my face and brush my teeth **2**

10. How many hours of sleep do you get every night?
- A. 8 or more **3**
 - B. Just about 6 to 7 **2**
 - C. Less than 5 **1**

11. Do you drink a lot of water?
- A. Yes but I should drink more **2**
 - B. Yes, I make sure I drink at least 8 glasses a day **3**
 - C. I try to drink whenever I remember **1**

12. Do you make time for your hobbies?
- A. I prefer to spend my free time surfing social media **2**
 - B. Where is the time for hobbies?! **1**
 - C. I catch up on latest plays or movies/ read a lot /indulge in gardening/Travel **3**

13. I'm good at matching how I'm feeling with what I say.
- A. Disagree **1**
 - B. Neither Agree nor Disagree **2**
 - C. Agree **3**

14. It's difficult for me to stick to my healthy resolutions.
- A. Disagree **3**
 - B. Neither Agree nor Disagree **2**
 - C. Agree **1**

15. "I am my own worst critic." This statement is true of me.
- A. Disagree **3**
 - B. Neither Agree nor Disagree **2**
 - C. Agree **1**

Check Your Score!

LESS THAN 17 Self-care? What's that?

Oh no! It looks like you need some help. It might seem like the best way to deal with the troubles of life is to escape them, ignore it or overthink it but, you'll always feel better when you bring your problems out into the light. Making yourself a priority and taking the time you need to de-stress is important. Consider talking things through when you can. Also do more of what you love and spend more time with people who support you.

It can be tempting in your busy life to never pause for breath, but it's not always sustainable. A score of less than 17 indicates you may be having some difficulty with clarity and focus. Could you block out five to 30 minutes during your day to try some of the items above?

18 - 28 Whoa, we're halfway there in practicing self-care!

It's clear you're making an effort to look out for your mental health. You're getting there! Though you're kind of on the right track, self-care is something that needs you to think deeply about the feelings you go through so you can understand yourself a bit better. No pressure, but could you say "no" to one more commitment this month, and have some "you" time instead? Don't be afraid to reach out to people who love you

29- 45 You're a Self-care Connoisseur!

Way to go! As with airplane oxygen masks, you're best at caring for others when you've first cared for yourself. Your score suggests that you are well into your self-healing process. Keep up the good work. You know that taking care of yourself means connecting with others but also making time for yourself.

We, the women. We, as a species, tend to put our “self” last, putting our needs on the backburner constantly, with work that cannot be put off, chores crying for attention, families that need tending to, a society that needs to be appeased constantly ...with everything and everybody demanding a slice of you. We cater to everyone and everything, neatly ticking off every ‘To-do list’ in order of priority, making mental notes of what remains to be done. Everyone except the person in the mirror.

Somewhere along the way that person staring back at you seems to have got lost, the image seems to have blurred its edges, missing its mojo...Everything is in order but still something is missing, however you cannot put your finger on it try as you might! Is it her essence..her identity.. or maybe her passion for life or is it simply her day-to-day wants...?? When it comes to the self-care department we somehow lag behind. Why is it so?

The Confidence Gap

Studies conducted have found that women have lower levels of self-esteem than men and this discrepancy is observed worldwide (Bleidorn, 2016). Gender differences in confidence are quite dramatic. A study done at Cornell University found that while men overestimate their abilities and performance, women underestimate both. In fact, their actual performance does not differ in quality or quantity. This is a particular crisis for women—a vast confidence gap that separates the sexes. This confidence challenge is also described as the “imposter syndrome”. Women frequently worry that they don’t deserve their job, their relationships or their happiness and are “imposters” who could be found out at any moment.

Women don’t consider themselves as ready for promotions, and they predict they’ll do worse on tests. It was found that women worry more about being disliked, appearing unattractive, outshining others, or grabbing too much attention. A growing body of evidence shows just how devastating this lack of confidence and self-esteem can be! Numerous studies indicate that women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with depression and anxiety related disorders, with the chances of it occurring at any age.

Life circumstances and culture

The higher rate of depression in women can stem from disparate factors such as upbringing to environment. Life circumstances and cultural stressors also play a big role. Factors that may increase the risk of depression in women include:

Unequal power and status-

Concerns such as uncertainty about the future, limited access to community and health care resources. These issues can cause feelings of negativity, low self-esteem and lack of control over life.

Work overload- Often women work outside the home and also handle domestic responsibilities. Women may be caring for their

children while also caring for sick or elderly family members, which are considered a woman’s responsibility.

Emotional, sexual or physical abuse- Women who were emotionally, physically or sexually abused as children or adults are more likely to experience depression at some point in their lives. Women are more likely to experience sexual abuse.

Biological factors such as regular hormonal changes during different life-stages like puberty, pregnancy, pre and post-menopause etc. are associated with mood changes and a higher

