

Good Health Starts *with* Personal Accountability

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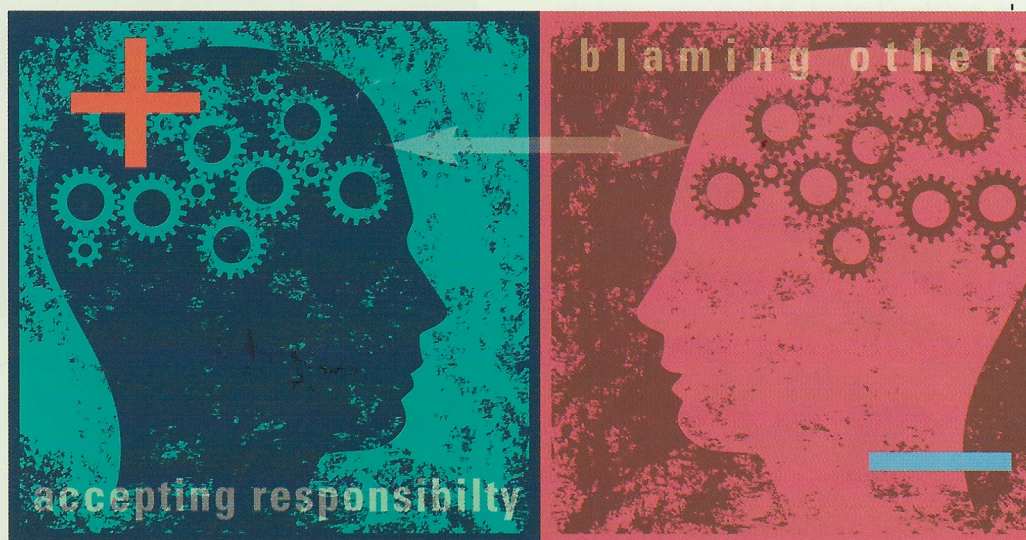
It is easy to become discouraged with our health. Many of us live with medical problems that were precipitated by forces outside of our control, such as hereditary diseases or tragic accidents. But to be healthy in mind, body, and spirit, we must accept responsibility for our medical situation. We can drastically improve health outcomes by accepting them as our problem and viewing them as our duty or responsibility to solve them.

Psychologists have found that medical patients who use an active versus passive coping approach in their health care experience higher quality of life and a stronger sense of control over their medical conditions. Examples of active coping mechanisms include patient education, eliminating self-destructive behaviors (tobacco, excessive alcohol, illicit drug use), weight management, and stress reduction. Patients benefit when they are proactive about their health care: read about your diagnosis and medications, prepare for medical appointments by preparing a list of questions for your doctor, take notes at medical appointments, and keep copies of all medical records.

While it is easier to blame others for our medical conditions, to foster a sense of helplessness, and to offer excuses for self-destructive behaviors, these techniques are a dead-end. Medical providers, family, and a higher power, all play a vital role in a patient's health care team, however, they cannot solve problems or cure disease without individual patient efforts and accountability.

Take an honest assessment about how you are approaching your health. Ask yourself some tough questions. Are you a

proactive advocate for your own well-being? Do you rely too much on others to manage your medical problems? Are you ignoring or denying adverse consequences of lifestyle choices such as tobacco, drug use, unhealthy eating habits, misuse of medications, or physical inactivity? Are you using the library or internet to educate



yourself on your diagnosis? Do you communicate effectively and honestly with your physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner?

Improving health starts with an honest reflection of one's own behavior, efforts, and motivation. Small changes in our behavior do make a difference in our health outcomes. Be realistic, work hard, and take responsibility!



Dr. Lisson is a licensed clinical psychologist in the states of North Carolina and Florida and is fellowship-trained in health psychology. Her expertise includes working with patients who experience stress related to their medical problems, promoting better medical compliance and health care behavior, and evaluating patients for surgical risk and readiness. To learn more about Dr. Lisson and her solo, private practice at the Center for Health Solutions, PLLC, please visit her website at www.gaillisson.com.