



JOEL OSTEEN

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

15 WAYS TO
Live Longer
AND Healthier

LIFE-CHANGING STRATEGIES

for Greater Energy, a More Focused Mind, and a Calmer Soul

15 Ways to Live Longer and Healthier

Life-Changing Strategies for Greater Energy,
a More Focused Mind, and a Calmer Soul

Joel Osteen



Nashville New York

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INTRODUCTION

After one of our services, I met a man who looked to be in his seventies. It came as a surprise when he told me he was over one hundred years old. It wasn't just that he was as handsome or as healthy looking as could be that threw me off. It was that he was so full of joy, his mind was sharp, and he had been having such a good time with everyone around him. He stood in the line nearly forty minutes waiting to visit with me. I told him we could have pulled up a chair for him so he didn't have to stand.

"I don't need to sit down," he said with a big grin. "When I get old, I'll sit down."

"I can't believe you're that old," I said. "You don't have a wrinkle on your face."

"Joel," he replied, "I just don't crack." Then he told two or three more jokes. We laughed and laughed. When he walked away, he turned around and said to everyone, "I'll see you next year."

I fully expect God will give him another year. I thought to myself that in his one hundred years, he'd had lots of troubles, had people hurt him, and made mistakes, but he was still young at heart, full of faith and energy. It was no wonder he seemed so healthy, so happy, so strong. He had a great sense of humor and loved to laugh. It made me think about all of God's natural healing that had been released and flowing in him all those years.

God created us to live a healthy, abundant, joyful, faith-filled life. He destined us to be confident, to be free, to be positive, and to be happy. He didn't create us to drag through the day, to be worn out by problems, discouraged and depressed by disappointments, even sick physically because we're living so stressed out, uptight, and worried. But it's easy to get so focused on what's wrong in our life, what we don't have, and how big our obstacles are that we leak out our joy and passion for living.

I know some people who actually get depressed every Monday morning. They don't like their jobs, they dread going to work, and every week, they develop a bad case of the Monday Morning Blues. Oddly enough, in several studies of various populations over the years, researchers have found that deaths from heart attacks occur at their lowest rates on weekends, jump significantly on Mondays, then drop again on Tuesdays. Most researchers blame the stress of returning to work on Monday for the increased risk.

My father believed that the world would be a healthier place if we stressed less, laughed and enjoyed life more, and learned the habit of emptying out any offenses, hurts, regrets, and condemnation. He never lost his youthful spirit. He knew that prolonged stress can damage your health and significantly shorten your life. He knew that when people are uptight and on edge, headaches, digestive problems, high blood pressure, and lack of energy are just some of the results. They don't sleep well. Much of this would go away if they learned how to deal with stress.

Scientists have shown that if you go through life in a negative frame of mind, uptight and stressed out, always worried, full of fear, carrying emotional wounds and past guilt, your immune system will weaken, making you more susceptible to sickness and disease. Studies have shown that negative emotions actually weaken the production of the natural killer cells that our immune system

creates to attack and destroy abnormal cells that cause disease. On the other hand, people who are happy and have a positive outlook develop more natural killer cells than the average person. When you stay full of joy, your immune system functions at its peak performance level, just as God intended. You'll increase your brain activity and creativity, which can help you overcome challenges in difficult times. You'll reduce the stress hormone and increase production of the human growth hormone, also known as the "youth hormone," which slows down the aging process and keeps you looking younger and fresher. The Bible says, "A cheerful mind works healing," and that Scripture continues to be confirmed by science.

The psalmist says that "joy comes in the morning." Every morning God sends you a fresh supply of joy. Every day is a gift to be vibrantly alive, to live it to the full. He has given us everything we need to live healthy and whole, but we have to do our part and tap into the promises of God and those things that breathe new hope into our heart and new vision into our spirit. We can't let wrong mind-sets, a negative past, and other people's opinions discourage us from experiencing all the good things God has for us. I believe it's your time to walk in the fullness of His blessing.

In this book, you will discover fifteen life-changing strategies for more energy, vitality, and happiness. We'll explore how to:

- *Have a healthy soul*
- *Stay positive toward yourself*
- *Deal with difficult people*
- *Let go of control*
- *Choose to be happy*
- *Live in the present*
- *Tame the tongue*
- *Take care of yourself*

I know these strategies work, because they've worked in the lives of my family members, friends, and associates, as well as in my own life. As you read these pages, be open to what God will reveal to your heart. I'm confident that if you will take these steps with me, you will be happier, healthier, and you'll rise higher than you ever imagined possible—not just for a week, or a month, but for the rest of your life.

CHAPTER ONE

A Healthy Soul

**Your inner life is more important
than your outer life.**

We spend a lot of time and energy taking care of our physical body. We try to eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, and take vitamins. That's all important. We want to feel good. But we don't spend enough time taking care of our soul. We don't realize how much our emotions, our attitudes, and our thoughts are affecting us physically. The Scripture says, "I wish above all things that you succeed and be in good health, even as your soul prospers." This links being healthy physically, having energy and vitality, to how healthy your soul is. If your soul is unhealthy, it's going to spill over to the physical.

If you're living stressed, worried, bitter, guilty, and angry, those negative emotions are not just affecting your relationships, your creativity, and how productive you are. They're weakening your immune system. Your cells are not fighting off sickness as they should. I've read that 90 percent of all visits to a primary care physician are stress-related. You can't sleep at night, your food won't digest, and you have ulcers. Much of that goes back to your soul

not being healthy. You're worried night and day about your child who's off course, stressed over your finances, and holding a grudge over a friend who did you wrong. You don't realize that you're making yourself sick. All that negative energy is poisoning your soul. Because your soul is unhealthy, it has spilled over to the physical.

You wake up in the morning and wonder why you're still tired, why you don't have any energy. It's because your mind worked all night. Your body lay there, but your mind wrestled, wondered, and reasoned. You thought, *What if...? How can I...? What may happen...?* You're trying to control things that you can't control. You're trying to fix people who you can't fix. You're worried about a problem that may not even happen. You're bitter over something that

If you get your soul healthy, you'll get your energy back.

took place twenty years ago. You can't take in all those toxins and not be poisoned. You can't let anger, unforgiveness, guilt, and worry dominate your life. If you get your soul healthy, you'll get your energy back. If you quit letting

the negative emotions rule, many of these physical ailments will go away. It's all interconnected.

Pay Attention to Your Inner Life

In my late twenties, I developed a redness between my eyes and all around the top of my face. It made my skin flake, was very itchy, and looked so bad. I tried creams, lotions, and different facial soaps, but nothing improved. I went to dermatologists who gave me prescriptions that helped control and lessen it, but it never went away. A couple years went by, and finally I went to a different doctor. He said, "I know exactly what's causing this. It's stress. You're

living too uptight. You have too much pressure. I can give you more medication, but until you change, until you get more balanced, it's not going to go away." I was young and had so much energy. I thought, *I'm not under stress. I'm fine.* Sometimes we can't see what's poisoning us. We have a blind spot. We look in the mirror and see a physical problem. We see the redness, or the blemish, or that we need to lose some weight.

But we can't see what's happening inside. Your inner life is more important than your outer life. What's going on in your emotions, how you feel about yourself, and what you're allowing to play in your mind are affecting what's happening on the outside. I was treating the symptom but not the cause. I thought, *Just fix the outside. Just clear this redness up.* But it kept coming back.

One day I got honest with myself. I considered everything I was doing and my commitments. I was married to Victoria, which was incredibly...relaxing. We had a two-year-old son, with another baby coming. We had moved out of our townhouse and were remodeling an older house. I had traveled several weeks to India with my father. I was working long hours at the church, trying to get the TV ministry going. I didn't realize the level of stress and pressure I was living under. Much of it, I was putting on myself. I like to go fast, work hard, and accomplish goals. But here's a key: You are responsible for your own emotional well-being. It's not up to anyone else. Your spouse can't keep your soul well. No one, including your doctor, your friends, or your parents, has control over your soul except you. In one sense, not even God has that control. He's not going to make you forgive someone or make you

What's going on in your emotions, how you feel about yourself, and what you're allowing to play in your mind are affecting what's happening on the outside.

not worry. He's not going to force you to not live angry, offended, stressed, and guilty. Those are choices we have to make.

My question today is, Is your soul healthy? We can see your looks, your talent, and your personality. But what's going on inside? Are you at peace? Are you turning things over to God? Do you know that you're valuable? Is your heart free from bitterness and offense? Or is there worry, guilt, insecurity, and self-pity? "Look at what I've been through. I'm so angry. I have this chip on my shoulder because they hurt me." That's poisoning your soul, but if you're like I was, you may not be able to see it. Sometimes

Is your soul healthy?

we've gotten used to these negative emotions. We've adapted. Then we wonder why we don't have energy, why we can't sleep, why we're not creative. You have to get honest with yourself. You have to look inside and ask, "Why am I jealous? Why can't I celebrate my friend's success? Why am I easily offended? Why do I argue so much? Why don't I feel good about who I am?"

A lady told me that every time she and her husband had the smallest disagreement, she would come unglued, blow up, and get loud. It would turn into a huge ordeal. Her husband couldn't understand why she was so on edge, so easily angered. Over time, it had become too much and their relationship was falling apart. What he didn't know was that as a teenager, she had been in a relationship with a young man who hurt her deeply. When he had suddenly broken up with her, he said some things that were very derogatory. She felt rejected, not good enough. Instead of letting go of that offense, knowing that God is our vindicator, that what people say doesn't determine who we are, she held on to it inside. It was poisoning her spirit, making her insecure and easily offended. When you don't let go of hurts and emotional wounds, they never heal. Any time her husband didn't agree with her, it was like touching a bruise. She would push back and lash out. One day

she did what we all have to do. She got honest with herself. She looked inside and asked, “Why am I like this? Why do I get upset so easily?” She realized it was from the pains of the past, from things that weren’t fair that she had never dealt with. She made the decision to get rid of the unforgiveness, the bitterness, the resentment. That was the turning point. As she got her soul healthy, her relationship became healthy. Today, she and her husband are happy and enjoying life.

Pay attention to your inner life. It’s easy to adapt to things that are poisoning us and we don’t realize it. We end up going through life just treating the symptoms. If we get to the root cause and get our soul healthy, God says we will have good health and good success. We need to ask ourselves: “Am I making myself sick? Am I sabotaging my relationships? Am I limiting my potential, holding myself down because my soul is unhealthy?”

It’s easy to adapt to things that are poisoning us and we don’t realize it.

Get Rid of the Roots

The writer of the book of Hebrews says, “Make sure that no root of bitterness springs forth and defiles you.” It describes bitterness as a root. You can’t see a root because it’s underground. But if you let it grow, it’s going to spring forth. A bitter root will produce bitter fruit. What’s inside is going to show up on the outside. We try to fix the fruit. We deal with the symptom, but the fruit is not the problem. We need to go to the source and get rid of the root.

Proverbs says, “Guard your heart, for out of it flows the issues of life.” One of our main responsibilities is to keep the toxins out.

*If your soul is bitter,
your life will be bitter.*

Keep those roots from springing up. Offenses are going to come. Cranky coworkers will come. You can't stop disappointments, hurts, jealousy, and anger from coming. The question is, Are you going to let it take root, get down in your spirit, contaminate your joy, steal your peace, take your energy, and open you up to sickness, trouble, and defeat? No, keep your soul healthy. You have to be an active gardener. Pull up those roots. Pull up the unforgiveness. Pull up the insecurity. Pull up the guilt and condemnation. Don't let your soul become poisoned. If your soul is bitter, your life will be bitter. If your emotional well-being is contaminated, it's going to affect your physical well-being.

Why are you letting that worry take root, then losing sleep and living stressed out? You've seen God take care of you in the past. You've seen Him make ways where you didn't see a way. You've seen Him provide in a pandemic, give you peace in a storm, favor in the fire. He did it back then, and He's going to do it again. He didn't bring you this far to leave you. Why are you holding on to that guilt, beating yourself up over past mistakes? God has forgiven you, so why don't you forgive yourself? God doesn't remember it, so why don't you quit remembering it? God has moved on, so why don't you move on?

Why are you jealous over the coworker who got a promotion or over the friend who you think is more beautiful, more talented, more successful? Now you're finding fault, being critical, feeling bad about who you are. God blessing them doesn't mean He's not going to bless you. God didn't run out of favor. He didn't forget about you. He has things in your future that are better than you've imagined. Don't let that jealous root keep you poisoned. Pull it up. Keep your heart pure. Celebrate their success. When your soul is healthy, God can trust you with more.

Why are you still upset over what happened twenty years ago? Why are you still holding a grudge over someone who hurt you and walked away? Why are you angry about what someone didn't give you? That didn't stop God's plan. What they

did is not going to keep you from your purpose. God knew it was going to happen, and He already had a plan to bring you out better, to give you beauty for the ashes, joy for the mourning. Pull up that root of disappointment, resentment, and self-pity. That's poisoning your future. That's limiting your potential, draining your energy, and weakening your immune system. Don't just deal with the symptom; get to the root. Learn to live from a place of faith. "God, I trust You. I know You're in control. You're fighting my battles. You're ordering my steps. You have a good plan for my life. You're my provider, my protector, my way maker, my vindicator, my deliverer. God, my life is in Your hands." That's how you keep your soul healthy. On a regular basis, you have to pull up roots, get rid of toxins, and guard your heart.

Don't just deal with the symptom; get to the root. Learn to live from a place of faith.

You Control What's in Your Soul

There was a man who owned a stable of horses. One day when he was out riding his horse, he saw a large tree limb had fallen across the trail. His horse went to jump over it but didn't quite clear it, and the horse scraped one of its back legs very badly. The man took the horse to the barn and cleaned the wound, put some antiseptic on it, and wrapped it up. A couple of weeks later, he noticed the horse was still bothered by it. The veterinarian came and looked

at the wound and put the horse on antibiotics. The horse began to improve, but a few months later the infection returned, and his horse could barely walk. They started another round of the same antibiotics, and the wound began to heal. But three months later, the wound was reinfected. The owner finally decided to take the horse to the clinic and get a better evaluation of what was going on. The horse was put under anesthesia, and the veterinarian opened up the wound. He found a chunk of wood about the size of a golf ball buried way up in the horse's leg. That's why every time the horse went off the antibiotics, the infection came back. They were treating the symptoms, but until they went deeper, until they got to the root of the problem, it wasn't going to go away.

We treat symptoms because we can see the symptoms. It's obvious. "My skin is red and flaky. I need some medication." But we have to go deeper. We have to deal with the root. "I can't get rid of these headaches because I'm so worried, so stressed. I'm making myself sick." "I can't get along in this relationship because I'm inse-

Is there an infection in your soul and some toxins that are keeping you from getting well physically?

secure. I don't feel valuable." "I'm not reaching my potential because I'm mad at myself. I'm living in regrets, thinking about where I should be." Get the infection out. As long as the root is there, the fruit is going to be bitter. The good news is that you control what's in your soul. You

can't control what happened to you, what someone did or said, but you can control how you respond, what you choose to dwell on, and what your attitude will be. Is there an infection in your soul and some toxins that are keeping you from getting well physically? Is there some bitterness, worry, anger, or guilt that is keeping you stuck, that is keeping you from flourishing?

Sometimes we can't get along in relationships because we have

a root of pride. We think we're right all the time. We won't listen to other people's opinions. We won't apologize. We're hard to get along with, contentious, touchy. Pride is one of those toxins we can't always see. You have to look deeper, under the surface, to find it. When your soul is healthy, you're loving and kind. You see the best in others. You're a peacemaker. You let them be right.

Get Honest with Yourself

In Psalm 119, the psalmist says, "God, keep me from lying to myself." That is one of the most powerful prayers we can ever pray. "God, help me to be honest with myself. Help me to look inside and see where my soul is not healthy. Help me to see where I need to change, where I need to forgive, where I need to be more kind and understanding. Help me to see where I need to quit letting people take my joy, where I need to get over what happened three years ago, where I need to quit beating myself up for mistakes I've made. Help me to see myself as valuable, as attractive, as a masterpiece." My prayer is, "God, don't let us go through life lying to ourselves." It's one thing to be dishonest with others, which is certainly not good, but don't lie to yourself. Don't sweep things under the rug, make excuses for why you're angry, bitter, jealous, and hard to get along with. There's no fault in being there today, but there is a fault in staying there. It may be your explanation, but don't let it be your excuse.

"God, don't let us go through life lying to ourselves."

"Joel, I have this ongoing infection because I scraped my leg." Get the wood out and move forward with your life. "I'm bitter

The Scripture says that you will have success and good health as your soul prospers.

because my loved one died.” No, pull up that root, let the grieving process work, and go out and do great things. Make your loved ones proud by leaving your mark. “I’m stressed because of my finances, my children, and the pressure at work.”

You can’t control all that. Don’t let circumstances be an excuse to live worried, on edge, and to be short with your children. Get back in balance. Life is too brief for you to live that way. Get your soul healthy. If you look inside and deal with things that are stealing your peace, taking your joy, and causing you to compromise, then as your soul gets healthier, physical healing will come. Your gifts will come out in greater ways, your relationships will be better, and new doors will open. The Scripture says that you will have success and good health as your soul prospers. Notice there’s a requirement. God says, “If you want success, good health, good relationships, and abundance, then do your part and keep your soul healthy—your attitude, your thoughts, and your emotional well-being.”

It’s interesting that most scholars believe that David wrote Psalm 119 and that prayer about not lying to himself. Maybe it stemmed from the time when he had an affair with Bathsheba. His army was out fighting a battle, but he stayed back in the palace. One night he went on the rooftop to get some fresh air, and he saw

this beautiful woman taking a bath. Instead of walking away and not going there, he went and got his binoculars. Even though Bathsheba was married to one of David’s faithful soldiers, he sent for her. When she ended up getting pregnant, David

The problem with burying negative toxins is that they never stay buried.

tried to cover it up. He had her husband, Uriah, come home from the battle, but Uriah was so loyal that he refused to sleep with her while his colleagues were out fighting. So David told the commanders to put Uriah on the front lines and then withdraw any protection from around him. Uriah was killed in the battle. David took Bathsheba as his wife, thinking that everything was fine. He covered it up, which didn't seem like a big deal. But the problem with burying negative toxins is that they never stay buried. Those toxins will eventually come back up and poison your life.

For the next year, while David was lying to himself about what he'd done, pretending nothing was wrong, his health began to deteriorate. He was sick and weak. Here he'd been strong his whole life. He was a warrior, but now his soul was unhealthy. The guilt, the shame, and the compromise started to affect his physical body. He finally got honest and admitted what he had done wrong. In Psalm 51, he said, "God, forgive and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart." He was saying, "God, I'm not hiding anymore. I'm going to deal with these toxins that are poisoning my soul." The beauty of our God is that He's merciful. He'll forgive you. God restored David. He got his health back, his joy back, and he went on to fulfill his purpose.

But until you get honest with yourself and deal with what you know is holding you back, you're going to be limited. As your soul gets healthier, your body is going to get healthier. You're going to have more energy and vitality. David also wrote in Psalm 23, "He restores my soul." Your soul may feel broken, wounded, hurt from mistakes you've made or from what someone else did. But your soul can be restored. When you get honest with yourself, you release what you need to release—the guilt, worry, anger, jealousy—and then healing will come. Joy will come. Peace will come. I believe that even now God is working to restore your soul. Emotional healing is taking place. Healing from the hurts, the

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pains of the past, what wasn't fair, the loss, the heartache. Healing from self-inflicted wounds, mistakes you've made, regrets you're living in. Healing from tormenting spirits, from mental illness, from anxiety and depression. God is doing a new thing. Forces that have held you back are being broken off your emotions, your attitudes, your thoughts.

You're not to live wounded. He's restoring your soul. Your latter days are going to be better than your former days. You're about to step into a new level of joy, peace, fulfillment, abundance, and victory. Don't believe the lies that it's too late, that you've made too many mistakes, that you've been through too much. No, the best part of your life is still in front of you.

Get the Poisons Out

When I was growing up, our family knew a man who loved to play the piano. He was very talented, but he suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. Over the years, his condition kept getting worse and worse. All his joints were swollen. It got to the point where his fingers were so bent over that it looked as though he was making a fist. He couldn't open his hands up, and he couldn't play the piano anymore. He had loved to play for hours, but now that dream was gone, leaving him so discouraged. One day he heard my father talking about how important it is that we don't hold on to hurts and how unforgiveness can poison our life. This man suddenly felt convicted for something he had held against his parents for years,

feeling they had done him wrong. Instead of letting it go, showing them mercy, he had let that bitterness take root. He had shut them out of his life, refusing to speak to them. He thought that was the best way to handle it. He didn't realize that was poisoning his soul. When your soul is unhealthy, it can affect you physically. That day he made the decision to forgive his parents and make things right. When he went to see them, his mother wept with joy and his father was so happy. It was an answer to their prayer. This man said that as he forgave his parents, he felt a heavy weight lift off him. He had gotten used to it. He had forgotten what it felt like to be free, to not have that bitterness in the back of his mind, always poisoning his joy.

It was great that his parents wanted the reconciliation. They were happy to have their son back. But there may be times when the people who did you wrong don't want to reconcile. They don't want to have you in their life. That's okay. You're not forgiving for their sake; you're forgiving for your sake. Forgive so you can keep your own soul healthy. Let it go, so that negative root doesn't spring up and contaminate the rest of your life. They hurt you once, but don't let them continue to hurt you by holding on to it. Let God be your vindicator. He sees what wasn't fair. He knows who did you wrong. And He knows how to make it up to you. He knows how to bring you out better than you were before.

Forgive so you can keep your own soul healthy.

Over the next few months, much to this man's surprise, his fingers started opening up little by little. The swelling started to go down, and he got better and better. A year later, he could sit down and play the piano as though he'd never missed a beat. It's amazing what can happen when our soul gets healthy. When we get free from the bitterness, the guilt, the stress, the worry, and the anger,

that's when healing is released. That's when you'll see good success, the blessing of God in new ways.

Joy Is Medicine

I realize that not all sickness is from a lack of emotional well-being. But any time you face sickness, you're going to have to be strong in your emotions and in what you allow to play in your mind. When my mother was sick with cancer, she wrote letters to people who she thought she may have offended, asking them to forgive her. She was making sure that no toxins were in her spirit, that nothing she had done was poisoning her emotional well-being. She knew the emotional will affect the physical. She even watched cartoons

“A merry heart is like taking medicine, being joyful brings healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.”

and funny television programs that would make her laugh. The Scripture says, “A merry heart is like taking medicine, being joyful brings healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” If you go around discouraged, defeated, and saying, “Look at this medical report. I'm

never going to get well,” you're helping that sickness. You're giving it life. But when you're cheerful, when you know God is in control, when you're thanking Him when you could be complaining, when you're laughing when you could be crying, that's sending healing to your body. I believe many diseases will go away—headaches, high blood pressure, digestive problems—when we start taking our medicine by laughing, being joyful and good-natured.

We focus a lot on the outside, but I'm asking you to look inside. Is your soul healthy? Are you spending your day being positive,

hopeful, and grateful, or are you weighed down with stress, burdens, and worry? How can you be creative when you're using so much energy for the negative? How can your immune system work properly when you have bitterness, anger, and regrets? How can you be the mother, the father, or the leader you're called to be when you have toxins poisoning your spirit? It's time to get honest with yourself. Don't go another year letting something that you have control over to hold you back. Get your soul healthy. Pull up those bitter roots. Start turning things over to God. Release the worry, the hurt, the disappointment over what didn't work out. Keep your heart pure. If you do this, I believe and declare that because your soul is healthy, you're going to have good success and good health. New doors are about to open, opportunity is going to find you, healing is coming, with strength, energy, and vitality.