

# **VITALITY CHALLENGE**

**ART ULENE, MD**



This book has been written and published strictly for informational purposes, and should not be used as a substitute for consultation with your medical doctor or health care professional. The author and publisher urge all readers to consult health professionals before engaging in any program that involves significant changes in dietary habits and physical activity.

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS VITALITY?

Modern dictionaries contain several definitions for the word “vitality”:... “*the capacity to live and develop*”... “*the power of enduring*”... “*the state of being alive*.” It doesn’t take much—with those definitions—to qualify as a person with vitality.

I see vitality as a much grander state—the highest possible level of wellness. How can you tell if you have my kind of vitality? *Real* vitality? It’s easy.

- If you wake up each morning feeling refreshed and looking forward to the day ahead—you have vitality.
- If you can briskly walk a mile or two, and still have energy for more—you have vitality.
- If you can meet the stress of daily life without *feeling* stressed—you have vitality.
- If you can eat all you want of foods you love and still not gain weight—you have vitality.
- If you can remain well while all around you are sneezing and sniffing—you have vitality.
- If you can argue without getting angry, and love without feeling fear—you have vitality.

What if you can do *all* of the things described above? Then you have *real* vitality, and you are *truly* alive. And you shouldn’t settle for anything less. That’s what the Vitality Challenge™ is all about.

## THE VITALITY CHALLENGE

Many people assume that major sacrifices are necessary to attain such a high level of wellness. This attitude harks back to the now-discredited philosophy of “*no pain, no gain*.” But real vitality has nothing to do with pain or sacrifice; it comes from simple, easy lifestyle changes maintained consistently for long periods of time.

*Real* vitality involves a state of balance between all dimensions of wellness—not just the physical. You cannot overlook one aspect of your being without causing disharmony in others. All the strength in the world won’t give you *real* vitality if you have ignored your nutritional, mental, emotional, spiritual, and medical needs. Losing twenty pounds won’t make you feel good if you cough all the time from smoking. Walking two miles a day won’t make you feel well if problems at work or home leave you feeling angry all the time. Meditating daily won’t fill the gap if your diet is deficient in vitamins, minerals, proteins and fiber.

Life is different when you have developed *real* vitality. You feel balanced. You can live in a stressful world without feeling stressed. You actually get better as you grow older.

The program you are about to begin will guide you toward vitality in five critical areas: physical vitality, nutritional vitality, mental vitality, emotional and spiritual vitality, and medical vitality. Only by maintaining high levels of vitality in all of these areas can you achieve the *real* vitality described above. Now, let's define what we mean when we talk about "vitality" in each of these areas.

## **Physical Vitality**

If you asked several people to define physical vitality, you would probably get several different answers, because each person looks at vitality or fitness in terms of his or her personal needs. A person who swims long distances wants stamina and endurance. Someone who does gymnastic routines requires flexibility. A middle-aged, sedentary person might be content with a slim waistline. The truth is, you can be extremely fit for one kind of task and completely out of shape for another.

Overall physical vitality is made up of three discrete components: aerobic fitness, muscle strength and joint flexibility. Each component of physical vitality provides a different benefit. Being aerobically fit will allow you to perform physically demanding work or engage in exercise for long periods of time without getting breathless, and it will decrease your risk of heart disease. Building muscle strength will enhance your balance and coordination, promote good posture and make your daily activities easier. Maintaining flexibility will protect your muscles and joints, relieve many aches and pains, and allow you to move about more comfortably.

To consider yourself physically fit, you must achieve a balance of fitness in each of these areas, and it takes different kinds of exercise to accomplish that. To develop aerobic fitness, you must exercise vigorously enough to raise your heart rate significantly. To build strength, you must make your muscles work against resistance. To promote flexibility, you need to stretch the connective tissues that bind your joints to their surrounding muscles. You will find more information about each of these areas later in the book, and the daily assignments will help you achieve a balance in all three areas.

## **Nutritional Vitality**

There are many different ways to look at nutritional vitality. Some people assume they are nutritionally fit if their weight is in the desired range. (Ironically, many of these same people have severe nutritional deficiencies because of the fad diets they use to keep their weight in that range.) Others think they are nutritionally fit because they use vitamin and mineral supplements (at the same time their diets are filled with fatty foods that are low in

fiber). Some individuals seek nutritional vitality by avoiding certain food categories, like meat or dairy products (and fail to make up for the iron or calcium that these categories provide so well).

The truth is, there is no single diet that will meet everyone's nutritional needs. While some people need to severely restrict the amount of fat and cholesterol in their diet, others may safely tolerate larger amounts. And while some people must restrict the amount of salt in their diet because it raises their blood pressure, others do not respond this way and can tolerate larger amounts without jeopardizing their health. And a young, thin athlete who exercises intensely for hours every day requires far more calories than a sedentary person who is overweight.

But there are some general nutritional principles that apply to everyone:

**Real foods are your best source of vitamins and minerals.** A varied and balanced diet is the best way to ensure that your body is provided with the essential nutrients you need for good health. Foods provide you with other important substances that you can't get from pills, including flavonoids and other so-called phytochemicals that appear to play an important role in the prevention of cancer and other diseases. Foods also provide proteins, carbohydrates and essential fatty acids, without which your body cannot function normally. And foods provide fiber, which promotes healthy intestinal function and can reduce your risk of high blood cholesterol, heart disease and colon cancer.

That doesn't mean that vitamin and mineral supplements should not be used to reach optimal levels of intake for certain nutrients. Just keep in mind this fact: A poor diet plus supplements is still a poor diet.

**Drastic dietary changes produce dangerous nutritional deficiencies.** It is not possible to cut back drastically on your caloric intake or your intake of any major food category without jeopardizing your intake of certain nutrients. That's because nature did not distribute all nutrients equally in all foods. Dairy products are exceptionally rich in calcium; meats are exceptionally rich in iron; and dietary fiber is found exclusively in plant foods. That's why it's so important to avoid severely restrictive diets that promise radical benefits, such as rapid weight loss. These diets also deliver radical risks. The program you are about to begin does not require any drastic reductions of energy intake or of any particular food category that could result in a deficiency of important nutrients.

**The goal of nutrition is not just to keep you alive and prevent deficiency diseases, but to help you achieve optimal health and *real* vitality.** For decades—and even today—most nutritional recommendations have been based on the lowest level necessary to prevent deficiency symptoms, with a modest margin of safety added. The scientific panel that sets the RDAs for vitamins and minerals states that its recommendations are based on the amount that should “be adequate to meet the known nutrient needs of practically all

healthy persons.” But what if you’re not healthy? And what do they mean by “practically all”? Who is left out by their definition?

Those RDAs may be much too low for people who have medical disorders such as diabetes or kidney disease, people who use alcohol or certain medications, and those who have unusual dietary patterns. Also, there is evidence now that larger doses of at least some nutrients can do far more than simply prevent deficiency diseases. To the extent that you can potentially benefit from larger doses, it makes sense to increase your consumption—provided the monetary cost is reasonable and the potential risk of adverse reactions is low. For this reason, you will find some recommendations in this book that exceed the current RDAs.

## **Mental Vitality**

It is not possible to live in today’s hectic world without encountering stressful situations. But that doesn’t mean you have to let the stress make you sick. When you are mentally fit, you can recognize your sources of stress, and develop procedures to reduce their frequency and intensity. When stress can’t be avoided, if you are mentally fit you can use techniques that cancel its ill effects.

What happens when you are not mentally fit? You ignore the stress. Before long, your heart pounds, your blood pressure rises, your hormones surge, you can’t sleep. These are natural responses to stress, and they won’t hurt you unless they happen all the time. Then the pounding becomes palpitations, the rapid pulse becomes a tachycardia, the rise in blood pressure becomes hypertension, sleeping difficulties become insomnia. The natural response to stress becomes disease.

In our program, you will learn how to identify your sources of stress and what you can do to eliminate some of them. You will never be able to get rid of all outside stress, but we’ll show you how to manage the remaining stress more comfortably. With practice, you’ll learn how to turn external stress into a positive force for change.

## **Emotional and Spiritual Vitality**

Have you ever noticed that some of the most “fit” people you meet are also some of the unhappiest? These are people who have achieved high levels of fitness in one of the categories we’ve described, but who have neglected their emotional and spiritual needs. In spite of their accomplishments in one dimension of fitness, life holds no joy for them, and they look forward with despair to growing older.

Contrast these people with the ones you know who can’t wait to see what the future holds for them—people who truly believe that life gets better every year.

Why does life get better for them? Because they get better at living life. They have personally meaningful goals and they know how to achieve them. They learn to change

loneliness into serenity and feelings into action. They learn to express anger as well as affection, to live with a plan as well as to be spontaneous. They know how to satisfy the many different and conflicting needs of their own personality.

These people prove that learning doesn't stop when you leave school, growing doesn't stop when you finish puberty, and life doesn't end when you leave your youth. They teach us that the best part of life lies ahead—if we are willing to change as life changes. They show us that *real* vitality cannot be achieved without emotional and spiritual fitness.

The program you are about to begin will show you how to enhance your emotional and spiritual fitness level. You'll find information on how to improve your relationships with others, and assignments that get you started on the process. We'll show you new ways for managing anger without hurting yourself or the people around you, and we'll give you assignments that let you practice these techniques. You'll learn about the effect that altruism and social connections can have on health, and you'll do assignments that demonstrate the effect of these elements on your health. And you'll examine—and reexamine—the priorities that influence not just your behavior, but who you really are.

## **Medical Vitality**

We have invented this unique fitness category to cover the preventive medical activities you can do to minimize your risk of illness and accidents. This category includes some obvious medical procedures, like immunizations and screening tests, and some less apparent (and less medical) activities like using seat belts and wearing bicycle helmets. A person who is “medically fit” (using our definition) has taken advantage of every preventive measure that is appropriate in his or her particular case.

We think it's important to include this category in any definition of *real* vitality, because people who are medically fit have a much lower risk of illness, disability and death than those who ignore these opportunities for protection. There's a dramatic difference in the injury and death rates of auto accident victims who use seat belts all the time and those who don't; and between cyclists who wear helmets every time they ride and those who don't. And there's a great difference in the hospitalization and mortality rates of older people who are immunized against influenza and pneumonia and those who are not.

The same substantial differences can be demonstrated for people who are medically screened at appropriate intervals and those who are not. Women who are screened for breast cancer at appropriate intervals have a significantly better survival rate than women who ignore mammography. (Women who are screened are also more likely to be eligible for breast-conserving surgery.) Women who are screened at appropriate intervals with Pap smears have almost no chance of dying of cervical cancer, yet nearly 5,000 women die of

this disease every year in the United States—almost all of them because they failed to get Pap smears. Even “simple” screening tests, like blood pressure measurements and blood cholesterol determinations, can make a huge difference, because they permit the detection of potential problems many years before any serious damage is done.

During the next four weeks, you’ll learn what you can—and should—do to make yourself medically fit. Several days in the program are actually dedicated to this aspect of fitness, and on those days you will find information about a wide range of preventive activities. After reviewing this information, especially the sections on immunizations and screening, talk to your own physician to determine which of the guidelines are appropriate in your particular case. Then work with your physician and do whatever else is necessary to complete those assignments appropriately.

## **HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE *REAL* VITALITY?**

The process of achieving *real* vitality begins with recognizing the opportunity for improvement and making a commitment to change. If you do not believe that the quality of your life could be improved, and if you are not committed to at least attempting some change, there is no point in reading further, because simply reading—this book or any other—can’t make you fit. If all it took to make people healthier was reading a book, we’d be the healthiest people in the world (and the thinnest, considering the number of diet books that have been sold).

If you want to achieve *real* vitality, you have to do it for yourself. You have to start caring *about* yourself and caring *for* yourself. That doesn’t mean you have to exercise to the point of pain, or give up all the food you love to eat, or maintain the lifestyle of a saint. *Real* vitality doesn’t require that you shut yourself away from all stressful situations or master the art of meditation. On the contrary, you can eat delicious foods without guilt; enjoy physical activities without discomfort; and confront stressful situations without getting sick. Your entire life actually gets better, because *you* are getting better in all dimensions of your being.

This book will provide the information and structure you need to reach the goal of *real* vitality. The book contains scientific information that will help you understand what is needed to achieve your goal. It also includes a highly structured 28-day program of assignments to get you on the right path.

Will you be *really* fit—totally fit—if you follow the program for 28 days? Probably not, unless you are very close to that point now. But I can promise you this: If you do every assignment for the next 28 days, you will learn the process of building vitality, and that is far more important than reaching your goal in four weeks. *Real* vitality is a lifetime

process of continuing self-evaluation and constant self-improvement. It's a pleasurable process that leads to a lifetime of pleasure.

What about the other promises this book makes: an inch off your waist, a minute off your mile, 10 points off your blood pressure, 10 percent off your cholesterol level and fewer aches and pains. If you really do have room to improve in each of those areas, and you do all the assignments, those promises can be fulfilled in 28 days. But you shouldn't limit your vision of this program to the achievement of those finite goals. Our ultimate goal—and our ultimate promise—is to give you a sense of control over your life and confidence in your ability to achieve and maintain *real* vitality for the rest of your life.

Now it's time for you to make a promise: That you will follow this program as closely as you can for the next 28 days. The program in this book is only as good as your promise to follow it. If you are ready to make that promise, it's time to get started.



4. Rate the amount of fat in your diet:

very low in fat  
(approx. 10%)

somewhat low-fat  
(approx. 20%)

lightly reduced in fat  
(approx. 30%)

typical American diet  
(approx. 34% fat)

very high-fat  
(over 35% fat)

5. Rate the amount of salt (sodium) in your diet:

\_\_\_\_\_ Very low (*I am careful about the packaged foods I eat and never add salt at the table or during cooking.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Moderate (*I do not add salt at the table, but I am not particularly careful about packaged foods.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Heavy (*I add salt at the table and do not monitor my salt intake in any way.*)

6. How many half-cup portions of fruits and vegetables do you usually eat in a day?

0

1-2

3-4

5-6

7 or more

7. Do you have a clear list of priorities and a conscious plan of action that is designed to help you get what you want out of life—including your work life, your family life, and your friendships?

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I've really never thought of this in a concrete way.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sort of. While I have thought of it, I have never structured a specific plan with real goals and dates attached to it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I have a real plan and I actively put it to use. (*If you checked this response, briefly describe the top three priorities in your life.*)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

8. How often do aches and pains disrupt your life?

never

once a week

a few times a week

many times a week

every day

9. How actively do you try to meet the Recommended Daily Allowances (USRDA's) for vitamins and minerals?

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not know the USRDAs, and I make no active attempt to monitor or meet any particular nutrient needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of the USRDAs, but I make no active attempt to monitor or meet any particular nutrient needs.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of the USRDAs, and I attempt to meet my nutrient needs through my diet.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of the USRDAs, and I attempt to meet my nutrient needs through the use of vitamin and mineral supplements.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of the USRDAs, and I attempt to meet my nutrient needs through my diet and the use of supplements.

10. How often do you have trouble sleeping?

never	almost never	once a week	a few times a week	almost always	always
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11. How often do you awaken feeling refreshed and rested?

never	almost never	once a week	a few times a week	almost always	always
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12. How stressed do you feel in general?

\_\_\_\_\_ I often have more stress than I can bear.

\_\_\_\_\_ My stress is bearable, but still taxing on me physically and mentally.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is considerable stress in my life, but it is not taxing me physically or mentally.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is little stress in my life, and I am able to handle it well.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have no stress in my life.

13. How often do you use stress management techniques or relaxation techniques (such as meditation, self-hypnosis or imagery) to counter the effects of the stress in your life?

never            almost            once            a few times            almost            always  
                      never            a week            a week            always

14. If there is a “significant other” in your life, how happy are you with that relationship?

extremely            happy            satisfied            somewhat            unhappy  
                      happy            dissatisfied

15. Have you volunteered your time or money to a good cause in the last year?

yes            no

16. Do you drink alcoholic beverages?

yes            no

If yes, how often do you drink:

every day            a few times a week            once a week            less frequently

When you drink, how much do you drink?

1 drink            2 drinks            3 drinks            more than 3 drinks

17. Why do you drink? (*Check all appropriate answers*)

\_\_\_\_\_ I like the flavor and/or thirst-quenching properties of the beverage.

\_\_\_\_\_ Drinking relaxes me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Drinking makes it easier for me to socialize.

\_\_\_\_\_ Drinking brings out my personality.

\_\_\_\_\_ Drinking helps me tolerate my life.

18. Overall, how do you feel about your life?

extremely            happy            satisfied            somewhat            unhappy  
                      happy            dissatisfied

## EVALUATING YOUR RESPONSES

Now, take a moment to review your responses on this questionnaire. What do they tell you about your *real* vitality level? Is there a balance among all of the different categories, or have you neglected some important areas? Remember: You cannot mistreat one aspect of your being without causing disharmony in others. Ignore one of your parts and something goes wrong with another.

- If everyone at home makes you tense and angry, running three miles a day won't produce a state of vitality. Running may help you release some of the tension and anger, but these feelings will keep returning unless you work on improving your relationships. You'll find some techniques in our program that can help you improve them.
- If you cough all the time from smoking, losing twenty pounds won't result in *real* vitality. Taking off the excess weight may help you look better, and it will improve some aspects of your health, but you'll never feel *really* fit as long as nicotine is constricting your coronary arteries and cancer-causing chemicals and tars are irritating the lining of your breathing passages.
- If unresolved conflicts from your past are constantly stirring up your emotions, meditating regularly won't create a sense of vitality. Enjoying meditation in a tension-provoking world is a great idea, but learning to recognize and deal successfully with the root causes of your unhappiness is the only way to keep those distressing feelings from interfering with your life.

What did you learn about yourself from the questionnaire? Take a moment to reflect upon what your answers mean. Perhaps you've singled out one or two specific areas that need your attention most. However, as the program gets underway, and you learn about all the factors that contribute to your vitality, you may find that you have more work to do than you initially thought.

No matter what your answers show, however, remember that this is an *overall* vitality program, not one that focuses on just a single category of wellness. You'll find a holistic approach in this book, which means that *every* component of the plan is important, and capable of contributing to your enhanced well-being. I hope you will take advantage of all of it .

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The remainder of this book contains a 28-day program designed to produce the comprehensive kind of *real* vitality that was described in the *Introduction*. Each day covers a specific subject or issue that is important to the process of developing overall vitality. On Day 1, for example, you'll read about dietary fat. On Day 2, about flexibility...and so on. Each day you will be provided with scientific information about the specific subject and with detailed assignments that relate to the topic.

Occasionally, the specific topic for the day may not be relevant to your particular fitness or medical needs. For example, Day 16 deals with anger, and angry outbursts may not be a problem in your life. Read the section anyway, even if the issue does not seem to apply directly to you. Covering the material may help you better understand why some around you behave the way they do. You may also be surprised that you can learn something about yourself, too, in the process.

Each of the 28 days also contains a series of specific assignments to do that day. Some of the assignments are keyed to the featured topic of the day; others relate to subjects previously discussed. To get the full fitness benefits from this carefully structured plan, you must do all of these assignments as diligently as possible, unless your physician has advised you against these activities because of your particular medical circumstances.

## PACING YOURSELF

As you will soon see, some of the assignments appear very modest. For example, on Day 1 you will be asked to walk one mile. Each day thereafter, you'll be asked to speed up your walking time by just two to three seconds. That may not sound like very much, but cutting your time by two more seconds every day—day after day—soon adds up. By the end of 28 days, you'll be walking the same mile one minute faster, and you'll be able to do it without getting winded.

You may be tempted to increase our assignments so you can progress more rapidly toward your goal. In general, we'd like to discourage you from doing this, in part to ensure your safety, and partly because we want to make the process of change as easy and comfortable as we can for you. This approach works best over the long term, because it allows you to change without pain or discomfort, and without feeling like you are being deprived of something important to you.

The assignments also build upon one another—that is, there is a synergistic effect among them. Each one gains strength from the others, and by the time this multifaceted

program becomes fully integrated into your life, their impact begins to multiply. As you add each new activity to those you've already made part of your life, the overall effect is quite impressive.

You can start the program on any day of the week, although you may find it a little easier to start on a Monday, since two days of each seven-day sequence in the book are laid out as "weekend days." On these days, you will find the same kind of assignments as on other days, but there will be no new featured topics to read. Use this time to play "catch-up," reviewing any sections you may not have had enough time to read carefully the first time around.

## **MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS**

Research shows that a technique called "self-monitoring" can significantly increase the likelihood that you will reach your goal. This process simply involves a daily review of your goals and activities, followed by some form of written entry into an ongoing record. Careful monitoring and recording of your activities will reveal what you are doing right and in which areas you need to improve.

There are many different systems for monitoring and recording your progress, ranging all the way from detailed diaries to complex wall posters. Some people in fitness programs find these systems to be extremely helpful; others find them too burdensome to fit into their already busy schedules.

The system you will use to monitor and record your progress for the next 28 days is a simple and uncomplicated approach that forces you to think about what you are doing each day in the five key fitness areas of our program: Physical Vitality, Nutritional Vitality, Mental Vitality, Emotional and Spiritual Vitality, and Medical Vitality.

At the end of each day, take a few moments to evaluate and record how you performed on your specific assignments for the day. As shown in the key, use a pencil or pen to fill in the entire circle if you fully accomplished a particular assignment. Fill in just half the circle if you completed only part of the goal. And if you had a bad day with respect to that component of the program, leave the circle completely empty.

Keep in mind that you will be making general, qualitative evaluations of how you're doing. Try to reach fair and realistic judgments of how well you're doing, and then record those evaluations on the chart. Each day, as you are filling in the circles that chart your progress, ask yourself not just "What did I do today?" but also "Why?" As you answer the question "why," you will begin to recognize the specific problems that undermine your *real* fitness efforts. Then you can make adjustments in your daily routine that will help you deal effectively with those issues.

Filling in your assignment chart—and, more specifically, analyzing it—will enable you to learn what helps and hinders you and to put that knowledge into future plans and action. Think of your daily assignment charts as visual portraits of your fitness activities in the different categories. At a glance, these charts can reveal how you are doing generally, and identify specific areas where you need to begin concentrating more attention.

Each time you review your assignment charts during the next 28 days, see whether you can detect patterns that are creating problems for you. If many empty or half-empty circles appear on the assignment pages during a particular week, if they appear repeatedly on a particular day of the week, or if they appear repeatedly in the same assignment category, ask yourself why this is happening. The answer to that simple question may help you pinpoint particular situations or emotions that are triggering problems.

Self-monitoring is not just about finding your weaknesses and problem areas. It is just as useful for highlighting your strengths in this program. As you look closely at days when you've done very well, ask yourself what you can learn from those experiences. How can you apply the strategies that brought you success in those situations to other areas in which you still might be having problems?

Remember, self-monitoring is a dynamic process. Filling in the circles on the assignment pages is just the first step. You need to feed the information you gain from monitoring and charting back into your program, using it as a springboard for the next day's efforts. Your efforts will be repaid with even greater progress in the future.

**THE USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS, IN ANY FORM, IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH *REAL* VITALITY. IF YOU SMOKE OR YOU ARE USING OTHER TOBACCO PRODUCTS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU DISCONTINUE THIS PRACTICE BEFORE STARTING THE VITALITY CHALLENGE. DO NOT PROCEED WITH THE PROGRAM UNTIL YOU HAVE DONE THAT.**

AIA Vitality is a comprehensive programme that provides you with the tools and support to understand your health, how to improve it and offer great incentives to motivate you along the way. About aia vitality. AIA Vitality is a comprehensive health and wellness programme that motivates you to keep fit and helps you to manage your health.Â Vitality Weekly Challenge. 7 Days Reduce Stress Eat Well Check Your Health Stay Active Quit Smoking In progress Completed RECOMMEND FOR YOU. {"key":"RiskAllData"