



e-quilibrium

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Paragons

The most common way to define health is to quantify it. Descriptions of health might include body mass index (BMI) which incorporates weight and height, percentage of body fat, waist circumference, blood pressure, cholesterol level, fitness measures (e.g., pace to walk or run a mile, amount of weight one can lift), and the like. Additionally, definitions of health may include the absence of verifiable disease, including mental disorders. Chronological age is usually included in some fashion, so that an older person might be described as having excellent health "for his age."

Most of us would agree that health is more than a set of numerical calculations. This is especially the case if we think about health from the perspective of wellness or high-level wellness. While quantifiable indices tell part of the story, how a person lives also seems to be an important facet of health.

A paragon is a perfect embodiment of a concept or a model of excellence regarding the concept. Many would regard Thomas Edison as a paragon of an inventor, Mother Teresa as a paragon of selfless service, or Mahatma Gandhi as a paragon of a nonviolent activist. Who comes to your mind as a paragon of health?

World-class athletes might be considered paragons of health, although such individuals may not have the kind of balance in their lives that we would include as a component of health. Body-builders or models would hardly qualify, particularly with concerns about steroid use or eating disorders

among such individuals. In some cases, a persons' life work might bring them to mind as paragons of health, such as Dean Ornish with the intensive lifestyle regimen he promotes.

Perhaps the phrase "paragon of health" is an oxymoron as no one individual can be a "perfect embodiment" of health when considering the multifaceted nature of health. With that caveat, who are some of the people in your life whom you might regard as nearly a paragon of health? Family members? Friends? Work associates? Acquaintances?

Upon identifying such individuals, try to ascertain what it is that leads you to regard them as a model of health. Beyond perhaps having been blessed with good genetics, what can be learned from them about healthy living? How are they able to follow healthy patterns? What can you yourself do to be one step closer to being a paragon of health?

Paul J. Hershberger, Ph.D.

... is a clinical health psychologist. He is Professor of Family Medicine and Director of Behavioral Science for the Dayton Community Family Medicine Residency Program, Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine. His clinical practice includes psychotherapy, consultation, and coaching.

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To contact Dr. Hershberger:

e-mail: paul.hershberger@wright.edu
phone: (937) 278-6251, ext 2021