

## Dr. Rüdiger Dahlke's 12 Steps to Preventing Illness

**Rüdiger Dahlke** is a physician and psychotherapist, co-author of *The Healing Power of Illness: Understanding What Your Symptoms Are Telling You* and many other books on addressing illness. He believes disease presents an opportunity to become more aware and find out why we're alive. These are the steps he recommends for addressing illness before it settles into the body.

- 1. Change your perspective.** Stop thinking "Illness is bad" and start asking, "What is my body telling me?" Looking at things differently makes things different. Change your approach at the consciousness level.
- 2. Change your diet.** Stop eating meat, dairy products, eggs and fish; there are enough studies that show the negative effects of animal protein that we should react. Start this way of eating with a one-week fast. Increase relaxation at the same time.
- 3. Address your problems and symptoms on both the physical and mental levels.** That's the meaning of psychosomatic medicine.
- 4. Love yourself.** That includes your symptoms. It's easy to be grateful to destiny when you look back. Cultivate that gratitude looking forward. See where your symptoms lead. That makes it possible to love them. In the beginning, it's difficult to do this, but later it gets easier, and you'll enjoy living this way. And if you have a great love for yourself, you probably won't get sick.
- 5. Love your enemies.** Loving your enemies requires that you recognize that you are projecting your shortcomings onto others and that you take back all those projections. That is of great benefit to you and to society.
- 6. Go with the flow.** You lose a lot of energy to resistance. Invest yourself in the places where your life says "Yes!" and everything will become easier.
- 7. Live a courageous, realized life.** If your growth is only on the material level, the economic level, you may develop a growth problem in your body, a cancer, because you're missing the opportunities at the consciousness level. We choose where the growth occurs: on the material level or in our consciousness.
- 8. Integrate death into your life.** If you don't do this consciously, it can turn into depression. The same with burnout. When the sense is lacking in our work, our partnerships, our religion or our philosophies, we miss living in

the moment. We can't live without sense. If we can't live in the here and now, we're really ripe for burnout.

9. **Be overtly aggressive.** If you aren't daring, if you let fear sink into the body, you have war in the body. Inflammation develops, so you use antibiotics and antipruritics. This raises the chance of allergies. If you suppress allergies long enough, you get autoimmune diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome, rheumatism, multiple sclerosis, Hashimoto's disease. And if you don't live with daring, you certainly don't want to deal with your symptoms, so you suppress them with antihistamines and cortisones, which creates still deeper problems. All of this is because we don't know how to work with our aggression. We have to live with courage, and recognize that our symptoms represent our problems in life.
10. **Change the health-care model.** We have to learn to understand and work with our problems differently. Illness starts very early. In the case of lung cancer, it starts with the first cigarette and the communication problem that accompanies it. You build on that with every cigarette, and in 40 years, you've built up enough toxicity to cause illness. If you take the first moment seriously, if you ask yourself why you're smoking, you can solve the problem at the start by taking another route to try to grow up rather than the cigarette ritual.
11. **Work with the wishes of your heart.** You prevent illness and symptoms the same way you treat them. If you want to prevent heart problems, for example, you listen to the longings of your heart before it's crying with pain. Find out what your longings are and live up to them; then you can prevent heart disease.
12. **Look beyond your problems to their meaning, to what they want to tell you.** Be willing to work with your resistance every time you encounter it. Then you can prevent all sorts of problems. If you live a conscious life, you look at where you are in resistance, where you want to fight, and you take responsibility for the things that are coming to you from fate. Maybe some of your problems are worth fighting, such as when you live in a dictatorship. Still, you can find the principle and learn something, and you can do this in every aspect of your life.

Rüdiger Dahlke teaches regularly for The Intelligent Optimist. To learn more about studying with him, visit our events & courses page on [theoptimist.com](http://theoptimist.com).