

Excerpt from: *Live Healthy and Be Well*

## CORE PRINCIPLES

This book is about health and wellness, not simply about doing aerobic exercise to “get healthy,” but creating a way of thinking about who you are that brings wellness and harmony into all parts of your life. Wellness is the sum of those ideals that bring you joy, that strengthen your relationships, that fulfill your dreams, and that lead you to a deeper connection to God: Joy, Love, Purpose, and Faith. These are the core principles of *Live Healthy and Be Well*.

In 2012, I wrote an article that was published in the *Journal of Religion and Health* called “Ethic of Resistance: Choosing Life in Health Messages for African-American Women.” I explored how the media and public health agencies deliver news articles that build fear and lead to inaction because their messages are negative. Studies show that when African Americans hear negative health messages they are less likely to get health screenings than when they hear messages that empower and give hope.

In my article, I proposed that churches encourage women to tell each other more life-affirming stories that encourage them to become more healthy, to educate the next generation on what to do to stay healthy, and to create their own health messages that are grounded in Jesus’ promise that we can have abundant life (John 10:10). When we hear life-affirming stories, we build a resistance to the negative images and messages that are so often a part of what we constantly hear about healthy living. “Black women get cancer less often, but die from it more than other racial/ethnic groups.” “Black women have more heart disease, diabetes, HIV, etc.” “Eat this or else you will get a disease or die.” “Exercise this way or else.”

Do these messages work for you? I absolutely am not motivated to get a screening if I can only expect to hear bad news. Or, at least, that is what the public health messages lead us to believe. We don’t have to live with those messages. It is our opportunity as women of God to bring messages that call us into living with Joy, Love, Purpose, and Faith. Joy, Love, Purpose, and Faith are the *Live Healthy and Be Well* Core Principles. These principles are the foundation for better health. These Principles are at the heart of every *Live Healthy and Be Well* story, every activity, and all of the meditations. When you live with joy, love, purpose, and faith, you are more willing to take action to be healthy and well. You will seek health information and put it into action: eat better, move more, learn what gives you joy, have faith in your wisdom and courage, and give yourselves the love you deserve. You will live with the vitality of having a sense of purpose that integrates all parts of your life.

My purpose is to improve the health outcomes of African-American women, to provide positive, inspirational health messages that are life-affirming, and to remind you that your faith must be followed by work. “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.” James 2:26 It is action that leads to health and wellness as a lifestyle.

May the joy and love of God, the abundant life given to you by Jesus, the wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit fill you and overtake your life.

## DEFINING HOLISTIC HEALTH FOR YOURSELF

In our culture, we define “holistic living,” “well-being,” and “wholeness,” as ways of integrating our minds, bodies, and spirits to have health and wellness in all areas of our lives. Everywhere you look in this pop culture you hear these words and people telling you how to get there.

This book is different. I may give you the activities, but you will tell your health story in your own way. Holistic health, well-being, wellness are all ways of talking about living with a spirit of joy, love, forgiveness, and peace, knowing God is present with you through it all.

I offer you mind-body-spirit activities to select according to what you want to achieve. Some of you will want to focus on physical health by using more of the “Body” activities. Others will want to try more of the “Spiritual” activities. You will have the opportunity to explore activities from all three areas: “Mind,” “Body,” and “Spirit” to create your “holistic” Self-Care Action Plan.

A holistic Self-Care Action Plan is the goal of your journey with Live Healthy and Be Well. This is more than an inspirational book with health activities. This is a journey where each chapter, each activity, every story draws you closer to the transformed life you desire. You deserve a renewed life of health and well-being, not just exercising more, not just eating more fruits and vegetables, but finding new ways to express joy, love, purpose, and faith in your life.

A holistic Self-Care Action Plan brings together all the parts that make you who you are: your emotions, your spiritual beliefs, and your physical strengths. A Self-Care Action Plan helps you to see areas you would like to change. You also will notice areas where you are satisfied with what you are doing. It is important to write down what you learn from the activities. In your supplies, you are asked to use a journal. The purpose of your journal is to track the changes you want to see and to celebrate what you are already doing. You will learn, in the final section of the book, how to organize your journal to complete your Self-Care Action Plan. Or you may use the blank pages in the Notes section at the end of the book to write your Self-Care Action Plan.