



DR. DEIDRE MACDONALD, ND

# Seven Habits of Healthy Living

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# Seven Habits of Healthy Living

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*Dr. Deidre Macdonald ND*

# Introduction

If you are reading this book, chances are you are wanting a new level of health and vitality. You may be suffering with chronic health issues, stress, fatigue or chronic pain. Likely, you have pursued other paths to try and find answers, but are left with the feeling that you are not living up to your health potential. The information in this book will outline a path for you that can lead you to new levels of health and wellness. It will help you understand the difference between a true system of health care and simply disease management. It will show you the steps you can begin to take to better understand and optimize your health. I hope that the information you read here will help you feel more empowered to take charge of your health and your future.

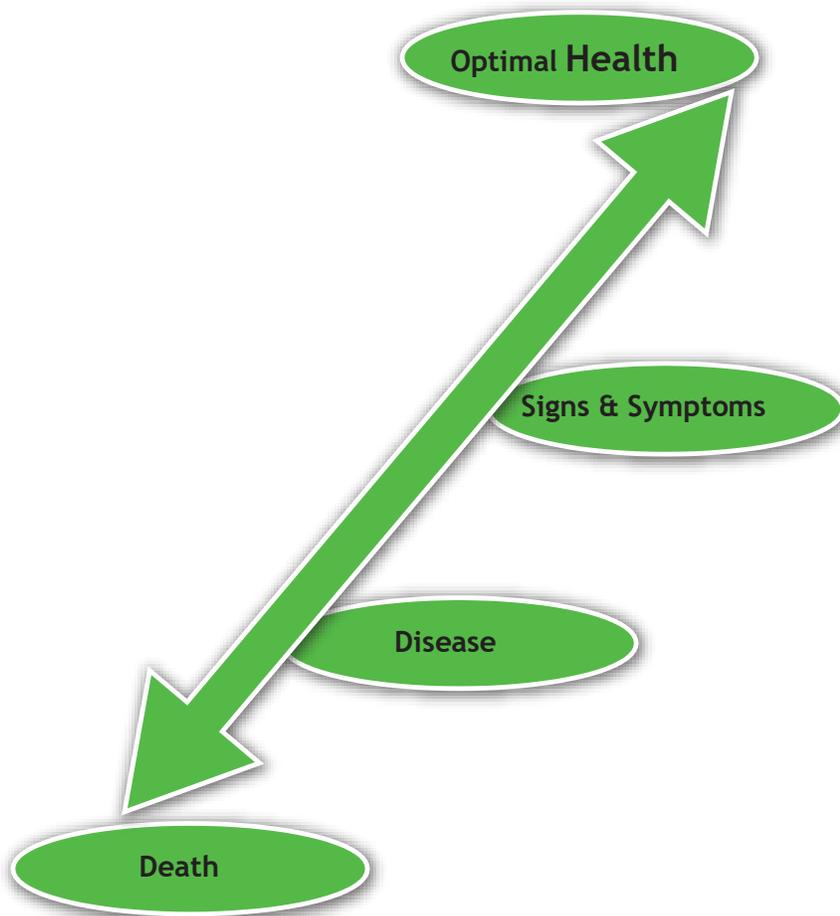
# Take Charge of Your Health

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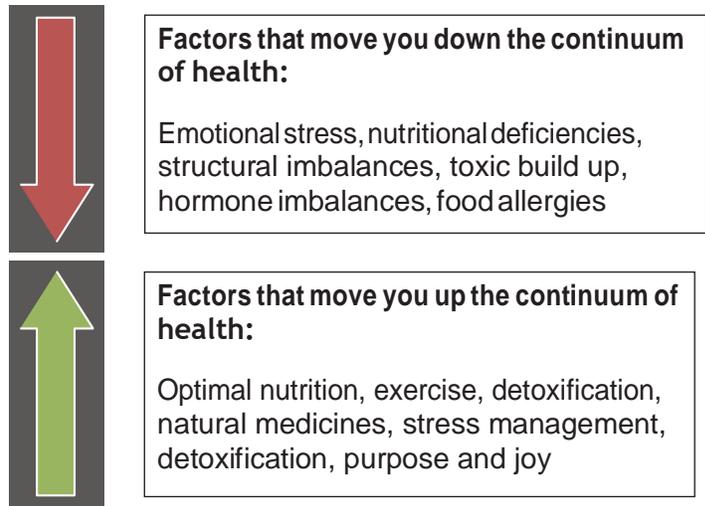
## What causes disease and what you can do about it

**Y**our health is indeed your most valuable asset. The level of physical health and vitality you possess will in large part determine the quality of your life. Therefore, the time, energy and money you put into your health will surely give you a tremendous return on investment.

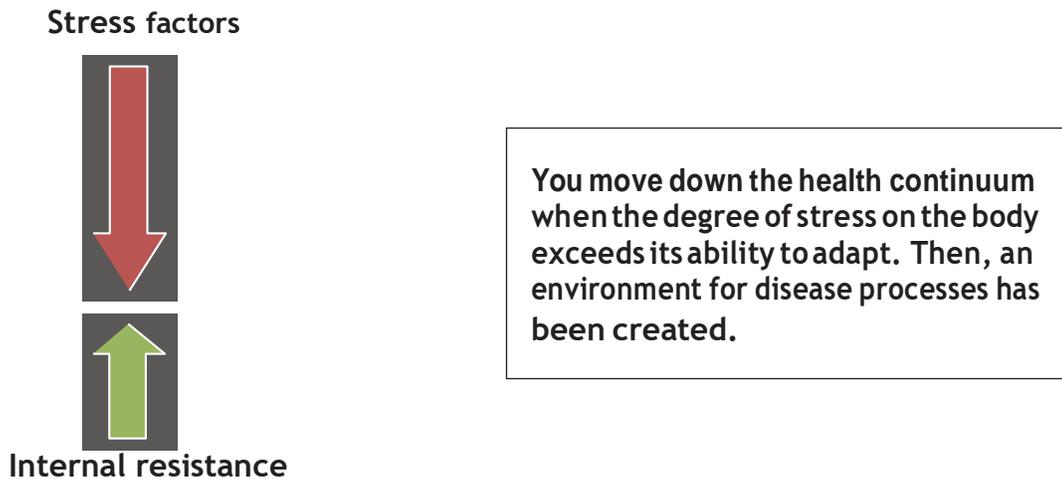
There is a continuum of health ranging from optimal health and diminishing towards signs and symptoms, disease, and eventually, death.



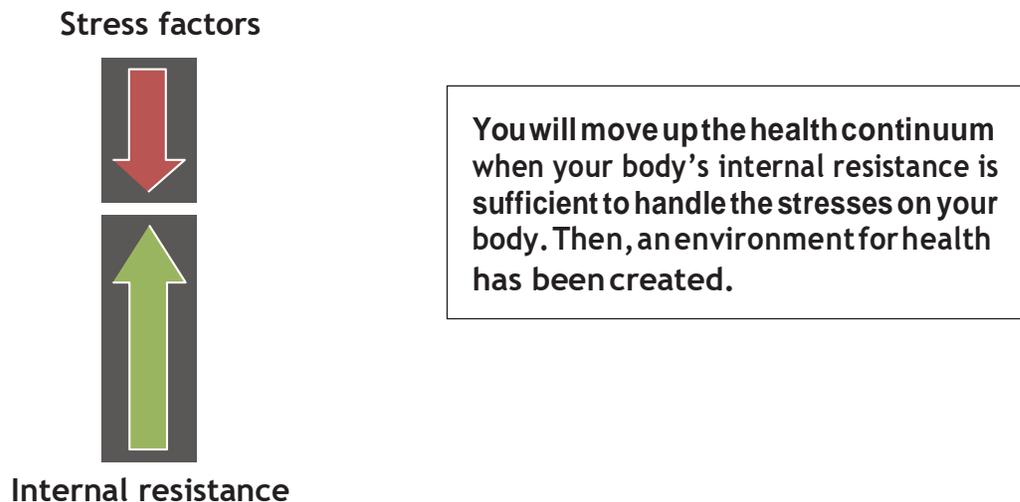
On the other hand, the body is wise and is constantly trying to heal itself. It has the potential for great internal resistance to infection and disease. Your internal resistance can be fostered through optimal lifestyle practices and natural medicines. For instance, cabbage family vegetables can fight disease, exercise strengthens the circulatory and immune systems, and fish oil reduces the risk of heart disease.



If the level of stress on your body overwhelms your internal resistance, then your health will suffer. You will inevitably move down the continuum of health. First the body will try to get your attention by presenting you with signs that it is under stress. Those signs and symptoms may include fatigue, aches and pains, infection, digestive problems, allergies and more. If your body continues to be overwhelmed by stress factors, then your internal environment will be conducive to disease formation. Naturopathic physicians can often trace back the seeds of their patients' diseases to the long term stresses that the body had to endure for years prior to diagnosis of a disease. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the early signs of imbalances in the body, before the body produces a serious alarm bell to get your attention.



You can change the course of your health and reap the reward of greater freedom and vitality. By reducing the stress factors on your health and investing in your body's internal resilience, you will begin to move toward optimal health.



You have the power to create an internal environment that is conducive to greater health. You have far more control over your health than you ever imagined. Your body has an innate ability to heal, given the right building blocks. But where do you begin? You may have a lifestyle that supports health but you lack knowledge of natural medicines. You may have a good regime of natural medicines, but struggle to create a lifestyle that works for your body. It may be time to ask for guidance from a naturopathic physician. We can outline a comprehensive plan to get your health on track and the coaching to help you stick to that plan.

### **How do I know if I am a good candidate for naturopathic medical treatment?**

1. If you have chronic health issues and you are unhappy with just treating the symptoms. You are ready to try to understand the underlying cause of your issues and work toward better long term health and vitality.
2. If you are looking for alternatives to Western treatments and want guidance on how to create a thorough program that will move you towards your goals.
3. If you are in a pro-active mode and wanting to ensure that you are optimizing your health.
4. If you want a doctor who listens to you, who gets to know you as a person, and cares about you.
5. If health care to you involves attending to your emotional and spiritual wellbeing, as well as your physical health.
6. If you are interested in learning, growing and taking more personal responsibility for your health.

## What is naturopathic medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct field of medicine that blends centuries-old natural, nontoxic therapies with the latest advances in the science of health and medicine.

Naturopathic physicians are primary care physicians whose work spans all aspects of family health from prenatal to geriatric care. With 8 years of university medical education, naturopathic physicians are experts in creating health through natural medicine. Naturopathic physicians undergo rigorous medical training. To be licensed in British Columbia they are most often complete an undergraduate degree including pre-med sciences. They then must receive at least four years of post-graduate training from an accredited naturopathic medical college. Graduating students receive a doctoral degree, “N.D.,” Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine. Extensive board exams are then written to become licensed to practice as a primary care physician in B.C.

The basic medical education of naturopathic physicians is very similar to that of medical doctors (MDs). Like MDs, we are licensed to diagnose illness, utilizing diagnostic techniques like physical exam (including PAP smears and breast exams) and blood work. We are licensed to treat illness, and have extensive knowledge of a wide variety of modalities to draw from. These modalities include:

- Nutrition
  - Optimal and individualized diet coaching
  - Vitamins and minerals
- Herbal Medicine
- Physical medicine – spinal manipulation, acupuncture, massage, physiotherapy, Laser therapy, exercise
- Homeopathy
- Counselling and stress management
- Hydrotherapy
- Pharmaceutical prescriptions

We treat patients with acute and chronic health issues using the common sense principle of:

*Lifestyle first,*

*natural medicine second,*

*pharmaceutical medicine last.*

## **Philosophy and Principles of Naturopathic Medicine**

There are six time-tested medical principles on which naturopathic medicine is based. These principles make as much sense in today's modern world as they did 200 years ago.

### **First Do No Harm.**

Naturopathic physicians seek to do no harm with medical treatments by employing safe and effective natural therapies. They seek to produce "side-benefits" not side-effects.

### **Nature has healing powers.**

Naturopathic physicians believe that the body has considerable power to heal itself. It is the role of the physician to facilitate and enhance this process with the aid of natural, nontoxic therapies.

### **Identify and treat the cause.**

Naturopathic physicians are trained to seek the underlying causes of a disease rather than to simply suppress symptoms. Symptoms are viewed as expressions of the body's attempt to heal, while the causes can spring from the physical, mental / emotional and spiritual levels.

### **Treat the whole person.**

Naturopathic physicians are trained to view an individual as a whole, composed of a complex set of physical, mental / emotional, spiritual, social, and other factors.

### **The physician is a teacher.**

Naturopathic physicians are primarily teachers, educating, empowering and motivating patients to assume more personal responsibility for their health by adopting a healthy attitude, lifestyle, and diet.

## **Prevention is the best cure.**

Naturopathic physicians are preventative medicine specialists. Prevention of disease is accomplished through education and encouraging life habits that support health and prevent disease.

Why wait? I encourage you to prioritize yourself and seek out the kind of medical care you that suits you. Don't sacrifice your health by allowing conflicting priorities to get in the way. What are you allowing to be more important than taking care of your health and your future? What could possibly be more essential than investing in your optimal functioning today and protecting yourself from disease in the future?

**You are the CEO of your health care team!**

# The Seven Habits of Healthy Living

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### **One – “Patient, know thyself.”**

The more you can learn about your health the more you can target a plan to deal with imbalances before they become diseases. A thorough medical work up is part of a preventative health plan. For my patients, I provide a complete physical exam and thorough blood work, including evaluations of the liver, kidneys, red and white blood cells, and cholesterol panel. I also monitor the metabolism, inflammatory markers, nutritional factors and more. I investigate food allergies, intestinal flora imbalances, heavy metal overload, and provide other tests depending on the situation. With greater information, we can tailor a health optimization plan to suit your unique needs and we will be on our way towards creating real, lasting change in your health.

### **Two - Optimizing Nutrition and Overcoming Emotional Eating**

When it comes to nutrition, there are many conflicting ideas out there as to which diet is the best for health. In my opinion, there is much to be learned from cultures of the world in which people have tremendous longevity and where elders remain active members of society into their 90's and beyond. These cultures hail from Okinawa Japan, the Seventh Day Adventists of California, and aboriginals from Costa Rica. There are common themes in the lifestyle and practices of these diverse cultures.

Firstly, they eat mostly plant based foods. Not all the cultures are vegetarian, but they eat mostly fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, and whole grains. In these cultures, they eat very little animal fat. Animal fat is known to increase inflammation in the body and contribute to cardiovascular disease and cancer. Fish is the exception. Its healthy fats decrease inflammation and therefore disease. Avoiding processed foods and eating a mostly plant based diet with additional fish will give you the disease fighting nutrients you need. If you do eat meat, I recommend eating organic, free range meats in moderation.

But don't we all know that we should eat more fruits and vegetables and less sugar and flour? What we know and what we do can sometimes be a world apart. I have worked with thousands of patients and found that most of them use food for emotional comfort to some degree. Often the first step towards greater health is to uncover the cause of these self-sabotaging behaviours and work towards re-learning how to eat more consciously.

## Overcoming Emotional Eating with Conscious Eating

The most important part of a nutrition plan is your ability to stick with it. Do you start a diet with great intentions only to sabotage it after a short time? Do you eat for comfort whenever you feel stressed or bored? Do you reward yourself by indulging in food? Do you realize, after it's too late, that you've eaten too much? These behaviours are the signs of emotional eating or unconscious eating. Conscious eating is a commitment to eating with a purpose in mind and it is the make or break factor in any weight loss effort. Here are my top five strategies for lasting weight control through conscious eating.

Firstly, keep your eyes on the prize. Are you crystal clear on your health goals? What are the compelling reasons why you want to eat well and lose weight? Write down your goals and motivating factors, and keep them close at hand to help you stay on track through the tough times.

Secondly, make meals matter. I recommend curtailing eating in front of the TV, while driving, or standing at the kitchen counter. It is too easy to overeat and to not really even enjoy the food if you are eating while distracted. Commit to eating while sitting down and focus on the act of eating. Chew slowly and mindfully. Eating mindfully allows you to notice when you are 80% satisfied and to stop eating at that point.

Thirdly, slow down the process of eating. Breathe three times before you eat. Take time to check in with yourself to see if you are truly hungry or feeling an emptiness of another kind. Cravings can lead to impulsive eating, but if you slow down and become aware of the process of eating, you can learn to make conscious choices about what and when to eat. See if you can catch yourself having a craving, then observe the thoughts and body sensations that come with the craving. See if you can breathe through the craving before acting on it.

Fourthly, tame the stress dragon. It is vitally important to expand your stress management repertoire beyond using food for comfort. Find constructive ways of dealing with cravings and the feelings that might be driving them. Have a list of tools you can use to combat impulsive eating, such as taking deep breaths, going for a walk, talking to a friend, writing in a journal, or repeating affirmations.

Lastly, if emotional eating continues to sabotage your best intentions to eat well, it may be time to get professional coaching or counselling. As a naturopathic physician experienced in coaching people through lifestyle change, I can help you explore the issues that may underlie emotional eating, help to free you of old patterns and teach you new strategies that will create lasting success.

## Three – Optimizing Digestion

Optimizing digestion is the foundation of most naturopathic treatment protocols. Healthy digestion is critical to overall health. The digestive system is where we absorb nutrients and eliminate toxins. If either of these functions is compromised, our health suffers.

As we age, changes occur in the digestive system that can compromise its ability to break down and absorb nutrients, and eliminate waste. Hydrochloric acid levels in the stomach can be 50% lower at 60 years old than they are at 25. Digestive enzymes can diminish too. Bile flow can be sluggish. Correcting deficiencies in digestive secretions can help restore optimal digestive function.

Undetected food allergies are a major cause of illness and disease. They can cause inflammation in various tissues throughout the body and stress the immune system. Food allergies can contribute to digestive distress, autoimmune disease, psychiatric conditions, joint inflammation, chronic infections, ADHD, fatigue and more. For my patients I often recommend having a thorough test to determine food allergies and I coach them on how to establish an allergy free, anti-inflammatory diet.

Another common stress on the digestive system is a lack of intestinal “good bacteria”. We should have about three pounds of good bacteria lining our intestines. Antibiotics, prescription hormones, and processed foods can disturb this delicate ecosystem. Without good bacteria on the defense, the intestinal lining is left open for overgrowth of yeasts and parasites that can cause gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, mental fogginess and more. I recommend testing the intestinal flora and if needed, engaging in a one to two month plan to re-establish the healthy bacterial flora.

A thorough plan to optimize digestion can have tremendous health benefits throughout the body. If you have digestive issues or other health problems that have their root in the digestive system, taking prescription drugs that simply mask the symptoms of digestive problems is not sufficient. Symptoms like acid reflux, fatigue or chronic inflammation are there for a reason, and it is our job to search for the true cause and to seek to remedy the problem in a real and lasting way. I have seen hundreds of patients with chronic digestive problems ranging from acid reflux, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn’s disease, Celiac disease, Colitis, gall bladder problems, liver disease and more. The vast majority of them have been able to reduce or eliminate medication, cancel surgeries, and return to a normal life, by engaging in the principles of naturopathic medicine. Optimizing digestion can also have a profound effect on preventing cancer, treating autoimmune disease, helping hormone problems, headaches and more. Don’t suffer in silence. You can feel better!

## **Four – Exercise, Pain reduction and Laser therapy**

Interestingly, exercise is a regular part of life in those cultures where people live the longest. Elders participate in physical exercise or physical activities such as food gathering and preparation. In my medical practice, the elders I see who are the most vibrant and mentally fit are those who enjoy regular exercise. Yet many people in our culture are living largely sedentary lifestyles.

Research shows that exercise not only prevents and treats cardiovascular disease, it also is a key protector against age-related dementia. The risk of some cancers can be lessened through exercise. It can improve mood more than anti-depressants. If having more energy and vitality is on your list of health goals, then exercise is an important part of helping you achieve that goal.

It is important to find exercise that you enjoy and to schedule it into your routine. Don't wait until you "feel like it", or until your to-do list is complete, or the weather is perfect. Get out there and commit to a plan to move your body on a regular basis.

If injuries are getting in the way, be creative and try to work around them. If you can't jog, then swim. If you can't swim, then use a stationary bike. If you can't ski, then snow shoe. The options are endless.

I encourage my patients to get treatment to overcome any injuries that hold them back from exercise. Your health depends on it. It is such a shame to see someone gain weight and increase the risk of diabetes, heart disease and cancer because an old injury is preventing them from exercising.

### **Low Level Laser Therapy**

Laser therapy is an excellent method for creating rapid healing of tissues. It is a safe and painless therapy that promotes regeneration of tissues such as muscle, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, nerves and skin. It is very useful for treating conditions such as back pain, joint pain, arthritis, tendonitis, bursitis, neuropathy and more. In the years that I have been utilizing laser therapy in my clinic, it has proven itself to me as the most effective treatment modality I have come across. Around the world, scientists have used placebo controlled studies to prove the power of laser therapy to safely and quickly heal injured tissue. For more information check out my website.

## **Five – Stress management, and adrenal fatigue**

Elders in the cultures where people live the longest share another characteristic. They enjoy a sense of purpose and a sense of community. They have, either through choice or necessity, an important role in their social group. Elders in our society often struggle with a sense of isolation and loss of purpose. Take time to redefine your sense of purpose at different stages of life. Find opportunities to connect with others or be of service to others. It may be more important to your own health than you would think.

Stress management is also an important component of a health care program. Excess stress compromises immune function, creates hormone imbalances, promotes inflammation and central obesity. Don't wait until you are in the grave to "rest in peace". Take time each day to actively relax, whether it is through deep breathing, relaxation techniques, prayer, meditation, tai chi, or taking a quiet bath. Find your bliss! Your health depends on it.

## **Six - Create Great Sleep**

Good sleep promotes better cognitive function, reduces stress hormones, enhances immunity and generally makes life feel a lot brighter. Sleep patterns can change with age, but you don't have to settle for broken sleep or a lifetime of pills with side effects. I recommend behavioural strategies and natural medicines that can enhance sleep, such as doing guided relaxation techniques in a dimly lit room before bed, or taking valerian root tincture as a natural sleep aid. For more significant insomnia issues, I coach my patients through proven effective cognitive behavioural therapy techniques and work with them to balance their out-of-sync nervous systems.

## **Seven - Natural Medicines**

Lastly, nutritional supplements can provide that final touch in the quest for optimal health. They can help to bolster the body's internal resistance and help enhance its ability to heal itself. Whether your goal is health optimization or the treatment of a chronic illness, vitamins, minerals, amino acids, herbal medicines, and homeopathic medicines can help you reach your goals.

Rather than using natural medicines just for "green quick fixes", naturopathic physicians use natural medicines for their ability to fight the underlying causes of disease including:

- Correcting Nutritional deficiencies,
- Providing antioxidant nutrients
- Assisting in detoxification of the liver, kidney, colon and blood
- Healing tissues

- Reducing inflammation
- Balancing hormones and strengthening the adrenal glands
- Strengthening the immune system
- Preventing and treating cancer

For instance, research clearly shows that fish oil reduces inflammation and vitamin D strengthens the immune system. Antioxidant nutrients are some of the key anti-aging and cancer fighting supplements. I am impressed by the newer, potent antioxidants like resveratrol and grape seed extract. Quality scientific research shows that reishi mushrooms help prevent cancer. Curcumin, a turmeric extract, is not only an excellent anti-inflammatory for people with arthritis and cardiovascular disease, it is an impressive cancer fighter as well.

My job as a naturopathic physician is to make sure that the natural medicines you are taking are going to be compatible with any prescription medications you are taking. My training in both natural and pharmaceutical medicine makes me uniquely poised to help you navigate this challenging terrain.

The great news about naturopathic medicine is that it is a common sense approach that treats you as an individual. I look at each patient as having unique challenges and opportunities. I'll help you understand the roots of any health issues and what you can do about it. I'll guide you through a process to that will help you heal yourself. All healing comes from within, given the right building blocks and the right environment. Are you ready to enjoy freedom from health problems or pain, increased energy and mental clarity, and more vitality? If you are ready to take charge of your health, call our clinic today and receive a free 15 minute consultation to see how we can help you!

Did you find this book useful? Please spread the word to your friends, family and co-workers. Many people are desperately trying to figure out how they can overcome their chronic health problems and live more meaningful and energized lives. This book is a great starting place for creating hope and encouragement that there are indeed powerful resources available to guide us in this direction.

# About the Author

## *Dr. Deidre Macdonald, ND*

Dr. Deidre Macdonald, B.A., N.D. is a naturopathic physician who has a passion for helping people reach their health potential through safe, natural medicine. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from UBC in 1988 and received the award for top student in her faculty. She received her doctorate from the premier naturopathic medical school in North America, the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon. She received her license to prescribe pharmaceutical medicine in 2010. She continues her medical studies through extensive continuing education courses.

Dr. Macdonald has had a thriving naturopathic medical practice in downtown Courtenay since 1997. She has presented over 200 lectures on topics such as healthy living, stress management, hormone balance, anti-aging, weight loss, children's health, digestion, immune enhancement and more. She has published over 100 articles on health related topics.

She actively supports the Comox Valley Transition Society and a Kenyan Orphanage run by Plant-a-Book International. She is married and has children. She enjoys exploring the rivers of the Comox Valley, singing in a jazz choir and meditation.