

The 12 Steps Of Functional Health Recovery

by Dr. Bill Hemmer



Every healthcare practitioner has had *that moment* in practice. A person with serious issues is looking to you for help, and suddenly panic wells up inside of you. You think to yourself, “Where do I even start with this patient? They have so much going on and I really want to help them. What am I going to do?” This moment of dread occurs in every caring doctor at some point in their practice career, so this article aims to provide a simple roadmap to bring your blood pressure back to normal, allow you to think strategically, and effectively work through even the most difficult patient cases.

Functional Health Recovery begins at the nutrient level. Unless the proper nutrients are digested in the body nothing really happens. Once these nutrients make it inside the body they must then be correctly delivered by the proper fluid medium. And then the nutrients must have the ability to be absorbed and assimilated by the body’s cells, glands, organs, and tissues. Finally, these cells, glands, organs, and tissues create systems that must work together to create

optimal health and well-being.

This global view of Functional Health Recovery is the strategic roadmap used in the 12 Steps I will outline in this article. The first 2 steps focus on digestion and absorption of nutrients; the next 3 describe how the different fluid mediums deliver nutrients, and the proper messages being sent to the rest of the body. The next 5 steps deal with building the cells, glands, organs and tissues, and the final 2 address the systems your patients need in order to maintain life-long good health.

No matter the current position of your patients in their health journey your job is to uncover the one thing they need to focus on, i.e. that which has the greatest and most immediate impact on their health. Some people start at Step One, others at Step Five. Regardless, once you have a grasp of their current level of health and which step they need to enhance straightaway, you can begin to build upon that foundation. Often, multiple steps downstream can be augmented at the same time by focusing on

the most important step with which they’re currently struggling.

It’s been my experience that a majority of patients have digestive issues that have never been properly addressed. This is why Steps One and Two are so important. **Step One:** You Are What You Digest And Absorb, and highlights your stomach and small intestine. If your patients aren’t digesting their nutrients and these nutrients are not readily absorbed, their health will never significantly improve.

Step Two: Fix Your Bugs Then Feed Them Well. This refers to the importance of the distal small intestine and proximal large intestine microbiome. If a patient’s microbiome is struggling to produce vitamins, neurotransmitters and a proper immune response, then their ability to regain their health will also be severely comprised.

Steps Three, Four and Five all look at the fluid communication systems of the body. **Step Three** highlights the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. The HP axis is often the key

to hormone production-related health issues. Stress, hormone overload, toxic load, and use of pharmaceuticals are just a few triggers that knock this fluid communication pathway out of balance, and unless "this light is turned on and working properly," stress handling and hormone function will never be optimized.

Step Four looks at the blood, cardiovascular system and lymphatic system. If these communication pathways are not fine-tuned and working the way they should be your patient's ability to heal will also be extremely comprised. Blood and lymph quality are among the most overlooked aspects of overall health, and often taken for granted. Since these two fluids affect every cell in the body it is critical to pay more attention to these areas.

Step Five is designed to assess and help decrease the body's total inflammatory load. When a person's body remains in a constantly-inflamed state, the aging process speeds up and their ability to heal is decreased. Looking at the effectiveness of all of the inflammatory pathways, and using diet, supplementation and exercise to reduce the overall inflammation, is key to health recovery.

Steps Six through Ten focus on rebuilding a patient's cells, glands, organs and tissues. Once nutrients are properly in their body and transported, they need to be received correctly. **Step Six** assesses how the cells are being fed. Cell membrane and mitochondrial health are key to Functional Health Recovery, and without these two structures working properly overall good health and well-being will never be achieved.

Step Seven takes cellular health to the next level. A person's metabolic health depends on all of the six steps before it. This is one of the main reasons patients have such a hard time with metabolism, i.e. unless all of the first six steps are working their metabolism will suffer greatly. This is also where the magic of weight loss usually begins to occur.

Step Eight is where other changes in esthetics often happen. As you help slow a patient's aging process by changing the way their cells, organs, glands and tissues are working, their skin will appear healthier, their muscle tone will improve, and their mood and general outlook will be more positive and cheerful. At this point others often notice that there's something different about this person, and they will remark on it, e.g. "What have you been doing? You look great!"

Step Nine is designed to "take out the garbage" from an individual's old lifestyle. Everyone has hidden viruses, parasites, bacteria and fungus that have been camouflaged among the good cells, organs, glands and tissues in their body. Once your patients build up their health to this point, their bodies will have plenty of energy to fight and kill off as many of these nasty invaders as possible, i.e. the patient's immune system is ramped up and getting rid of much of this garbage.

Once "the garbage" is taken out in Step Nine, then in **Step Ten** it's time to keep it out. When a patient's gut lining is leaking their immune system continues to be activated, and inflammation is thereby increased. During Step Ten specific actions are taken to heal the gut lining in order to allow the immune system to rest and recover.

The last two steps are designed to control the overall spectrum of your patient's health once it's been built up in the first ten steps. Looking at the total picture, the entire nervous system and immune system allows health span to equal life span. The most important part of the 3 branches of your nervous system to control Functional Health is the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic balance is crucial for health, and if a patient is too sympathetic- or parasympathetic-dominant many of the lower steps will be adversely affected.

Sympathetic dominance is very common. Most people have so much

stress to deal with on a daily basis that their autonomic nervous system can be hijacked, and often gets stuck in a fight-or-flight mode for an extended period of time. Sleep disturbances, high blood pressure, anxiety, irritability and short-term memory loss are all common symptoms of this imbalance. Parasympathetic dominance is less common but occurs when adrenal exhaustion sets in, and in this state symptoms such as bowel disturbances, low blood pressure, depression, and low mood and/or negative outlook are common.

The final step focuses on a patient's overall immune response. This includes monitoring gut health, skin health, personal hygiene, diet and exercise. The immune system is a complex innate living matrix of the evolution of our species, and vigilance is required for it to run correctly. Innate immunity is the foundation of the body's repair-and-replace system of regeneration, and allows for virtually every cell in the body to be replaced every 7 years or less. Acquired immunity stands at the ready to fight off any and all intruders. The human immune system is considered to be the most evolved biological system in our planet's history, and it needs to be treated that way.

Everyone has the ability to recover their health, and we've all seen dramatic changes in our patients' situations when they have been put on the right road, at the right time, for the right reasons.

The 12 Steps I've described are designed to help doctors create a systematic approach to an infinitely complex existence we refer to as "human." So the next time you have that "What do I do now?" moment you'll have a roadmap to use. This doesn't mean that you might not still feel a little lost but at least you'll be able to find your way back home, and I find comfort in that!

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