



Working for Health

Quality of health

Presenter

Working for Health. These recordings will help you explore how different people view the concept of health.

In the first part you will hear some responses to the question: what does health mean to you. First three men who are, or who have been homeless, and are now selling The Big Issue in Brighton, give their off the cuff responses. Patrick has been on and off the streets for 6 years, but has now moved into a flat. What does health mean to him.

Patrick

Staying alive. Obviously in the winter you suffer a lot more than in the summer, healthwise. I got asthma out of it, out of being home I don't know whether it's being homeless or whatever but, like five years ago I had to be moved into hospital with chronic asthma. If I've got a problem I go to the doctor and take my Ventolin and Becotide and, luckily that is the only health problem I do have.

Presenter

Paul sells the magazine while sleeping rough.

Paul

What does health mean to me. Ha, I don't really know really. Just keeping myself fit and clean, you know. You know I mean I do walk everywhere so that's basically what keeps me in good shape really you know but, other than I don't do any exercises at all.

Presenter

Brian has now been re-housed, thanks to Brighton Housing Trust.

Brian

Well if I wasn't healthy I wouldn't be doing The Big Issue I'd be indoors all day, but I'm not an indoor person, I'm out 6 o'clock every morning walking along the beach.

Presenter

Now six people from the deprived Pilton Estate in Edinburgh give their response to the question, 'what does health mean to you'. Robbie has been grappling with a weight problem and an eating disorder.

Robbie

Health is you know looking bright, you know cheerful. I must say thin again because thin is quite a big thing for me. Eating properly but understanding about you know what food is what you're putting in your body, understanding about you know what's in a tin a food, you know like all the E's and things like that, I don't understand about that yet but I'm trying to. No I feel healthier now, I've got to admit that because then I had lost so much weight so quickly, even though I'd lost all that weight I hadn't even you know noticed that I'd lost it. So it's, it's quite a hard question to answer that.

Presenter

Wilma has struggled with mental health problems, and now volunteers at the local stress centre.

Wilma

Having come through what I've come through, healthy to me means a variety of things, it doesn't just mean physical health. It means contentment, happiness, more outspoken in things that concern me, it means so many things now, smoking twenty cigarettes a day, if I choose to do so.

Presenter

Jackie has become very active in a self-help group for mothers with post-natal depression.

Jackie

If you are healthy enough to get up in the morning and do what you've got to do without having to worry about being exhausted or breaking down by dinner time, you're happy, everybody's happy. That's my idea of health. Oh yes, not just stop smoking or stop drinking that's no good to me, I do them all. But health starts for me, I've got to be healthy in my family to get up in the morning and do what I've got to do and still have a smile on my face at 10 o'clock at night. To me, that's healthy.

Presenter

The Pilton Community Health Project aims to involve local residents in improving their own health. George is an active volunteer.

George

I don't say I would define healthy as being without any diseases and fully fit and all that it's, as somebody who struggles to stop smoking I'm not at all sure that that's relevant to how I would describe health. Health, I think it's got to be something much more holistic than just the fact that your machine's working well. It's about your environment it's about the relationships that you have with people, the relationships that you're allowed to have with people round about you, that society gives you the space for some sort of creativity in your life. So it's not just whether the machine works well, it's about whether you can actually explore life to the fullest of what you've got, I don't think I do but, that's what I think health is about, it's much more holistic than whether you take pills or, or whatever.

Presenter

Roberta is a paid worker with the Pilton Elderly Forum.

Roberta

I think an awful lot of people maybe tend to think of health if you're either not feeling well and you're ill you know and that's health but I think health is just a feeling of well being, that you're living in decent housing, there's resources about you that you can actually do things, you know it's like the new centre they've built up the road, you know the big swimming pool.

I mean that to me is promoting health because people are being able to get about and go and do things that before they would have to maybe take all their kids in a bus to go up to Commonwealth Pool well now they can just go up the road. You know so I think environment. You need a good environment to be healthy.

Presenter

Christina has a background in health visiting, and like Roberta is also employed by the project.

Christina

If I had to give one sentence I think it's having within ones grasp a certain capacity for enjoyment, enjoyment of life, not just capacity that there is enough enjoyment so that if you looked at a really satisfying full life, that enjoyment would be part of it that wouldn't be eaten away by some painful condition or such awful housing that that's a constant anxiety or unbearable stress. So the picture of health might include quite a few warts, but if there's enough enjoyment if over a week say there's one really brilliant time, that can perhaps balance out some of the other things.

Presenter

Liz, who has married into an Indian family talks about how her views on health have been influenced by her husband and his family.

Liz

Health is not viewed as something difficult or broken down into lots of different problems, there's a much more holistic approach you know, about your general life and the way you live your life, especially to do with diet. It is not a question of having access to huge resources, but even the diet of the poorest people in India is probably more nutritious and better than here, and they're very concerned about you know having balanced elements in their diet, and how they eat and how they cook, and eating fresh food, never eating processed food, that is you know very important, that your basic the way you live your life you should work hard you don't have to keep fit or take exercise you just work hard at what you do in normal life, and you eat well. You know if you are concerned about big issues of life but you don't worry about little things and you trust your sort of instinct and intuition, and women for example in pregnancy, there are things that you eat that are very nutritious, and you take care of yourself and you're taken care of by the family. After childbirth you don't do anything, the family look after you, and you're given very nutritious soups made with milk and so on and you have all these things that actually keep you well because the western medicine is very expensive, and they look after you as a whole person and give you social, you know companionship and help and support in many practical ways which I think a lot of these things are missing and have to be bought in or constructed here. So, I think there's a huge difference in regards of mental health as well, and that is very deeply culturally different because of the attitude towards individualism. I've learned very much how to trust my instincts with regard to things like health and parenting, but occasionally we do have differences because say well you know, science says this, and then there are things which are sort of folk wisdom, and my mother in law has all sorts of things to do with health and nutrition and what is good for you, and what is bad for you equally, which don't seem to bear any relation to any scientific investigation but I'm sure they all sound like common sense and they probably are right. And I think they still maintain and they still have a whole fount of folk knowledge which when it is investigated is usually found to have some meaning in it, which they've still got which science has actually deprived us of and we're taking you know our rights to knowledge have been taken away by making into expertise.