Holistic Individual Human Ecology for Holos: A Brief and Practical Summary

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Individual ecology can only be arbitrarily divided as all human-environment interactions are overlapping, interconnected, and interdependent. Ecology can be divided infinitely or not at all. Here it has been divided into 5 divisions which can be commonly identified within the fields of medical science, physiology, environmental health, human ecology, evolutionary ecology, anthropology, and ancient and traditional healing systems. Further, these divisions transcend the individual person, passing across the interconnected and interdependent (and arbitrarily defined) scales of the human microflora, body, mind, society and built environment, culture and bioregions, and humanity and the biosphere as a whole. Any interaction in any ecological division (eg. movement or physical activity) influences all scales and is, therefore, scale-free.

A much more in depth discussion of the evolutionary variability of natural human ecology and the modern approximations of ecology, in the terms of these 5 ecological divisions, follows elsewhere on this website. Below is a VERY BRIEF summary of several elements (interactions or actions) within each division, in terms of modern approximations, which can powerfully improve health person to planet, or
holos. To adopt one or more of these elements is to change one’s ecology (environmental interactions) and to improve one’s health and the health of all other organisms, including the earth organism. This is the process of EcoHolos. Yet, this remains a surface or superficial ecological approach and should ultimately be coupled to a deep ecological approach.

**NUTRITION:**

1. **Eat humanely, with gratitude and respect:** Eat with the awareness that you are ingesting life to continue life. Thank the food (plant or animal) you are eating for its life and your life. Appreciate the fact that it has lived in this world, in your environment, with you and now it lives as part of you.

2. **Know who you’re eating:** An extension of the first point is to understand how your food has lived before it became your food. Did it live as part of a naturally connected ecosystem, participating as part of the earth organism, or did it live as part of the build environment and human society insulated from the ways of nature? What did the life you are ingesting eat? The web of ecological connections which allows us to find wholeness extends across the food web (i.e. what food did the food we are eating eat, and on and on).

3. **Whole Food:** Whole food is the food nature makes for free. It does not need to be processed, designed, packaged, modified, or preserved.

4. **Local, Fresh, Seasonal Food:** Whole food would then need to be local, fresh, and seasonal food for the most part. Wholeness originates in the local environment, our local ecology.

5. **Organic, wild, wild-like food:** Evolutionarily, food was wild and/or minimally cultivated within nature but in modernity this is rare. Modern approximations of foods which are more connected with the ways of nature include organic, biodynamic, or permaculture based cultivation of plant source foods and grass-fed, wild-caught, free-range animal source foods. Unfortunately, the labeling of foods using these terms often does not accurately reflect the animal’s life. If possible, visit the local source of these foods and get to know the animals and workers.

6. **Maximize diversity:** Diversity is a hallmark of healthy ecosystems and eating within a healthy ecosystem naturally leads to eating a great diversity of foods. In modern times, most of us eat a limited variety of foods. Our diets are monotonous and so our nutritional intake is grossly imbalanced. Go to local farmers’ markets and find all the interesting and unusual vegetables and fruits and try them. Be a dietary explorer. Indigenous populations often identify and consume over 200 different edible plants in their local habitat. How many edible plants can you name?

7. **More plant than animal:** This is the proportion of nature. Evolutionarily, plant source foods were gathered and eaten with regularity while animal source foods were consumed less reliably and more intermittently. This proportion changes with latitude, as plants become less available at higher latitudes and animals source foods dominate the diet. This is fine for individuals which share the native genetic lineage of these latitudes.

8. **Use somatic wisdom:** When we are thirsty we assume that we need water and may be getting a bit dehydrated. We acknowledge that our physiological circumstances produce this impulse. Yet, the rest of the time, we ignore the guidance of this somatic wisdom. If one has an impulse or craving for broccoli and an aversion to carrots, it is reasonable to conclude that the nutrients in broccoli are needed by the body while those in carrots are not. Our physiology and somatic wisdom co-evolved with these plants. The millions of years of interactions between human physiology and plant source foods have produced a wisdom which greatly surpasses our scientific knowledge and reflects the needs of the present moment.
MOVEMENT:

1. Daily, Frequent, Diverse, and whole body: The human body needs to move in many ways; walking, running, squatting, climbing, lifting, pushing, swimming, reaching, laying, etc. Move with a full range of motion, move frequently throughout the day. Stand and walk across the office rather than sending an email or calling. Get out of the chair and walk, squat, step outside, and use the stairs frequently.

2. Fast, slow, intense, and easy: The human body needs to move at all varieties of speed and intensity. Move fast and explosively and move slow and smoothly. Experience your limits and maximize your physiology. Experiencing your physiological limits triggers physiological adaptation and increases resilience (one component of health). Let your physiology reflect the terrain. Stretch, rest, and recover as well.

3. Through daily, frequent, diverse, fast, slow, intense, and easy movements, move an average of 5 miles daily (less on some and more on others is quite natural) on foot. Let your body guide you in the extent of movement on any particular day, but average 5 miles (or around 10,000 steps) a day.

4. Let nature move you and challenge you: Follow your kinesthetic impulses. Let yourself run across that stretch of green grass barefoot and follow your curiosity over that mountain. Listen to the call of that warm sand or ocean water.

5. Don’t exercise, play: Movement is a dance, an interaction, a reciprocal exchange. It is a medium of connection, not an activity in isolation. Embody your ecology through sensation and responsive movement. Movement occurs as a fluid and singular system, not as isolated anatomic mechanics. Move like the child spontaneously skipping and jumping around the forest. Make it play, not exercise.

6. Prioritize active transportation: In modernity with sit motionless while we move. We sit cars, buses, airplanes, etc. We stand motionless while we move vertically in buildings or horizontally in airports. Oftentimes, we let our bodies atrophy even for easily walkable or runable distances like 1 or 2 miles. Using active transportation for these short trips (or longer trips) can help serve as a modern approximation of our evolutionary activity and can make a PROFOUND impact on holos.

ELECTROMAGNETIC (Chronobiology, radiation, sleep, etc):

1. Embody nature’s rhythms (cosmic rhythms): Life is rhythm. In fact the whole of reality can be defined by nothing more than rhythms, patterns, and oscillating dynamics. Life as a human on earth consists of superimposed rhythms ranging from milliseconds to 30 years or more. The 24 hour mechanical clock has resulted in the profuse atrophy of our perception of natural rhythms. Feel and observe your rhythms and let yourself fall into sync with surrounding nature.

2. Let your body go, it knows: Try freeing yourself from the clock sometime and follow your body’s rhythmic impulses. We do this food and eat when we are hungry, but we also may simply eat because it is noon and that is when we are allowed to eat. Rest when tired, be active when energetic, work when inspired, create when creative, socialize when sociable, and etc. Notice patterns which emerge.

3. Slow with dusk, sleep with dark, wake with dawn: Sleep shifts smoothly with the seasons. Sleep more winter, less in summer. Let dark and light be your sleep clock, not the alarm clock. Don’t let artificial lights push you out of sync with the whole.
4. Overcome naked wrist anxiety, watch nature’s clock: Learn the daily and seasonal rhythms in your local nature. Let nature tell you the time and predict the weather. Awareness of these dynamics allows greater connection, wholeness, health, and wisdom.

5. Love the sun like the leaves: Soak it up and be illuminated with regularity. Daily sun exposure allows one’s constitutional pigmentation to adapt to sun exposure gradually as the intensity changes with the seasons. Sun feels good and somatic wisdom would suggest that it is necessary for health. Vitamin D, serotonin, melatonin, and other hormones or neurotransmitters are influenced by cutaneous sun exposure. Adaptive pigmentation protects against burning, the only real concern in regards to melanoma.

6. Get grounded! Walk barefoot on the earth whenever possible. Lay in the grass. Hug trees. Swim in natural bodies of water. Such activities make the electrical circuit of the human body continuous with that of the earth, nature, and your surrounding ecosystem. Tremendous health benefits can be achieved. Without this connection, the body exists in an electrical (free electron) deficiency. This connection also helps to entrain biological rhythms. A modern compensation is to use grounding or earthing sheets and other products when unable to be in touch with natural mediums.

7. Use ambient light rather than artificial light: We block out the light with walls and ceilings, and then try to recreate the light with light bulbs so we can see. There are so many errors in this approach that it is a truly unbelievable phenomenon. Use the sun for illumination through windows, skylights, open walls, etc. Build interiors in continuity with the exterior.

8. Minimize interference (electrosmog, wireless, cell phones, electronics, ionizing radiation, etc.): Natural rhythms create the symphony of sustainable and healthy life. The notes of this symphony arise from the instrument of electromagnetic energy or radiation. This includes both ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, and visible and invisible wavelengths. To excessively add the tones of low frequency wavelengths, focally and diffusely, is to add noise to this symphony. Emissions (both ionizing and non-ionizing) from technology all have biological effects and great potential for harm.

WATER:

1. Fresh, local, tested (spring water): Use the natural source of pristine water if available locally. Spring water, with confirmation that contamination has not occurred, provides optimal mineral and pH and lacks the chemical concerns of other water sources (until it is bottled in plastic that is.)

2. Municipal, filtered (carbon, RO, micro): If spring water is not locally available, the next best source is municipal water filtered for drinking. Carbon filters are the least wasteful. Reverse Osmosis is needed to remove certain contaminates such as fluoride but is more wasteful.

3. Know municipal sources and your regional watershed: Know where your water comes from and understand how weather, seasons, climate change, anthropogenic modification (dams, reservoirs, aqua ducts, etc.) and water use affect your local water.

4. Minimize bottled waters, choose spring water, choose glass, and recycle: Bottled water is often municipal water, put in plastic bottles, branded and marked up, and shipped. Avoid bottled water if possible. If needed, read labels carefully and choose actual spring water bottled in glass bottles. Recycle or reuse the bottles.

5. Avoid manufactured drinks: Only harm can be found here.

6. Drink tea, organic: If needing a change from water, tea is a great option. Of course look for local, organic teas if possible.

7. Careful with caffeine and alcohol: Moderate your intake and look for local organic options.
8. Let your lawn reflect the local ecosystem. Use native plants and do not rely upon sprinklers and watering for maintenance. Consider xeroscapes, avoid fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, etc. Don’t try to keep up with the Joneses.

9. Shower and bath only as needed. Daily showering is not always necessary. Showers can be extremely brief for rinsing off sweat or dirt. Let skin oil and healthy microflora nourish the body and moderate cutaneous physiology. Avoid excessive use of soaps and scrubbing. Avoid antimicrobial soaps and soaps or products with additives and fragrances. Use glycerin based soaps and products with simple natural ingredients. Avoiding excessive hygiene and allowing skin oils to remain balanced will dramatically reduce the need for moisturizers and other skincare products. If these are used, use 100% natural and raw moisturizers like shea butter.

10. Swim! In the ocean, a lake or pond, a river. Do this frequently.

AIR:

1. Fresh, unpolluted air: This is hard to accomplish if one lives in an urban environment. If needed, use filters in the home and office.

2. Know your air shed/air basin: Know where your air comes from and what affects the quality. Know that particulates from China reach the west coast and particulates from Africa reach the east coast. Know how human activities affect the pollutants in the air and how these affect your health.

3. Smell the air: Sense the air. Many pollutants do not have odors, but many do. You may notice that, in general, cities stink. Also notice the smells of flowers, trees, forests, and ocean air. Notice the smell of rain, summer heat, winter cold, and snow.

4. Use passive solar for heating, convection and evaporation for cooling: The body quickly adapts to temperature changes and these physiological compensations help to maintain resilience. Use natural sources of heating and cooling when possible, let your body adapt to the ambient and seasonal temperatures, and compensate further with clothing and activity changes. If using electric or gas heat, turn the thermostat 4-5 degrees warmer than usual in the summer and 4-5 degrees cooler in the winter and use clothing and activity changes to compensate.

5. Minimize fragrances, perfumes, etc.: These produces produce a “personal cloud” of dense particulate pollution around each person’s body. Many of these compounds are well known to be harmful.

6. Minimize off gassing material: Much of the material used in building, furniture, painting, plastic products, carpeting, and etc. produces harmful gases which we then chronically inhale. Become familiar with these materials and always look for opportunities to minimize or eliminate such exposures.

7. Practice balancing breathing: In addition to what we breathe, it matters how we breathe. Practice balancing breathing techniques. There are many. Look into pranayama and find techniques which are most attractive to you. Try breathing comfortably deep but not too deep for 5 seconds in and then 5 seconds out and continue this. Think of something that brings you joy. Try alternate nostril breathing. As you practice any of these, they change your physiology for more lasting benefits.