

Health Relatives

How to use this card:

Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on Health Relatives:

Concept 6: Health Relatives

People whose problems have similar biochemical and environmental causes, regardless of their diagnoses

Many people with dissimilar-sounding diagnoses are actually quite closely related because the diet and lifestyle changes needed to turn them around are virtually the same. To the extent that health problems are lifestyle-related, The Suppers Programs provide the ideal support for anyone with some combination of depression, anxiety, learning issues, obesity, diabetes, and/or problems with alcohol. These issues tend to cluster in families and individuals.

Robert's Story: Flavor Hounds

It was an interesting departure from the usual business one night at Suppers, when we were reading about how people develop the taste for particular foods. The conclusion was that food scientists had it all figured out and that it related to designing combinations of ingredients that change how people feel. Each one of us could name a favorite fruit and a few vegetables we enjoy, but the foods that we used to feel less lonely or give us a boost of energy were all manufactured foods. We all had health problems related to a weakness for sweet, creamy, and starchy comfort foods. The diagnoses that brought us to Suppers were varied: depression, low blood sugar, high blood sugar, and anxiety. One member was there primarily to learn how to feed a chronically constipated child with asthma and no interest in meals, just snack foods. We were health relatives, people who are related to one another by virtue of requiring similar solutions to different problems. In our collective "natural reality," it didn't matter that our diagnoses were different; we were all there to solve the same real problem: how to develop a taste for whole foods that would reverse our diet-related illnesses.

We thought we'd make up recipes that subtracted the worst processed ingredients and emphasized the appeal of healthy foods. None of us is a trained chef, so nothing got in the way of our fervor to try just about anything. It was November, so we had piles of squash, onions, and apples. We wanted a robust, autumnal flavor, so we roasted the squash instead of boiling it. We wanted something smooth and something crunchy, so we puréed some of the squash to make the soup creamy and roasted some pecans with nutmeg for garnish. Most of us were meat eaters, but there was one vegetarian. So we topped her soup with roasted cauliflower and everyone else's with slices of roasted chicken.

The soup was delicious. We decided to spend the next few weeks looking for recipes or developing our own ideas for how to make food taste good without a lot of sugar, fat, starch, or salt. We made sure to have plenty of lemons and limes, nuts to roast, and sprouts for a healthy crunch. We made sure that vegetarian soups had a variety of vegetables and at least one kind of legume. We became connoisseurs of hot sauce, vinegars, and mustards: inexpensive ingredients that pack a lot of flavor.

At Suppers we talk about the importance of developing a spirit of creativity. For our group, that manifests as cooking with the goal of addressing our diagnoses, which are different, and our challenge, which is the same: learning to love whole food.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Health Relatives.

Consider what runs in your family. What can you do with diet and lifestyle to address this?

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- What labels have been applied to you that you would characterize as a diagnosis or health problem, and how do they relate to your diet and lifestyle?
- For those who experience any of the following: depression, anxiety, learning issues, obesity, diabetes or problems with alcohol, describe what is going on in your biological family, assuming you know yours.
- If you do not relate to the cluster (depression, anxiety, learning issues, obesity, diabetes or problems with alcohol), describe how you think Suppers support will improve the quality of your health or life.

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations:

- If you have depression, anxiety, learning issues or fuzzy thinking, just notice how you use food to relieve the feelings.
- If you have obesity, diabetes, or problems with alcohol, just notice how you use food to change how you feel.
- Notice how people with diagnoses different from yours need to change their diet and lifestyle and note any common themes.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members related to this concept.
 - For people who want to make changes as a couple, read [Barb and Carl's story](#), page 123 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.
 - For people who want to make changes with their children, read [Sara and Son](#), page 125 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.
 - For people dealing with sugar-addiction and/or family alcoholism, and/or diabetes, read [Oscar's Story](#), page 126 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* and on the Suppers website.
- Between meetings, make cooking dates and go for healthy sources of flavor.
- Have a conversation with family members about the health history of the family.