

# Salutogenesis

**“The health of the modern person depends entirely upon how he thinks of himself as a human being and upon which path of development he travels. “**

## **Salutogenesis: Seven Requirements for Healthy Growth and Development**

Everyone who becomes aware of divine spiritual existence, who "awakens" to it, can learn how to become healthier and more human. Rudolf Steiner, an experienced teacher in the realm of self-development, has described how this can be done. In his books *Esoteric Science*, *Theosophy* and *How to Know Higher Worlds*, he clearly states that the acquisition of knowledge, the striving for higher development or meditative exercises can only be beneficial if we make the results of this work fruitful for daily life. For ultimately, how can such magnificent human characteristics as veneration, inner peace, courage, confidence, hope, loyalty, devotion, love and honesty must become autonomous and, in turn, confirm the autonomy of others. To be learned, these qualities must be rooted in everyday life, and in fact, have to be developed and proven in daily life.

A healthy meditative life is a step toward building the origins of health “salutogenesis”. Working with the exercises below can lead to taking hold of our daily life in such a way as to build healthy habits and thinking into the fabric of our lives.

### **The First Requirement**

*"The first requirement is that we turn our attention to improving our physical and mental or spiritual health. Our health does not in the first place depend on us, yet we can make the effort to improve it." "*

From the above statement, we might surmise that we are given free license to egotistically cultivate our own health. However, the right balance between pleasure and duty can be found. We are very much bound up,

both mentally and physically with our daily tasks—so much so that we often overlook our health. We may skip a meal, or we work through half the night—or even all night to make ends meet. In other words, the demands of our work often prevent us from paying adequate attention to our own well-being.

### **The Second Requirement**

*"The second requirement is to feel ourselves fully part of life. It holds true for the smallest thing as well as greater ones. For example, out of such an attitude I will be able to look at a criminal totally differently, holding back my own judgment and saying to myself: he is a human being just as I am. My particular upbringing probably prevented me from a destiny like his. If his teachers had taken the same trouble with him as mine did with me, he may have thrived. I will reflect that I have enjoyed privileges that were denied him, and that I can thank my circumstances for the good fortune that was granted me. Then the realization that I am simply a member, a segment of the whole of humanity, will not be foreign to me, and that as such I am co-responsible for everything that happens."*

Whoever practices this requirement, comes to the somewhat shocking realization as to just how much power is exerted by our own actions. If someone annoys me, and I react on that level, the situation can easily escalate or lead to lasting discord. If I avoid reacting to the person but instead ask myself: how should I act so this person can express their better nature—or: what was he experiencing inwardly—what may have happened to him at home that his tolerance level is so low? Even if we are unable to answer such questions, the very fact that they are posed non-judgmentally is an important step. It is not uncommon that, faced with such an attitude, the other person begins to change his/her behavior after a time.

### **The Third Requirement**

*"... that we win through to the conviction that our thoughts and feelings are as important for the world as our actions. Hating someone is just as destructive as a physical blow. This leads to the insight that I not only do something for myself when I perfect myself, but I do something for the world. The world is served as much by my pure feelings and thoughts as it is by my good deeds."*

Anyone who knows someone for whom they feel love, respect and veneration, knows just how effective good thoughts and feelings are in

relationships. Children treated with loving respect grow up in an atmosphere that acts as a moral wall of protection against common daily mishaps and fearful experiences, and they grow up with quite a different inner confidence than would be possible without this kind of protection.

### **The Fourth Requirement**

*"The acquisition of insight that our true nature lies within. If we see ourselves merely as a product of our physical environment we cannot accomplish anything in esoteric training. The basic requirement is to consider ourselves as a being of soul and spirit. When we manage to break through to this conviction we are in a position to discriminate between inner calling and outer achievement, discovering that one is not necessarily measured by the other. As esoteric students we must find the middle balance between what outer circumstances demand and what we know to be true to our character. This practice develops what, in esoteric science, is termed the 'spiritual scales.' On one of its scales lies a heart open to the needs of the outer world, and on the other 'inner certainty and unshakeable endurance'."*

### **The Fifth Requirement**

*"Steadfastness in following through on a resolution once it has been made. Nothing should lead us to abandon something we have decided upon except the insight that we have made a mistake. Each resolution we make is a force that works in its own way — even when it is not immediately successful in the area where it is first applied. Success is crucial only when we act out of longing, and any action motivated by craving is worthless from the point of view of the higher world. In the higher world, love is the only motivation for action. Everything which stirs the esoteric student to action should come to expression in this love. Then we will never fail to transform resolutions into deeds, regardless as to how often we have failed in the Past."*

### **The Sixth Requirement**

*"A sixth requirement is that we develop a feeling of gratitude for everything that human beings receive. We must realize that our own existence is a gift of the whole universe. What a great deal is necessary so that each one of us can receive and sustain our existence! How much we owe to nature and to other people! Those who seek for esoteric training must lean towards*

*thoughts such as these if they are to develop the all-embracing love necessary to attain higher knowledge.”*

## **Conclusion**

*“All of the aforementioned requirements must unite in a seventh: to continue to understand life in the sense that these requirements demand. By doing so, the esoteric pupil creates the possibility for giving life the character of unity. The individual expressions of his life will be in harmony and will not contradict each other. He will be prepared for the peace of mind to which he must attain during the first steps in esoteric mining.”*

It becomes clear to us, when we take a look at our own path of development, that although we are imperfect, we are capable of development. Becoming more human allows us, if we are willing, to follow these requirements, to practice them and be willing to try ever anew. If we are able to make the sources for them more and more accessible, we are then at the same time increasingly able to achieve good health at the three levels of our existence, in the physical, soul and spiritual. Apart from this we will also acquire a basic healthy ethical attitude which can stimulate the development of our humanity in all realms of life.

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