

Live Well NOW!

“There’s something to be said about a fresh start, but there’s power in finishing strong.” Authors JRenee and Lisa McNeill, Here “TWO” Inspire You (HTIY)



Live Well Now! ‘Tis The Season To Be Whole

By JRenee
Contributing writer Rev. Bonnie Epps-Burgess

We’ve come to the last leg of our Live Well NOW journey, this month, directing our focus on the SOUL. It’s in no way an indication that the steps to living a healthy life are over, but just that the final piece of the puzzle has been added, to make us WHOLE. But what exactly does that mean? By no means an attempt to proselytize, this week, we’ve focused our attention on what it takes to be spiritually whole, from the Christian perspective. Plus during this Christmas season, which for many has commercial and religious value, HTIY wanted to bring you tips for keeping it all balanced. We are pleased to introduce our contributing writer for this issue, Rev. Bonnie Epps-Burgess of Baltimore, MD. She graciously took on the task of answering four very important questions for us. And in doing so, has provided an amazing wealth of knowledge, resources, and experience, to help understand what it takes to maintain the complete you, Mind, Body, and Soul.

December

This Month:

Week 1: Spiritual

Wholeness

Week 2: Soul

Survivors

Week 3: Healthy

Rewind

Week 4: Live Well

NOW!



What does it mean to be spiritually whole?

- There is a direct relationship between faith, spirituality, and health.
- Wholeness is a balance between the mind, body, and spirit.
- Wholeness recognizes the interconnection or the synergy between the mind, body, and the spirit.
- When faith, spirituality, and health operate together, the results are a sense of wellness, wholeness, and quality of life.
- According to Fosarelli, “Human beings are best regarded not in parts but in their wholeness . . . Science excels at understanding how individual body parts work and what to do when they malfunction, but science will always be limited because there is far more to human condition than body parts. Thoughts, feelings, motives, hopes, and dreams also affect an individual’s overall health.”¹
- “Since the days of Solomon, the wise have recognized that religious commitment and reverence for God help us keep up our physical, emotional, and spiritual health . . . People who have [authentic] faith...have a better chance of staying healthy, or if we get ill, making a strong recovery. . . The faithful are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and more likely to follow physicians’ advice and to engage in healthy behavior, such as exercising, eating a healthy diet, and wearing seatbelts. This thoughtful care for themselves stems from the high value and satisfaction they find in their lives, and their determination to treat the body as the temple God gave them.”¹
- Make a commitment to pray everyday! Daily prayer builds and strengthens our relationship with God. Get up 30 minutes earlier every morning during the Christmas season, and be still or take a short walk outside. Prayer is inseparable from our spiritual lives.
- Pray A.C.T.S. -- A = Adore God, C = Confess to God, T = Thank God, and S = Make a Supplication or Petition to God.
- Pray the Breath Prayer! It has health benefits, like lowering blood pressure. To do the Breath Prayer, synchronize your breathing by a single two-syllable word such as, “Father,” or “Jesus.” Say the syllables of the word as you inhale and exhale. Concentrate on the word and let God speak to you. Pray it until it prays you.
- Find a spiritual friend or a spiritual director and spend time together during the Christmas season.
- Journal and make your journaling experience your prayer. Take at least 20 minutes or more at the beginning or end of the day to journal your thoughts. Let God invite you to express yourself.
- Pray using the Lectio Divina: Read, Reflect, Respond, and Rest.
<http://www.shalem.org/index.php/resources/publications/articles-written-by-shalem-staff/lectio-divina>.
- Increase your body’s endorphins. Do something that brings you joy and find something to do with someone else that’s fun: read the story of Christmas to a child; sing a Christmas song to a

¹ Fosarelli, Patricia. : Fearfully Wonderfully Made: The Interconnectedness of Body-Mind-Spirit.” *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Fall 2002): 212-213.

¹ Dale A. Matthews, “Foreward,” in *A Minute For Your Health: The ABC’s For Improved Health And Longevity*, ed. Stephanie H. Kong, M.D., (Illinois: Hilton Publishing Co., 2003), xi-xii.

How do you keep the focus on your complete spiritual self and not get lost in the drama of the Christmas season?

- grandparent; share favorite stories with others or look at picture albums of the family “back in the day;” move outside of yourself, i.e., give yourself away for the day! Do random acts of kindness for others who are not expecting anything from you.
- Invite family and friends into your home for a Kwanzaa celebration.
- Eat responsibly. Adjust your food conduct and food conscience.

What should we remember as we prepare to share the birth of Christ?

As we prepare to share the birth of Christ, we should remember that Jesus came to us quietly as a light in darkness and a hope of the world. The good news of Christmas is for the humble, poor, lost, and lowly of spirit to know that they matter, they are important, and that they do count to Jesus and to the world. No matter what kind of year they’ve had, the Anointed Messiah has come, and with him comes his redeeming love. Keep the “Christ” in Christmas! Celebrate, sing songs, decorate trees, send cards, encourage one another, and prepare a feast to honor the sweet, little Jesus boy. “O come, let us adore Him. Christ, the Lord.”

Are there spiritual exercises we can share as families, or as individuals during the Christmas season?

- As hard as it sounds, and as difficult as it may be to do, don’t let the year-end, without an act of forgiveness toward a family member, a co-worker, a neighbor, or toward yourself. God’s Word says, “Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). In the book *Lord, I Want to Be Whole: The Power of Prayer and Scripture in Emotional Healing*, Stormie Omartian says that, “Forgiveness is a choice we make . . . The most important thing to remember about forgiveness is that forgiveness doesn’t make the other person right; it makes you free.”¹
- The Christmas season is a good

opportunity to show creativity. Help your family search for the image of God during the Christmas season. They can visit the elderly and sick, prepare food and serve it at a family shelter for homeless families, sing Christmas carols at a senior citizen’s center, or volunteer to give away their slightly-used toys and games.

- Wear an attire that pleases God and will make your family happy, too! If you’re the grouchy-type, wear a smile. Do your best to be pleasant during this season. If you’re the gimme-type, wear compassion all over you. Make kindness for others a part of your wardrobe. If you’re the fussy-type, dress yourself in quiet strength with a special coat of gentleness. Regardless of whatever else you put on, wear LOVE, sweetness, and keep a song in your heart!
- Plan to attend a worship service together as a family.
- As a family, introduce intercessory prayer and pray for another person’s well-being or for a resolution to our current economic conditions or global issues.
- ¹ Stormie Omartian, *Lord, I Want to Be Whole: The Power of Prayer and Scripture in Emotional Healing* (Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 2000), 20.

Rev. Bonnie Epps-Burgess is a native of New York, where she worked in the public school system. Her journey in ministry has afforded her many opportunities, from the east to west coast, to share her special gift of encouragement. She is an itinerate deacon in the AME church serving in the 2nd Episcopal district. She serves as the director of the Health and Wellness Ministry, at Mt. Calvary AME, and recently led the church in a successful weight loss initiative.

www.mtcalvaryame.org

Here 'TWO' Inspire You

Twin sisters and authors, JRenee and Lisa McNeill, team up to bring you inspiration times two. "Together, we are embarking upon a mission to be real, to be an encouragement, and to inspire each and every life we touch."

Combined appearances include Summer Literacy/Drama Camp and HTIY Teams Up With...



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JRenee is an author, drama/mime coach in Baltimore city, with a passion for sharing her jazz-infused poetry, and stage production. She makes regular appearances as her famous character, Miz Milly.

Lisa McNeill is a children's book author and co-chair of the CEO Literary Group, with the [Atlanta Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce](#). She has a passion for finding creative ways to promote literacy, and inspire young people to be their very best.