

Chapter Nine

Who is Responsible for the Health Crisis in America?

Change the Health Crisis

A baby born in the U.S. in 2004 will live an average of 77.9 years. That life expectancy ranks 42d in the world, down from 11th twenty years earlier. - Source: Census Bureau and National Center for Health Statistics

BLAME-STORMING THE HEALTH CRISIS

Who is responsible for the health crisis in America? Is it the government? The state of the economy? Parents? Schools? What about you and me? Restaurants? Grocery stores? Or is it our busy schedules? How about those get-togethers and parties you attend? Maybe the presented food choices are to blame. Yes! “Blame.” That’s the word I was looking for! We’re looking for someone or some institution to blame for our health crisis.

IS THERE A GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACY?

Or is there a government conspiracy? If so, just who are the conspirators? Let’s get one thing straight. You and I do not need anyone’s help in creating a health crisis. There’s a reason for this. You and I are the greatest conspirators of our own lives. We have received more than enough information to let us know what to do to enhance our health and yet we, in many cases, don’t act and make the changes. I

think that clarifies the conspiracy theory in a nutshell. So anytime you want to blame someone else or some institution, cease fire! Cease that thought!

When I speak of this health crisis, I am not talking about medical insurance or medical costs or treatment. True, this is an important issue. But this issue only touches on the surface of the problem. How we think, eat and live is the real cause. So who or what is responsible? Do you have an idea? Who is the villain or culprit?

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HEALTH

You are personally responsible for all the decisions you make. That stands firm. Do not blame any institution or anyone else for your poor choices that lead to disease, illness and poor health.

WHY AMERICANS RANK LOW ON LONGEVITY

What has caused America to fall so far behind the statistics on longevity in the world? The ranking went from 11th to 42d. Americans do live longer, but not as long as 41 other countries, according to National Center on Health Statistics. Why is one of the richest countries in the world not able to keep up with other countries?

Some say it is because the United States has no universal health care. I don't see that as the *primary* reason since we have never had universal health care.

Here's what I think are some of the primary reasons for this trend:

- Adults in the United States have one of the highest obesity rates in the world. One third of U.S. adults 20 years and older are obese and about two thirds are overweight, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.
- Americans are extremely sedentary in their lifestyles.
- Americans don't exercise at all or very little.
- Americans eat too much and they eat too much processed foods, sugar and fat.
- As long as the health care debate is limited to insurance, the health of Americans will not improve.

SAM MADE ME DO IT

Kids sometimes will do the craziest things. Once upon a time, there were two brothers. We'll call them Sam and Jake. As school-aged brothers, Sam challenged Jake to climb a tree, and so he does. Then Jake is challenged, on a dare, to go

farther out on a long, thin branch of the tree. He gets about half way out before the limb breaks, and he comes falling to the earth with a thump. Jake broke his nose and got some cuts and bruises. Both kids report to their mother and of course Mom asks Jake, “How did this happen?” Jake responds, “Sam made me do it!”

There are lots of complaints I hear about all that enticing processed food in the grocery stores. There are remarks about the special challenge of eating out: The portion sizes are too big, and there are all those irresistible, unhealthy “choices” available. I see no difference between Jake’s response and these complaining adults’ reactions to their plight – or, should I say, dilemma. Jake said, “Sam made me do it.” Translation: Sam is responsible for Jake’s poor decision to go out on a limb. That’s nonsense. Jake is responsible for his own decision to go out on a limb. We adults are too frequently “going out on a limb” with our health by making poor choices while laying the blame on external circumstances or institutions -- whether commercial, social, or governmental. Cease fire with such thoughts of blaming external circumstances or other people. Take charge. Be accountable for your own actions.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Are our institutions off the hook when it comes to responsibility? No, they are not. I use the term “institution” in a broad sense, to include the following:

- Federal, state and local governments
- Political parties and politicians
- Teachers and school boards
- Physicians, dentists, nurses
- Journalists, press and media
- CEO’s and corporate shareholders
- Restaurateurs, marketers
- School cafeterias
- Workplace cafeterias
- Clergy, little league coaches
- Parents and caregivers
- Law enforcement officers, parole officers
- Military leaders (from the squad leader upward)