

Need a greeting

# Tell friends, enemies to go to health

"If we Americans lived healthier lives, ate more nutritious foods, smoked less, maintained our proper weight, and exercised regularly, it would do more to improve our health than anything doctors and medicine could do for us."



"This statement was felt to be true by 92 percent of the people surveyed by a Louis Harris poll.

Self-responsibility for health

is the basic idea behind self-care. Self-care is said to be the future of health care in America. Strangely though, self-care is the history of health care in the world.

Everyone has always really been responsible for their own health. Yes, it has been easy to put the burden of health care on the visiting doctors, nurses, or resident health aides.

But the responsibility is not theirs, it is yours. Books like "Take Care of Yourself" start with lines like "You can do more for your health than your doctor can."

The idea of being responsible for your own care is growing. When Governor Jay Hammond was talking about the bill that will give every Alaskan \$1,000 from the Permanent Fund he said, "The bill will allow future legislators to at least to some degree, to cut government expenditures in that the public can be expected to use some of their benefits to purchase services of their choice from the private sector."

It looks as if this trend is going to continue into the future. The better you take care

of yourself the better off you will be.

But along with that self-responsibility should be a sense of how a person fits into the community. Recent studies have shown that close ties to other people can help extend one's healthy life span.

The Japanese have the highest life expectancy in the world and lowest heart disease rate. The Japanese have a strong sense of community and belonging.

Social ties mean a great deal in this community too. The Inupiaq culture is much like the culture of the Japanese —



the closeness of the community is important. This is much more of the true sense of social security than the monetary system that is on shaky ground in this country.

How does one get into self-care? Well, once again, it's up to you. If you feel better, have more energy, are happier, are in touch with the people and world around you when you are healthy, then it seems everyone would be beating down health educators' doors. This is not the case.

As a matter of fact, health education is often one of the first areas to be cut when budgets get tight.

Ben Franklin said it, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Prevention — get sick, don't get down, don't give up hope — is much less costly than cures, hospitals, medicine and doctors.

As part of a prevention program, the Northern Alaska Health Resources Association gave out three health promotion grants. The North Slope Borough Health Education program received one of these grants to develop an Arctic Survival Manual.

Material is already coming in from other Arctic countries as well as requests for copies of the manual. This project will look at traditional Inupiaq survival skills as well as modern techniques.

Survival is the ultimate in taking care of yourself. The materials will stress how to keep your mind, body and spirit strong.

Della Keats, traditional healer of the Kotzebue area, says it takes "your head, your hands, and your heart" to stay healthy. The new Holistic Health approach uses the same conception: mind, body and spirit.



But in both these approaches to health care it is not a doctor, hospital or medicine that is referred to, it is the individual. What are you doing about your health?

Naturally,

Carl M. Hild  
Health Educator  
One of the "Health's  
Angels"