



# Health Coach Erin Paul Breaks Down Cultural Myths... Lifelong Health Begins With Lifelong Commitment

**By Michael Stein**  
“A majority of illness and disease today is caused by everyday choices.”  
That’s a conclusion Erin Paul made in her book, “Culturally Ill,” her assessment of the health care industry primarily based on her 13 years of experience in the field, including six as a traveling nurse with the Veterans Health Administration.

Paul’s journey through the health care field has now placed her in Barnesville as the social service director and nurse with Valley Care and Rehab, a position she found quite appealing. Her passion for health education led Paul to become an integrative nutrition health coach and founding Hive Life Enhancement to provide wellness education and empowerment.  
Paul’s personal experience dealing with asthma had a strong impact on how she coaches others who seek a healthy lifestyle.  
“I was prescribed medications and felt okay,” she said. “But I ran into situations where the out-of-pocket expenses got to be very high. And it seemed like I was just putting a Band-Aid on the wound until I started looking at lifestyle and nutritional changes.”

Making those changes was, Paul said, “an unfolding, or putting the pieces together. I started reading about natural remedies for asthma. At some point I started questioning some of the treatment methods and started looking into the nutritional factors of treatment.”  
While questioning traditional methods of health care Paul was introduced to the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, an online school and community of people from all walks of life. “They are people who are committed to changing their lifestyle,” she said. “And if I wanted to help others, I knew I had to make

changes and get healthy myself.”  
One might point to an already abundant amount of information that’s out there in books, from practitioners and online.  
“Yes, we are flooded with health information,” Paul said. “Most of us know how to access this and know how to be well. The challenge is actually doing it.”  
Spending 10 minutes with your doctor and being told to do this and that is not going to be very effective for most people.  
“The patient really isn’t being heard in that short period of time,” Paul said. “Real progress is made when the practitioner has time to fully listen to concerns and provide coaching.”  
A health coaching session begins with an initial consultation, finding out what the person’s goals are and what he or she hopes to gain. “It’s an opportunity to get to know someone, ask questions and learn what their level of motivation is. You have to be committed to those goals, and the health coach is there to hold you accountable—to say, ‘these are the steps you need to take’ without dragging you to the finish line. The goal is to create sustainable change.”  
One thing in particular a health coach won’t tell you is, “Go on a diet.”

“The diet and weight-loss industry is a \$60 billion a year business. It’s crazy how much people spend on products that generally don’t work and may actually harm. Diets do not work because they’re not sustainable. ‘Diet’ is one letter away from ‘die.’ You need to aim for a lifelong healthy lifestyle, not short-term diets for benefits that probably won’t last.”  
Paul makes sure that people understand that a course of action that works for one doesn’t necessarily work for another.  
“We are all individuals.

What’s okay for one may be toxic for another. It’s called bio-individualism. Tune into your body because it’s communicating with you. Listen to the message. That makes it easier to process the information. Knowing you can rely on your body’s innate wisdom makes the wealth of health information less overwhelming.”  
When the word addiction is tossed out, most think of drugs and alcohol. While those are certainly serious issues, Paul thinks beyond that to everyday additions of everyday people.  
“Things like shopping, social media and sugar are also additions. We are exposed to sugar from the womb.”  
Paul admits it’s an addiction she’s been challenged with. “When I cut down on processed sugar it’s amazing how much better I feel. Sugar is a drug and it’s everywhere. When I’m coaching someone, we deconstruct the cravings and learn more about why they’re having the cravings. One reason why people crave sugar is that we crave the sweetness of life.”  
Kicking the sugar habit, Paul said, leads to more quality sleep, more energy, feeling more comfortable in one’s body, more stable moods and a greater sense of happiness.  
“It doesn’t happen overnight. A lot depends on where you’re at in life at the time. Accountability is essential whether you’re trying to cut down on sugar, exercise more, quit smoking or whatever you’re trying to accomplish. You need a partner, such as a health coach, to help reach your goal.”  
With the gross inefficiencies she had to endure in her duties with the VA as an object example, Paul said the failures in America’s health care system include a lack of long-term wellness planning.  
“Instead of addressing the root cause of health issues,



Erin Paul said creating real sustainable change, rather than dieting, is key to reaching life-long health goals.

drugs are prescribed and surgery is scheduled. This encourages people to ignore the important messages from the body and preventing opportunities to truly heal. The result is often worsening of the condition and more complications.”  
Paul added that, because our health system is separated into specialties, important connections between the body are often missed.  
The message she delivers in her book is stark—and a wake-up call:  
“People live solely on food-like substances and abuse socially acceptable drugs like caffeine. There are high levels of stress, excessive amounts of working, loveless relationships and a lack of daily movement. People and professionals fail to see the link between diet and lifestyle and energy, infertility, lack of sex drive, anxiety, fluctuating moods, and general unhappiness.”  
Paul added that our spiritual and emotional health is not recognized much in society, either.  
After resigning from the VA, Paul took eight months off to reflect on her experiences and work on writing and publishing her book and then starting a private health coaching business, an idea she says is still alive and well. “The reality is that there are so many changes in life so coaching full-time is not realistic at this time,” she said. “I never imagined I’d be living in a small town and working at a nursing home. But that’s the funny thing about life, you just never know where it will lead you.”  
“The stability and security of a full-time position has been a blessing, but I’m open to health coaching if there is someone out there really motivated to work with me.”



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