

“Healthy people and a healthy world” Ethical compass

“Healthy people and a healthy world”, every person generally agrees with that. In this document “healthy people and a healthy world” stands for the realisation of a situation of:

- “Healthy people”: every human being has relatively equal opportunities to choose for the value of health. We define health as the ability to manage one’s own healthy balance: mentally (IQ), physically (PQ), emotionally (EQ) and spiritually (SQ) in the short and long term. This definition emphasizes the individual’s resilience and the potential to become and/or feel healthy, even in case of illness.
- “Healthy world”: worldwide there is a system that puts “healthy people” at the centre with consideration for the “here and now” and the “elsewhere and later” (elsewhere in the world and future generations). This system focuses on the value of health.

“Health is everything” systems thinking & intuition

Realising “healthy people and a healthy world” requires a collective awareness from which people want to, can and will make other, integral choices in all facets of life based on the value of health. This requires “health is everything” systems thinking & intuition: a viewpoint based on an awareness that health is all-encompassing. For example, health does not only apply to the health care domain. Health concerns the entire ecosystem and affects all domains. It is a system that is characterised by a complex dynamic process of conditional dependencies.

Health requires making choices

Systems thinking & intuition based on the value of health in an all-encompassing sense implies making personal, political, social, financial-economic, constitutional and ecological choices that allow every individual to consciously and freely have equal opportunities for health. Inherent in making choices is that the resulting (in-)action has consequences. Acting and not acting affect our own and other people’s health, both in the “here and now” and “elsewhere and later”. As we constantly have to make choices in everyday life that reflect this ethical dimension, it makes sense to rely on basic ethical principles. Basic principles that together function as a value system; an ethical compass.

Ethical compass for “healthy people and a healthy world”

The big question is: what basic ethical principles, in their interdependence and interaction, can facilitate a situation of “healthy people and a healthy world” in the “here and now” and “elsewhere and later”? In theory, because we humans make ethical choices in a context of hidden shortcomings/impact of our (non-)actions. Inherent in our human discernment is its incompleteness. In addition, we all unintentionally and unconsciously cause friction to a certain degree in our daily lives. Aware of this relativity resulting from not knowing, based on reflective conversations, research and empirical experience, the following set of conditionally dependant basic principles has been chosen, which together form an ethical compass for “healthy people and a healthy world”.

Basic principles

The conditionally dependant basic principles that can act together as an ethical compass are:

- insight and intuition
- inner values
- consciousness and meditation
- compassion
- equality in freedom
- social inclusion
- organic
- regenerative
- circular
- green
- social purpose

Insight & intuition:

Insight and intuition help with approaching the value of health in an integral way, from an awareness that all elements in life are conditionally interdependent. Developing insight & intuition requires conscious living whereby every person can go in search of his/her purpose in the 'labyrinth of life'. Mindful and heartfelt; following the heart and with compassion. Listening to his/her gut feeling.

Inner values:

Inner values are the universal values present in every human being. For example: love, kindness, compassion, empathy, patience, tolerance, respect, forgiveness, altruism, courage, satisfaction, self-discipline and righteousness. They contribute to health, meaning, harmony, happiness and peace.

Consciousness and meditation:

Consciousness refers to a state of open awareness, which helps us to remember our core values in our daily lives concerning IQ (cognitive / mental), PQ (physical), EQ (emotional), SQ (spiritual / finding meaning) and allows us to give direction to healthy(-ier) behaviour. Awareness means paying attention to your actions, feelings, thoughts and words. In a way that is characterised by mindfulness; being able to be mindful and present in everyday actions. This state of awareness also indicates a general attitude of caution or conscientiousness in the sense of being considerate and attentive. Meditation is about practising and developing open awareness. It is a learning process of becoming familiar with something or a situation to gain insight into its unique nature and to become able to deal with it in line with core values.

Compassion:

Compassion is the desire to alleviate the suffering of others and to promote their well-being, resulting in an informed choice about whether to act. Universal compassion is the ability to allow the circle of care to encompass all of humanity. Compassion motivates positive states such as health, well-being, hope and resilience.

Equality in freedom:

Equality in freedom refers to solidarity. It is a collective responsibility that every human being is equally facilitated in basic material and immaterial freedoms that are necessary to live a dignified life. Respecting freedom of choice, this concept touches on issues such as fair income distribution



(basic income), health equality, equal ownership distribution (common property) and equal access to basic services.

Social inclusion:

Social inclusion refers to the principle of non-discrimination and safety. Every person has the same rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as gender, age, skin colour, background, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, birth, property, health status, disability or physical characteristics. Social inclusion also implies diversity. Diversity within an ecosystem contributes to its resilience to absorb shifts and disruptions.

Organic:

Organic refers to a method of production and consumption aimed at supporting and strengthening the health of soils, crops, animals, people and ecosystems. Health is viewed from the perspective of wholeness, synergy and integrity of living systems. Health is not a matter of absence of illness, but of continuously working on physical, mental, social and ecological well-being. Agriculture takes place within living ecosystems and natural cycles. Working organically implies adapting to local conditions, ecosystems, culture and scale. The entire chain from production to consumption must contribute to the protection and improvement of the living environment (water, air, biodiversity, landscape, climate, et cetera). It should also contribute to fairness in the sense of equity, respect, justice and stewardship. In order to protect the health of current and future generations and the planetary ecology, we must act on the principle of precaution and responsibility. This means deep reflection (triage) is required when it comes to experiments or scientific innovations.

Regenerative:

Regenerative implies relying on the self-repairing, self-healing capacity.

Circular:

Circular refers to the application of the principle of closed cycles. Like circularity of application. Circularity of energy and matter; minimising the use of finite resources, reusing materials and raw materials and allowing organic residues to flow back safely into nature after use. And monetary circularity; a deep reflection on compensation and capital (interest).

Green:

Green refers to green planning of the living environment, inclusion of nature, and awareness of the impact of our behaviour on our environment.

Local:

Local refers to prioritising 'closeness' where production and consumption are concerned. Manifestations of this are short supply chains, autarchy in a positive sense like high tech – low end, and communities of "prosumers" (aggregation of producers and consumers).

Social purpose:

Social purpose means that ownership structures are arranged in such a way that revenues are part of a larger community (to be allocated to the social benefit of the public good).

The revenues of an activity accrue to the value of health. The value of health manifests itself in stewardship, meeting social needs, embracing transparency, a level playing field, true pricing, a health-promoting environment and integral health management.



Vital sectors

Ethical action to facilitate “healthy people and a healthy world” also touches the systemic issue: which sectors are vital for primary provisions/basic needs and should therefore be the main destination of (financial) investments? Health is not for sale. Even though it sometimes appears that way. Health is a human right and not a product of the market. The combination of the all-encompassing character of health and not being able to buy it, means that health cannot be sold by any sector. In the context of “healthy people and a healthy world”, sectors that contribute to primary human needs - such as food, water, energy, safety, social relationships, self-actualisation and a sense of purpose - can be considered vital. These needs must be met, however, considering the health effects of choices on the individual person, on other people and the planetary ecology, and considering both the “here and now” as well as “elsewhere and later”

This document will be amended in the event of progressive insight. The revised version will be published online.

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This document is an English translation of the original document in Dutch.

Active Health Foundation (AHF) is a Public Benefit Organization (PBO, called ANBI in the Netherlands) aiming to realise its goals of "healthy people and a healthy world". It facilitates public benefit initiatives that are consistent with the basic ethical principles described in this document and of which it is unlikely that they will succeed without the support of AHF. To get in touch regarding this document, please contact the secretariat of Active Health Foundation: +31 88 - 28 66 000 or info@activehealthfoundation.org.

