



MOTIVATIONS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM™

# HEALTH AND HAPPINESS: A PURPOSEFUL APPROACH

SECOND OF A SERIES ON HEALTH DECISION-MAKING | MOTIVATIONS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM™ (MAP)



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STRATEGY GROUP

## HEALTH AND HAPPINESS: A PURPOSEFUL APPROACH

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Through our Motivations Assessment Program™ (MAP), Artemis Strategy Group continues to look at the forces that motivate individual decisions. In this second report on health decision-making, we focus on how Americans think about and take action related to their health.



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**“Health information is just about the number one thing that people go into public libraries and connect to public libraries for. They’re also looking for things that can make their lives better. It’s a great equalizer.”**

*— Carla Hayden, New Chief Librarian of Congress, in a PBS interview September 19, 2016*



Health is a big deal. Not only does the “health” sector represent nearly a fifth of the U.S. economy, but Americans attach high significance to their health-related decisions. We perceive good health as central to one of the most significant personal values: the desire to live life to the fullest. Enjoying life is the dominant value behind most Americans’ health decision-making.

### MAP: THE INVESTIGATION OF HEALTH DECISION-MAKING

Since 2014, Artemis Strategy Group has examined Americans’ health decision-making. Our MAP research aims to inform and inspire marketing and communications leaders engaged in influencing specific health decisions and helping people improve their health.

In “Healthful Is the New Healthy” we reported on how Americans’ approaches to managing their health have evolved. Americans have integrated their thinking about health-related matters to take a more holistic view of their health, a phenomenon we call “healthfulness.” And they continue to take greater personal responsibility for their health. This latest round of research extends that analysis, looking more closely at the actions people take related to their health and the thought-action orientations that connect those actions to the achievement of personal values.

When digging into the ways that Americans think about and take actions related to their health, the Artemis team discovered a very “purposeful” approach. Americans perceive their personal health as a way to fulfill important personal values. They see that being healthy requires smart decisions and a holistic approach that incorporates many aspects of day-to-day life.

## SMART DECISIONS

Making smart health-related decisions is a paramount emotional objective for most Americans. If you're saying, "Who would want to make dumb decisions?" you're right. That's obvious. But our findings have shown that the importance of making smart decisions goes up when the stakes are higher. The significance people attach to making smart health decisions illustrates two patterns of thought:

1. Americans' holistic approach to healthfulness
2. A recognition that, when it comes to health, people seldom face a simple "should I or shouldn't I" choice but rather a series of interrelated and sometimes difficult decisions; health information is abundant, often confusing and sometimes even conflicting

Americans' perceived imperative to make smart health decisions is accompanied by their desire to attain two complementary emotional states:

1. A sense of gratitude that comes from attaining better health
2. A sense of energy and control to achieve a full life

## What Are Personal Values?

We describe them as the internal guiding aspirations that shape how people evaluate and make decisions about the range of ideas, products and services they encounter in their lives.

### Personal Values:

1. Are shaped by culture, geography and demography; family expectations; beliefs and personal experience.
2. Come into play according to circumstances and decisions; for example, values that shape decisions about buying laundry detergent are different than those that shape decisions about financial affairs or personal health.
3. Affect decision-making.
4. Are unique for every person.



## BEING PURPOSEFUL: THE BIG SIX

Health is a very personal thing, so no single set of actions could capture all the ways that individuals think about and act on their health. When asked how they achieve personal health goals, respondents revealed both their target behaviors and mindsets. Our statistical analysis revealed six dominant sets of actions that most Americans strive to take for the sake of their health. The following represents our offer of a list for your refrigerator magnet, in order:

***"I can't believe I ate the whole thing."***

— Punch line from an old Alka-Seltzer® ad

***"I never smoke to excess – that is, I smoke in moderation, only one cigar at a time."***

— Mark Twain

***"Health is the natural condition. When sickness occurs, it is a sign that Nature has gone off course because of a physical or mental imbalance. The road to health for everyone is through moderation, harmony, and a 'sound mind in a sound body'."***

— Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World*

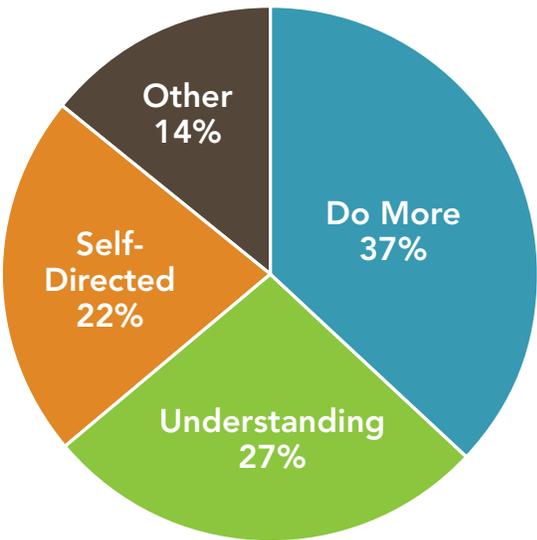


1. **You are what you eat.** Many of the most common actions that people take in the name of health have to do with eating. For example, people talk about eating more healthy foods, paying more attention to nutrition information, monitoring activity and diet, and consuming more of particular types of food.
2. **Practice moderation.** As is the case in tumultuous political times, moderation is admired most when missing. What's important is that even when failing to achieve it, most people recognize its virtue.
3. **Set targets and measure.** Fitbit and other gadget makers are trying to nurture the importance that people attach to measurement. In many aspects of life – and none more so than health – people recognize the value of setting goals as a personal motivator. They succeed most when they can connect that achievement to the emotional outcomes they seek.
4. **Get enough sleep and reduce stress.** Throughout this study, we've been surprised at the number of people who emphasize the importance of sleep. It's widely associated with stress reduction.
5. **Exercise more.** Those who can know they should. In some respects, it's surprising that this action isn't a higher priority.
6. **Take your medicine.** It's no surprise that this has become a colloquialism for patiently accepting an unpleasant situation, usually because it's true.

# Thought-Action Orientations

We use the term *thought-action orientation* to describe the pattern of connections people perceive between their specific health behaviors, the associated physical benefits, and the emotions and personal values they associate with those physical benefits. Thought-action orientations connect actions to the achievement of personal values.

Survey respondents' personal health goals reflect the widely differing circumstances, knowledge and decision processes in the population. However, three distinct thought-action orientations represent a vast majority of the population. Interestingly, they also illustrate the diversity of Americans' health decision motivations.



**THE DO MORE** thought-action orientation, the most common pattern, is shared by 37% of Americans. People who most often follow the Do More motivational pathway focus on an array of actions designed to maximize their ability to do more things. They hope their efforts will energize them and give them a sense of personal control to achieve a fully enjoyed life.

Do More is the only motivational orientation with a strong focus on exercise. People with this orientation also tend to be more social, engaging others in health discussions. They tend to have fewer health problems. They're focused on maintaining and improving their current good health.

**THE UNDERSTANDING** thought-action orientation, the second most common pattern, is shared by 27% of Americans. People who most often follow this motivational pathway aim to gain perspective on their health and understand their options so they can make the best decisions for living an enjoyable life. They are more attuned than other groups to the importance of medical care and nutritional strategies.

People focused on this motivational pathway are working on a variety of health goals and are somewhat more likely than others to be working on specific health problems.

**THE SELF-DIRECTED** thought-action orientation, the third most common pattern of thought, is shared by 22% of Americans. People who most often follow this motivational pathway are more directly engaged than others in managing and monitoring their situation: practicing moderation and diet/nutrition management are priorities. Like those in the Understanding orientation, they are grateful when they can achieve self-direction and want to make smart decisions.

Self-Directed people are more driven than others by the desire to achieve and succeed in life. This orientation is more associated with a personality style characterized by the need to be personally in control.

## TAKEAWAYS

- **Health is a big deal.** Americans attach high significance to their health-related decisions and perceive good health as central to one of the most significant personal values: the desire to live life to the fullest.
- Happily, most **Americans are quite satisfied** with their physical and emotional health. At the same time, health issues are a source of anxiety, and for nearly a quarter of Americans that anxiety is significant.
- We've focused on digging into the ways that Americans think about and take actions related to their health. Most significantly, we find a very "purposeful" approach on the part of most Americans: they see the **significance of their personal health in fulfilling critical personal values**, perceive that it requires smart decisions and recognize as well that it requires a holistic approach that incorporates many aspects of day-to-day life.
- This purposeful approach has many individual permutations, but it's based on **six major building blocks** of personal health actions.
- People link their goals and actions to emotional outcomes and personal values in different ways. **Three distinct patterns of thought**, or thought-action orientations, give a picture of health perspectives. Most Americans want to either "do more," "understand better" or remain "self-directed."
- This broad look at personal health decision-making offers a useful starting point for those engaged in **influencing specific health decisions and helping people to improve their health** to begin thinking about motivational strategies.



This second report on health decision-making is one of several feature analyses in the Artemis Motivations Assessment Program™ (MAP).

MAP applies the Artemis Motivation Research approach to probe deeply into the goals, actions, barriers and motivations associated with Americans' individual health and financial decisions, as well as the interactions between health and financial decisions. Measuring hundreds of activities and attitudes through qualitative research and a large quantitative study (n=3041), we map the rational-to-emotional forces that underlie health and financial decision motivations.



**MOTIVATIONS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM™**

The [MOTIVATIONS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM™](#) (MAP) is a free service for financial and health marketers and communicators seeking to influence their target audiences' decision-making. Through MAP eBooks, webinars and blog posts, Artemis Strategy Group provides actionable insights and illustrates how to use Motivation Research to develop effective communications strategies.

**Other eBooks by Artemis Strategy Group:**

*Americans and Their Money*

*Don't Just Talk to Your Audience; Persuade Them:  
Research for Effective Brand Positioning*

*From Confidently Anxious to Practically Confident:  
How Americans of Different Generations Feel About Money*

*Healthful Is the New Healthy*



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