

Rich Thinking

The 16th global study in the Rich Thinking series

HEALTH & WEALTH

What's Your Healthiest Habit?

WHITE PAPER

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ABOUT BARBARA

Barbara Stewart is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) with 30+ years of investment industry experience; five years as a foreign currency trader, more than two decades as a portfolio manager for high net worth entrepreneurs, and for the past nine years doing interview-driven research for multiple global financial institutions.

Barbara is a keynote speaker for CFA Societies, banks, stock exchanges and industry conferences globally, and she is a columnist for CFA Institute, Canadian Family Offices and Canadian Money Saver magazine. She is on the Advisory Board of Kensington Capital Partners and also is the Ambassador for the Kensington Women's Forum.

15 years ago Barbara saw a need to challenge outdated financial industry stereotypes and share positive messages about women and money. Today, Barbara is recognized worldwide as one of the leading researchers in women and finance. Rich Thinking® global research papers quote smart women and men of all ages, professions and countries and are released annually on International Women's Day, March 8.

Barbara is honoured to be part of the Milken Institute's Women's Financial Security Initiative in collaboration with Gloria Steinem and Gloria's Foundation.

To find out more about Barbara's research, visit www.barbarastewart.ca



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ii | INTRODUCTION

iii | HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

iv | COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

1

“It is health that is real wealth... and not pieces of gold and silver.”

2

“One cannot think well, love well, or sleep well, if one has not dined well.”

3

“The greatest health is wealth.”

4

“Exercise is the key not only to physical health but to peace of mind.”

5

“Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.”

v | HEALTH TECH 2025

vi | METHODOLOGY & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Health is wealth: What's your healthiest habit?

Welcome to the 16th annual edition of Rich Thinking! In this research paper, I share findings based on qualitative interviews with smart women and men from around the world.

I was inspired to explore this topic because a highlight from my research report "[Women & Alts: A Global Perspective](#)" was that the sector of most interest to women who invest in alternative investments is healthcare.

During 2025 I conducted 50 interviews (25 women and 25 men):

- **Ages:** from 16 to 65+
- **Regions:** 21 from the Americas, 16 from EMEA, and 13 from APAC
- **Industries:** arts, media, investment management, technology, derivatives, wine, consulting, academia, sports, nutrition, data science, engineering, marketing...among others

My first research question was "What's your healthiest habit?" I then asked these interviewees from diverse professions and cultures "How much do you spend on this habit?" As a fun bonus question, I asked "What's your least healthy habit?" 🤔

It was a great privilege for me to hear 50 people discuss their backgrounds and the reasons why they developed their healthiest habit. Each and every interview gave me an opportunity to personally consider new ways that I could possibly improve my own healthy habits. Readers will no doubt be inspired in a similar way while reading this year's collection of stories.

Enjoy!

Barbara

HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

“What’s your healthiest habit?” and “How much do you spend on this habit?”

All dollar amounts are in USD

Some of the heftier expenses for healthy habits included adventure travel (\$180,000 annually in one case), intensive therapy sessions (\$26,000 annually), and even bird photography, with top level telephoto lens costing \$10,000.

Most people seem to spend somewhere between \$1,500 and \$15,000 annually on their healthiest habits. But in most cases the real benefit is not really about how much it costs and more about the fact that feeling great is priceless.

Eddie Wong is the Residential Director of The World: Residences at Sea:

“I was recently talking with one of our residents who is a multi-billionaire in ailing health. He said “I know I’m rich, but you have such great health. Would you swap with me if you could be a billionaire with ailing health?” The answer was easy: no money can replace health. Health is wealth indeed!”

[Eddie gave me a tour of this incredible residential cruise ship last summer when she was moored off La Ciotat in France.]

Close to 50% of the interviewees exercise outdoors most of the time doing activities such as walking, running, biking, tennis or golf. Other favorite locations are a gym (home or fitness club), a pool, or a yoga or Pilates studio.

Post pandemic many people have continued to use their favorite fitness apps for indoor workouts and/or they now have a hybrid strategy of splitting their workouts between home (via app, home gym or both) and fitness club.

Men are more likely than women to spend their time and money on fitness (at a ratio of 3:2) however women are 4.5 times more likely to invest in eating and sleeping well.

My biggest surprise? Nearly half of the people interviewed said their healthiest habit cost them absolutely nothing.

HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

Top Five Healthiest Habits

#1 | BEING ACTIVE/FIT

Between fitness apps, subscriptions, personal trainers, gym memberships, running shoes...it all adds up. Especially for those who have a very athletic lifestyle.

Shawn DuBravac is the CEO & President of Avrio Institute in Washington D.C.:

“I’ve now completed about 20 marathons (including New York, Chicago, Big Sur, San Francisco, Tokyo, Berlin, Singapore, Pyongyang, Honolulu, Venice, Amsterdam, etc) – my races are always tied to where I want to go in the world. Next I’d love to run Kyiv in Ukraine. My most intense bike adventure was the LoToJa (Logan UT to Jackson Hole) – the longest sanctioned bike ride in the US. You cycle 207 miles in one day! Does staying healthy cost money? Well, I would argue that I save a ton of money by not drinking or smoking. But fees (and flights!) for running marathons or doing big bike races can be very expensive depending on how far you want to go with these pursuits.”

#2 | EATING HEALTHY FOOD

Whether we are talking about a plant-based diet, grain fed meat or good old home cooking – high quality ingredients can get expensive.

Sévrine Labelle is Directrice Générale, Lab Excelles et Fonds Excelles Repreneuriat at BDC Capital in Montreal:

“I would say my healthiest habit is eating a plant-rich diet with fresh organic food. I see this as an investment! I know that an omnivore diet probably costs even more but when I look in my refrigerator I realize I am a privileged person with all my colorful and sometimes expensive fresh food. I have the responsibility to lead some intense work projects and I feel that my way of eating gives me the energy I need to thrive.”

#3 | PUTTING SELF FIRST

Being mindful or self-aware is the key to success for many people. Investing in a meditation course or yoga practice is a relatively low cost way to foster a healthy lifestyle.

HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

Neha Rathi is an Investment Associate with UTI International Limited in Singapore:
“I tend to overthink and have trouble winding down before bed. One great habit I have developed over the last 12-15 years is to express gratitude for everything I have before I go to sleep every night. But I would say my healthiest habit is doing a 21 minute daily breathing-based meditation practice after my shower every morning. Two years ago, I took a three day meditation course from a guru in India and since that time I’ve been practicing this routine daily. You can’t see the difference overnight but over time I definitely feel much calmer and more conscious in my life.”

#4 | GETTING LOTS OF SLEEP

From a health perspective the difference between getting a good sleep and a bad sleep is night and day!

Lynn W. Liu is a Partner, Audit & Assurance with Deloitte Taiwan in Taipei :
“My healthiest habit is that I make sure to get at least eight hours sleep per night no matter how busy I am. I work in a high pressure job with long hours, and I frequently travel around the world for business. In the Deloitte work environment, I need to stay sharp and maintain a high level of alertness to foster critical thinking. For the most part my healthy habit of proper sleep is free – I keep consistent bed times and I am disciplined in my routines. I did spend money on an Airweave mattress (Japan’s leading mattress brand) to promote a better sleep.”

#5 | OTHER

Other healthy habits include: reminding oneself about God, playing guitar and singing, working on your social network, travelling a lot, saunagus (a Danish guided sauna ritual), and drinking water first thing every morning.

Bilal Pandow is an Assistant Professor of Finance at Bahrain Polytechnic in Manama:
“My healthiest habit is one that has been with me right from childhood. First thing in the morning I drink two or three glasses of water on an empty stomach. This habit does not cost me any money whatsoever...it just costs me persistent habit behaviour. I put in a bit of effort, a bit of time and I need to be consistent.”

COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

What triggered your first real awareness of the importance of health?

#1 | FAMILY OR PERSONAL ILLNESS

Cheryl Evans is Director of the Milken Institute in Washington, D.C.:

“Sadly, when she was 67 my mom died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage, and this got me thinking about the precariousness of life. I did a lot of looking inward and I became even more focused on fitness and nutrition.”

#2 | A NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT

Ismail Nasir is the Co-Founder of EKKO in Islāmābād:

“Three years ago, I gained a lot of weight as I had no time to exercise while working on this startup. I knew this was having a serious impact on my health when I became short of breath trying to climb up a flight of stairs in one go. I decided to commit to taking one hour every day to either swim or go to the gym and I would shut off my phone during this time.”

#3 | GOOD HEALTH WAS ALWAYS A LIFESTYLE

Johan Malan is the Head of Bordeaux, Investments and Brokerage at [Wine Cellar](#) in Cape Town:

“My parents had a very natural approach to doing healthy things with their three kids. We would regularly go on 3-, 4-, or 5-day long hikes and sleep in the mountains in the Drakensberg area. We also went camping a lot and did safaris - we would drive into the bush to watch the animals. Enjoying the outdoors was just part of our overall upbringing.”

Other health awareness triggers mentioned included: a desire to perform well at a sport (men only), severe work stress, a shift in circumstance such as pregnancy (women only 😊), new baby, or relationship breakup.

Interestingly, one third of the interviewees’ parents never talked about the importance of good health and/or never modeled a healthy lifestyle.

COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

Do you use Health Tech apps?

Nearly one quarter of those interviewed said they do not use any Health Tech apps at all!

Hector Hughes is the Co-Founder & CEO of [Unplugged](#) in London:

“I don’t use Health Tech apps although I had an [Oura ring](#) in the past. It feels to me that we are in a culture of optimization and this compulsion to track our steps and sleep stats might even be making our health worse.”

What about Fem Tech? (A term often used to refer specifically to investment opportunities in women’s health.) 16% of the women in this study use a Fem Tech app.

Batrisya Alya Azzly is a Business Analyst with KAF Group in Kuala Lumpur:

“The [Flo app](#) has been a life saver to help me plan around hormonal shifts. It gives me reminders and is super accurate. I’ve been using it for about five years now.”

Interestingly, just 6% of people said they use a nutrition tracking app.

Melek Gür is a Health & Longevity Coach in Istanbul:

“As a health coach, I stay current with evidence-based tools used in the field. I’m well-versed in several nutrition and dietary assessment apps including [MyFitnessPal](#), [Chronometer](#) (nutrition tracker), [ASA24](#) (dietary assessment tool), [FFQ](#) (Food Frequency Questionnaires), and [BiteSnap](#) (photo food tracker).”

COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

Top Three Health Tech Apps

All Health Tech products mentioned are accessible either via smart phones, smart watches, or standalone apps. Perhaps not surprisingly, smart watches are the most popular with 25% wearing them daily – top brands being Garmin, Apple and Huawei.

#1 | FITNESS TRACKING DEVICE OR WORKOUT APP

Brian Miller is a former Chief Technology Officer in Toronto:

“The main communication platform I have with my coach is an app called [Training Peaks](#): we record my workouts, my results and I’ll comment on how I felt during the workout. I also use [Garmin Connect](#): the watch, the head unit and a power meter. Also I use [Strava](#) which is kind of like a Facebook for athletes.”

#2 | HEART HEALTH APP

Maithili Desai is Director, Head of Derivatives Software Development & Cross Functional Capability Technical Lead at Nordea Markets, Corporates & Institutions in Copenhagen:

“The main turning point for me was when I became a parent. I realized how important it is to exercise, meditate, and journal. Fueling myself in this way is for my own functioning. These days I use a couple of different Health Tech apps to help the cause - [Apple Health](#) on my iPhone and [Heartify: Heart Health Monitor](#).”

#3 | SLEEP APP

Eftalia (Effe) Economou is an economics student in Boston:

“I can easily rationalize sleeping properly as time well spent. I see a theoretical financial connection: if I can’t sleep properly and I’m not able to do the best I possibly can in my class then I won’t be able to get a great job! Also I will have wasted my parent’s money. The only app I use is my iPhone which acts as a sleep tracker and an alarm to get me up in time for class.”

COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

What's your least healthy habit?

#1 | EMOTIONAL EATING AND/OR EATING JUNK FOOD

Many of the interviewees 'manage stress' by eating large amounts of food or junk food.

Agnes Mutiara is Growth Marketing Manager at Hoc-trade in Taipei:

"My least healthy habit is binge eating, which is usually stress related. Every now and then, it is easy for me to make my way through a giant bag of potato chips!"

#2 | DRINKING OR SMOKING

Some of us are party smokers or social drinkers (or both) and for some it is our daily habit.

Sylvia Solit, is Senior Advisor, Prime Quadrant in Miami:

"My least healthy habit has got to be drinking. I like to drink at dinners or parties, so I'll call myself a social drinker. And I have a big social life - I can be out four nights a week, so I definitely need to be mindful of moderation."

#3 | CONSUMING TOO MUCH SUGAR

Whether you are into chocolate, soda pop, or super sweet matcha tea...the search is on for a sugar high.

Gunilla Hellqvist is Senior Vice President, European Markets at Nasdaq in Stockholm:

"My least healthy habit is eating kanelbullar (cinnamon buns.) They are quite irresistible to me. We serve fika at our office every Wednesday and every week I say to myself "don't take one." But...I love them!"

#4 | WORKING TOO HARD

Overworking can lead to burnout, anxiety, and a compromised immune system.

Nessrine Slimani is the Founder of Finess in Vienna:

"My least healthy habit is not disconnecting from work when I am supposed to be taking time off. Since I started my entrepreneurial journey I have been finding it tough to set boundaries - ideas come to me on evenings and weekends. I used to work from home, so the lines were really blurred between work and leisure time. I recently joined a co-working space to help me with this."

COROLLARY QUESTIONS & FINDINGS

#5 | OTHER

Other least healthy habits include: staying up too late, not reading enough, scrolling on social media, being lazy, worrying too much, not taking medication regularly, relying on a lot of coffee, and self-obsession.

Grace Di Meo is Executive Director, Investment Specialist Canada, Unified Global Alternatives (UGA) at UBS Asset Management in Montreal:

“My least healthy habit is social media. This is what I do before going to sleep! I open Instagram and binge watch reels. Ideally, I should be falling asleep while reading a good book but instead I’m falling asleep to “blue light!” Improvement is greatly required here!”

Our least healthy habits often lead to a feeling of guilt and disappointment in self. But clearly these habits are extremely hard to break.

I found it interesting though that many of us can somehow find a way to justify our least healthy habits...

“I know I need to quit smoking entirely, but part of me still wonders: what’s the point of life if you don’t allow yourself at least one vice?”

“I know my approach to eating isn’t really sustainable so I should try and get to the root of why I behave this way. But I guess none of us are perfect!”

“Being in a happy relationship is conducive to sharing this lovely way of relaxing. I really love wine!”

*It is health that is
real wealth...
and not pieces of
gold and silver.*

– GHANDI,
INDIAN SPIRITUAL LEADER





“ I was born in Sydney and my parents were always talking about health with my sister and me. Every week my father would stock up on fresh fruit and vegetables and my mother was big on calcium intake – she liked forcing glasses of milk on me. Growing up I loved kid’s food like McDonald’s but for my entire youth I was into sports and over time I understood that staying in top shape was paramount. I went from playing rep football (aka soccer) to playing professional football for several different teams in Australia. This was a big motivator to eat properly and to take care of myself.

In general, I have a super healthy lifestyle and this ship provides very health conscious food. I start each day with a big glass of lemon and water, I do vinyasa yoga and meditation regularly, I eat a lot of salad and try to avoid fatty meats, and every day I run or bike at least 10 kilometres. I also swim and do triathlons. One thing I really love about my job is that we are in a different city every few days, so I integrate sightseeing with photography and running. I need to be outside!

I think my healthiest habit is being a big calisthenics body weight exerciser.

Every day I do 150 push-ups: this keeps body definition. I do sets of 60/50/40 with a one minute break between sets. I hate the gym and never do weights. I use my smart watch to keep track of my blood pressure and heart rate and I constantly check my number of steps. I try to do 10,000 steps a day and 50,000 when I’m on vacation.

My least healthy habit is lack of sleep. On average I get about six hours per night... because life happens! The crew on the ship is my family and some of the residents are my best friends. We have so many opportunities to go out at night to music festivals or whatever is happening in whatever amazing city we are in. I always want to go but then I still have to wake up every day at 6 am.

I was recently talking with one of our residents who is a multi-billionaire in ailing health. He said “I know I’m rich, but you have such great health. Would you swap with me if you could be a billionaire with ailing health?” The answer was easy: no money can replace health. Health is wealth indeed!”



“ I was born and raised in Subang Jaya, a city 20 kilometres away from Kuala Lumpur. This was a lively and diverse place to grow up – lots of people visit for the pretty cafes and great food. My parents didn’t talk with me about health but in my early 20s I was forced to put health at the top of my personal priority list. Despite receiving all of the vaccines, I got Covid three times, and this had a very negative impact on my immune system. I am now the one in my family who gets sick most often.

One year ago, I was diagnosed with a mental health disorder: talking about mental health issues is still a bit taboo in Malaysia but I try to be open about it. You can’t see it, but mental health is as crucial as physical health! The pain is real. Over time I have learned to accept this part of myself, and I don’t let my diagnosis define who I am. I manage to stay positive via creative outlets such as singing, painting, and playing music. I also try hard to stay socially connected with the people I love – my close friends and family. Every Friday my family has a sports night, and we play badminton or pickleball.

I use my Apple watch to track my sleep and also the white noise feature on my iPhone to help me sleep more deeply. The [Flo app](#) has been a life saver to help me plan around hormonal shifts. It gives me reminders and is super accurate. I’ve been using it for about five years now.

My healthiest habit is hiking.

I love it because I can stay active but also enjoy nature at the same time. It costs nothing to go the woods here in Malaysia: the parks and forests are free. I love hiking between 7-11 am on Sundays – the weather is beautiful in the mornings. After noon it gets super hot. My least healthy habit is my daily dose of coffee or matcha with tons of milk and sugar. I love a good ice matcha latte with oat milk: the matcha culture here is crazy!”



“ I was born in Columbus, in western Georgia, but we moved around a lot when I was growing up. In the States we lived in Georgia, Virginia, Kansas, Texas, and also in Germany. I am the third of four kids and our parents didn’t talk much with us about health. Their ‘healthy’ messages were along the lines of “Don’t sit so close to the TV” or “Get good sleep.” But from a relatively young age I recognized that my health should be a priority – I saw first hand from playing a lot of sports that being physically active offered significant benefits that would help me achieve my goals.

In high school I played lots of team sports like lacrosse and then as I got older I was into more individual sports such as cycling and running. As an adult, sports are less about competing against others and more about competing against my former self. I’ve now completed about 20 marathons (including New York, Chicago, Big Sur, San Francisco, Tokyo, Berlin, Singapore, Pyongyang, Honolulu, Venice, Amsterdam, etc) – my races are always tied to where I want to go in the world. Next I’d love to run Kyiv in Ukraine. My most intense bike adventure was the LoToJa (Logan UT to Jackson Hole) – the longest sanctioned bike ride in the US. You cycle 207 miles in one day!

Does staying healthy cost money? Well, I would argue that I save a ton of money by not drinking or smoking. But fees (and flights!) for running marathons or doing big bike races can be very expensive depending on how far you want go with these pursuits. I do use apps – I use [Calibre](#) and [Strava](#) to track my workouts – this removes the cognitive load of having to remember my output. If I’m in heavy training mode I rely on monitoring my metrics and use [Garmin](#) which is also my regular watch.

My healthiest habit (aside from not drinking or smoking) is that I try to do a lot of physical work around the house and walk as much as I can.

Walking doesn’t cost anything other than time, but time is sometimes the more valuable resource. Often, I use walks to catch up on podcasts or think about problems I’m working on. Time is money so you make that trade-off – there is an opportunity cost associated with how you choose to spend your time.

My least healthy habit is that I don’t sleep as much as I should. I love to work and I work a lot! Sleep is a critical factor in promoting good mental health and along these lines I should also do more silent meditation. At the end of the day your physical health might be perfect but your mental health could be off balance. There is something to the idea of moderation in all things: do what feels right for you.”



“ I was born in Martigues in the south of France near Marseille but grew up in Morocco. My parents passed along conventional wisdom about health such as the importance of healthy eating and engaging in sports. As a kid I was involved in ballet, tennis, and taekwondo.

Five years ago I suddenly became highly aware of my health. I was at the beginning of my finance career and was overcommitted at work. This led me to a very high stress situation and as a result I ended up in hospital. I realized clearly that I had been taking my health for granted and from that moment I vowed to change that!

My healthiest habit is running two to three times per week: this is fantastic for both physical and mental health.

I also love to ride my hybrid fitness bike a couple of times a week. Other than the price I paid for my running shoes, my bike, and some clothes...these activities cost me nothing. One “sunk cost” I’ll mention is that I bought a Fitbit, but it broke after only one year. Now I use my [Xiaomi](#) watch that cost me a fraction of the price of the Fitbit. I also use the [Adidas](#) running app to track my workouts.

My least healthy habit is not disconnecting from work when I am supposed to be taking time off. Since I started my entrepreneurial journey I have been finding it tough to set boundaries – ideas come to me on evenings and weekends. I used to work from home, so the lines were really blurred between work and leisure time. I recently joined a co-working space to help me with this.”



“ I was born in Calgary and grew up in Vancouver. Growing up, my parents didn’t talk with my sister and me about health however they were super supportive in general. My first encounter with a fitness-oriented person was when I was about 16 or 17: my friend raced bikes, and I would occasionally go on rides with him. In my third year at university, I got more serious about workouts: I bought a proper racing bike and started swimming in the university pool.

When I moved to Toronto after graduating I began riding with a group and developed a great network of likeminded people who have become lifelong friends. My first team event was in 2008 – the TransRockies, a seven day mountain bike stage race. After that I thought “If I can do this, I can do an Ironman.”

I had always been in awe of the Ironman – the swim is 3.8 km, the ride is 180 km, and then you run 42.2 km – a full marathon! I did Penticton in 2009, Mont Tremblant in 2012, Lake Placid in 2024, and Ottawa in 2025. In between I’ve done six or seven marathons and a lot of half Ironmans. Racing is a great way to prove things to yourself.

I will say that the Ironman is a privilege in that it is an expensive sport. There are race fees, travel costs, equipment and I have a coach. Then there is the cost of your time. When I was working I’d get up every day at 5 am to workout, then I’d go to work, go home and do another workout, and go to bed at 9 pm. You really need to have a supportive spouse! When I’m not racing I am always active in one way or another...even if it is going on a short run with my wife Joyce after work.

My healthiest habit is consistently being active.

The main communication platform I have with my coach is an app called [Training Peaks](#): we record my workouts, my results and I’ll comment on how I felt during the workout. I also use [Garmin Connect](#): the watch, the head unit and a power meter. Also I use [Strava](#) which is kind of like a Facebook for athletes.

My least healthy habit? Not reading enough. I worry that I’m not getting enough intellectual stimulation since retiring three years ago. I made a New Year’s resolution to read more books - I definitely need to put more time towards that goal. As I get older I become more concerned about mental acuity. I read the Economist and the New York Times but I need to read more books!”



“ I was born in Goa, a beautiful state in India, and lived there until I moved to the UK at age 24. My father died when I was just five years old, so my mother raised me and my three sisters by herself. Mom had a full time job and worked very hard but every single morning she would prioritize cooking – she ensured that we had healthy meals that included fresh fruit, vegetables and enough protein. There was no explicit discussion around the importance of health per se, but I can’t recall a day when we ate out at a restaurant – home cooked meals were paramount in our family.

Early on my mom also taught us yoga and meditation. She needed these tools personally and wanted to pass along the importance of a daily practice. Although I was always active enough, in retrospect I realize I was being active for the sake of it...not because I was focused on the health benefits. The main turning point for me was when I became a parent. It was quite a traumatic time because when our son was born he used to get ill often and there were many back and forth hospital visits and stays. This was a trigger for me: I realized how important it is to exercise, meditate, and journal. Fueling myself in this way is for my own functioning. These days I use a couple of different Health Tech apps to help the cause - [Apple Health](#) on my iPhone and [Heartify: Heart Health Monitor](#).

A few years ago we took out a big mortgage and bought a house near Bellevue Beach in Klampenborg, about 10 km north of Copenhagen.

I live close to the beach and my healthiest habit is taking a dip at Bellevue which calms me and helps me not remember the huge mortgage I have to own the house.

And staying close to forest and beach always provides nature therapy which is actually for free.

One of my challenges is that I enjoy late night scrolling Reels on Instagram but my ‘just for five minutes’ often turns into 15 or 20 minutes rather quickly. But I would say my least healthy habit is my love for Pepsi Max. I used to be quite addicted to drinking it daily, but I’ve now cut back to a couple of times on the weekend.”



“ I was born in Pretoria but have lived in Paarl, the largest city in the Cape Winelands, for the past decade. Were we very health conscious? Not by today’s standards of counting calories, etc., but our family certainly had a healthy approach to exercise and in our school culture everyone participated in team sports. My parents had a very natural approach to doing healthy things with their three kids. We would regularly go on 3-, 4-, or 5-day long hikes and sleep in the mountains in the Drakensberg area. We also went camping a lot and did safaris - we would drive into the bush to watch the animals. Enjoying the outdoors was just part of our overall upbringing.

I work in the wine business: I love the taste of things and I like the delicacies of life. My wife is a great cook and from the time we got married she has always prepared our meals using the freshest ingredients. In simple terms we are conscious of what we eat and there is a cost associated with this approach. For example, we buy from our local butcher friend who only sources his meat from free range animals, and this is more expensive.

What else do I do that I consider healthy? A couple of years ago my brother signed me up to run the Addo Trail: an ultra trail marathon in a big wildlife park. I used a couple of running apps to track my training. Another perhaps less obvious example - my wife home schools our four kids. We don’t have an aversion to the school system, but we want to do everything we can to develop their characters. This broader view of wanting to invest in our kids comes with a cost because we operate with only one household income.

My least healthy habit is that I sometimes get stuck in a normal work routine. I often seem to get to a stage where I’m working without a lot of intention: I’m not getting out for a jog and/or I’m not taking time out to spend with my wife.

I think my healthiest habit is that I take a holistic view on health.

I’m continuously reminding myself that I’m not self-sufficient in this world...I am dependent on God.”



“ I was born and raised in Bangalore, India and lived there until I moved to Paris to do my Master’s degree. My twin sister, elder sister, and I were raised in a warm, traditional family. While our parents occasionally commented on the importance of health, the underlying message I absorbed was that building wealth came first – health could be dealt with later.

In my late twenties, my perspective began to shift while I was working in finance in Paris during the Covid period. Being desk-bound with a less-than-ideal ergonomic home setup, I faced a heavy workload and relentless deadlines. Over the course of ten months, I endured persistent back pain. It became so severe that I returned to India for an MRI, CT scan, and orthopedic evaluations. It was an incredibly daunting period—both physically and mentally. I wasn’t even 30, yet I couldn’t travel alone because I was unable to carry my own luggage.

After all my tests the doctors concluded that I had accumulated a lot of stress, and this was the primary cause of my back pain. The key message was that I needed to keep my body moving. I started doing a lot of physiotherapy, and regular workouts including Pilates and swimming. These activities don’t cost much money, but the rewards are multi-faceted. The costs are more about the requirement of time and discipline.

I tend to overthink and have trouble winding down before bed. One great habit I have developed over the last 12-15 years is to express gratitude for everything I have before I go to sleep every night.

But I would say my healthiest habit is doing a 21 minute daily breathing-based meditation practice after my shower every morning.

Two years ago, I took a three day meditation course from a guru in India and since that time I’ve been practicing this routine daily. You can’t see the difference overnight but over time I definitely feel much calmer and more conscious in my life.

My least healthy habit is over-analyzing small things. I think a lot of people of my generation face a similar problem: we sort of glorify stress.”



“ I was born in Le Luc en Provence in France, which is about 40 km inland from St. Tropez. I lived there until I moved to the US in my mid 20s. My parents didn’t talk with me about health, but it was embedded in our culture in that it was part of our school curriculum. We were encouraged to eat our veggies and make all of the proper food choices. We also had the opportunity to try every kind of sport imaginable (not just basketball) – all of the Olympic-style sports.

My lifestyle is still very active today. I play tennis and soccer/football, and I run half-marathons. One thing that differentiates me from a health perspective is that growing up in France I loved to eat biscotti and jam for breakfast every day! Today, I call myself a ‘Renaissance Seafood Man’ because now I eat sardines for breakfast.

My healthiest habit is running.

When I moved to San Diego I started working out and I met a bunch of people in the running community. I got inspired by them! I don’t really enjoy running in and of itself but it is fun being part of a running group. We run 3-6 miles four days a week and then we do even longer runs on the weekends. Sometimes we’ll do a destination race in Vegas or Vancouver for example.

Running doesn’t cost much – there are no registration fees for our local races. So all I need is a good pair of shoes. Oh and I wear an [Amazfit](#) watch to keep track of all my running data. Everyone else I run with likes to use [Strava](#).

My least healthy habit? Smoking a few cigarettes. But only when I am on vacation in France. Why? It’s self-defense. Everyone in France smokes and they are always blowing smoke in my face!”



“ My parents were first generation Italian immigrants to Canada in the 1960s and I was born in Montreal. Growing up I spent lots of time with my grandparents in Abruzzo, a beautiful mountainous region east of Rome on the Adriatic coast. I am still strongly connected to my roots and regularly visit my remaining family in Italy.

We always had fresh fruit and vegetables in our home. My father used to stress the importance of eating well – he was a typical Italian man who loved food. He despised fast food chains! On the contrary my mother had a lot of health issues and this had a significant impact on me. In my early teens mom was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes but she didn’t take it seriously. She neglected her health and I saw the effects.

When I was around 17, I became very focused on physical fitness and at 19 I joined a gym. This was back in the days of Jane Fonda when workouts were a mix of fashion and fitness: I wore the leg warmers and flashy tights! I started forming my healthiest habit back then and I’ve never looked back.

My #1 strength is my discipline, consistency and perseverance in physical training.

I love dance classes, Pilates, yoga, weight training – you name it.

Even when I’m travelling for business I stick to my routine. And even during Covid I found ways to stay fit! I belong to The Midtown Athletic Club and they provided members with [Les Mills](#) app for home workouts. On Instagram I followed [fitstylegrace](#) – she provides excellent focused 30-40 minute workouts for abs, legs and back. Post-Covid I’ve been going to my club five out of seven days a week: I feed off the energy of likeminded fit people with similar lifestyles to my own. My life is all intertwined in that being physically fit feeds into being mentally strong for my work, family, friends, and my personal life.

I view my club membership as an investment in myself, when I am at the club I’m focused on my health. I also feel strongly that being active helps us age better. As women we don’t talk enough about menopause and how our healthy habits can help us navigate this stage of our life. Staying super fit and healthy has been a blessing for me in this transition.

My least healthy habit is social media. This is what I do before going to sleep! I open Instagram and binge watch reels. Ideally, I should be falling asleep while reading a good book but instead I’m falling asleep to “blue light!” Improvement is greatly required here!”

*One cannot think well,
love well, or sleep well,
if one has not dined well.*

– VIRGINIA WOOLF,
ENGLISH WRITER





“ I was born and raised in Southern California and lived there until I went to college. My parents didn’t really talk with my sister and me about health much, perhaps because we both did a lot of sports anyway. The one thing I distinctly remember about my childhood was every day they put out a multivitamin for each of us on the kitchen table, a key family health ritual, and we were told to eat our veggies at dinner!

At age 10 I started competing in track and field and continued through high school and college. I understood the idea that the effort you put in directly impacts what you get out of it. In college as I elevated my training as a decathlete, I also elevated my focus on health... but this was more about health as a means to enable performance, not necessarily overall wellness. Now that I am in my mid 30s, I’m focused more on health, wellness, and fitness in a broader sense. Part of my motivation is seeing some people I know in their later years of life not being able to enjoy it fully due to health problems, I really want to be healthy in my later years as well.

Having recently completed my third Ironman in June, I’ve experienced firsthand the impact of nutrition on performance and overall well-being. A key lesson has been embracing a strategic approach to eating: sometimes for enjoyment, and other times purely for nutritional value to fuel performance or recovery. The quality of calories truly matters.

For me, a cornerstone of my healthiest habits (in addition to consistent training and good sleep) is incorporating lots of legumes into my diet.

Legumes like black beans, lentils, edamame, and chickpeas are incredibly nutrient-dense and high in fiber, offering benefits like improved gut health. An additional advantage is their cost-effectiveness; legumes such as black beans are one of the cheapest forms of high-quality protein you can buy. Although I’m not a vegetarian I try to eat one or two plant-based meals per day...this is good for both my health and the environment.

I use my [Garmin](#) watch and app to track all of my fitness activities and sleep, this helps me track my fitness progress and sleeps scores over time. The data provides clear feedback, helping me understand the impact of lifestyle choices like late-night snacking or alcohol on my recovery and overall well-being. While I strive for optimal nutrition, I’ll admit I have a soft spot for empty carbs like salty corn chips and cookies or biscuits. My least healthy habit tends to be indulging in these types of snacks, though I try to remind myself that a bit of indulgence is OK given the consistent training.”



“ I was born in Taoyuan, a city just outside of Taipei, where the airport now is. I was very lucky to grow up in a safe and supportive family: I felt secure on the outside and also on the inside. The culture in Taipei is highly focused on education and my father always encouraged me to get good grades. But my mother cared more about my health than my grades. She really cares about me as a person...not just my achievements. She told me to eat properly, get good sleep, take breaths and not to put too much pressure on myself.

While I always valued my health, in the last couple of years I've become more aware of the importance of taking care of myself. My uncle recently died of a heart attack in his early 50s – he was a big smoker, a big drinker, and he loved to laugh. His death reminded me of how unpredictable life can be! My grandmother died from the same cause, and also in her early 50s. I started taking medication a year ago to control high cholesterol which is hereditary. I live a five minute walk from my local hospital, and I go there every three months for a checkup. I follow my doctor's advice.

My healthiest habit is that I make sure to get at least eight hours sleep per night no matter how busy I am.

I work in a high pressure job with long hours, and I frequently travel around the world for business. In the Deloitte work environment, I need to stay sharp and maintain a high level of alertness to foster critical thinking. For the most part my healthy habit of proper sleep is free – I keep consistent bed times and I am disciplined in my routines. I did spend money on an Airweave mattress (Japan's leading mattress brand) to promote a better sleep.

My least healthy habit is spending too much time on screens. I need to do this for work of course but I also have leisure time and I check my phone too often. I now use my iPhone screen tracker so I know how long I am using various apps: I need to keep this least healthy habit in check to preserve my overall health.”



“ I was born in Rawalpindi, which is beside Islāmābād, the capital of Pakistan: they are known as the twin cities. I come from an educated family – my father was a civil engineer and university professor. Both parents were quite focused on health, my father in particular. He loved to swim and play tennis and would take me along with him. He stressed the importance of eating three good meals a day and ensuring that we had an early dinner.

Three years ago, I gained a lot of weight as I had no time to exercise while working on this startup. I knew this was having a serious impact on my health when I became short of breath trying to climb up a flight of stairs in one go.

I decided to commit to taking one hour every day to either swim or go to the gym and I would shut off my phone during this time. This is my healthiest habit!

My new regime took a lot of effort, but I am proud to say that I’ve lost a lot of weight, and I am now a regular swim or gym person! There was a one-time fee for my gym membership of 300,000 Pakistan Rupees (approx. US\$1,000) and an annual subscription fee of 50,000 Pakistan Rupees (approx. US\$175).

I am sure my focus on my own health has been a factor in the success of our business: it takes a ton of energy to build a startup. I am happy to share that [EKKO](#) was selected as the winner of the WSC (World Startup Championship) – [SEE Pakistan 2025](#). Out of 2000+ national and international startups, 100 teams made it to the finals...and we won!

I use my [Apple Watch](#) to track my steps: my daily target is 10,000. If I’m not quite at my target I’ll walk around the office parking lot for a while. I appreciate it very much when my watch reminds me to stand up and walk for a while or to drink some water. It also offers great tips and videos on how to increase stamina. I focus on trying to burn 600 calories a day to offset any junk food I might eat (or probably do eat...) I’ll say I’m quite dependent on this watch!

My least healthy habit is eating processed junk food such as KFC or McDonald’s. Accessing a good meal is very difficult when you are travelling a lot – it isn’t easy to take the time to go somewhere nice. And working in a startup culture you don’t have a fixed time to take a lunch or dinner break. This least healthy habit is quite an ironic one given that I’m running a health care startup: I guess everyone has these purely human stories. I actually know eating processed food is not good for me. I want to stop but somehow I still keep doing it!”



“ From a young age, I dabbled in everything from gymnastics and cheerleading to netball, and even took pride in being a Girl Guide. While my parents weren’t particularly athletic, they had their own passions. My father, rooted in his Negeri Sembilan heritage, found joy in bold flavours like “*masak lemak cili api*”, often accompanied by spontaneous jamming sessions on the guitar, piano, or drums. My mother, half Thai and half corporate warrior, was just as comfortable with a fiery papaya salad with a side of conference call.

Moving from an international to a government school during my teenage years was a big adjustment. The change in environment, especially in terms of access to sports and facilities, was noticeable. Physical education classes were held early in the morning, and with no proper shower facilities, it meant heading to class in a damp uniform, something that naturally made me less inclined to continue with sports as actively as before.

It wasn’t until I began my career in finance that I reconnected with my passion for movement and the arts. The long hours of the job made physical activity a much-needed outlet. In the fast-paced world of finance, where Type A personalities often dominate, health isn’t just a habit, it’s a way of life. We’re intentional about what we eat, how we rest, and how we move. For me, sports like tennis, squash, and golf are more than just ways to stay active, they’ve become alternative arenas for connection and collaboration. These sports often take the place of traditional business lunches, offering a more dynamic way to build relationships and read the room. How someone approaches a game, whether with aggression, patience, or strategy, can reveal just as much as any boardroom conversation.

It’s easy to overlook personal health metrics which is where tools like [Flo.health](#) become invaluable. As the leading mobile app for women’s health, Flo helps me monitor daily feelings and track my menstrual cycle, deepening my understanding of my body. I also use a sleep aid app to track my sleep patterns, crucial for preventing migraines triggered by sleep deprivation.

Prioritizing a healthy diet remains my healthiest habit, though it’s a challenge in the corporate environment of Kuala Lumpur where irresistible food is both affordable and everywhere.

The after-work culture often tempts one away from nutritious choices, and healthy options are both scarce and expensive. My least healthy habit (which I’m working to overcome) is doom-scrolling in the evenings!”



“ I was born and raised in Montreal, one of five kids. My parents were careful to limit our intake of butter, chips and Coke and they were big on exercise. As far as I can remember, sports were always an important factor in my life. I was fortunate to attend College Notre Dame, a high school that prioritized healthy habits. From age 13 every single day we had one hour of exercise in the morning and another hour of exercise in the afternoon. I remember going running around the beautiful Westmount neighbourhood and thinking to myself “One day I’m going to own one of these houses.”

At about age 20 I knew that while it would be easy to centre your whole life around either work, sports or fun, I wanted to balance all of the elements that make life rich. I make it a priority to give time to everything, I never work to the point of exhaustion, and I know that I could have had more wealth but to me money isn’t everything. I’ve been happily married for 48 years, and our son is my best friend and business partner.

You never “have time for” sports...you need to “make time for” sports. I run, ski, play tennis and bike: I’ll often do a 90 minute workout riding up Mont Tremblant at 7:30 am. Our Montreal lifestyle supports this body/mind focus as we spend most weekends in the country. I love the Roman poet Juvenal’s expression “*mens sana in corpore sano*” which means “healthy body, healthy mind.”

In business you are brought up not to show emotion. It is all about facts, analysis and rationale.

I think my healthiest habit is that I’m also a musician: I play guitar, sing and compose.

There is no cost to this habit, and it provides another array of joy, friendship and activity outside of the business world. When you sing without emotion it’s like dictating your grocery list – super boring. I work with a vocal coach because I feel it is key to really live what you are singing.

I’m doing my best to avoid watching video before I sleep and instead listen to music. Especially as I’m getting older I need to focus on managing my energy: our bodies are machines, and sleep is critical to proper functioning. I make sure to sleep for 7-8 hours solid every night. I also avoid using health tech apps of any kind: we have enough tech around us.

My least healthy habit? Frankly if I had a least healthy habit I would immediately change it!”



“ I am an only child and was born in Pittsburgh. My parents were healthy eaters, and they were very focused on the value of eating vegetables and a balanced diet. I liked most vegetables except brussels sprouts! My mother had a business degree but later planned to study nursing until she was injured after passing the state nursing exam with the highest score. Since she was very interested in health and science, I could ask her medical questions and because of her influence I know a lot about health. In fact, both of us became the person who answered medical questions from our friends. I have had to remind friends that I am an attorney and not a doctor!

Sadly, when she was 67 my mom died suddenly of a brain hemorrhage, and this got me thinking about the precariousness of life. I did a lot of looking inward and I became even more focused on fitness and nutrition. I worked at a weight loss camp the summer before law school – I was naturally super thin, and I was focused on not losing any weight back then! In my early 40s, I trained as a wellness coach and even started my own life and wellness coaching business - the Lantz Wellness Center - which I no longer operate as my current job at a global think tank focused on lifetime financial security takes up most of my time. However, I have given talks on resilience and researched things like grief and loss and the mind/body connection.

My healthiest habit is being cognizant of what I eat – I try to take note of it every day.

At times, I forego eating things I like but try to maintain balance. I will eat dessert but try to do so right after a meal so that I don't spike my blood sugar. I prepare food most days and this can be time consuming. In terms of cost, I spend more money on high quality groceries but then again, I eat out less frequently than most of my friends.

My least healthy habit is that I don't get enough sleep. I've always been a night person: early for me is midnight and I'm often up until 2 AM. I know that whether you are a morning or night person is innate though. And I am very interested in learning new things so I often stay up later than I should reading. A month or so ago I listened to a podcast by a therapist that highlighted how to change a habit. It is still early days, but I am hopeful that this method might work for me. The idea was not to try to change per se but to think of yourself as someone who does the new thing. My new mantra will be “I'm now a person who prioritizes sleep!”



“ I was born in Kashmir, India, and lived there for most of my life. After completing my MPhil, I moved to Oman where I joined Middle East College, an affiliate of Coventry University, UK. Later, I returned to Kashmir to pursue my PhD at the University of Kashmir. Following the completion of my doctorate, I relocated to Bahrain, where I have been living and working for close to three years now. Growing up in Kashmir I had an early connection to fresh food from the local farms and we were in an area surrounded by mountains and natural beauty. I cherish this about the place I was born.

My father always stressed the importance of eating food at home: you never know how other people cook and it is good to know that you have healthy ingredients. Unlike some of my relatives and friends, our family was not allowed to eat food outside our home. Only recently I have become much more aware of my own health after organizing check ups for my parents with our doctor when I was on vacation back home. The doctor said, “How about your checkup?” It turns out that I have a grade two (closer to three) fatty liver disease and need to do more regular exercise otherwise I could end up with cirrhosis– non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD/NASH), often linked to obesity. Fortunately, if I take care of this it is completely reversible.

My healthiest habit is one that has been with me right from childhood. First thing in the morning I drink two or three glasses of water on an empty stomach.

This habit does not cost me any money whatsoever...it just costs me persistent habit behaviour. I put in a bit of effort, a bit of time and I need to be consistent.

In terms of HealthTech, I use the app that is built into my phone: [Samsung Health](#). I also (infrequently) use [Strava](#) for tracking runs. My least healthy habit is that at times, I’m lazy! I have a gym in the building that I live in, but I don’t go there very often. And I don’t run very often. I realize this tendency towards laziness is costing me my health so I plan to change this least healthy habit!”



“ I was born in Sydney, Australia. My parents loved to move around, and the focus was very much on the idea of living a large life. In the first 10 years of my life, we lived in three different continents! My father was quite healthy and enjoyed running and sailing to compensate for how much he loved eating. My mother was gorgeous and skinny, a woman of her time who dieted, drank black coffee, and smoked. I’ve always had a complex relationship with health. When I was 14 my mom asked me if I wanted to go to Weight Watchers. She later apologized realizing it had been very impactful on me!

I started to think more seriously about my health quite late in life. At age 36 when a relationship ended I was heartbroken but all of a sudden I had the stark realization that I can have control over my own decisions. I’m an adult! I told myself I don’t have to have kids and I can eat veggies! It took a while to find what was right for me but for the last 10 years I’ve started my mornings with a super healthy juice consisting of a head of celery, half an apple, ginger and three handfuls of spinach. I mainly eat high protein salads for lunch or dinner when at home – I especially enjoy meatballs and chicken.

As I’ve learned about myself eating well has been my consistently healthy habit.

Chocolate and ice cream are my kryptonite.

I went to Pilates twice a week for 14 years pre-pandemic but then my instructor retired, and the studio shut down. Nowadays, I inconsistently use [BetterMe](#): they offer great (though expensive) short workouts. In my view it is worth spending on a fitness or health app because the creators deserve to make money from their platform and an app pushes me to do more than going to the gym in my building.

My least healthy habit is emotional eating. If something isn’t going the way I want it to, there may be some chocolate, ice cream and butter tarts on my menu! The trick for me is to get a handle on whatever I think I’ve ‘done wrong’ and forgive myself...then I don’t have the excuse to continue eating poorly...I can stop myself.”



“ I was born in Bengaluru (Bangalore) and I’ve lived here for most of my life. We were a Punjabi family of six: my grandparents lived with my parents, my sister and me. When I was growing up, being mindful about health was certainly not trending! It wasn’t a topic most Indian people were conscious about – maybe just the higher income groups or celebrities. Everyone in my family was slightly overweight except me, and we never had detailed discussion about health per se. However, I loved sports like cycling and running and I played cricket in school. After my school years I also played both football (soccer) and cricket in college, so this helped me stay fit naturally.

By the age of 26 I was married and starting a new business so being active had taken a back seat. I was doing a lot of travel to smaller towns where there was less access to healthy food. Only in 2019, after I had added a few extra pounds, the topic of being healthy came into discussion. I started doing some occasional walking and running, and then during COVID, as mental and physical health became more of a focus for everyone, I signed up to [cult.fit](#) – an app made by the one of the largest fitness brand in India. It only costs me a few thousand rupees annually (about US\$30) and I regularly do a wide variety of pre-programmed workouts in my home such as yoga, dance, cardio, and high intensity interval training. I also spend some time doing meditation for mental wellbeing. I have also started doing an annual health checkup to ensure all internal parameters are sound, plus I’m back to playing cricket on Sundays which is a stress buster too, in addition to being a fitness activity.

My healthiest habit has been more of a subconscious one now that I think about it. Whenever I am on extra long business calls or personal calls I start walking.

Usually outside but sometimes I do laps inside my office building. These daily walks of 30 to 40 minutes add an extra four or five thousand steps without me even realizing I am doing it!

Alongside my work at Aurivox, I also run a successful consumer distribution company representing Centuary Mattress, Cenflex Foam, Rub-Le furniture and other brands. Even though I am in a business that promotes healthy sleep, I would say my least healthy habit is compromising on sleep. I often study, work or even spend time relaxing and play games at night, so end up sleeping late and then I need to get up for my young son in the morning. I normally sleep just 6 to 6.5 hours per night, which I know isn’t enough and I hope to improve on it in coming days.”



“ I was born in Bettna, a tiny town in Sweden, about a two and a half hour drive southwest and inland from Stockholm. I lived there until I moved to Australia in 2001. I was aware of what good health is all about from an early age: my brother was born with lots of allergies. He was allergic to eggs, milk, oranges, tomatoes, all furry animals, etc. He also had asthma and was very sick most of the time.

I have always appreciated the outdoors – my family was active, and we loved being in nature. Growing up I played soccer and enjoyed horseback riding and I also loved walking, running and biking. I still do all of these activities today.

I think my healthiest habit is that I drink a cup of hot lemon water every single morning.

My healthiest habit doesn't cost much – I only need to buy lemons and pay for the heating of the water in the kettle. I also do some sort of exercise every morning: usually yoga with [Kassandra](#) on YouTube or a weight class app called CENTR. This daily routine is so important to my overall sense of wellbeing. If I didn't do my workouts I would go crazy! What else would I do? Stay in bed? Go to work earlier?

The [CENTR](#) app costs AUD \$100 per year. I used to wear an Apple watch, but I don't use it anymore because it made me stress about my sleep! Another thing I do that interferes with my sleep is drink wine. That is how I know it is a really bad habit. I don't drink every day: I try my best to practice moderation. But I will say my least healthy habit is wine.”

*The greatest health
is wealth.*

– VIRGIL,
ANCIENT ROMAN POET





“ I was born and raised in Toronto. My mom was of Swiss descent and was ahead of her time in terms of being super health conscious: we ate a lot of homemade food, and she came from a family of big walkers. My dad was of Italian descent and was also a healthy eater: he was really into vitamins and being “fit for life.” In spite of the healthy start from our parents both my older brothers and I began smoking in our teen years. I was in my early 20s when I made my first conscious healthy decision to quit smoking. I had a long-term boyfriend at the time and I began to consider that one day I would want to get pregnant and I certainly didn’t want to be a smoker at that time so I should probably quit smoking as soon as possible! As a virulent anti-smoker my mother was overjoyed and paid for me to join Smokenders.

Over the years I’ve used a couple of different apps for health, one of them being an early edition of what we would now call FemTech. While in my late 40s, my doctor would keep asking me for the date of my last period, and I had trouble keeping track, so I downloaded [Period Tracker](#). These days I use [Noom](#) for tracking weight loss and health and being more aware of my relationship with food.

My healthiest habits are walking and Pilates.

I tend to walk about 30 to 40 km a week and last fall I completed the 800 km Camino de Santiago in Spain. With regards to Pilates, it was a health and wellness game changer for me. My husband and I have five kids and 20 years ago when our youngest was just over a year old, I had a bulging disk in my back. I was in excruciating pain and eventually I passed out and was taken to emergency at the Toronto Western hospital. I was sent home with a prescription of Percocet and no plan for long term recovery.

I took the drugs for a day but quickly realized that I couldn’t deal with my children and my life in that state! I talked with my chiropractor, and she strongly recommended that I take up Pilates and build up my core muscles. I am happy to say that Pilates cured my back issues and gave me a life without pain. Initially Pilates cost me money (I still pay \$300 per year for my Pilates Anytime subscription) but now Pilates is making me money! I started teaching during Covid and I now have my own Pilates studio in the basement of our home in the Beaches neighbourhood. I recently hosted my first retreat in Costa Rica and next year I have two weeks booked in Panama. A dream come true.

My least healthy habit? Sadly I am an intermittent party smoker: this has been my ongoing struggle.”



“ I was born in Glasgow, Scotland and both of my parents were schoolteachers. When I was about two years old we briefly lived in Detroit before settling in Toronto, Canada. My mother would talk to the three of us kids in quite a casual way about food being part of health – no white bread and that type of thing. We were a generally healthy family (no hospital visits) and we would have regular appointments with the doctor and the dentist.

I first became aware of potentially serious health issues when my father was diagnosed with colon cancer in his mid 60s. Sadly he only survived for a year after the diagnosis. I knew then that we were in a high risk group. In addition, I have very fair skin, and I've had a form of low risk skin cancer on my hands and face: I am always looking out for it. Fortunately, health care accessibility is very high here in Malaysia and I've lived here for the last 35 years. There is no preventive medicine for that cancer, but there are lots of private family doctors who will do early first screenings. And there is a medical faculty at my university where, as a teacher, I am eligible to have various screenings every six months.

My healthiest habit is bird watching.

It gets me outdoors often, it gets me walking great distances, and it is a very good mental break. I realize from the outside looking in this might be considered to be a very geeky habit, but I really enjoy it! When I walk anywhere, I am not just going for a walk, I am paying close attention to what is around me. This is true mindfulness. The only app I use these days is the [Apple Health](#) app that is built into my iPhone – I'll look at it occasionally if I've walked a lot to see how I did. On some of my bird watching outings I will end up walking over 15,000 steps.

I also do a bit of bird photography, and this can become quite expensive if you want to use a very good quality camera and lenses. One good high end telephoto lens can cost US \$10,000! I don't spend a lot of my personal money on this habit though, since I'm studying bird diversity for my university, and they have incorporated my work into their “Environmental Research Institute.” I try to buy used photography equipment and work the cost into a funded research project.

Both my wife and I work like crazy – around the clock with our devices – sometimes at 9 pm and often on weekends. Cooking something super healthy is not really an easy option for us. So we eat out quite a lot and this isn't the best diet as the local cuisine is high in fat. My least healthy habit is eating too much delicious Malaysian food!”



“ I was born in Saint Malo, a port city in Brittany, France. When I was a young child I noticed a statue of a man who was raising his hand towards the Atlantic Ocean and Canada. I asked my mother what he was looking at? The statue was Jacques Cartier. Many many years later in life when I had an unplanned move to Canada my mother reminded me of that moment – maybe this was always my fate.

I am one of three daughters and health was a daily conversation in our household. My mother talked with us about our diet, sexual health, good sleep patterns, vaccinations, and she warned us against alcohol. The importance of good health was ingrained in me for my entire life. Maybe it’s not a surprise that both of my sisters became nurses. My father was funnier about health saying things like “here’s a condom but be careful” and “yeah, have a drink but be careful.”

My healthiest habit is that I have the ‘sleep gene’.

I can nap anytime, anywhere and wherever I travel I can sleep 9-10 hours per night. It doesn’t matter if it is noisy or if it is daylight...I just sleep! I think this is my superpower. I’m a high achiever and received a 100% GPA on my second master’s degree. Now as the founder of an AI strategy firm I am intellectually very busy all day reading articles for at least three hours for my research. I also swim a little bit every day (500 metres) and I walk 30-60 minutes a day. My brain is tired in a good way and there is no cost associated with sleeping.

I tell my friends to get rid of their Oura rings: you are your own enemy. I got rid of my Apple watch a couple of years ago for two reasons. First, I’m AI conscious and I don’t like the idea of sending my data to them, and second I don’t like receiving nagging negative messages like “you should walk now to achieve your goal!”

My least healthy habit is that I worry too much about all kinds of little things. Fortunately, my husband is really good at saying to me “stop worrying!” Even more fortunately, I listen!”



“ I was born and raised in Bangalore then at 23 I moved to the UK for a couple of years to do my master’s. I’ve been living in Dubai since 2011. Growing up in India the culture was such that women are the money managers. My mother took care of the household spending and investing. While it was a positive thing that she was cautious with our money, when it came to matters of health she was “doctor averse.” Both my parents avoided hospitals like the plague, you would only go there if you were very sick. Otherwise, they preferred an Ayurvedic approach and would come up with homemade remedies.

I really only started paying attention to my health about five years ago, during COVID. The lockdown in Dubai had my wife and me stuck in an incredibly sedentary routine – I spent my days glued to the laptop and most nights binging Netflix. We even wore it like a badge of honor that we drank every day for 47 days straight. Not surprisingly, I put on a belly and we both started feeling sluggish and unwell. That was the wake-up call: it was time to take our health seriously.

Today my strongest habit is waking up at 5:30 a.m. and going to the gym for an hour, four to five days a week.

I follow a strength-training routine consistently, and now I train with a coach to push myself further. About a year ago I bought my wife a [WHOOP](#) band for her birthday; she upgraded recently and passed me her old band. At first it felt overwhelming because it tracks so many metrics – heart rate, blood oxygen, sleep, recovery – but now I’m a bit obsessed. I wear it all the time. Between a coach, supplements, and the WHOOP subscription, I spend roughly AED 30–35k a year (around US\$9,500.)

My biggest unhealthy habit is smoking. I started at 17 and, despite many attempts, haven’t successfully quit. Oddly, I’m much more disciplined with alcohol – I’m strictly a social drinker, every other weekend, and never during the week. I count my drinks and stick to that limit. I haven’t given up on quitting smoking, but it’s a hard one.

Last December I switched from cigarettes to [IQOS](#) devices. Instead of burning tobacco, the device heats it at a lower temperature and releases fewer toxins, though the nicotine content remains the same. The good news is I no longer have a smoker’s cough and my stamina has improved. I know I need to quit entirely, but part of me still wonders: what’s the point of life if you don’t allow yourself at least one vice?”



“ I was born and raised in Surabaya, a town at the eastern end of Java, in Indonesia. I lived there up until the time I moved to Taipei for college ten years ago. My parents taught me general concepts around health – primarily the importance of avoiding MSG and heavily processed foods. Their teachings weren’t nearly as complex as how the media is currently profiling nutrition and health.

I was a bit on the chubby side when I was growing up, and at age 13 I tried to lose weight. I initially took the easiest and most obvious route to lose some weight, which was to eat severely less to the point of starving myself. But since I was still in school and needed some brain power to power through, I had to pivot my strategy. I then began educating myself about nutrition and focused on what I was consuming. Flavour became the second priority over the nutritional content when it comes to food. That’s also where I started to develop a sweet spot for sweet potatoes.

My healthiest habit is self-awareness.

For example, if I feel sluggish at a certain time of the month, I look at why. Maybe I have overconsumed sugar. If I have some acne, what is the cause? Maybe work stress. I take cues and look into the signals around me. Being self-aware has led me to prioritize better eating habits. Since I don’t spend money on gym or any exercise classes, most of my wellness budget goes to groceries. Healthy ready-food takeout has become much more expensive in Taipei.

My least healthy habit is binge eating, which is usually stress related. Every now and then, it is easy for me to make my way through a giant bag of potato chips! I use a couple of basic iPhone apps: the [Period Tracker Period Calendar](#) and also [The Fitness App](#). When I’m under stress and not sleeping properly I definitely need to remember to move my body more.”



“ I was born in Porto – the best city in the world! Perhaps I am a bit biased, but I only have beautiful things to say about it. The rich culture truly values academic life, and the people are strong and resilient. These are values that I always want to live.

My father died when I was young, and my mother has always tried to keep me and my older sister as healthy as possible. Mom still thinks of me as her precious little child. When I started university a couple of years ago I began to prioritize my health. It wasn't like I had been completely neglectful before but with so many deadlines and assignments I had a lot of pressure on me, and this forced me to pause and reflect on my wellbeing. Focusing on health was more of a necessity rather than a conscious choice.

If I'm ever feeling sick I use ChatGPT to help me figure out what is wrong with me. While it isn't exactly a replacement for a doctor, Chat offers amazing medical guidance.

My healthiest habit is self-reflection.

I have become very good at analysing my current state and being honest with myself. Improving self awareness takes time but it really pays off. It is important to pause often! Then either act or keep things the way they are. A simple example? I use my Huawei smart watch to monitor my sleep patterns and most often I get only 4-5 hours sleep per night. Most people would think I need more. But...when I paused and analysed my body I actually concluded that I could live with four to five hours sleep. I can still be productive, so I don't see the need to act.

There is no cost to self-reflection, but it directly affects performance. In that way it eventually translates to financial consequences. This summer I have a lot of work to do because starting in September I'll be taking on another role as Director of Internal Affairs for "Smart Data FEP" - a new junior company ruled by students. Initially I thought this would be way too much stress, but a friend came to me and insisted that I take the role. Upon further reflection I thought "Let's do it and do it well!"

My least healthy habit is that although I usually understand my limits, I sometimes still push beyond them. This falls into the category of not acting when I should take action. I'm still a work in progress!"



“ I was born in Tampa, Florida and I had a very early awareness of the importance of eating healthy food. My father was a biochemist – I grew up hearing about organic ingredients, pesticides and additives.

I always had compassion for animals, so it was an easy choice for me to become a vegetarian at a young age, and later in college I attended a talk about veganism and at about 18 I became a militant vegan. This involved super extreme thinking: dairy was bad for you, only raw food was okay and no ghee! These days I describe myself as a qualitarian. I eat local and I am mindful about trying to make choices that are as close to the source as possible.

My healthiest habit is my mindset: this is the operating system of the body.

When I was a vegan my mind was so controlled...I was extreme with yoga and extreme with eating. For a full year I stopped menstruating because there was no cholesterol in my body. I have now happily put aside those extreme views especially those that come from outside. I embrace a curious mindset – one in which you become your own pharmacy. I’ve developed tools to reframe everything happening to me in a conscious way.

I think there is a connection between cost and mindset but sometimes it plays out over a longer period of time, so it is difficult to see the correlation. When I was a young mother with two kids living in France, our lifestyle involved eating higher quality food and only buying what we needed on a daily basis. This approach was definitely healthier and less expensive.

I don’t feel like I need any HealthTech apps personally, but I have done research as an investor on [Elvie](#) and [kGoal](#): Kegel trainers for women. They are interactive training systems (device + app) that measure pelvic floor muscle function from inside the vagina and offer a unique combination of guidance, tracking, biofeedback and personalized workouts.

My least healthy habit has got to be drinking. I like to drink at dinners or parties, so I’ll call myself a social drinker. And I have a big social life – I can be out four nights a week, so I definitely need to be mindful of moderation.”



“ I was born in Lisbon but grew up about six kilometers away in a suburb called Carnaxide. When I was 11 we moved to the best place in the world to live: our building was very close to Estádio da Luz, home stadium of Portuguese football club Benfica. When I got married in 2002 I moved to another building on the same street so I could continue to watch matches from my house. Before I fall asleep at night I say goodnight to my wife, and I say goodnight to the stadium!

Growing up I had an advantage in that my mother was a doctor. She probably talked with me about health, but I don't remember...as kids we don't care about such things. I realize now that my lack of health problems was a gift. Good health is certainly not guaranteed.

I think my healthiest habit is that I am not a person of excesses – I always try to behave according to the signals that my body sends me.

I recall being about 22 and staying up all night a few times. I felt terrible! I am a rational person and quickly realized that this was not rational behaviour, so I listened to my body and stopped staying out so late. Proper sleep prevents potential health problems. Another example is that I used to be a regular runner but a couple of years ago I started having knee problems. I had an option to have surgery with a six month recovery time but instead I opted to stop running. My body had sent me a signal. Now I walk and my knees don't hurt any more.

There is no cost to listening to the messages my body gives me. And in fact, I think my approach to sleep, diet and exercise is similar to a 'buy and hold' style of investing. It is quite boring, but it works out in the long run. I don't use any HealthTech apps – I'm a bit old-fashioned and prefer to schedule regular checkups with my family doctor. Also I think if you use apps you will probably find problems that probably aren't that important. If you are too cautious it can have the opposite effect. I like to follow one of the old Portuguese expressions “*Somos felizes sem saber a verdade*” (We are happy if we don't know the truth.) So far it works!

My least healthy habit is a critical one: sitting for too many hours in a row at my laptop. My job stress is high, and I am committed to finishing work by 6 pm to spend time with my family. I forget to take breaks...I am definitely not listening to signals from my body in this area. I haven't found the solution yet!”



“ I was born in Toronto and both of my parents modeled a generally healthy lifestyle – they didn’t drink much and neither smoked nor did drugs. As a family we would go hiking on weekends. My mother was a power walker and back in the day she would workout to VHS tapes. My father belonged to the Fitness Institute and even joined me for yoga classes.

I was a very active child, I loved playing outdoors and was very sporty in my youth. My predisposition was always around self-optimization. In my mid 20s I went to see a naturopathic doctor to focus on how I could optimize my health and performance and prevent disease or illness.

My healthiest habit is tennis: it is great for the heart and also the brain!

I play singles tennis and because I love it so much I’m truly in the flow...mentally, physically and spiritually. The greatest joy for me is taking lessons and clinics so there is definitely a cost to my healthiest habit. My husband and I belong to clubs in Ontario and also in California, where we spend some time every year. You may also want to know that tennis may be the healthiest sport in the world – [a study found that recreational tennis players lived 9.7 years longer](#), the highest for any sport.

I don’t use any health tech apps at all...not even a smart watch. I’m concerned about low levels of radiation so I try to minimize my use of technology in general. I also don’t want to become overly dependent on external intelligence sources! I prefer to rely on my natural approach trusting my own mind and body.

My least healthy habit is being sedentary for too much of the time. I seem to have two switches: I’m either exercising or sitting -- at my computer, driving, or dining out in the evening. I know that movement is essential – it isn’t enough to spend an hour a day in the gym and then be sedentary the rest of the time. I need to work harder at incorporating movement into more moments of my daily life.”



“ I was born and raised on a resort island called Langkawi, an archipelago of 99 islands located some 30 km off the coast of northwestern Malaysia. We lived in a small house at the top of a hill in a forest. Everything was out to kill you: our two main companions were serious injury and death! Friends of mine had a variety of mishaps including being bitten by a cobra, almost drowning and being stung by a jellyfish. There was only one hospital in the town.

Growing up my parents didn't talk with me about nutrition or health other than “eat your greens” and “eat a balanced diet.” And “watch out for cobras.” I was an outdoors jungle guy by nature... I wasn't a sports guy in school. I first became aware of fitness by reading some Muay Thai magazines my grandfather had left lying around from the late 1970s. I read about the art of kicking, but I also learned about proper nutrition, recovery, and the importance of taking care of yourself. I started practicing Muay Thai when I was in my early 20s.

In school I always found doing cardio boring: jumping rope was the worst thing in the world.

But these days my healthiest habit is running.

I love running because it is always available to you. If you can't run, then you can jog, and if you can't jog, you can walk. I like to do my daily 5 km run after work. The only cost is what I pay for my shoes! I used to pay for my Fitbit via subscription but just after Google acquired the company in 2021 my watch quit on me. I switched to a Huawei version, and it is working very well...and with no subscription cost. I also use the free running app [Strava](#) to track and share my activities.

What is my least healthy habit? Oh, there are so many of them! There's the whisky, there's my inability to get up in the morning, and my sugar addiction is a tough one to break. If I had to pick one thing to focus on it would be my love of our Malaysian diet - it is high fat, rich, and carb heavy. In the old farming days Malays needed this type of sustenance - they would toil away all day doing tough farm work, go home for a big dinner and then burn off the calories the next day. But the nature of work has changed and the food has not! Now I sit in an air-conditioned room staring at a screen with my soft drink nearby.

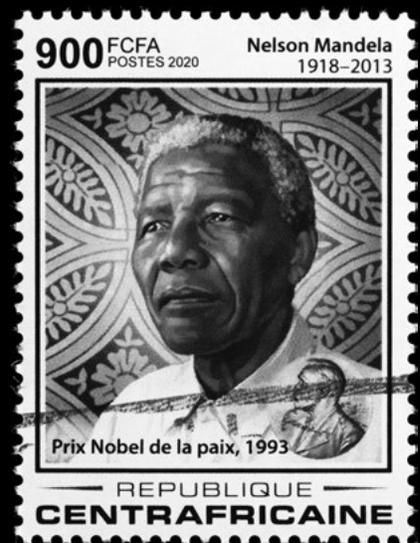
Eating home cooking is super expensive here and eating crap like KFC and A&W is very cheap. My wife and I have good intentions to cook at home so we can stay in control of our fat and salt intake. But unfortunately if we buy some fish and put it in the fridge to “cook tomorrow”...we never do it and the fish ends up going bad. More work is needed to overcome this least healthy (and most wasteful) habit!”



*Exercise is the key
not only to physical health
but to peace of mind.*



– NELSON MANDELA,
SOUTH AFRICAN ACTIVIST





“ I was born in a town called Mudanya in Türkiye on the shore of the Marmara Sea, where the sea is a central part of life. My great grandparents had immigrated from Macedonia and Greece and our family has always been in the olive and olive oil business. Growing up in a Balkan culture the focus was very much around eating healthy fresh, homemade food with natural ingredients.

From a young age I was prone to impulsive eating. At age 14 I weighed 74 kg (163 pounds) and one day realized that it was time to take control, so I began dieting. I tried the watermelon diet, a veggies diet, and various teas that might help me to lose weight. At the time I was very focused on my body...it was less about my health.

At age 35 I was diagnosed with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, and this was a real wakeup call for me. After 18 years in high-stakes finance, I knew how to perform under pressure. I was disciplined, consistent, and always fit. But I was also constantly hungry—physically and mentally. I lived in gyms and offices, counted every calorie, and spent years compensating for every meal. On paper, I was thriving. In reality, I was tired of chasing health through restriction and control.

That’s when I decided to create a different approach—one that works with the body, not against it. Today, I’m a Holistic Health and Longevity Diet Coach, trained in London. I’m also an International Coaching Federation member, currently studying Nutrition Science at Stanford, and completing NBHWC certification through one of the most respected wellness coaching programs in the world.

My healthiest habit is that I never eat trash!

In Turkish culture people always insist that you eat. But I set boundaries and say, “No I don’t eat that.” I don’t want to have to please people with my body - I’ve changed my diet completely and no longer eat gluten or refined sugar. Importantly, I choose nourishment over convenience even though this comes with a price tag. Healthy food is expensive in Türkiye!

I use my smart watch to monitor my activity levels: this has been a gamechanger for me and my clients. As a health coach, I stay current with evidence-based tools used in the field. I’m well-versed in several nutrition and dietary assessment apps including [MyFitnessPal](#), [Chronometer](#) (nutrition tracker), [ASA24](#) (dietary assessment tool), [FFQ](#) (Food Frequency Questionnaires), and [BiteSnap](#) (photo food tracker).

My least healthy habit is that I want to feel 100% full after every meal. As an extrovert and food lover, this is a habit that is hard to break. Choosing the right foods requires new habits. At the end of the day, we are what we eat!”



“ I was born in Córdoba, which is about 700 km northwest of Buenos Aires, and have two sisters – one 28 (we share the same parents) and the other 18 (born to my father in his third marriage.) My parents did encourage and support me for doing sports but didn’t really talk with us about health.

I first became aware of my own health at around age 25...mainly for esthetic reasons. I wasn’t happy with the way my body looked, and I realized the only way to change it would be to do serious workouts. I was living in Spain at the time, and I contacted a personal trainer who I was connected with on social media. She was also from Córdoba, and she helped me remotely. Once I got into my new regime, fitness started to become a lifestyle, and it was no longer just a way to ‘look okay’...it was superb for my mental health.

My healthiest habit is body building.

But I am convinced that you need both workouts and proper nutrition to see results. I had to learn how to eat and cook - you have to put as much effort into the kitchen as you do at the gym! When it comes to food I am very disciplined and eat more or less the same thing every day: chicken breast and boiled vegetables (usually broccoli, onions and sweet potato.) I weigh everything I eat, and I don’t use much oil.

I am a salesman by nature but right now I’m studying in the IT field. My financial situation isn’t great as a student and eating a proper diet costs money. My trainer in Argentina is relatively cheap – around \$40 to \$50 per month. I don’t use any fitness apps - even though I work in data science I still believe in the human touch. In future when I have lots of money I would love to have my personal fully equipped gym at home. I hate seeing so many people at the gym sitting on machines staring at their phones!

My least healthy habit is smoking. I roll my own tobacco and smoke about 15 cigarettes a day. I have in my mind that the next step in my evolution to a healthier life will be to stop smoking...this has to happen!”



“ I was born in Stockholm, Sweden and I’ve lived here my whole life. Even if my mother was a great cook, growing up in the early 70s this wasn’t a big thing. You were served what you were served, and you ate what you ate! It was regular food, nothing special. My father was quite fit – he enjoyed Swedish long skating (also known as wild skating) in the Archipelago during the winters. Naturally I didn’t want to do what my parents wanted me to do when I was younger, so it took me until my 30s to learn this traditional sport.

In our youth we take our health more for granted but the older you get...you cannot take health for granted. To me the definition of health is a combination of both mental and physical health and since I feel great when I am active I try to be active every single day. I love being outdoors and happily I live in Gärdet - an area north and east of Östermalm in Stockholm, but close to the rest of the inner city, that includes vast open spaces used for recreational purposes. In the afternoons or evenings in the winter, for instance, I can go wild skating in the city just 1 km away from home.

Growing up I played volleyball in the national league, in the lower levels: I’ve slept on floors in many schools in this country! I continued playing until we were in our early 30s. I always loved that feeling of working hard at a sport and being super sweaty. Now that my two daughters are adults, and I’ve recently retired from an active career I’m coming back to that great feeling! I’m now focused on Board work and volunteer work for non-profits, and I have the time to do something physical every single day whether that is taking a longer walk or going to the gym. Yes my gym card costs money, but I see this as an important investment that will pay off over the long term.

The only HealthTech app I use is [Apple Health](#). Tracking my daily steps became a habit during the pandemic and I continue to do my best to walk my 10,000 steps per day. I don’t use any other HealthTech apps because I really wonder if they are actually healthy... I’m sure tracking my sleep would stress me out even more?

I had an uncle who lived well into his 90s and when various people asked him for his secret to success he would say “you always have to work on your social network.” He said this over and over again. I took note!

I will say that working on my social network is my healthiest habit.

My least healthy habit is eating too much chocolate. Preferably a combination of milk and dark and I like to treat myself to handmade chocolates from the best places in Stockholm such as Ejes Chokladfabrik at Erik Dahlbergsgatan, just down the street from where I live.”



“ I was born in a rural town called Primero de Mayo in northeast Argentina. My father’s family background is in farming, and we had a farm raising crops and cows. My mother was a teacher. My parents never directly talked with my two brothers and me about health matters, however more indirectly they taught us to value homemade food as it is both healthier and tastier. And they would make sure that we finished our salad before moving on to dessert. Growing up on the farm also meant I was physically active from a young age—helping with chores, moving around outdoors, and staying engaged with the rhythms of nature. These rules were important when I was growing up and I still adhere to them.

When I turned 25 (about five years ago) I read a study comparing activity levels in elderly people: being active versus inactive and the impact on health. X-rays showed a massive different between the two cohorts! This resonated with me because my own grandparents had always been very active walking and gardening. They lived well into their 80s and never had any major health issues. Some of my friends had grandparents who needed a lot of assistance – they had not been active. I realized clearly that it would be easier to start doing exercise when you are young as it would be difficult to change your habits later on.

My healthiest habit is quite a simple one: I do a lot of walking.

This habit was formed when I was a child walking around our farm. As I grew older and I moved through different cities across my home country, as well as in Brazil for studies and Ireland for work, I found walking to be a great way to get to know a new place, a way to connect with each new environment. Walking is so great for both mental and physical health. About half the time I try to learn something while I walk so I’ll listen to a podcast. The other half of the time I’ll relax and listen to electronic music or rock: David Guetta or the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Walking costs me nothing other than a new pair of shoes every once in a while. I use [Google Fit](#) to track my steps – I like to compete with myself to reach my daily walking goal.

My least healthy habit is not sleeping enough. I sleep far too few hours (six on average), and I don’t go to bed at regular times. Some nights I’ll go to bed at 10 pm, some nights at midnight and some nights at 1 am. The problem is I get home after work and I prioritize something other than sleep – maybe I’ll study or maybe I’ll watch a movie. I’m not comfortable with this habit of not sleeping enough but it seems to be a problem that is too difficult for me to solve! I need to improve this at some point.”



“ I was born in Suzhou, a city near Shanghai in China. Growing up, I had quite a sweet tooth, which isn’t surprising given that the local cuisine tends to be on the sweeter side – we have many delicious, sweet pastries, for example. Like much of Asian cuisine, our diet was also heavily carbohydrate-based. It wasn’t unusual to have multiple carb-rich items for breakfast, such as porridge, *mantou* (steamed buns), and *youtiao* (fried dough sticks).

That said, my parents were aware of the importance of protein in a balanced diet and made sure I regularly had milk and eggs as I was growing up. While exercise wasn’t a major priority for me during my teenage years, it was still a structured part of our school curriculum. To progress from secondary school to high school, we had to pass a fitness test. Although it was quite some time ago, I still remember it included short distance runs, strength exercises, and long jumps.

When I was pregnant with my first child I started to become much more aware of my health. My doctor would monitor my weight, my body mass index and my glucose level (which was borderline.) I got advice on how to use a balanced diet and exercise to control my blood glucose level.

My healthiest habit is exercising – I work out to various play lists of “[BodyFit by Amy](#)” on YouTube.

I used to jog outdoors as my main form of exercise but after I gave birth I wasn’t able to keep that up as it was during Covid and running outside was prohibited for some time. As it turned out I prefer the full body workout and I’ve stuck with it for six years now.

Some people need a gym membership to stay motivated but I am a naturally disciplined person so it is easy for me to make time for my exercise routine. I still enjoy sweating outdoors from time to time so I’ll do a 3 km run a couple of days a week in the reservoir behind my workplace. None of my exercises come with a cost!

My least healthy habit is that I like to drink sweetened beverages like cola. I sometimes feel quite guilty about this since in our food science studies we offer advice that plain water is the best beverage! In Singapore there is a grid (A, B, C or D) for the sugar level in our soft drinks. A and B have lower sugar levels so they are healthier choices. I’m trying my best to choose the less sweet options!”



“ I was born in Salihli, a small town in western Türkiye that is surrounded by nature and where almost everyone knows each other. I also spent a lot of time with relatives who lived in Izmir where I had a much more urban and modern experience, so I had the best of both worlds - the calmness and simplicity of a small town which is Salihli, and the openness and energy of a bigger city which is İzmir.

My parents talked with me quite a lot about health when I was growing up. It was part of our daily life in that my mother always made balanced home cooked meals and my father encouraged me to be active in sports. I started playing volleyball in elementary school and continued to play from there: this was a really big part of my childhood. Eating well and staying active was then and still is my mindset.

The first time I had any health concerns was just after the pandemic. I went for a checkup and found out that my cholesterol was at the upper limit of the range. This surprised me...it was a real wakeup call! Our health can change if we don't pay attention. Since then, I have been much more conscious about eating better and exercising more regularly.

My healthiest habit is doing regular workouts with my personal trainer.

This gives me structure and consistency as well as accountability (he is waiting for me!) I've had the same coach for three years and it has made a real difference in how I feel. Not just physically but mentally. As a portfolio manager, I work very long hours with a lot of mental focus required. Exercise gives me the energy to recharge, I'm more productive, and I sleep better.

Workouts have become part of my lifestyle versus something that I feel I have to do. Over time I have come to see exercise as self-discipline and self-care. In Türkiye, personal trainers are relatively inexpensive at around 1,200 Turkish lira (US\$29) per hour. The only health tech app that I use is [Samsung Health](#) on my phone: the step counter is a simple but helpful way to check my walking goals daily and the sleep data function has helped me turn awareness into a good habit.

My least healthy habit is spending too much time sitting in front of my computer. I have a desk-based job and when I sit for too long I feel low energy. I am trying to make small adjustments during the day such as going out to grab a coffee, walking to speak with a colleague instead of sending them an email, and taking the stairs rather than the elevator. Good health isn't only about the hours you spend at the gym, it's about how you manage your energy throughout the rest of your day as well. I am working on this: I need to educate my body!”



“ I was born and raised in Calgary and aside from going to school in Aarhus, Paris and Oxford and a short work stint in Taiwan I’ve lived here my whole life. My upbringing definitely had a big influence on me in terms of my awareness around health issues: my mother suffers from mental illness, and my father died quite young. But somehow this felt removed or perhaps disassociated: it was more like “that’s happening to them, not me.”

It wasn’t until late 2018/early 2019 that I developed a couple of major health issues of my own. First vertigo and then Bell’s palsy (a type of facial paralysis that results in a temporary inability to control the facial muscles on the affected side of the face.) In all but rare cases Bell’s palsy goes away on it’s own, but mysteriously mine never went away! The medical community essentially abandoned me, so this forced me to be open to anything to get things resolved and restore me to my original position. I started to work with a naturopath to determine how to remove inflammation from my body, including the best foods to eat for my health issues and I increased my activity levels – I now do lots of biking, swimming and walking.

My healthiest habit is putting myself first.

Whether this is about my mental health or my physical health I am making the conscious decision to prioritize my health. The greatest thing I’ve learned is that the reasons I had been making for not putting myself first were red herrings or false reasons. There is always a good reason to not do something.

Paying for treatment has a cost associated with it however this is nowhere near the cost of not putting yourself first. I don’t use HealthTech other than [Apple Health](#) to track my steps and [Strava](#) to stay focused on my fitness goals. I am okay with data as long as it doesn’t involve me having to actively track anything – I have enough work to do without giving myself more, though I do believe in data. I haven’t made the full transition to wearables.

My least healthy habit is that I don’t always take my medication on a regular basis. I am asthmatic and should take Symbicort every day for prevention but instead I use Ventolin once things become acute. I don’t like taking medication, so preventative medicine sometimes has a block for me. I am more of an “in the moment!” type of person.

The older I get, the more I value health and time. I know prevention is key to quality of life and longevity, and I am always learning and willing to try new things.”



“ I was born and raised in Bramalea, Ontario – our family background is farming going back hundreds of years. My great aunt’s farm is now Pearson airport and my great grandfather’s farm is now Brampton golf course. My parents didn’t talk directly about health with my older brother Gord and me, but they made sure that we were always on the go. We were both five star Cubs, curling champs for our high school, we took riding lessons, swimming lessons, had our Bronze Crosses and we played hockey and baseball, and skied. Our pace was go go go!

So far I haven’t had any scary ‘aha’ moments around my health. As my grandfather would say “that’s because we are farmer stock!” He lived to 102 and he and I rode horses together up until he was 101. In terms of lifestyle, I don’t focus on trying to be healthy per se, I am more motivated by living well and having fun, which is my definition of true wealth. Living in New York, if I’m not sleeping properly, I have been known to throw a sweater over my jammies at 4 am, step into my bunny slippers, and hop on the 2 train to Katz’s Deli. It’s open 24/7 and there are plenty of interesting characters to chat with. As Gen Z is fond of saying “Do it for the plot!”

I walk all the time and enjoy taking different routes so I can discover new galleries or cafes...life is one big adventure. I love to work out at either Barry’s Bootcamp or Soul Cycle three times a week: it’s inspiring to hang out with sexy fit people in a vibrant community with tons of camaraderie. I use [MyFitnessPal](#) to track my weight – it connects to my Apple watch.

My healthiest habit is travel.

I did a one year exchange program at Örebro University, an international business school in Sweden, and now I have friends all over the world. Now my ‘go go go’ involves visiting friends in Greece, Türkiye, Sweden, Italy, Switzerland...you name it. This is a rather costly habit in that even though I stay with people half of the time I still spend between \$10-15,000 per month on travel.

My least healthy habit is drinking wine or gin and tonics. We don’t have to drive in New York City, so we have plenty of opportunities to drink more than a glass or two. We’ll sometimes have wine before, during and then after the opera, movies, even after playing tennis! Then continue the party at a few more fun places. Wine certainly adds to the communal vibe!”



“ I was born in a small town called Säfte in the western part of Sweden but I grew up in Stockholm and Linköping (a large university city.) My parents didn’t talk with me about health but maybe in our Swedish culture good health is the norm – people take their bikes everywhere. In school you have the opportunity to test out all sorts of types of physical exercise and I had a lot of fun playing squash. There are so many great squash players in Linköping that it is known as “Squash City.”

I realized that doing healthy things should start with doing what you like. I think about what is fun for me and what do I like to do? Growing up in the 1980s and 1990s I did aerobics classes. I loved the combination of movement and music: this gave me extra energy, and I still do it today. These days I have a gym membership at SATS which costs about 800 SEK (US\$80) per month. I make sure to go there three times a week to take an exercise class or to participate in padel lessons.

I think my healthiest habit is my consistency around fitness.

I use the [SATS](#) app for tips and tricks around extra stretching and in an attempt to become more mindful I have tried out the [CALM](#) app a few times for the three minute relaxation. A few of my friends have paid subscriptions to [Yogobe](#) and I’m considering this as well as I’d like to be more physically flexible.

My least healthy habit is eating kanelbullar (cinnamon buns.) They are quite irresistible to me. We serve fika at our office every Wednesday and every week I say to myself “don’t take one.” But...I love them!”



“ I was born in Hong Kong but only lived there for 10 months before moving to Kingham, a peaceful and secluded village in the Cotswolds. Health was certainly not a massive topic when I was growing up...although I do remember my parents saying something along the lines of “Eat your veggies.”

I really didn't take care of myself at all through my teens and early 20s. I did a lot of drugs and drinking resulting in a fair amount of damage. I was running myself into the ground – it was all about “more, more, more.” I worked with my friend Ben at a tech startup, and we were clocking 11 hours a day of screen time. I felt like I could never switch off and eventually I burned out. The positive of this was that I had a clear realization that I didn't like the life I had built, and I decided to transform it.

At age 25 I escaped to The Himalayas for a two week silent retreat in the mountains. I spent my time meditating, doing chores, and contemplating the meaning of life. I knew it was time for a major life rebrand! When I returned to the UK I felt completely reenergized and I immediately quit my job. Meanwhile, Ben was now up to 14 hours of screen time per day and when he saw how recharged I was he started to think about how we could get busy city people to have the same kind of retreat experience but without having to fly halfway around the world.

We quickly came up with the idea for Unplugged: we sell three day beautiful off-grid cabin retreats just outside of the city. As a goal, our company wants to help people actually change their behaviour. Putting your phone in a drawer for three days is a very freeing experience. Rather than “taking away” people's devices, we are looking to “add” to their lives.

I have learned that due to early trauma I had been suppressing my emotions – the idea being “I'm resilient and I'll be fine no matter what.” Although I had stopped drugs and drinking I hadn't yet addressed the primary cause of these behaviours. I am working hard investing in myself: somatic therapy costs £140 pounds per session, talk therapy costs £80 per session, my health supplements cost £200 pounds a month, and my gym membership is £80 per month.

My healthiest habit these days is digging up suppressed emotions and processing them.

Doing this type of work will allow me to be of the best service to the company and enable positive change in the world. My least healthy habit is self-obsession. I think a great “health hack” is to develop your concept of God (aka a higher power) and foster the ability to surrender. All the best things in life are free and simple. I'm a big believer in simplicity.”

*Healthy citizens
are the greatest asset
any country can have.*

– SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL,
FORMER UK PRIME MINISTER





“ I was born and raised in Mauritius and moved to Toronto in June 2025. I’m the eldest of three brothers and although we are a fourth generation family in the agricultural business, our parents gave us the freedom to choose our own path. Growing up, exercise was never the topic, but my mom (like any mom) would tell us to “Eat!” Two situations made me more health conscious. First, in my late 20s my dad was diagnosed with hypertension and then my mother received the same diagnosis. I told them maybe it was the way we were eating? When I started working, I weighed 90 kilos, but I now weigh 20 kilos less, thanks to running and eating less junk.

Second, when I was 35, I saw a father playing with his kid in the school playground and he could barely keep up with the kid. From that day I said, “that won’t be me.” I knew one day my wife and I would want a family of our own. Out of the blue, I signed up for a trail run along with a thousand other people. I struggled but I was hooked. From there I always kept asking myself “Can I do more?” I started with 10 km runs and last year I did a 65 km ultra marathon in Mauritius.

Running is starting to cost me money in that I change my shoes every 600 kms and stock up on protein based products – energy gels to meat. I use my Coros watch to log my miles and pace: every time I run I learn more about my body. I also use a free app called [Strava](#) to connect with other runners.

My healthiest habit is discipline.

For anything you want you need to prepare for it. When I was planning to move to Toronto, I visualized the area I wanted to live in – one with parks and easy access to downtown. Everything I am now is about the routine I put in place to get here.

Some of my friends suggested meditation as a way to alleviate the stress of being in the investment business. But then I started to observe what happens when I run. Over the past three years I’ve averaged two hours per run and 20-30 minutes in I am not thinking about anything. I am cut off from all of my thoughts! I’ve realized that before the run everything is stored...stuff to do with my kids, trade ideas or articles I want to write. It is unplanned, but post run I get ideas for whatever had been on my mind before I started the run. Running doesn’t just keep me healthy – it declutters my mind. When you give yourself space, even in motion, the answers start to show up.

My least healthy habit is pizza! When I was living in Mauritius, I would eat two or three per week. One day I bought a large pizza that I was supposed to bring home and share. Somehow, I ended up eating it all on the way home so I had to go out and buy another one! For the record, my go-to is Hawaiian. Yes, pineapple belongs on pizza. And no, I don’t debate it – I train for ultra-marathons, not food fights.”

**CECILIE WANNED
CHRISTENSEN**

Associate, CFO Service, PwC
Copenhagen, Denmark



“ I was born and raised in the northern part of Denmark, surrounded by forest and open spaces. Life was unhurried: we had time to notice the small and beautiful details in nature. My family had a summer house along the coastline, and my father would encourage my little sister and me to “get out in the fresh air.” He would say, “*If you have dirt under your nails when you arrive home, I’ll know you had a fun time.*”

When I moved to Copenhagen at 19 for my studies, it was a shock to my system. The pace of life shifted radically: now I had to share open spaces with half a million other citizens in Kongens Have (the only open garden in the city centre). Also, CBS (Copenhagen Business School) was a very demanding school, and I had not yet learned the important skill of setting boundaries. I felt firsthand the impact on my body of not taking breaks.

Fortunately, my first job in finance was with a company that prioritized the health of its employees: they would actually put time in our schedules to take breaks. I began to notice that even a five-minute walk around the building could release my stress levels. Taking small breaks throughout the day gave me more energy, greater capacity to focus, and better sleep. Most importantly, it allowed me to bring my best self to others - showing up as a more present, supportive colleague.

I have continued this habit of taking small breaks throughout the day, and I will say that it is indeed my healthiest one.

Today, I’m with PwC, where health is again a big priority, and I feel grateful to have found this twice in my career. Taking a walk costs nothing, and for me it is the best practice of all: taking time to listen to yourself and check in with your mental health. I don’t use health apps - I prefer to live in the moment, to simply notice how my body and mind respond.

One of my quirkiest healthy habits is *saunagus*, a Danish guided sauna ritual that typically includes three rounds of extreme heat followed by a dip in an ice-cold bath - all enhanced by music and breathwork. I try to do this every Sunday to recharge for the coming week. You sleep so well afterwards! It is a bit of a pricey habit in that one session costs 250-300 Danish krona (US\$40-50), but to me it is worth it for the powerful experience.

My least healthy habit is coffee: I average five mugs with milk per day and probably rely a bit too heavily on caffeine! I know it provides only a temporary boost, whereas true energy comes from restorative rituals and habits.

At the end of the day, health is about striving to live with balance, so I can contribute meaningfully and, most importantly, bring my best self to others. I believe that small, consistent habits create the foundation for growth both personally and professionally.”



“ I was born in the township of Howick located southwest of Montreal near the US border. As a farming family we all worked hard, we ate a lot and the idea of being “in shape” was more in the context of how heavy a bale of hay can you lift? Being strong was a rite of passage for me. This wasn’t so much about health, it was more about what your capabilities were.

My mother would cut her bread slices in half to reduce calories: she was a victim of the era of Weight Watchers and yoyo dieting. I was kind of chunky as a kid but luckily when I was 13 I got my first dumbbell set for Christmas. I grew up on a diet of action heroes! From age 14 I started competing in sports such as football, basketball, track & field and triathlons and I wanted to be as healthy as possible so I could do all of the activities that I wanted to do.

I’ve been on the journey of all the food extremes...I’ve tried everything from the bean diet to vegetarianism to a carnivore style of eating.

Today my healthiest habit is good nutrition tied to performance.

I eat in a very disciplined way to fuel my body, optimize my digestion and help me sleep. My diet includes healthy fats like avocados, nuts and olives as well as carbs such as yams, potatoes and rice. I eat a moderate amount of fruit and veggies, some organ meats, minimal sugar and no processed or refined foods. I regularly eat red meat, and all of my chicken and pork are fed no corn or soy.

My relationship with food has evolved to a point where I’m a bit more relaxed – these days I think it is fine to have pasta once a week or the odd glass of wine. But I continue to believe that healthy food is the most powerful drug we have. Spending on high quality food such as grass fed meat is a priority: there are no limits budget wise. Some other of my healthy investments include an infrared sauna and resistance training (we built a gym in our home during Covid.)

I’m not addicted to apps: I think you can over index on them and lose connection with how you feel. Having said that, I do use a [Polar Heart Rate](#) monitor for cardio, work with a VO2 training coach and all the tech to support it, and I now have 1,600 nights of data on my [Sleep Cycle](#) alarm clock. I also wear a patch for continuous glucose monitoring twice per year for 10 days at a stretch.

My least healthy habit is ruminating. I do it far less than I used to but it is still a thing for me. Just the other day my team had a business loss, and I woke up at 4 am fretting about it. Will ruminating like this actually help anything? My wise grandmother used to say “You can’t build a barn at night!”



“ I have lived in four different cities in Türkiye: I was born in Adana and lived there until I was 14 years old, then I went to boarding school in Niğde for three years, then university in Ankara. After doing my masters in Milan, I moved to Istanbul in 2010 for my career and lived there until my recent move to the US in 2025.

Although both of my parents were doctors, they didn't really train my younger brother and I in health matters – in those days no one paid much attention to proper nutrition. We loved to eat chips and chocolate! And my father smoked a lot. I started to pay attention to my health when I got to university – I found myself binge eating due to stress around exam time. And as students we would do the usual things like go out drinking and enjoy crazed weekends, so this made it harder to prioritize proper nutrition. I gained weight and this negatively affected my mental health. I decided at that time to become more conscious around my eating patterns.

My eating habits improved a lot when I started working because then I had more of a foundation: I could design my own food schedule, and I worked with a personal trainer for a while to help me create personalized workout routines.

My healthiest habit is that I always find a way to embed some type of workout into my day no matter what I'm doing.

I make sure to stay flexible – sometimes it is weight training, maybe a run in Central Park (if it isn't too humid), and I joined Equinox so that I have access to a wide variety of fitness classes.

Even with my corporate discount the gym membership is quite pricy at \$270 per month but it is definitely worth it. I will always find a way to move my body! When I was in Türkiye I was able to do morning workouts and I paid for [Ulive](#) – an app for home cycling and routines. Now in New York I have access to the [Equinox](#) app.

My least healthy habit is that I am an emotional eater. In general, I have an “all or nothing” approach. If I'm in a healthy frame of mind I do my workouts, I eat high quality food, and I do less socializing. But if I'm super stressed after a long day I'll start eating too much and maybe open a bottle of wine and finish it. This all or nothing approach isn't really sustainable so I should try and get to the root of why I behave this way. But I guess none of us are perfect!”



“ I was born in Orlando, Florida. When I was two years old my parents divorced and my older brother and I moved to Oklahoma to live with our mom. Six years later he and I went back to Orlando to live with our dad. At age 20 I moved to Oklahoma again for college, then after college I moved to Thailand at age 25.

I was little chunky growing up – I spent too much time indoors playing video games. My dad strongly suggested that I go outside and exercise more. I also had some rather unhealthy eating habits. In particular, for years I would drink two litres of Dr Pepper every single day! At 14 I consciously told myself that I can’t keep doing that...and weirdly it was such an engrained habit that even after I stopped drinking it I was still buying it for a while (without realizing I was doing this) when I went to the grocery store.

Obviously I had a sugar addiction, and it took me several tries to quit. At 15 after I had successfully stopped for a few days my brother confronted me and said “You drink soda all of the time.” I said “No! I don’t do that anymore.” And that was finally the end of the habit. I’m nearly 32 now and I have had almost no soda since then. I’m relatively healthy these days – I built a gym in my house and I weight train five or six days a week. I also drink two gallons of water daily. For my entire life I’ve been prone to getting headaches more than most people and I have found that if I drink this much water I don’t ever get a headache.

My heathiest habit is regular exercise.

I incurred a one time cost of \$2,000 to build my gym and it is perfect because an unexpected benefit is that I can go back and forth between my computer and the gym. I work all day long and I workout all day long! I used MyFitnessPal for a couple of months but at this point I know intuitively how many calories I’ve consumed. The only Health Tech app I use is my [Casio](#) watch to track my steps.

My least healthy habit is that I go through periods of overeating. I got it into my head that if you are lifting weights there are two possible states: you are either under eating and losing fat and muscle, or you are over eating and building fat and muscle. I’m getting married soon and in an effort to look my best for the occasion I’ve recently figured out that eating lots of protein (150 grams per day) and just one small serving of carbs is the ideal solution. I am actually putting on muscle and losing fat at the same time!”



“ I was born in Montreal and have lived here for most of my life. My parents split up when I was just a year old and I have a half brother and two half sisters from my father’s different marriages. Although I stayed in touch with my father over the years it was my mother who raised me. Mom was forward thinking and super mindful about health. She didn’t ever smoke or drink and as a baby I never ate store bought baby food...only homemade purée. I was not allowed to have sugar until I reached a certain age.

Health was always in the back of my mind because of my upbringing and also the fact that my dad had numerous health challenges. He was diabetic, had heart surgery at age 45, never worked afterward and eventually died of colon cancer at age 67. I was pretty sure I had bad genes, so I decided to help my odds by doing some research. When I was 39 I watched a documentary about the benefits of a whole food plant-based diet, and I decided at that time to go vegan. Exercise came a bit later in my life but now I do yoga nearly every day, I do strength training a few times a week and I walk a lot.

I would say my healthiest habit is eating a plant-rich diet with fresh organic food.

I see this as an investment! I know that an omnivore diet probably costs even more but when I look in my refrigerator I realize I am a privileged person with all my colorful and sometimes expensive fresh food. I have the responsibility to lead some intense work projects and I feel that my way of eating gives me the energy I need to thrive.

I’m quite a big fan of Health Tech: I love my [Garmin](#) watch for monitoring sleep and steps; I use [Cronometer](#) to help me hit my nutrition targets; I’ve started using a new app called [Coral](#) to manage menopause symptoms; I like the German yoga/dance app [Inside Online](#) for my daily workout; and my favorite plant-based recipes are found on [fivsec health](#).

My least healthy habit is that I’m addicted to stress. I kind of like being under tons of stress until I don’t like it anymore. In 2016 I worked way too much and started to feel very unwell. I moved to Costa Rica for a year with my husband and two sons to try and rebalance my life. Two weeks into the move I became physically ill - my body just broke down. I had all kinds of tests and scans and finally the cause was determined to be the aftermath of severe stress and anxiety. I now do my best to be super careful and listen to my body before it gets to that point.”



“ I was born in Turin (Italians call it Torino), a city in the northwest of Italy not far from the border with France. My roots have kept me here. Growing up my parents encouraged me to engage in sports and in summer we would swim together. In the early 70s due to the petrol shortage, it was forbidden to drive your car on certain Sundays, so this was a good occasion for bicycles. I have fond memories of being seven years old biking with my parents along our city’s beautiful big boulevards.

Part of our standard education in Turin is Roman Catholicism: it isn’t really a choice. You go through the Order of Sacraments and by age 12 you must make your own decision as to whether or not you want to continue the faith. I made the decision to continue, and I feel strongly that this is one of the biggest supports in my life. From a health perspective, Catholicism teaches us that “The body is the temple of the soul” so therefore we must treat and respect the soul. I can’t wait to see the afterlife but ... no hurries!

When I was young, as with most Italian men, I smoked 10-20 cigarettes daily. But when I started working for an American company they had a no smoking policy. I knew that this wasn’t an intelligent habit and it was also a costly one: I was spending around €1,000 yearly on cigarettes. By quitting I would smell better, I wouldn’t have to interrupt meetings to take smoke breaks, and I wouldn’t have to invest in incidentals such as perfume for the house. Not to mention ash burns can damage your car seat...fire is dangerous!

My healthiest habit is not smoking.

I don’t use any Health Tech apps – I practice traditional games and exercises at a very old gym association in Turin. For me this offers more discipline than an app and I can take classes at 8:30 pm so it doesn’t interfere with my professional life. I attend two different types of training: military (lots of push ups) and functional (more stretching.) It is fun to exercise with companions of all ages and we are all in good spirits. I like both of my teachers, since neither of them is extreme, and the focus is on making sure we have a decent level of fitness.

My least healthy habit is chocolate. We have an expression “Nutella on bread slices is the best remedy against depression.” My favorite chocolate is Gianduja for which Turin is famous. I used to bring it to my business meetings and tell people not to eat it until I give them the signal. If a software demo was stalled or if my colleagues seemed tired I would instruct everyone to eat some chocolate! This strategy worked so well that it unleashed a bit of a problem. If on any day I didn’t have the chocolate with me people were disappointed. I had created a hard to meet expectation.”



“ I was born in Worcester, Massachusetts. My parents lived in Albania during the Communist regime, so they were heavily influenced by food scarcity. They immigrated to the US in the late 1990s and I was born in 2006. I didn’t grow up with the idea of choosing to eat food that was ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ – it was more like ‘eat anything!’ My parents focused on feeding my younger brother and me what we needed.

I was kind of chubby when I was younger, probably because I was eating just about anything. I started to become conscious of my health just before the Covid era when my mom, brother and I went to Greece for the summer. In Athens we would go to the farmer’s market every Saturday and buy fresh eggs, milk and lots of produce. Meat was too expensive, so we ate a lot of fish. This diet suited me well and I soon began to feel much more energetic!

The second realization I had was more around my mental health. I worked extremely hard attempting to get into college and after I finally got accepted...I crashed. I had bad anxiety and chest tightness to the point where I had to see a cardiologist. After being prescribed medication to alleviate my symptoms I decided I had better incorporate healthy habits into my lifestyle now!

I do my best to spend 30 minutes on the treadmill every day and after every meal I try to walk around for 10 minutes or so.

But my healthiest habit is that I sleep as much as I can.

In high school I would stay up very late if I had to finish an assignment but now I have different priorities. I realize that if I stay up until 3 am studying I probably won’t retain anything so instead I’ll wing it the next day if necessary. I make sure to sleep 6-8 hours every single night and I also nap if needed.

I can easily rationalize sleeping properly as time well spent. I see a theoretical financial connection: if I can’t sleep properly and I’m not able to do the best I possibly can in my class then I won’t be able to get a great job! Also I will have wasted my parent’s money. The only app I use is my iPhone which acts as a sleep tracker and an alarm to get me up in time for class.

My school only caters to 2,500 students and there aren’t many nutritious food options either onsite or nearby. Their salads are horrific: the high fat dressing is worse for you than Ranch dressing! You are better off eating the lettuce raw. My school heavily advertises that they have ‘their own pizza oven’ and my least healthy habit is eating too much pizza because it is available.”



“ I was born in an area of Northeastern Italy that was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the 20th century. My great-aunt lived until she was almost 104. She was born Austro-Hungarian but died Italian. She never moved, but the border did!

My family feared illness. Their common belief was that a pill could fix everyday issues like colds or flu. My parents’ attitude was more about avoiding sickness than promoting well-being, reflecting the local culture and, more broadly, the era I grew up in.

When I was young, I was thin: my friends used to tell me “Careful...you might fly away!” Since I wore glasses, I couldn’t play contact sports. I also did not like group classes. I did body training, played tennis, and skied. Once, I had a mild but persistent fever, and my parents were deeply worried. After numerous tests, the doctors recommended spending a few weeks in the mountains.

I am somewhat of a workaholic. When I moved to Milan, I determined that I needed two activities to survive the city’s financial industry’s work style: swimming and Latin American dancing – which helped me meet my now-wife. Neither of these evolved from learning to developing healthy sport habits, as I had to prioritize work and professional education. Over the years, life got in the way, and I became even less consistent about exercise – this led to a drop in my energy levels. About a year and a half ago, I decided to revisit my strategy of swimming, and now I go to the pool religiously every other day. I feel reborn! It’s also very inexpensive. As a CFA Charterholder, I love getting more for less.

Swimming is my healthiest habit: I swim, strengthen my body, and wash away my thoughts.

It’s become a necessary condition for productive workdays. When I revisited my approach on swimming and cardio, I decided to add less cardio-intensive activities such as golf and ballroom dancing, which can help me maintain a healthy social life as I age, as well as a healthy body.

As a tech investor and appraiser, I follow health tech apps, but I am skeptical about their benefits. I don’t use a smartwatch because it is still complicated – you need to charge it, and where is the data going? I also think we are getting a bit enslaved by these apps. How we actually feel is much more important!

My least healthy habit is that I work from day to night, so I need a snack before bed. About an hour before sleep, I eat something like a yogurt and maple syrup or cheese and crackers, then go to bed. I can’t avoid a glycemic peak. I’ve tried to change this routine, but I haven’t succeeded. I always seem to fall back into this unhealthy habit.”



“ I was born in Essex in England, but my family moved to Ottawa when I was six, where my father worked in the Defense Department of the federal government. My parents were not obsessive with matters of health. My dad liked to do some walking, but my mom didn’t really exercise, and she was on the heavy side. Mom had a chronic condition called Sjogren’s Syndrome which I didn’t know as a kid. As a result, she had a lot of aches and pains, dry eyes, and she sometimes wore a cervical collar for her sore neck. What I experienced as “complaining” made me go the other way: As an example, my kids would say I never paid enough attention to my kids’ legitimate complaints!

When I was around 15-16 and in high school I first started becoming aware of my health. My brother Damian was super fit and a marathon runner (I baked him “marathon muffins”) and this inspired me to start running casually. A couple of years later I spent the summer with my other brother Vincent in the UK and I put on about 15 pounds. When I came home Damian said, “Oh my God...what happened to you?” This was the start of a rather unhealthy relationship with my body: I felt like I was always battling my weight. Fortunately, I got out of that phase when I met my first husband at age 21, since he helped me to shift my focus away from my weight and instead I began to focus on self-acceptance and proper self-care.

My healthiest habit is that I eat super fresh, homemade, and healthy food.

My only food rule today is that I cook everything from scratch! I have pretty good adherence to exercise such as Pilates and walking (I check my steps every day using my iPhone app), but my constant is eating well. I’ll often combine three recipes at the same time and use my intuition to decide on what to select from each to concoct something fabulous. I particularly love making sourdough bread, granola or pasta. My favorite dish is orecchiette with rapini and fennel sausage in homemade chicken stock.

To me, eating well is a big part of being fiscally responsible. I never compromise on the quality of my groceries – I only buy the best meat and fish. If I compare this to the alternative of eating out, my groceries are a savings! My least healthy habit is that I drink a couple of glasses of wine each night and more on weekends. Being in a happy relationship is conducive to sharing this lovely way of relaxing. I really love wine!”

HEALTH TECH IN 2025: STRONG, BUT WITH AN AI ANGLE

At the end of Q3 2025, US-based health tech venture capital funding was US\$12.2B, and year to date was above 2023 and 2024 levels. Depending on how Q4 turns out, VC funding is likely to surpass 2020 levels. The sector received record but unsustainable amounts during the pandemic, for obvious reasons. In Q3, although there were no IPOs, there were 42 smaller exits, an encouraging sign.

As is the case across most classes of VC investing, AI is dominating the funding landscape. According to Pitchbook, as of Q3, AI themed investments were US\$193B year to date, making up over half (53%) of all VC deals globally and 63% of deals in the US.

The AI trend is true in health tech as well, with AI themed companies closing many of the larger financings. Interestingly, these are relatively practical solutions (writing code, clinical documentation, etc.) rather than on “potentially more revolutionary technologies—such as patient-facing agentic AI and platforms for early prediction of major health events like heart failure, sepsis, and seizures – [which] have a way to go before widespread commercialization.”

We don't have fem tech/women's health tech data for 2025 yet, but it was strong in 2024, at US\$2.6B globally, up over US\$1B from 2023 levels. Further, it is growing faster than overall health: up 3.2x since 2019 compared to 1.6x for all healthcare. It is estimated that the revenues of femtech are over \$50B annually, with almost 40% of that accounted for by the Pregnancy & nursing, and Reproductive health & contraception subsectors. As an example of the latter, the top three period trackers have over 250 million downloads.

HEALTH TECH FUNDING EDGES PAST 2024 TOTAL

Venture capital deal value, 2015 - YTD 2025

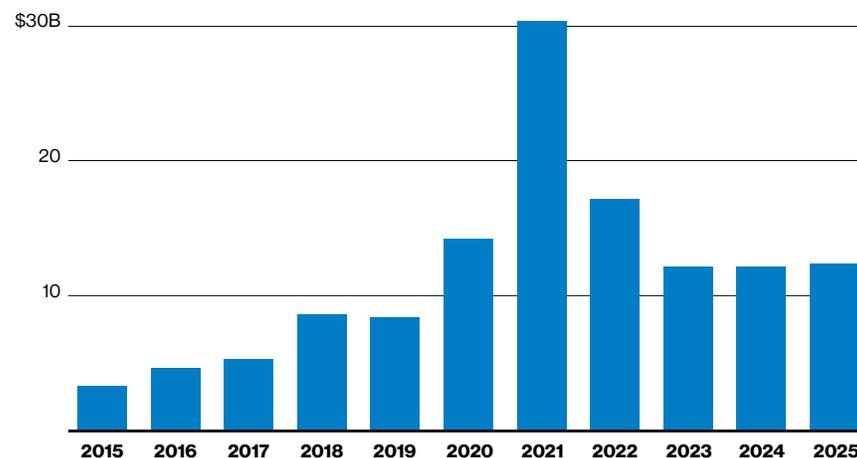


Chart Source: PitchBook • Get the data

METHODOLOGY

Throughout 2025, the author conducted 50 interviews with smart men and women around the world. Interviewees varied by age, cultural background, profession and geographic location.

The selection criteria for this research are not scientific but are more based on serendipity in how the introductions come about.

Two central questions were asked: What's your healthiest habit? How much do you spend on this habit?

Follow-on questions included: What triggered your first real awareness of the importance of health? Do you use Health Tech apps? What's your least healthy habit?

The author wrote up an edited summary of the conversation with each person interviewed and received approval to publish those summaries. Research findings are based on the 50 qualitative interviews.

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