



# LET'S HUDDLE!

## EMBRACING THE VIBRANCY OF WELL-BEING

### *What Shade of Pink Are You?*

*Written by Kylie Alger*

One summer, our family enjoyed a fun vacation in Wisconsin. While on vacation, we went to the zoo and saw many incredible animals — including flamingos! It's always fun to see animals up close when we usually only see them in books or movies. I guess that's why I was **surprised** when I noticed how many different colors the flamingos were. *"Huh, I thought flamingos were always pink ... but the color of these birds ranged from light pink (almost white) to dark pink."*

There was an informational plaque near the flamingos that explained the different varieties of pink hues. The plaque read, *"Adult flamingos range in color based on their diet and overall health; the healthier the flamingo is, the more vibrant pink their feathers will be."*

I learned that flamingos are naturally *white* and it's their diet containing healthy carotenoids (brine shrimp and algae) that turns them pink. **Wow.** I guess the expression, *"you are what you eat"* is absolutely true for flamingos! To maintain their pink hue, flamingos also need plenty of sleep.

We also learned that both flamingo parents feed their young, and that during this labor intensive time, their feathers often turn pale pink, or even white. As humans, we don't have feathers that reflect our overall stress and present level of health, so it's **imperative** that we become aware of the stressors that impact our ability to care for ourselves and our patients.



As my three-year-old daughter, Mikki, excitedly shouted her favorite color, “*Pink! Pink!*” pointing to the flamingos, I began to wonder, “*If I was a flamingo, what shade of pink would I be based on my current health habits?*” To be healthy, flamingos need good rest and healthy food to retain a vibrant color; but what do *humans* need to obtain abundant health and well-being? In addition to rest and nourishment, we also need to pay attention to the health of our mind and our spirit. Again I asked myself, “*Do my daily habits support a vibrant pink color?*”

Deepak Chopra, M.D., best-selling author, teacher and co-founder of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing, reports, “*There are five simple things individuals can do to live healthier lives.*”

### FIVE SIMPLE THINGS INDIVIDUALS CAN DO TO LIVE HEALTHIER LIVES.

1. **Sleep:** Get enough sleep (7-8 hours)
2. **Meditate:** Daily meditation/prayer/connection with one’s higher power
3. **Exercise:** Exercise (every little bit helps)
4. **Nourish:** Nourish your body with healthy food and drink
5. **Control:** Control emotions, especially anger

“*That’s it. It’s not really rocket science,*” says Chopra. Observing these five health practices will help you become the **healthiest** version of yourself.

Flamingos are beautiful, unique birds that symbolize beauty, balance, grace, and confidence. It’s also true that the pinker (healthier) a flamingo is, the more desirable they are as a mate. This fact resonates as truth for humans as well; we are more likely to attract and enjoy positive relationships and outcomes ... when we are living our *healthiest and most vibrant* life.

ASK YOURSELF...

*what shade  
of pink am I?*





# REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**1. If you were a flamingo, what color would you currently be?**



White



Medium Pink



Pale Pink



Bright Pink

**2. What one health habit will you focus on to become a happier and healthier version of yourself?**



Get enough sleep



Nourish my body with healthy food and drink



Daily meditation/prayer/  
connection with higher power



Control my emotions,  
especially anger



Exercise

**3. What's one small action step you can take in the direction of your goal?**

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**4. If you were living life as a “bright pink flamingo” what would that look like? Would you be doing anything differently than you are now?**

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# FLAMINGO COLORING ACTIVITY

Color the Left Flamingo with a color that represents how you currently perceive your health and well-being. Color the Right Flamingo with a color that embodies the level of well-being you aspire to achieve. Consider this an expression of your intention to be the healthiest person and physician you can be. Remember, the healthier the flamingo, the more vibrant its pink color!

We hope this activity adds a touch of relaxation and creativity to your day. Some colleagues have highlighted certain parts of their flamingo darker to represent a healthier mind, a healthier heart or to represent a healthy relationship. Be creative and have **FUN!**



*A participant shares their finished coloring page*



I remember talking through the idea of having my physician colleagues sit and color during one of our huddle meetings. I knew there would probably be push back, and I wasn't wrong. When I pulled out the crayons and flamingo coloring pages, there were groans, eye rolls and even laughter from my peers. After a little encouragement, people began coloring and even shared their drawings. It was neat to see the variety of different colors used to portray the vibrancy my colleagues felt in the different areas of their lives. Some of the flamingos were gray in areas, but bright pink in others... as thoughts and feelings were shared about areas where individuals felt they were doing really well and other areas where they felt they were lacking.

I like to think that if I were a flamingo at a zoo, that I would have vibrant pink feathers and all my other flamingo friends would also be bright and colorful. Visitors would want to know how/why our colors were so bright... and it would be because we looked out and cared for one another.

I believe this same hope can be achieved in healthcare, if we huddle together as a team and support and care for each other. Even though there will be times when our color may be dull or muted (after an unexpected outcome, patient death, or a difficult patient interaction or disagreement with a colleague), we can remember that by taking care of ourselves, connecting with and getting help/support from those around us, we can once again achieve our bright pink hue.



