

Ready, Set, GO!!!!

Guidelines to Starting Your Journey Towards Healthier Living

You have made the decision to begin a healthy lifestyle of eating properly and exercising regularly, but where do you begin, as it all seems so overwhelming. Read on to hear my tips on helping you to begin this new, amazing journey.

You are being inundated by the TV and Internet on different types of diets, exercises, weight loss pills, etc. But the truth is it doesn't need to be overly complex, however you do need to want it. Really, really want it. You need to want to feel more energetic, less bloated, more confident, maybe fit back into a great pair of jeans you used to wear, or run after your little kids or grandkids without losing your breath. All these amazing things come with being healthier.



This is where you can start. Begin by asking yourself these two questions:

1. Do I really want to feel healthier and more confident?
2. Am I worth it, do I deserve to feel great?

I really hope your answer to both those questions is a loud resounding YES! If so read on, if not re-evaluate why your answer is no and work towards turning it into a YES and then read on!

Beginning Your Exercise Journey

Let's start by incorporating exercise into your life if you aren't already doing so.

Figure out what times of day are best for you to exercise so that it doesn't cause you stress, and so that you aren't likely to skip out on it.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Waking up 30 minutes before the rest of the family and getting it done before your busy day begins, during your lunch hour at work, after dropping the kids off at school if you work from home or are a stay at home mom or dad, maybe after work before you get home or after you put the kids to bed.

In my opinion and what I have seen works out best, is waking up a little earlier than everyone else in your family and getting that workout in. If you absolutely cannot move your butt to do much of anything in the morning then getting in a lunch workout is great too. If you have a busy family life often leaving it until after work is difficult as the demands of coming home may get in the way and it's all too easy to forego. Working out at night after the kids are in bed is fine if you are a night owl but beware, this may cause you to have issues falling asleep due to the adrenaline pumping through you. Mind you, you could always put that adrenaline to good use with your partner more exercise!

2. Next, figure out what type of workout you want to do. Will it be walking outside or on the treadmill for half hour, or lifting weights, maybe you want to do an exercise video, or maybe see a personal trainer or take a fitness class (I know some fabulous trainers and great classes :) Whatever you do, try your best to get in a variety of exercises at least 4 – 5 times per week for at least 30 minutes each time.

3. Try to find what motivates you to workout. Perhaps you need a workout partner, a friend, spouse, or co-worker. Having a partner helps to keep you committed as you have someone that is holding you accountable and relying on you to get their own butt out. Working with a good personal trainer (I know a few hehe!) who you have a set time to see a couple times per week, will make you less likely to cancel. A good personal trainer will help to motivate you and guide you through a safe and effective workout and ensure you are getting the most benefits from your program. Maybe sign up for a class that you love. Or do all of the above!



Now that you are on a good exercise regime, let's get this eating stuff going in the right direction.

New Way of Eating – 80/20 Rule

Some people use the word 'diet' to describe a way of eating but I don't. I call it lifestyle however we will use the word 'diet' for simplicity sake, but let this be known, I am not an advocate of 'diets'. You know those diets that say you will lose twenty pounds in twenty days, those diets that are nicknamed crash diets. This is not that, this is a complete lifestyle change. This is living by the 80/20 rule of eating really great and healthy 80% of the time and eating some not so great cheat stuff 20% of the time; however if losing a lot of weight is your thing at first, then maybe 10% of the time is your cheat allowance for the first few months. This 'diet' is about adopting this as your life, so that you don't just feel good for a couple of months but that you feel great and possibly prevent disease and illness and look ten years younger than what you are, for the rest of your life.

This would be so much easier if I had my meal plan package ready to direct you to but it's still in the works. The 14-day Meal Plan that I have been working on should be taken as a lifestyle change and not a quick fix and it will be geared towards weight loss if that is what our body needs, or maintenance and general healthiness if that is what you need, or to help digestive issues if that is your issue. It is pretty much what I follow on a daily basis BUT it's not complete yet...soon I promise!

Recommendations for a Healthier Lifestyle of Eating

Many of us know what we should or shouldn't be eating but sometimes we just need to be told again or need some clarification, so here it goes.

1. **Eliminate** white bread, sugary treats like cookies, cake, doughnuts, candy and pop. Remove salty snacks like chips and those damn addictive salted peanuts that are so good but make you so thirsty that you reach for a pop! Avoid frozen dinners or pre-packaged quick and easy foods like those noodles in a cup, or any thing in a package that has so many ingredients that you have to stop reading after the first few because your getting bored or worse yet, have no clue what they mean!

2. **Stick to whole foods.** Whole foods are fresh vegetables and fruit, in season are best, especially if you can buy from a local farm or market. Lean meats, nuts and seeds, eggs, organic dairy products, and whole grains. Try to avoid starchy carbohydrates at dinner, such as potatoes, rice and pasta, especially if weight loss is your goal. If night snacking is a must then try to limit yourself to veggies sticks and homemade hummus or a bowl of grapes or cherries, and a cup of herbal tea. I believe night snacking is done out of habit, or boredom and can be avoided. Going to bed earlier will not only be beneficial because you are getting more sleep (which is another important factor of a healthy lifestyle) but will also prevent too much snacking at night.



3. **Plan and Prep** - I think this is key. Plan what your meals for the week are going to be. Make yourself a meal plan on the weekend (if my meal plan was ready you can just follow it! Soon I promise!) When you go to the grocery store you know exactly what you need to buy (my meal plan package will include a grocery list for each week too!) Once all food is purchased, prep what you need for the week, especially for lunches and snacks, as these are usually the meals that are eaten out of the home.

Here are some examples:

- Cut your veggies up and store them in a container so that in the morning you can just grab a handful for your snacks or add them to your salad for lunch.
- Wash your fruit and store them in a container to grab n'go.
- Bake several breasts of chicken and store them in containers. You can add these to your salads or wraps for lunch.
- Boil several eggs, keep them in the shell and place them in a bowl in your fridge. These can be used for breakfast or lunch.
- When shopping for your dinners, buy and then make extra protein so that you can eat leftovers for lunch the following day.
- If you get home late at night and find it hard to throw together a healthy meal in time to feed the family and get the kids to bed at a decent time then do a slow cooker meal. Most of us have one of these handy machines and all it does is take up storage space in our cupboard, but I am telling you, if you can get into the habit of doing a couple meals per week in it, you will see how much easier it makes your life and how really yummy the meals are that come from them. It takes 10-15 minutes to prep most slow cooker meals in the morning or at night, then put that slow cooker on so that when you arrive home from work, voila, meal is ready! There are so many healthy slow cooker recipes, and I have included some in my meal plan

4. Keep a Food Journal

I cannot say enough about keeping a food journal. A food journal works in several ways to keep us on track. If you can commit to writing down EVERYTHING you eat and drink then a food journal is one of your most helpful tools.

Here are a few reasons as to why a food journal is so helpful:

- A food journal holds you accountable. Writing down what you are eating helps you to be more aware of what you are actually popping into your mouth on a daily basis. The leftovers from your child's breakfast, the broken cookies at the bottom of the bag, the few M&Ms you took from your co-worker...all of this adds up! If you wrote down every single item that went into your mouth you will be able to

see where you are going off track and consuming a few hundred extra unnecessary calories. By being aware of this, it may help you to not eat those extra little things and in turn you will reduce your caloric intake for the day, which can help you to lose weight.

- Your food journal will show you what you need to eat. We go through each day pretty routinely and eat a lot of the same things most times. You can sit down with your journal and check to see if you are actually consuming enough vegetables and fruit and including a variety of different kinds. You can see if you are drinking enough water and eating enough food to maintain blood sugar so to not feel cranky, tired or unclear.
- A food journal will help you to track down foods that may be triggering symptoms in your body such as bloating, gas, abdominal pain, acid reflux, rashes etc. By writing down when these things happen may help you to pinpoint which foods may be related to these symptoms.



Allow yourself a cheat meal each week. Some people take this a little too far and have a cheat day. If your goal is weight loss, ONE cheat meal a week is okay and if you are maintaining, follow the 80/20 Rule. If you do end up having a few more cheats than what you think you should have, don't beat yourself up about it, just promise to do better the next day.

Remember, if weight loss is your goal, it really comes down to this – calories in vs. calories out. You do not need to be calorie counting everything you eat. In my opinion that just creates frustration and confusion and really, the calories on the labels of food and the calories that your treadmill says you burn may not be completely accurate for your body. (Watch out for my next article on calorie counting).

I hope this article provides you with enough tips on how to begin that new healthy lifestyle! Good luck!

Always consult your doctor or physician prior to starting a new exercise program or diet.

The information provided is for educational purposes only and not intended to diagnose or treat disease. All information is based on my research, experience and opinion.