



What the Health!

Creating a healthy lifestyle – instead of simply focusing on weight loss – is the key to uplifting both your health and happiness. Here are five steps to try.

1. Look at lifestyle patterns

Many of us have unknowingly lived an unhealthy life for a very long time. We have simply lived how those around us live. But this means that often, we have jumped from one crash diet to a quick energy fix to another cleanse... and the cycle continues. Essentially, it has probably been a frustrating "yo-yo" type of lifestyle so far. But the key to overall health is to understand that weight loss and a healthy lifestyle are two very different things. Instead of swapping from unhealthy eating habits to quick-fix methods, you should rather change to sustainable, realistic, long-term efforts.

2. Think 'healthy' over thin (and everything else)

When you think about a topic such as 'health', there are many different facets to consider: cholesterol level, blood sugar level, mental stability and general wellbeing. Although many people focus on reducing their body fat to a certain level, this might not eradicate other health issues. There are many slim people with sky high sugar levels or really bad cholesterol. Instead of obsessing about being 'thin' and simply putting your body through the latest fad diet, it's important to think of your body as a system and take care of it as a whole. This means understanding that if one area of your body is performing sub optimally, it might have a domino effect on other areas of your body too.

3. Renew your mind

Another very important aspect of health, which is often overlooked or forgotten about, is mental health. Mental health (as described by the World Health Organization) is "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and can contribute to his or her community". Although there is benefit to knowledge that you gain at work and school, it's important to spend time every week learning lessons from other areas. Listen to an audio book, see an inspiring movie, spend time on your passion project or visit an upcoming exhibition. Basically, celebrate the human spirit and you might find that you renew your mind (and soul) all in one go.

4. Stay focused

If you're trying to eat healthily, aim to make it as easy for yourself as you can, by avoiding temptations as much as possible. This means staying off food-related blogs and social media accounts, which will just leave you feeling like you're depriving your body. If you live with family or friends, understand that they might have different meal plans and eating schedules than you do; you need to work out how to navigate this, so that it doesn't become a daily struggle for you. Staying focused goes for exercise too. As difficult as it may be, although you'd rather sleep in, just think about how much better you'd feel after a workout – and know that every small thing you do will add up to a big change at the end. From there, instead of rewarding yourself with a food item, reward yourself with something for your body or mind, such as a massage or new book.

5. Know your body

If you've struggled with weight issues for a long time, remember that every person's body is different and various factors might be keeping you in a vicious health cycle.

Genes Genes play a big part in your body's efficiency (or inefficiency) to burn kilojoules. If one of your parents is obese, you're more likely to be obese than someone who has parents of a healthy weight.

Metabolic rate Your metabolic rates are largely determined by how active you are. The higher the metabolic rate (i.e. the more exercise you do), the more kilojoules you burn.

Eating patterns Families that favour high-fat, high kilojoule foods are at a greater risk of gaining weight, than families that serve smaller portions of lean meats, steamed vegetables and brown rice. The speed at which different people eat can also impact their weight. People who eat quickly, tend to eat more food than people who eat slowly, as it takes a few minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that it is full.

Exercise Exercise builds lean muscle mass and burns fat reserves – and a combination of cardio and strength training is first prize. Adding muscle mass through strength training raises your metabolism and makes it easier to lose weight. Strength training also improves bone density, helps with digestion and assists in lowering blood pressure.

"Thinking about your health from an overall perspective is so important. It allows you to consider all the different facets that make up your body as a system.

If one area of your body is out of whack, then it often has a negative effect on other areas too. Eat real food, move as much as you can, surround yourself with supportive people and spend time on your passion projects; these will all be a good start to the all-round healthy lifestyle that you're after."

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