

12

Weeks

TO HEALTHY EATING

WEEK TWELVE – LONG-TERM SUCCESS: LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Congratulations! You have made it to week 12! Throughout the past 11 weeks you have hopefully learned more about your own eating habits, identified areas of concern or key areas to address and you may have even made some simple lifestyle changes. Establishing nutritional habits is an ongoing process and is constantly changing depending on your current goals and focus. The information contained in this manual is yours to revisit at any point. Refreshing yourself on the information, resetting goals and making additional lifestyle changes will help you continuously work toward achieving optimal health and wellness.

Making changes to your nutritional habits and behaviours is only half the battle. Maintenance of the healthy behaviour changes is even more important to achieve long-term success. There are several maintenance tips that can help you sustain the changes you have worked so hard to make. At this point in time, you might still be working on making healthy behaviour changes. That is wonderful and I encourage you to continue to set goals and spend additional time on the chapters that might pertain to you. Read the information below if you choose and revisit this information to create your maintenance plan.

It is important to understand the changes you have made must be thought of as long-term lifestyle changes. In order to achieve and maintain your health and wellness goals, the changes you have currently made and will continue to make, need to become part of your everyday habits. There are several components and strategies you can use to make this happen. Here are some tips to help you maintain your healthy, lifestyle behaviour changes.

1. Determine your priorities

Always evaluate what is important to you at this time in your life. You will be more willing to dedicate time, effort and energy toward items higher on your priority list. There may be times in your life where nutrition does not fall high on your list. At times like that, attempt to maintain your habits and re-evaluate your priorities at another time. If health, nutrition and healthy eating does fall high on your priority list, continue to set goals, work toward them and make healthy, lifestyle behaviour changes.

2. Determine WHY you want to change

Everyone will have a different reason for wanting to change eating habits. It is important to determine specifically why you want to change your eating habits to help keep yourself on track. Whether it is being healthy for children, setting good habits and examples for family, losing weight, improving healthy, reducing heart disease risk, managing diabetes or even to increase energy, be sure to be specific and WRITE DOWN why it is you want to change. Keep this “why” phrase in your mind and understand each decision you make will have an impact on your habits.

3. SMART Goals

Determine specifically what it is that you want to do. Be sure to write short-term and long-term goals using the SMART method. This means the goals must state or be the following: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time sensitive. This means you must know exactly what you are going to do, when you are going to start, how you are going to do this, who you are going to do this with and where you are going to do this goal. The more specific the goals, the easier it is going to be for you to determine your success!

4. Track your food and hold yourself accountable

Food diary tracking is one of the most successful methods to hold yourself accountable, maintain healthy habits and identify habits or areas in your eating you might want to change. How often you track is up to you. Some individuals find tracking to be tedious, while others love to determine their daily calorie intake, nutrient intake and how that relates to their goals. You don't have to use paper; some people use cell phones, apps, computer programs or websites. Whatever you choose, make sure this is a habit you can maintain for a period of time, and use the information to determine what areas you might need to change to accomplish your goals.

5. Plan of action for every foreseeable barrier

The more you plan ahead, the less often you will be stuck without a plan of action. Restaurants, holidays, dinner parties, emotions, lack of sleep, travelling or even sickness can all throw off your daily healthy eating habits. The more you plan for these types of "fast balls" and other barriers that may come up, the easier it is going to be for you to make a healthy decision that fits right into the overall plan you have created for yourself. Never let yourself get overly hungry and never leave the house without a plan of action!

6. Gather your support

Friends, family, pets, coworkers, counsellors, online support or a complete stranger can all be considered excellent support systems for long-term success. You must share your goals and plan of action with others. Communicate to others what you are trying to do and what you need from them to be successful. Create contracts with your support system indicated you are holding yourself accountable to certain goals. Utilize those around you as you are not in this alone. Find a buddy to work together with you to make changes!

7. Set your environment up for success

Identify what types of environment you are most successful in. Are you able to practice self-control or do you make impulse decisions if something is in front of you? If you have your favourite foods in the house, can you practice moderation and portion control? When friends and family are eating foods at times you are not hungry are you able to say, "No, thank you?" Determine the steps you need to take to set your environment up for success. This may mean keeping all food out of sight and out of mind, not buying foods associated with overeating or even asking your friends to not eat after dinner desserts in front of you that might lead to cravings. Only you can determine what it is that will make you the most successful. Communicate your needs and wants to those around you and establish a plan. Communicate and agree on the best solution!

8. Structure your day

Never let yourself get too hungry, as you know when this occurs you are more likely to make unhealthy choices and overeat. Keep your appetite in check and maintain your self-control by creating structure. Eat every two to four hours during the day, at similar times each day and load up on the good, healthy foods your body needs. The body and mind like consistency, so make sure your body knows when the next meal or snack is. Frequent eating will help you to maintain control and establish long-term success.

9. 80-20 rule for long-term success

Incorporate treats and indulgences into your eating plan, guilt-free. Including these items is all part of the long-term plan. Eliminating or avoiding the foods you enjoy will not be easy to maintain and can lead to binging. Practice portion control and self-control by giving yourself permission to have little indulges. These treats should be part of your long-term plan and will help you to feel like you have made a lifestyle change as opposed to being on a diet. If you view yourself as being on a diet, it is something you can go off of. If you are creating lifestyle changes, you can't fall off the plan!

10. Evaluate your progress and reward yourself

Determine how you will know when you have achieved your goals. When you have achieved one, reward yourself! Rewards make us feel good about ourselves and our accomplishments and keep us moving in the right direction. Determine how you will reward yourself. Think of something you don't get to do very often so it feels like a real reward! Once you accomplish a goal and give yourself a reward, set another goal to continue working toward!

I wish you the best success moving forward and, remember, you are the only one that can determine what needs to be changed and how to change it. You have the power and control to achieve and maintain healthy eating habits!