Mindful Body

Create The Happy, Healthy Body You Want Through Mindfulness

by Paige Burkes

www.simplemindfulness.com
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About Paige

Many years ago, I was like most people. I trusted that anything sold at the grocery store was fine to eat. I didn’t read labels or understand nutritional content and didn’t care too much about it.

If I had aches and pains, I would take some pain killers and wait for them to go away. If something hurt badly enough, I would go to the doctor and blindly do whatever the doctor said.

There were times in my life where I struggled with my weight. I tried many different diets, some more successful than others.

Everything changed when I got pregnant for the first time. I was suddenly hit with the revelation that everything that I put in and on my body would become part of a new person growing inside me. That’s a pretty daunting thought.

I started reading ingredient labels on foods, drinks, personal care and household products and anything else that came in or near my body or in the air I breathed. I looked up everything I didn’t understand.

I began to see that the conventional food system does not have our health in mind. We’ve been led to believe that harsh, highly toxic chemicals are required to clean our homes, cars and bodies and that carcinogenic chemicals are just fine to add to our foods.

Rather than turn to medications, I opted for natural ways to manage aches, pains and illnesses. I studied and began to understand how different types and qualities of foods affect our health and emotional state.

As I slowed down and implemented more mindfulness practices in my
life, like yoga and meditation, I learned how strongly our emotions affect our health and habits.

I realized lasting solutions to long-standing health issues for myself and my family, and I began to teach what I had learned and experienced to others. These people implemented these concepts into their own lives and were pleasantly surprised to experience improved health, especially in areas where they had chronic issues.

My quest is to share this information with you, in hopes that it can open your mind to new ways of thinking about health and wellness. This program can help you realize that you don’t need expensive and risky medications, special programs or anything else outside yourself.

You have the ability to heal yourself from the inside out.

Join me as we walk through this information and see that you can heal yourself too.
Getting Started

About This Program

I’m not a licensed nutritionist, personal trainer, psychologist, Zen Master, practicing Buddhist or anything like that. I’m a person who got very tired of repeating my old patterns and mistakes and decided to do something about it.

While my approaches aren’t for everyone, anyone I know who has committed to implementing them in their life has seen dramatic improvements in their health and happiness.

To me, results speak much louder than lofty theories. This stuff has worked and continues to work for my husband, me and many others and will work for you if you commit to the deep work it requires.

This program is not for the person looking for a quick fix to their problems. It’s not a diet.

If you’ve had issues with your weight or other health problems for years, I’m not going to tell you about a crazy new supplement or exercise that will magically make everything better while you make no changes in your lifestyle. That stuff is all crap and doesn’t work and we all know it.

You’ve tried those other approaches and they haven’t worked for you. That’s why you bought this program.

This program is for anyone who struggles with their body in any way (weight, diet, exercise, health issues, aches and pains or sleep issues) and wants to do something about it once and for all.

This program is for the person who is willing to do the work required to make those changes and make them stick. You don’t need any fancy diets, supplements or equipment. Everything you need is inside you.
If you want lasting change, you’re going to have to work for it. You’re going to have to make choices and changes. What you’ve been doing in the past is what got you to where you are now. If that’s not where you want to be, it’s time to do something different and be someone different.

I’m here to guide you down that different path. I’ll hold your hand and answer your questions along the way to achieving the healthy, happy body you’ve been yearning for.

I want to help you recognize your own beauty, feed your body and your mind well and care for them like they’re your own child.

I want you to feel that you’re good enough – awesome enough – to be treated well and to feel well on your own terms.

In this program, I’ll hold your hand on your journey from wherever you are now to your own happy place with your body.

While many of the steps here are simple, they’re not always easy.

For the most part, we’re talking about making lifestyle changes, habit changes. We’ll be changing the way you think about yourself and how you see yourself.

This isn’t a diet or something you do for a few weeks before resuming life as normal.

We’re creating a new normal.

We’ll re-examine how you look at food and what it means to your body.

We’ll also re-examine how you see exercise. Just like diets, there are many reasons why most people don’t use their gym memberships or maintain their exercise programs. There’s a different way and it’s a whole lot of fun.
This program will change the way you see yourself and your body. The conclusion of our journey together will be the beginning of your journey to lasting health and happiness with your body for the rest of your life.

Are you ready?
Living Mindlessly

You’re mindlessly flying through your days. You have too much to do and don’t have time to think about caring for yourself.

You’re constantly distracted with a myriad of electronic devices and the information and fluff they deliver 24/7. You’re doing your best to keep up with your job, business, kids, family, friends, chores and errands.

You’re scared to death to let anyone down so you move a little faster each day to keep up.

Faster and more are better, right?

You find shortcuts in the ways you buy and prepare your foods. You look for shortcuts to exercise or, more likely, you cut exercise in order to prioritize things you feel that you have to do for others.

And where does all this leave you?

- Stressed
- Overweight
- Emotionally and physically drained
- Mentally scattered
- Sick
- Burned out

All of this describes the essence of living mindlessly. You fly through your days checking things off your to-do list and adding even more while you wonder how you’ll ever get it all done.

You’re constantly focused on the past or the future and are almost unaware of what’s right in front of you right now.

You’re so busy doing, doing, doing that you don’t slow down to consider how to do things more effectively or, God forbid, how to simply be. You
listen to others and do what’s expected of you. Generally speaking, those “others” don’t have your best interests in mind. They have their best interests in mind.

Do you think this is the way it has to be? Do you think you can’t stop this train wreck?

Think again.
End the Diet Torture

You’ve tried all the diets: low carb, low fat, juicing, raw, vegetarian, paleo, whatever. You ate what the diet dictated, whether you liked it or not. You ached as you passed up your favorite desserts.

You’ve been to the gym, paid for a one year membership to make absolutely sure you would go. You even worked with a personal trainer to motivate you for a while.

You’ve done these things with a friend or two for accountability. You were all psyched up and super motivated for the first week or two as you pushed each other to keep going.

After two or three weeks (or sooner), the new routine seemed a bit too much to maintain. Even though you might have lost a little weight, the process seemed too hard – too much to keep up for that little bit of weight loss.

So you quit and went back to your old ways and decided that nothing works. You accepted that you’ll never maintain that ideal weight of yours.

Sound familiar?

It doesn’t have to be this way.

What if you could lose weight by simply noticing what you eat, why you eat it and how you feel before you eat? No more crazy restrictions or having to eat things you hate.

What if you could get enough exercise by doing things you love when you want to do them? No more personal trainers pushing you beyond your limits with the “no pain, no gain” mentality.

What if you could get and stay healthy and feel good about it for the rest
of your life?

Sound too good to be true? People all around the world live this way every day. And you can too.

**Why Diets Don’t Work**

We all hate diets. And who wouldn’t since the first three letters are “die?”

There are many reasons diets don’t work.

- The mere thought of the word ‘diet’ connotes something uncomfortable, undesirable, something to merely get through.
- Diets are short term.
- Diets generally don’t take into account the individual needs of each person’s body, mind and spirit.
- Diets focus on what and how much to eat with little regard to how these foods are eaten.
- Diets don’t address *why* we eat what we eat.
- Diets are not sustainable.
- As soon as the diet is over, you go back to the habits that created the undesirable body in the first place.

Most diets put severe restrictions on what we can eat. Maybe you like those foods or maybe you don’t. Either way, eating such a limited group of foods can get old in a hurry.

Diets are not made for everyone. Every diet can’t possibly account for the likes, dislikes, allergies, metabolic variances and health condition of each individual.

And, quite notably, diets usually don’t stipulate the quality of the foods they prescribe, only quantities. Quality matters. And *how* we eat matters.
Most importantly, diets don’t address the emotional and psychological reasons that people eat what they eat and when. Prescribing a diet for weight loss is like prescribing medication for symptoms (what western medicine is all about). Sure, it will alleviate the symptoms in the short term, as long as you take it. But it doesn’t get to the root cause. It doesn’t solve the issues that create the unwanted symptoms.

In this program, we’re going to get to the root causes and shift them so that feeling awesome isn’t a struggle. It’s easy.

Making better choices will become second nature. You’ll wonder why you didn’t do this a long time ago.
**The Mindful Way**

What if you could hit the pause button in your life? How would that feel?

It’s completely in your power.

And you can do it right now.

Close your eyes.

Take a deep breath. Inhale slowly and deeply until your lungs are completely filled.

Now exhale slowly through your nose.

Take two more deep inhales and exhales with your eyes closed.

Pause and savor the space you just created.

While breathing deeply, notice any sensations in your body. Listen to your heart beat.

Open your eyes and look around you. What do you see? Close up? Far away? Simply notice.

Spend five minutes doing this. Noticing without judgment. Breathing.

_Welcome to your introduction to mindfulness and the art of simply being._

Did the world stop? Did you miss out on anything? Did things come crashing down? Did someone judge you as being less than perfect?

**Your Mindful Body**

Now that you’re relaxed and in the moment, consider how you want your body to look and feel.

What’s your vision of your health? What’s your vision of your perfect...
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body?

What is this based on? Is it realistic for you?

Are you 40 or 50 and wanting your face and body to look like it did when you were 25?

While our bodies are capable of some amazing transformations, something like this may not be realistic without some serious plastic surgery and major lifestyle changes. Some people are up for that while many aren’t. Are you? No judgments. Either answer is fine.

With the “quick and easy” programming that we’re bombarded with every day, we think that we should be able to get whatever we want without having to work for it.

Better health, weight loss and happiness in a pill. The pharmaceutical companies are making fortunes off this lie.

I’m suggesting a completely different path.

One that is uniquely yours.

I’m suggesting that we take back our power and choose health and real happiness rather than physical appearances and a happy face.

Are better health, a healthy weight and true happiness possible for you? It’s your choice.

It’s completely in your power to make it happen without drugs. It doesn’t have to cost you a dime.

What will you get out of this program?

The honest answer is: Whatever you put into it and what you believe is possible for you.

If your mind is open to new possibilities and you read, understand and implement everything I’ve laid out, you’ll be creating a new way of being,

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a new way of listening to yourself (or listening to yourself for the first time), a new way to live. This means:

- Saying good-bye to diets because you maintain your ideal weight with pleasure.
- Wearing all those “skinny clothes” you’ve been saving in the back of your closet and feeling radiant about it.
- Maintaining a regular exercise routine because it’s something fun that works easily with your lifestyle.
- Your self-confidence and self-esteem soar as you see results in your body and higher levels of energy. When you finally make these changes with your body, who knows what else you can accomplish!
- Your relationships grow and thrive. With more self-confidence, it’s easier for you to create new, amazing relationships.
- You regain the energy and zest for life you thought you lost allowing you to strike out on the adventures you were reserving for people younger and more vibrant than you.
- You get enough rest and have the energy you need each day to not only get more of your “to do” list done, but, more importantly, to have the energy to play with your kids or grandkids and get involved in activities that you thought were off-limits for you.
- Aches, pains and illness occur much less often and you’re able to resolve them quickly with fewer medications. Your immune system is able to do what it was designed to do and keeps you running at peak performance.
- Your moods even out and you realize that you’re regularly experiencing happiness.
- Your outlook on life broadens, allowing you to see possibilities you never even considered. And you have the self-confidence to take action on them.

Overall, you have a sustainable way to look and feel how you’ve always

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wanted – your “uniquely you” happy, healthy body and totally amazing self.

“Keeping your body healthy is an expression of gratitude to the whole cosmos — the trees, the clouds, everything.”
— Thich Nhat Hanh
Motivation

Why did you buy this program? Why is it important for you to make a change now?

How important is it to you? Not for anyone else.

If you don’t make changes now, what will your life look like in one, five or ten years? What will be different?

How will you feel if you put this off again?

Think you don’t have time?

How much time does it take to make a choice? Throughout this program, all I’m asking you to do is to notice how you feel in the current moment and make a conscious choice about your next action.

Most of us run through life making unconscious choices, and we wonder why we have the results we do.

We spend time on what’s important to us.

Stop for a moment and think about where you spend your time. Do you realize that you’re making those things very valuable to you?

If you like how you feel about those thoughts, then there’s not much of a need for change.

If those thoughts are a bit of a wake-up call for you, then it’s time to be more intentional with how you spend your time.

It doesn’t take any extra time to simply make a different choice.

Consider this: What if the Universe gave you the time in the form of your becoming ill? So ill that you couldn’t keep up with your never-ending to-do list?

It’s been my experience over and over that, if we don’t listen to the
whispers of our Higher Self, intuition, the Universe, Higher Power, whatever you want to call it, the whispers will get louder and louder. When we continue to ignore the signs, we’re blind-sided by something that completely knocks us off our feet – something so big that we have to stop and listen and finally heed the call.

I’m hoping that your timing is perfect and that you’re reading this before the proverbial brick hits you in the head.

**Put your motivation where you can see it**

Write down why it’s important to you to make the changes that you’re seeking *right now*. Write down all your reasons.

Make absolutely sure that whatever you write down makes you feel really good or really bad. This is *essential!*

No negatives: not, never, should, shouldn’t, can’t, won’t. No doing things to please other people. This is just for you.

Your motivation has to be a “must,” not a “should.” Why MUST you make this change NOW? No excuses. No “yeah, but…”

*Must* means 100% commitment. Don’t give yourself any back doors. You’re not committed if you say anything like, “I’ll do it until…” or “I’ll keep up with it unless…”

With 100% commitment, you leave yourself no options.

> "There are only two options regarding commitment; you’re either in or you’re out. There’s no such thing as life in-between." - Pat Riley

If you don’t have a strong enough ‘why,’ it will be an uphill battle to stick with your new program.
Motivations that don’t work (source is outside of yourself):

- My doctor/partner/friend/kids/whoever told me that I should lose weight/improve my health.
- It would probably be good for me if I lost weight/improved my health.
- I know I should lose weight and start eating better.
- Others would more readily accept me if I was thinner.

Motivations that work in the short term (source may be outside yourself or internal):

- I want to fit into my little black dress for a big event.
- I want to run a certain race on a certain date.
- I want to prove to someone that I can do it.

Motivations that give lasting results (source is internal and aligns with your values and beliefs):

- Heart disease runs in my family and my mother/father died at my age. I don’t want to die.
- My child came to me, knowing how unhealthy my habits are, and said in a frightened way that they didn’t want me to die. They want me around for a long time for them.
- I don’t want to be that kind of person anymore. That’s no longer who I am.
- I know that my children emulate me. I don’t want them to develop the same unhealthy habits I have had that have led to my health issues.
- I want to have enough energy to play with my kids/grandkids and create amazing experiences with them.

Why are you absolutely committed to changing now?
Write down your reasons for changing on six pieces of paper (six copies of the same answers) and put those pieces of paper on your:

- bathroom mirror
- refrigerator
- credit cards
- computer monitor
- bedside table
- dashboard of your car.

Find an image of your ‘why’ and use it as your screensaver and desktop image on your computer, phone and touch pads. This could be an image that conveys how you’ll feel when you’re healthy and happy and feeling amazing.

Avoid comparing yourself to others. Every body is unique. Every body is beautiful. By comparing yourself to others, especially using the comparison as ‘motivation’, you will inevitably begin to judge yourself as better or worse than the images of others in your head.

**Being mindful means having no judgments.**

Judgment and self-criticism will reverse any progress you make.

As you read the pieces of paper and see the images of your ‘why’ throughout your day, feel the feelings of your ‘why.’ Visualize and feel what your life is like when you’re living how you want to live, when you’re making choices throughout your day that support your vision of the new you.

Doing this in small increments, even for a few seconds, many times throughout your day will help to reinforce your drive, your motivation.

Becoming your new you will be that much easier.
Goals and Intentions

I used to be a master of setting goals. I would write everything in the present tense, as if it had already happened. I would see it in complete detail. I set deadlines for each goal. I would read and write them every day to reinforce them. I added every trick in the book to my goal-setting practice.

And time after time I would achieve almost none of these goals.

It took me a while to realize the biggest reason for this was that this process put my goals “out there” and never in the present moment. I kept doing the same old things in the present, hoping for a different future that never came.

Then I started reading about the practice of “no goals.” I must admit that I don’t completely understand this practice but I’ve incorporated what works for me into my life.

Instead of setting very specific goals to achieve, I ask myself why I want to achieve them.

How do I want to feel by achieving that goal?

I focus on feeling that feeling in the present – right now. What can I do right now to feel that way? It usually doesn’t take much to stir up this feeling.

I also think of how every aspect of my life would be when I achieved my goal. What would my average day be like? How would my moment-to-moment decisions be different that the ones I make now?

Keeping that “new me” in mind throughout my day, I act out my average new day each day.

With this practice, I’m not focused on an end goal that’s “out there.” I’m focusing on what I’m doing in the present moment. The things I do all
day are my habits. Our habits create our results and our lives.

**If I continue to practice my old habits, I’ll never achieve a different future.** My future will look like today.

**What’s your daily intention?**

Instead of setting goals for yourself with this program, I’m suggesting that you set daily intentions about how you want to feel and the kind of person you want to be every day.

Is the kind of person you want to be the same person who would achieve the goals you’re thinking of? If not, something about the picture needs to change.

For example, change a goal of losing 50 pounds to an intention of being a healthy and energetic person. Make mindful choices throughout your day that a healthy and energetic person would make. After you’ve lost those 50 pounds, you’ll need to continue to make the same healthy, mindful choices every day for the rest of your life.

As you play with new forms of movement, change your eating and create a healthier lifestyle, know that there’s no end goal to achieve. Improving your health and getting in shape are parts of your life – not goals. You don’t stop doing them when you’ve lost a certain amount of weight or can finally fit into certain clothes. If you do that, you’ll end up right where you started.

**Your new habits and lifestyle are your new normal.** Knowing this, make sure you choose things that you love, things you enjoy, things that are fun for you.
Vision of a Healthier You

In order to create the healthy, happy body you want, you need to know what that looks and feels like. Without that vision, you won’t have any solid basis for your moment-to-moment decisions.

If you can, find someone who lives the way you would like to live. Ask them how they feel and how they make decisions. Learn from them.

Don’t strive for perfection. Don’t try to look like someone else. Don’t beat yourself up because you’re not there yet.

See and feel your vision daily

In your mind’s eye, see and feel your healthier you. What does each part of your body look and feel like? How does it feel when you move and exercise? What kinds of movement do you enjoy? What do you eat? Where and how do you eat?

Spend a few minutes every day as you’re waking up in the morning, while you’re taking a shower and as you fall asleep at night visualizing and feeling the new you.

Don’t compare your current state to your vision. That would usually create judgments. Simply feel how great your healthier you feels.

As you go through your day, notice all you can about yourself in the present moment. Does it match your vision yet?

If it does, celebrate and make your next choice something that further supports your vision and current state.

If it doesn’t, simply make your next choice as if you had already achieved your vision and you’re acting to maintain that vision. No judgments.


Before making a choice, answer the question, “Is this helping me to be
healthier and happier?” Each day we take baby steps toward being and feeling a little better than we were.

You probably won’t see big changes overnight. Big, lasting change happens in baby steps taken consistently, persistently and with patience.

**Practicing self-love and acceptance**

Love who and what you see, no matter what you look like or where you are in the process.

You’re amazing as you are right now.

Think of all the things about your body that you’re grateful for. Your body is pretty amazing when you stop to notice all the details and intricacies.

If you have a hard time with this, ask someone close to you what they think is amazing about you. Acknowledge and accept those things.

**Accepting yourself as you are right now is the first step in making changes.**

If you hate where you are now, you’re resisting what is. As the old saying goes: What you resist persists.

If you can’t accept where you are now, you have no concrete basis, no starting point, upon which to make decisions. Change is almost impossible.

Here are some examples:

*Accepting:* I weigh more than I would like and have no energy now. I’m learning about and making choices to change this.

*Resistance:* I can’t believe I weigh this much. How did I let myself get so big? I know I should probably drop a few pounds (my friends and doctor keep telling me so) but it’s so hard and takes too much time.
Which do you think will realize lasting results?

Make choices based on who and what you want to be.

*Know that you are enough regardless of where you are along your path. Everything you do and everything you are is good enough.*

Now that you have your motivations, intentions and vision clear, let’s get started!
The Mindful Way

Mindfulness: The Art of Being in the Present Moment

What is mindfulness?

Definitions from dictionaries include: awareness, attention, regard, heedfulness.

One that I especially liked from Wikipedia is: The practice whereby a person is intentionally aware of his or her thoughts and actions in the present moment, non-judgmentally. Mindfulness is applied to both bodily actions and the mind’s own thoughts and feelings.

We can be mindful anywhere, any time.

During yoga practice, while brushing our teeth, walking to the car, walking in nature, washing the dishes, while speaking to someone. All the time.

We can be mindful of our bodies: how hard we’re trying to maintain a yoga pose or relaxing into it, our breathing, how strong or weak we feel at the moment, our aches and pains.

And we can be mindful of our thoughts: thinking about things in the past (a previous conversation or event) or the future (all the things we have to do next, how we’ll handle certain situations, worrying about the future).

And we can be mindful of our surroundings and the people around us: the temperature, the weather, how someone is reacting to what we said, how others are dressed.

Being mindful is simply noticing what is in the present moment without judging it.
Mindful Body: Create the Happy, Healthy Body You Want Through Mindfulness

Mindfulness means slowing down
It’s frequently difficult to stop the constant chatter in our heads (and from our electronic devices).

I remember when I first considered meditation about ten years ago. I was a type A person who didn’t know how to slow down. I couldn’t fathom how anyone could sit still and think of nothing for more than thirty seconds.

Like learning any new skill, I had to start somewhere. And thirty seconds was pushing it for me at the time.

With regular practice I can now happily sit for about twenty minutes.

With more practice, I’ve been able to bring that same sense of quiet and mindfulness to the rest of my day.

Mindfulness with other people
Mindfulness has helped me to be much less reactive and more thoughtful and proactive in my relationships with others.

I now take a moment to notice the condition of the person speaking to me. If they’re angry at me, are they having a bad day? Did something else upset them earlier? Have they not had enough to eat (low blood sugar can do a number on most people) or sleep?

I ask myself how I might have contributed to the issue instead of immediately getting defensive.

If I can’t figure out the cause, I usually tell myself, “They have issues.” This keeps me from taking things personally that usually have nothing to do with me. It keeps me from needlessly attaching myself (and my ego) to the other person and their issues and causing myself unnecessary anguish.
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Mindfulness with myself

In the first half hour of when I wake up each morning, I’m mindful of how I’m feeling physically and emotionally. Doing this without judgment helps my entire day flow much more easily.

If I’m feeling tired or not as strong as normal, I know not to push myself too hard that day. I don’t judge myself as weak, pushing myself harder to get things done only to be disappointed that I didn’t complete things as well as I normally would.

If I’m feeling anxious or upset or cranky, I ask myself where that’s coming from. If it’s something I can do something about, I try to change the situation so I feel better. If it’s something I can’t control or I can’t figure out where the feelings are coming from, I accept things just as they are, take a few deep breaths and smile, even if I don’t feel like it.

It’s amazing how breathing deeply and smiling for at least thirty seconds can change your mood.

I’ll do a body scan and notice any aches or tight spots. Instead of approaching them as something bad and something to get rid of (i.e. judging and resisting them), I focus on them deeply. Trying to get rid of them guarantees that they won’t go away.

Mentally I go into the area of pain asking the sore spot what it’s trying to tell me. Sometimes that focus and non-judgmental questioning are enough to release it. Other times I learn more about myself from the answers I receive.

Judgment

Mindfulness involves not only taking a moment to notice ourselves and our surroundings but to do it in a non-judgmental way. This is very difficult for most people to do.

We naturally label/judge almost everything in some kind of “good” or
“bad” category.

If I’m feeling cranky, that’s bad.

If I’m feeling energized, that’s good.

If someone is mad at me, that’s bad.

If I’m being very productive, that’s good.

Approaching all of these things mindfully means simply noticing them as they are. There is no good or bad. It’s just the way things are.

**I can choose to change them or accept them as they are.**

If I judge them, I make up a story about them. I become attached to them and I allow them to affect my feelings and possibly my behaviors.

If I notice them in a non-judgmental way, they float by me and I’m free to go about my day feeling lighter.

**Mindfulness is a practice**

Being mindful is something we do one moment at a time, taking baby steps to incorporate it into various aspects of our lives.

It’s a practice that profoundly affects our lives the more we practice it. As we implement it in one area of our lives, we can’t help but practice it in other areas. And we watch the benefits spread. I am infinitely happier now and have much more fulfilling relationships than when I started.

**Take a moment right now to be mindful. Be present.**

**Simple Steps**

Instead of making New Year’s resolutions that you’ll never keep for more than a couple weeks or saying that you’ll change your ways – promise! - or going on yet another diet, how about simply sitting still for 10 minutes?
Mindfulness is a practice. Like any practice, initially we have to remind ourselves to practice the practice.

Consider setting a timer on your phone (there are a variety of mindfulness apps out there). Put a ring on a finger that you don’t normally wear it on or put a smooth stone in your pocket. Whenever those things capture your attention, take ten minutes to simply be.

At first 10 minutes will be painful. Start with one or two minutes (or thirty seconds) if that’s the case and build up slowly over time.

Commit to devoting 10 minutes each day for you. You’re so worth it.

What do you do during those 10 minutes?

Nothing but breathe.

Don’t do anything.

Just be.

And breathe.

Notice your environment. Is it quiet or noisy? Hot, cold or comfortable? What, exactly, do you hear and see? Who is around you?

Do a body scan and notice the sensations in every part of your body. Do you feel relaxed or tense? Where do you feel these sensations?

Notice your thoughts. Don’t judge them or yourself for having them. Don’t create stories about them. Simply notice them as they are.

Are they here in the present moment? Or in the past or future?

How do you feel in the moment? Where in your body do you feel that feeling?

Whatever you’re experiencing in the moment – experience it fully with an
inquisitive mind, a beginner’s mind. No judgment. No attachment.

You are not your thoughts.

You are not your emotions or feelings.

All of these things are temporary. They come and go. You are still as they come and go.

If you’re experiencing something painful, stay with it. It has something very important to tell you.

Treat the pain, whether it’s physical or emotional, as another person or being and have a conversation with it. Be inquisitive and light. Ask it why it’s there. Ask it what message it has for you. Take whatever message you receive to heart.

How do you feel because of how you interpret all of these things? Nothing and nobody “makes” you feel a certain way. It’s all about how you choose to interpret it and how you choose to react or feel about it.

These are all ways to practice mindfulness.

Be mindful now, in the present moment. This is really all you have.

Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 1. These exercises will help you tune into your current state, establish your motivations and open you up to being mindful with your body.
Mindful Body

How do you feel about your body?

How does your body feel?

It’s amazing how disconnected we are from our bodies even though our bodies physically get us through our days.

We’re taught that our minds and thinking are more important than our bodies and our feelings.

Our minds take over telling us that we must be productive – get things done! Society tells us that being productive is important. We are defined by the things we accomplish.

It’s time we start re-writing those rules, standards and expectations.

Honestly, we can’t accomplish much if our bodies aren’t properly cared for. You know this but you continue to put caring for yourself off to when you “have the time.”

You stay up late watching TV or working, cutting into the precious hours of sleep that you know you need.

You have dessert for breakfast with those big coffee drinks (have you checked the sugar and calorie content in those things?) and drink more coffee and eat more carbs and sugar throughout the day to keep you going. Gotta be productive, right?

You grab whatever is fast and convenient because you don’t “have the time” to think about something healthier.

You actually have the time. You simply don’t choose to take it.

You’re following old habits and patterns that don’t take any less time than making healthy choices would.
You skip your workout because you’ve got a pending deadline or you’re so tired that you just don’t feel like it.

And where does that leave you?

Tired, spent, fuzzy headed, stressed, anxious, weak.

There’s a much better way and you know it. You hear about how to live a healthier lifestyle all the time.

**So why aren’t we all choosing this lifestyle?**

Because it’s hard to stop and be still and listen to what’s really going on inside of us. Sometimes it’s downright painful.

It’s so much easier to gloss over the tough stuff inside with the easy stuff outside.

**Do you want to feel this way for the rest of your life?** That’s a long time. Your life is all you have.

If you’re a parent, you’re setting an example for your kids, regardless of their age. You’re the teacher with the strongest impact on the habits they develop in their lives. **Do you want your kids to live this way?**

**Getting to the root of our choices**

Everything about our lives is the culmination of the choices we make in every second of every day and night.

It takes mindfulness to understand why we make the choices we do.

Without getting to the core of a problem (the driver of our choices), anything we do only treats the symptoms. The problem will rear its ugly head again and again.

Anti-depressants, antibiotics and steroids simply treat symptoms while the root cause remains untouched. While one medication may suppress (or “cure”) one symptom, the root cause will continue to create other
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symptoms. Doctors prescribe these drugs over and over to keep patients happy. Doctors have no incentive to get to the heart of the problem. That’s our job.

Consider these:

Do you overeat and remain overweight because you experienced some kind of hurt or abuse in the past? Do you use the weight to keep yourself unattractive and distant because you can’t bear to allow others to be close to you? Then no diet will ever work for you. Until you practice a heavy dose of forgiveness of yourself and others with some deep self-love on top, your weight won’t change.

Are you driven to work crazy hours, sacrificing exercise and sleep, because of an internal belief that you’re not good enough and, no matter what you do, you’ll never be good enough but you push yourself harder and harder anyway? Then stress and its many physical manifestations will remain your constant friend.

Until you deeply love and accept yourself as you are and stop looking for acceptance and approval from others, no plan or program will work for you.

Do you eat everything on your plate because you were programmed to believe that, if you don’t eat it, the food is wasted and could have somehow been eaten by someone on the other side of the globe? It’s time to reprogram that old belief with a positive, new one that says you can stop when your body feels that it has had enough (and mindfully notice when that occurs). Put the leftovers in the fridge or the composter or feed the local critters.

Do you binge on comfort foods like ice cream, chocolate or chips to soothe painful emotions that you’re scared to face? It’s time to address those fears and emotions, talk to them, make friends with them, lean into them and learn the messages they’re trying to deliver. Emotions are
fleeting. Resist the urge to feed them in the present moment and wait for them to pass (they always will).

Everything, and I mean everything, in your life is your choice. What you do, how you do it, how you perceive things and people, how you respond or react, what you think, how you feel – are all in your power.

Do you have a big enough “why” to compel you to make different choices that will lead to the changes you say you want to make?

Without understanding your “why” for changing, keeping it front and center and understanding why you make the choices you do, lasting change is almost impossible.

**Being mindful of your body**

If you decide that you want to lose weight, before making any changes, start to notice how you feel when you make the choice of what to put in your mouth throughout your day. Why did you choose what you chose? Before you take the next bite, ask yourself if you really want it. How will it make you feel in an hour or the next day?

If you want to start a regular exercise program, start to notice how you feel when you wake up and at other times during the day. When do you have the most and least energy? Could you motivate yourself to even the easiest of exercises? If not, why not? If you can, then do that exercise. Notice how you feel with either choice.

**One of the keys to mindfulness is noticing things without judging them.**

Don’t beat yourself up for not being able to live up to what others think you should do. Or what you think others think you should do.

It’s not going to work for everyone to get up early, exercise for an hour, eat a big, healthy breakfast and hit the day running.

I started experimenting with my day and found that I feel much better
when I exercise around 1pm or 2pm in the afternoon instead of 5am like I did for years.

I found that I’m not very hungry until later in the morning and I only need about half of what I had been eating. At the tender age of 45 I’m finally learning how to not eat everything on my plate like I was made to do as a child. Thankfully I’ve been blessed with a healthy metabolism.

How do you want your body to look and feel? Are your moment-to-moment choices supporting that vision?
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**Mindful Eating**

As the old, wise saying goes, “Happiness comes from within.” Lasting happiness does not come from a box of chocolates or a giant bowl of macaroni and cheese.

Food is often used to bury (or swallow) emotions. Becoming mindful of this can unlock the door to better eating habits, improved health, more energy, more self-confidence, higher self-esteem and getting out and experiencing the awesomeness and happiness in the world and ourselves.

How do you lose weight and get in shape without going on a diet and going to the gym? It’s simple and as easy as you allow it to be.

The next time you reach for something to eat or drink, pause and take three deep, relaxing breaths before putting anything in your mouth.

**Take a moment to consider whether you’re hungry, thirsty or feeding some other need.**

**We need more water than we think**

Most people spend their lives dehydrated and never know it. If you feel thirsty, you’re already extremely dehydrated. Do you have mild digestive issues or constipation? Try upping your water intake for a month and see what happens.

How much water should you drink? A good guideline is to take your weight in pounds and divide it by two. The result is the minimum ounces of water you should be drinking every day. For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, you should be drinking at least 75 ounces of water each day (2.4 quarts or 2.2 liters).

Drink more if you have strenuous workouts, live in a dry climate or in high altitudes or are pregnant. If this sounds like a lot of water to you,
you’re probably in that dehydrated group.

To ensure you’re drinking all your water, in the morning, fill up as many containers as you need for your daily supply (i.e. two 1 liter bottles). Make sure they’re all empty by the end of the day. It’s best to drink an even amount of water throughout the day.

Many times we read our body’s signals as hunger when it’s actually thirst. The next time you feel a little hungry, drink at least 12 oz. of water first. Wait a few minutes and notice if you still feel hungry or if you want more water.

Drinking plenty of water is your body’s way of eliminating the waste and toxins that build up in your body and collect fat cells. You’ll also be reducing the calories you eat by replacing water with food on occasion.

Not drinking enough water also prevents our skin from rejuvenating itself, resulting in more wrinkles and other skin issues.

Drinking more water is one of the most effective practices you can integrate into your life to achieve and maintain your healthy weight.

**We need less food than we think**

If you’re feeling truly hungry, then eat. But take the time to notice how much is enough before always eating the same quantities you’re accustomed to.

As you’re eating, notice whether you’re still tasting your food. The first couple bites are usually the tastiest. After that your mind drifts off while your hands and mouth keep eating. You become disconnected from your present moment experience.

If you’re enjoying eating, are you actually enjoying the food in front of you or are you reliving pleasant memories of how you felt when you ate similar foods?
If you always eat a whole sandwich for lunch, try eating only half. Put away the other half before you start eating so you won’t be tempted to mindlessly finish whatever is in front of you. Eat the first half and wait an hour before considering whether you want the other half. Maybe eat the other half as your late afternoon snack instead of the candy you usually have to keep yourself going that time of day. This way you won’t experience the sugar high and energy crash that comes with the candy. **You’ll have a more sustained energy level.**

America is notorious for its super-sized portions. I’ve heard endless comments from foreign visitors who can’t believe the amount of food served at most restaurants. As time goes by, those servings seem to grow.

The next time you go to a restaurant, order an appetizer for your main meal. If you like an entrée better, have them put half of it in a to-go box and serve the other half. After I started doing this, I was quite surprised by how little food filled me up.

**Enjoy every morsel**

Can you write down every morsel of food that passed your lips in the last 24 hours? Most people can’t which speaks to how mindlessly we eat.

We eat many of our meals and snacks on the run, at our desk, while we’re reading, driving or working. It’s as if we’re wasting time if we don’t combine eating with another activity.

Many people have an uncomfortable feeling if they’re eating alone, especially in restaurants. If you’re at a restaurant alone, do you bring something to read, absorb yourself in your phone or feign interest in other paperwork? Why is that? Take a moment to answer that question for yourself.

We’re subconsciously saying that the act of eating, nourishing our
bodies, is unimportant – simply something we have to do.

We’ve forgotten that what and how we eat dictates much of who we are and how we feel. With that in mind, I would say that eating deserves a bit more respect and attention.

I once took a mindful eating class that was held at a nice restaurant. Eight of us sat around a big, round table. We ordered whatever we wanted off the menu. As we waited for our food, our instructor set the stage for our experience.

We wouldn’t speak or do any other activity while we were eating.

We would put down our fork or spoon after every bite and chew each bite thoroughly.

We would notice our food’s appearance, the aromas, the textures and the tastes in every bite.

We would notice how we felt as we were eating, stopping when we felt that we had eaten enough.

We would rest and reflect on our experience when we were done.

It was the most amazing dining experience! Yes, the food was good but the experience of noticing and enjoying every facet of it made the food literally come to life.

The next day I tried an experiment. Ever since I was a kid, I got up early and ate a big breakfast while reading. It was a habit that I thought little of since it seemed so normal.

My experiment was to simply sit in silence while I ate the same breakfast without reading. I was amazed at the difference.

I realized how little attention I paid to what I was eating when I was reading. I used to surprise myself when I reached the bottom of my bowl.
of oatmeal thinking, “Did I already eat that whole bowl?” And I paid almost no attention to the tastes or textures.

Without anything to read, I slowed down and savored the aromas, textures and tastes. I realized that the quick oatmeal that I had been eating every day for years tasted like cardboard so I switched to whole oat groats. I also realized that my body didn’t like coffee much so I switched to tea and felt a noticeable improvement.

The most dramatic thing I noticed was the shift in my subtle stress level when I had nothing to do but eat. I was much more relaxed and enjoyed the whole experience infinitely more. To see how much of a difference it made, I pulled out a magazine half-way through my meal and started reading. Immediately I could feel my gut tighten a little and my breath get a little shorter.

We’re all learning about the damaging effects of multi-tasking on our productivity and our health. This was one more example of that.

I’ve noticed the same dramatic difference between eating while standing or sitting. Eating while standing up or driving sends our minds and bodies the message that eating isn’t very important. That it’s something to hurry through to move onto the next task. We deserve more respect than that.

**How and where we eat are as important as what we eat.**

I’ve also experimented with the mindful eating practice of taking three full minutes to eat one small piece of chocolate, blueberry, nut or similar bit of luscious food, savoring the smells, tastes and textures and noticing how it feels in my mouth as I chew it and roll it around with my tongue.

Normally we would toss handfuls of these bits of magic in our mouths, barely noticing what or how much we just ate.
And yet every little nugget is a gold mine to be discovered.

**Simple Steps**

Experiment with the exercises above.

Go to a quiet environment where you can focus on your food and eating.

**Don’t do anything else while eating. Nothing.**

When you’re done eating, write down everything you remember about the experience including how you felt before you started and after you were done. Was it easy or difficult? Did you find yourself generally slowing down or trying to hurry the process? How did the practice affect your ongoing stress level? Describe the tastes and textures and anything else you noticed.

**How does your food affect you?**

Questions I ask myself before eating are, “How will I feel right after I eat this? How will I feel a couple hours later? How will I feel if I ate like this every day?”

When I say “feel,” I mean physically and emotionally.

While I love the taste of wheat bread, I know I’ll feel like I swallowed a lead balloon about a half hour after I eat it.

I love salads but know that I’ll have horrible gas if I eat as much as I want. I have finally broken from my practice of making my salad in a mixing bowl and eating the whole thing in one sitting - especially after I added up the calories I was consuming (wow!). Even though salads are very healthy, it was too much of a good thing for me.

If I finish the last couple bites that my kids leave on their plates, I hardly notice how much I’m eating but I noticed how quickly I put on weight when I do that. I used to think I was eating those last morsels because I hate to waste food. Then I thought about all the food that gets thrown
away in restaurants. And I realized that I was still wasting it by eating it because it was turning into more waste in my body. I didn’t need it. Now I have no problem scraping those last few bites into the trash or composter.

**Simple Steps**

For at least three days (a week, if you can), take a picture of everything you eat before you eat it. Stopping to take the pictures allows you a moment to consider what you’re about to eat. It creates a system of accountability for yourself because you’ll go back and review all the pictures at the end of the three days or week.

After you take each picture, record in your Mindful Eating Journal how you feel before you eat. Are you hungry, thirsty, stressed, depressed, happy, anxious, bored?

Answer the questions: How will I feel (physically and emotionally) in one hour if I eat all this now? How will I feel tomorrow if I eat this now?

Complete the statement: I choose to eat this now because _________. Notice the “should’s” that come from your programming and ego, not your Higher Self.

As you work through these exercises, notice when you judge yourself for your answers. How are you judging yourself as good or bad by making the choices you’re making? How do those judgments affect you and your choices?

Depending on how deep your emotions and subconscious programming run, you may or may not have touched upon the “real issues” behind the difficulties you’ve experienced in your past that affect how you eat.

If you ate or drank things that you knew weren’t good for you, what excuses or rationales did you use? When you review your notes for the
week, do you notice any patterns?

*Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 2. You’ll be using the Mindful Eating Journal to record your experiences. Print as many copies of the Journal as you need to mindfully record your eating and drinking experiences for the week. The Journal is one of the most powerful tools in this program because it will open your eyes to the mysteries behind your eating and thinking.*
Feeding Our Emotions

In many ways, we use food to make us feel better or worse. There are comfort foods like mashed potatoes with gravy that help us to feel better when we’re down, good chocolate or other delicacies that we use to reward or treat ourselves, alcohol to momentarily wash our problems away and salty/crunchy snacks like chips or popcorn to soothe our stress.

While there’s generally nothing wrong with eating any of these foods, the way we eat them creates good and bad interpretations in our minds. Eating a helping of mashed potatoes with gravy along with your chicken and vegetables is no big deal. Eating an entire pot of potatoes with a cup of gravy all by itself while watching TV may help may soothe some difficult emotions momentarily but will inevitably lead to feeling even worse.

**Being aware of our emotional state before deciding what to eat is very important. The point of eating is to nourish our bodies, not feed our emotions.**

You feel kind of hungry so you drink a big glass of water. That felt great but you’re still hungry. What do you reach for and why?

Do you reach for a piece of fried chicken because you need some emotional comforting? Or the flavorless baked chicken because you think that’s what you “should” eat? Or the baked chicken bathed in a delicious sauce because you simply love that dish?

None of these answers are good or bad. Being mindful is not about judging. It’s about simply noticing.

Notice your internal dialogue. Are you judging yourself as not good enough in some way, feeling bad about that and either placating those negative feelings or punishing yourself with food?

If you need emotional comforting, how else can you take care of that
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need? Food will never resolve it. This is the “simple but not easy” part. Whether it’s stress, relationship issues, rewarding ourselves, general depression, neediness, boredom, not feeling like enough or whatever, we need to break the association between our emotional needs and food.

If you weigh more than you would like because you’re frequently eating or drinking to temporarily placate an emotion or feeling, it’s time to face your fears and address that need productively.

Noticing the emotional triggers that lead us to certain unwanted eating behaviors is the first step to changing them. Accepting that you have these emotional needs and being okay with that is crucial.

Getting to the root of the triggers is the next step.

Noticing and digging into your triggers might sound something like this:

I notice that I snack more often than I would like, eating too much when I feel stressed.

What’s the source of the stress?
My job is very stressful.

What about your job is stressful?
My boss is demanding and I’m always working under tight deadlines.

What can you do to manage the stress at work?
I could try yoga, meditation and other mindfulness exercises.

Are you willing to make time in your schedule for these things?
Well, I’m pretty busy already. I’m not sure how I would find the time.

Could you speak to your boss about making changes with your

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workload?

No. They expect a lot of me. I may lose my job if I asked for something like that.

Could you look for another, less stressful job?

It’s so hard to find jobs now and I’ve got it pretty good where I am. I don’t think there would be anything better out there.

In this dialogue, the person has created a number of excuses and roadblocks for making any change. They see no way to change the situation. This person would have to experience more pain from the results of snacking too much than the perceived pain of making a lifestyle change.

So far, the dialogue hasn’t uncovered the root cause. All we know is that this person feels that they must work long, hard hours to please their boss and keep their job and they’re ready to make concessions in their health to accomplish this.

This person may have subconscious reasons for needing to be very busy and stressed. Due to their upbringing, they may feel that they’re not “good enough” so they push themselves very hard to prove themselves but nothing is ever “enough.” Or they may not have felt accepted by their parents so they work harder and harder to gain acceptance from authority figures for whom they work.

Without uncovering and working through these core issues, it’s unlikely this person will make a change. This person needs a compelling reason for making a change. If their father had died of a heart attack that was primarily caused by a poor diet and high levels of stress, this person would have a stronger drive to make changes in their own life. Until then, they will continue to feed their old, limiting beliefs.
Here’s another example with a very overweight person:

I’ve tried everything and I just can’t seem to lose weight and keep it off. Most diets don’t work and the couple that have didn’t last very long.

*How long do you stay on the diets?*

I give them a week or two but I usually get tired of the foods they make you eat. Or it’s just too expensive. Diets don’t work.

*Have you tried cutting out processed foods and focusing on fresh fruits and vegetables?*

Sure but that gets expensive and takes too much time. And I like to eat the kinds of foods I eat now.

*Why do you want to lose weight?*

My doctor said I should and I would probably have a bit more energy.

*What would happen if you didn’t lose weight?*

Nothing really.

This person has little personal motivation to achieve their goal and has plenty of excuses for why they can’t or shouldn’t have to change. This person will continue to “try” the latest diets and fads but, without any kind of heart-felt motivation to make lifestyle changes, nothing will change. At this point, this person’s sole motivation is external – their doctor’s advice.

**Until there’s an internal, personal, compelling and painful reason, change is highly unlikely.**

This person may have deep, subconscious reasons for needing to be overweight. They may have been abused in their past and use their extra
weight to create distance and deter intimacy with others. Or they may have been abandoned in the past and use the extra weight to subconsciously attract more abandonment to reinforce their own “unwanted” perception of themselves.

**Regardless of the changes that we say we want to make in our lives, it’s our subconscious that runs the show. Until we dig deep, understand and address our root causes, lasting change will continue to elude us.**

Get to the root of the problem. Dig it up and face it. Talk to friends. Join a group. See a therapist. Do whatever it takes because you’re worth it. If you don’t do something about it now, the issue will seep into other areas of your life (if it hasn’t already) and create more unwanted symptoms. We want a healthy, happy you from the inside out.

If you have children, they’re observing your habits and behaviors and making them a part of their own lives in their own ways. Know that if you don’t address the issues for yourself, they will become your children’s issues.

**What to do along the way**

Finding and addressing the root cause of your emotional eating can take time and effort. While you’re on your journey of lasting healing, there are steps you can take to improve your health.

Check in with yourself before you eat or drink anything. While you’re taking those three deep breaths, notice what is triggering your desire for food or drink.

These triggers have created habits for you.
Below are examples of triggers, how you may unproductively react to them and healthier alternatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Unhealthy Response</th>
<th>Healthy Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boredom (no zest for life)</td>
<td>Mindless eating</td>
<td>Take a walk, clean or de-clutter mindfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress (living in the future)</td>
<td>Eating crunchy foods, drinking alcohol</td>
<td>Sip a cup of tea, meditate, yoga, visualize a calm place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger (inability to control people and circumstances)</td>
<td>Drinking alcohol, lashing out, burying emotions</td>
<td>Highly aerobic exercise, hit a punching bag, meditate, be in nature, journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing (need for bonding or acceptance from others)</td>
<td>Eating and drinking large quantities of food &amp; drink</td>
<td>Play games (board games, bowling, sports, etc.), create stories, drink water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression (creating negative futures)</td>
<td>Eating fatty comfort foods, drinking alcohol</td>
<td>Exercise, volunteer, meditate, talk to friends, walk in nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Play with different ideas for healthier responses until you find something that works well for you. What works today may not work tomorrow. Be open to exploring and experimenting.

The key is to be aware of these emotional triggers as they arise. As soon as you notice their presence, consciously do the healthy response instead of the unhealthy one.

It will take some time to create new responses, new habits. Don’t beat yourself up if you forget and slip into your old habit.

Mindfulness is about noticing what’s happening in the present moment without judgment. If you don’t like what you’re doing, simply do something different in that moment.

Keep practicing and experimenting. Keep noticing the results. Have patience with yourself.
**Food Quality Over Quantity**

With so little free time, many of us have given up on cooking most of our meals. Whether we go to restaurants or delis or pick up something quick at the grocery, we’re relying more and more on packaged foods. When was the last time you checked the ingredients or labels of what you’re eating? And, more importantly, do you know what you’re reading?

Our food system has evolved in such a way that low-quality, processed foods cost much less than high-quality, simple foods. While low-quality foods cost less when you buy them, we pay the price later in poor health and higher medical bills.

**What are low-quality foods?**

These are foods and ingredients where the nutritional benefits have been processed out of them or they had no benefits in the first place. Examples are white flour and white rice where the basic wheat and rice have been stripped of beneficial layers and what’s left has been chemically bleached. To make up for the physical removal of their nutritional benefits, chemically-based nutrients are added back. Unfortunately, our bodies can’t fully process these chemically-based nutrients. So, even though the food has been “enriched,” it doesn’t mean your body can use any of that “enrichment.”

Other low-quality foods are those that have been heavily preserved with chemicals. If you bake a fresh loaf of bread, how long will it last? Maybe a couple days. If you buy a loaf of bread from the store, how long does it last? I once forgot about some store-bought bread in the back of my refrigerator for two months. When I opened the package, it had almost the same “fresh” texture as when I bought it. And this was one of the “all natural” brands. I’ll never buy that brand again.

Meats can be preserved in a variety of ways. Cured meats like bacon, hot dogs and most deli meats contain nitrates which act as a preservative.
The problem isn’t necessarily nitrates but their byproduct when broken down in your digestive tract, nitrosamines. These are compounds linked to everything from diabetes, blocked arteries, colon, pancreatic and gastric cancers.

Cheap foods fill you up while offering very little nutritional value. Chemicals and preservatives in these foods that the body can’t process are wrapped in fat cells and stored in the body.

This means that what you eat, even in smaller quantities, is making you fat and, with less nutrition, you have much less energy and low-level, nagging health issues such as chronic pains, skin problems and digestive issues.

**Fats, carbohydrates and sugars**

There are huge differences in the types and quality of fats, carbs and sugars (and everything else). Lots of Crisco is not the same as lots of pure olive oil in your body. High fructose corn syrup (aka corn sugar) isn’t even a food – it’s technically a chemical. It does much nastier things in our body than cane sugar or honey. And carbs from a box of well-preserved donuts made from processed, bleached flour are not the same as carbs from a bowl of brown rice.

Fats, carbs and sugars aren’t bad. It wouldn’t be healthy to avoid them. Diets that restrict or eliminate them create deficiencies. Our bodies aren’t able to process the vitamins and minerals we need without them. We need to be smart about the types of fats, carbs and sugars we eat to ensure that they’re part of a healthy diet.

**Fats**

There are a wide range of fats that vary in their nutritional benefits. While some fats are quite bad for us (like partially hydrogenated oils, margarine and refined oils), others are good and even necessary (like extra virgin olive and coconut oils). *Fats don’t make you fat.* Coconut oil
can actually help you lose fat by boosting your metabolism.

Low-fat diets have been repeatedly found to cause weight gain and other health issues. Fats allow us to feel full so reducing them encourages us to eat more. Most prepared foods that are labeled “low fat” include significant additions of sugars and salts to compensate for the missing flavor when fats are removed. It’s been proven that people on low-fat diets eat significantly more sugar, and not the good kinds.

When you read the labels on foods, avoid anything with trans fats. Like high fructose corn syrup, these partially hydrogenated oils have been so processed that their chemical structure is closer to plastic than food. Increased levels of trans fats have also been tied to joint inflammation, obesity, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Manufacturers use trans fats to make processed food look better and last longer on the shelf. Trans fats have no redeeming value.

So what should you be using? Minimally processed fats. The best are coconut and olive oils. Butter (with no additional ingredients) is great in moderation. **If you don’t understand how it’s made or you wouldn’t eat it straight, don’t eat it at all.**

**Carbohydrates**

All carbohydrates are not alike. When you read a nutrition label that tells you there are 20 grams of carbs per serving, do you know what goes into those carbs?

Do they come from processed, enriched, bleached flours or from whole grains? Do they include any fiber to aid in the digestive process?

Controlling the amount and types of carbohydrates we consume plays a large role in controlling our blood sugar and weight. The more processed a carbohydrate is, the quicker it turns into sugar in our systems. Complex carbs that are high in fiber take much longer to convert to sugar (and
energy) and, therefore, offer more sustained energy levels and are better for us.

There are many diets out there that recommend restricting the amount of carbohydrates we consume. I liken this movement to the low-fat diet phase a few decades ago that turned out to be so unhealthy and counter-productive. Removing a huge part of our diet isn’t healthy or sustainable. We simply need to move from consuming high levels of processed carbs like Frosted Flakes and well-preserved white bread to moderate levels of naturally-occurring carbs like slow-cooked whole oats and whole grain sprouted breads.

**Sugars**

What has happened over the last forty years such that almost everything we eat needs to include sugar? And not just any sugar, but high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). When reading labels, be aware that manufacturers may also refer to HFCS as ‘corn sugar’ in an attempt to avoid the bad rap HFCS has received. The FDA finally banned this practice but I continue to see it on labels. Like trans fats, this sweetener has been so processed that the body can’t recognize it as food and rejects it in the form of inflammation, heart disease and a variety of other health issues.

HFCS is in just about everything – breads, crackers, cocktail sauce, yogurt, salad dressings, desserts, ice cream, peanut butter and jelly and the list goes on. If you see this on the label, drop it like a hot potato!

Plain, white sugar has also been completely stripped of any nutritive value and should be avoided.

What are the preferable sweeteners? Anything minimally processed like molasses (great source of vitamin B), maple syrup or honey. If you want crystals, go for turbinado or brown sugars which retain some of their nutrients.
When reading labels, understand how much sugar you’re eating in each serving (and understand how many servings you usually eat at one time). Sugar content is listed in grams. Four grams is equivalent to one teaspoon (4g = 1tsp). Armed with that knowledge, I was shocked at how much sugar was in most foods. If you’re a fan of those fancy coffee drinks, go to the company’s web site and look up the nutritional information for their beverages. You might make a different choice next time the barista asks you what you’re having.

**Artificial Sweeteners**

Many people attempt to limit their caloric intake using artificial sweeteners. For a variety of reasons, this is counter-productive and downright unhealthy.

While artificial sweeteners reduce the calories of the food or beverage they’re used in, they increase our desire for more food and, for many, cause increased overall caloric intake and weight gain. I’ve personally known people who have struggled with weight loss for years while they continued to drink diet sodas. When they switched from diet soda to water, making no other conscious dietary changes, they quickly lost the weight they had been struggling with for years.

Aspertame (Equal and NutraSweet) is the most frequently used artificial sweetener found in diet sodas and just about every other low/no-calorie food. Others are Splenda (sucralose) and Sweet’n Low (saccharin).

These products continue to be sold because the studies that concluded that they were safe usually only studied consumption over short periods of time. Very few food studies have assessed the damage of these toxic chemicals over time. Studies have shown that Splenda reduces the levels of gut flora (the good bugs in your digestive tract that break down your food), increases digestive pH levels (not good) and reduces the body’s ability to absorb drugs and supplements taken orally. If you’re
consuming any of these products and experiencing symptoms like nausea, dizzy spells, disorientation or digestive issues, you might want to consider switching to natural sugars to see if your symptoms subside.

Another reason that artificial sweeteners can inhibit fat or weight loss has to do with how the body treats them. All of these sweeteners are artificial chemicals. Our bodies correctly label them as toxins and do their job to protect our internal systems from the toxins. Our bodies do this by wrapping the toxins in fat cells to prevent them from being assimilated. The more toxins we consume, the more fat cells we require to protect our bodies from potential damage.

Drinking more diet sodas creates the need to carry around more fat cells. Switching from diet soda to water reduces the toxic load on the body and allows the toxins to be flushed out of the body.

**Fewer toxins, less body fat.**

**Proteins**

With the preponderance of low-carb diets, proteins have been placed in the limelight. We all need high quality proteins to rebuild our constantly changing bodies. Unfortunately, there seems to be a heavier focus in America on increased consumption of meats to serve as our major source of protein. This has caused a myriad of health issues like obesity, heart disease, inflammation and cancer stemming from meat increasing the acidity of our body’s systems.

Meat, in and of itself, isn’t the bad guy here. It’s the quality and quantity that we need to be more mindful of.

Combining meats with beans, legumes and other high-protein grains and vegetables offers a much healthier variety of proteins that our bodies can assimilate and digest more easily. Vegetables also offer a much wider variety of nutrients than meats.
Limiting your meat intake to about three days a week will help to reduce the acidic environment caused by the digestion of meat products.

Knowing where your meat came from and what it ate is vitally important. Animals that have room to roam and eat diets that their systems were designed to handle will produce much tastier meats with a much higher nutritional content. Happy animals make better tasting food.

Feedlot and CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation) animals can barely move, live in their own excrement, rarely see the sun, are heavily dosed with antibiotics and hormones, are treated inhumanely and are fed diets that cause them to be ill most of their lives in order to fatten them quickly. This description includes most farm-raised fish. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to eat an animal that was that miserable and sick for most of its life.

Cows are meant to eat grass, not corn. Chickens were meant to eat a lot of bugs, not just grains. Fish eat other fish, bugs or aquatic plants, not corn.

All-natural, USDA Choice, Grade A and similar labels don’t tell us anything about the true quality of the meats we buy. These are the labels on feedlot and CAFO meats and dairy products. Grocery stores are full of them.

Know how your meats lived and what they ate. Your best bet is to find a local producer who you can call or visit. You can find local meat and vegetable producers in your area at www.localharvest.org. There are a lot more of them out there than you might imagine. Not only will you improve the quality of your diet, you’ll also be supporting some great local businesses.

**Eating organic**

According to Wikipedia, organic farming is agriculture conducted according to certain standards, especially the use of only naturally
produced fertilizers and non-chemical means of pest control. Basically, old-fashioned farming the way it should be.

Most of today’s foods are grown in a mono-culture environment where only one crop is grown on massive, company-owned farms. Because this isn’t sustainable, genetically modified seeds are used (many that have been infused with pesticides\(^1\)) along with a variety of toxic chemicals to grow produce that looks good, ships well and stays nice looking longer. Taste? Apparently that isn’t a concern any longer to the industry giants.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 60% of herbicides, 90% of fungicides and 30% of insecticides are known to be carcinogenic (i.e. cancer-causing). Pesticide residues have been detected in 50% to 95% of U.S. foods (fruits, vegetables and commercially raised meats that ate treated foods).

**These toxins cannot be washed off of the foods to which they’ve been applied.** When the chemicals are sprayed on the food as it grows, the chemicals are also sprayed on and absorbed by the soil. Anything in the soil is absorbed by the plant’s roots and distributed throughout the plant, including the parts we eat.

All of these chemicals negatively affect the nutritional quality of the foods they’re used on. **Studies have proven that organic foods contain higher levels of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals than their conventionally-grown counterparts.**

The more foods we eat that contain these unwanted and quite unhealthy chemicals, the more these chemicals build up in our bodies. Studies have shown that mothers pass these chemicals to their babies through their breast milk. Formulas are usually even more toxic.

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\(^1\) Unfortunately, companies are now treating the seeds with pesticides so the poisons are grown *into* the plant. You can’t wash it off because it’s part of the plant. It saves farmers lots of money at the expense of all the people consuming the produce and the bees that try to pollinate the plants.
As I’ve mentioned before, more toxins = more fat and chronic health issues = less energy and vitality = fewer enjoyable experiences in life like playing with your kids or grandkids, dancing with your partner, fitting into the clothes that make you feel great or having the energy, drive and self-confidence to pursue your passions.

We would probably all love to eat 100% organic but, with the high cost of quality food, for most it’s simply not affordable. In the fresh produce section, if you’re working on a budget and can’t buy everything organic, focus on buying organic versions of anything that you’ll eat the peel or skin of like strawberries, apples, peaches, cherries, lettuces and greens, carrots, grapes, etc. While it’s impossible to avoid pesticides in most non-organic produce, this will lessen your intake of toxins.

If you shop at farmers’ markets, you can talk to the farmers and ask about their farming practices. Given the arduous requirements and high cost of being certified organic, many smaller farmers forgo the certification but use organic or better practices.

With meats and dairy products, learn about their source and the farmer’s or rancher’s practices. Know what the animals ate and how they were treated. You’re eating what the animals ate and what they were injected with. What they ate is in their flesh. What you eat is in yours.

While organic versions of foods are always preferable, that doesn’t mean you should eat them in excess. Cereals made out of wheat and lots of sugar are unhealthy even if they’re organic. Five servings of beef a week will still create an unhealthy, acidic environment in your body, even if it’s organic.

In case you need a bit more convincing on the differences between organic and traditionally-grown produce, here are a couple of my experiences:

I noticed that a conventionally-grown tomato had been sitting on my
kitchen shelf about two weeks after I bought it. It looked red and ripe when I bought it and looked the same over two weeks later. I knew that couldn’t be good so I threw it out in the yard for the local wildlife to eat (we live in a very rural area). It sat out there, untouched, for another week before I picked it up and put it in the trash.

Another time I bought a conventionally-grown cantaloupe at the grocery. Again, it sat around a bit too long so I threw it outside, smashing it open on a rock to make it easier for the critters to eat. The next day a bear visited and broke into our trash. It dragged the trash (which included nothing tasty) right by the cantaloupe without giving the melon a sniff.

If the local wildlife is smart enough to stay away from this produce, I think we should too.
Eating Healthy On the Run

We would all love to eat freshly prepared meals every day, but most of us won’t make the time to prepare them on a daily basis.

There’s plenty of low-quality, cheap prepared food out there to satisfy our need for fast food. We can run through a drive-thru or into a convenience store and fill our bellies but we pay for it later, especially if this is a habit.

What’s a busy, health-minded person to do?

The easiest answer is simply to replace low-quality, cheap food with high quality foods and eat in a more mindful way. Prepare your meals and snacks yourself or find someone to do it for you (yes, a personal chef would be wonderful but that’s not what I’m talking about).

Instead of running through the usual fast food joints, take a lunch hour to explore other options. Find the nearest natural grocer or health food store. Most have prepared food sections. Find healthier restaurants who advertise their use of local, organic and higher quality ingredients.

Ask health-minded friends for recommendations of stores, restaurants and prepared foods such as shakes and meal replacement bars (Isagenix has been my family’s all-time favorite for years).

Keep a full bottle of water, some protein bars, unsalted nuts and dried fruit handy instead of heading for the vending machines. Restock from the natural grocer when your supply runs low. Spread your stash around in your car, desk, pantry, purse/bag so you’ll always have something healthy to reach for in an emergency.
Food Emergencies

What is a food “emergency?” It’s usually either an emotional urge to satisfy a craving or hypoglycemia (drastic dip in blood sugar).

If you feel like you have to eat something right now, or else! then take a deep breath and determine whether it’s emotions or a dip in blood sugar.

Emotional urges usually aren’t as drastic as hypoglycemia. With an emotional urge, you’ll want to take a few deep breaths while you ask yourself if food is going to solve your problem. We know it won’t. Take a couple minutes to find a healthier way of addressing the issue like taking a walk to think about the emotional issue.

Hypoglycemia is much more common than most people think. I dealt with this for years before I discovered what it was and how to manage it. If you’re mindful, you can feel the build-up to a hypoglycemic attack.

You may or may not feel hungry. Your mood will go downhill while you feel cranky and generally aggravated. It will be difficult to concentrate. You’ll feel increasingly shaky. You’ll feel like you have to eat immediately or you might rip someone’s head off. In late stages you’ll suddenly feel hot, sweaty and tingly, possibly with parts of your extremities falling asleep. Then you’ll start to see stars and begin to black out.

To avoid all this, eat small snacks throughout the day. Most of these snacks should contain some protein. If you feel a hypoglycemic attack coming on, stop what you’re doing immediately and eat something.

Do NOT eat or drink anything with lots of carbs and sugars.

I used to grab a soda when I felt the crash coming on. I would wait too long and succumb to the urge to chug a whole can of soda in a few seconds. With that jolt of sugar to my system, my body would swing the other way: my mood would turn inward and quiet and I would feel cold.
and weak for hours.

Eat nuts, cheese, meats, beans – anything with a high protein and low carb/sugar content. Once your body begins to process what you ate (in 15 to 30 minutes), you’ll feel much better.
Food Allergies and Intolerances

With the increase in toxins in our environment, our bodies are losing their natural ability to fight off pathogens (viruses, bacteria and fungi). As a result, the incidence of food allergies in adults and children continues to rise.

Most allergies are evidenced by skin and digestive issues. Our skin is our largest filtering and cleansing organ. The body removes toxins through our urine, feces and our skin. Illnesses work through our bodies from the top down and from the inside out.

Skin issues such as eczema and psoriasis are evidence of the body’s healing process in action. Unfortunately, most medical practices recommend suppressing this process with steroidal creams and other medications. These remedies simply force the toxins back under the skin to either resurface when the medication stops or create more serious issues in other organs.

Digestive issues occur when we eat things our body has difficulty digesting. Our gut feeds every system in our body so when our digestive system isn’t working correctly, our bodies suffer.

Taking medication to soothe the symptoms of digestive issues (gas, heartburn, ulcers, constipation, diarrhea, etc.) while we maintain the same damaging diet creates further problems.

These practices don’t attempt to find the source of the recurring problems which usually exist in our diets.

The Biggest Offenders

Foods that account for ninety percent of food allergies are milk, eggs, peanuts (which grow in the ground like potatoes), tree nuts (most other nuts), wheat, soy, fish and shellfish.

It’s frequently difficult to identify the culprits in our diet because allergy
and intolerance symptoms can take anywhere from 30 minutes to two days to appear, depending on a person’s digestive rate and metabolism.

Allergic reactions to these foods are caused by an immune response where our bodies see a protein in the offending food as a toxin. The body releases histamines and other antibodies in an attempt to eradicate the offender. These natural reactions of the immune system are what cause a variety of symptoms that include a runny nose, itchy eyes, dry throat, rashes and hives, nausea, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, general fatigue and life-threatening anaphylactic shock.

While some allergies resolve themselves over time, others may last a lifetime. Studies are currently being performed where patients are given very small amounts of the foods they’re allergic to, increasing the quantities over time under controlled circumstances. Many of these patients have experienced decreased symptoms or complete elimination of the allergy. This is very similar to how homeopathic remedies work.

**Milk**

Issues with milk, specifically cow’s milk, generally stem from lactose, the main sugar in milk, or casein, the main protein in milk. Symptoms can include flatulence, diarrhea, fatigue and skin rashes.

Some people experience an allergic reaction to casein where their bodies send out a warning or histamine response where the immune system attempts to destroy the protein. Symptoms of an allergic reaction include skin rashes and fatigue.

At least 30% of adult Americans are lactose intolerant because their systems don’t produce enough of the digestive enzyme, lactase, which breaks down lactose. Symptoms of this intolerance include flatulence and diarrhea.

Removing milk from your diet may be more difficult than you think.
Besides the obvious (milk, cream, yogurt and cheese), check ingredient labels for the presence of lactose and casein.

**Eggs**

Symptoms of an egg allergy include skin rashes, hives, nasal inflammation, coughing, chest tightness or shortness of breath and vomiting or other digestive problems.

These reactions are caused by an allergy to the proteins in eggs, primarily egg whites. When reading labels, watch for the general statement that the item contains egg ingredients (a federal requirement). Also be aware that more common foods like breads (and their shiny crust), mayonnaise, protein powders, whipped toppings, salad dressings and rich sauces generally include eggs. They are also a stabilizing ingredient in a variety of vaccines.

**Peanuts and Tree Nuts**

Peanut and tree nut allergy symptoms can range from a minor irritation to a life-threatening reaction (anaphylaxis) and include skin reactions (hives, redness or swelling); itching or tingling in or around the mouth and throat; digestive problems, such as diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea or vomiting; tightening of the throat; shortness of breath or wheezing; and runny nose.

Peanuts are included in a variety of candies, foods and sauces, especially some Asian and Mexican dishes.

Tree nuts include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, filberts/hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, coconut, pecans, pine nuts (pignolia nuts), pistachios, and walnuts.

**Wheat and Gluten**

Allergies to wheat and gluten and not the same. Because of this, someone with a wheat allergy will show sensitivity to spelt and
kamut which are derived from wheat and are frequently marketed as safe for those with grain sensitivities.

Gluten is the large protein molecule in dough that creates that gooey elasticity when wet. It is also used as a thickening agent in many recipes including soups and candies. It’s found in grains such as wheat, rye, barley and oats. While oats alone do not contain gluten, they are usually processed in facilities that process wheat and are frequently cross-contaminated. Look for oats specifically labeled as gluten-free, to be safe.

Symptoms of gluten intolerance may include gas, bloating, lethargy, ADD or ADHD and other psychological disorders, dermatitis and joint pain, inflammation of the gut wall and more. Celiac disease is the most extreme permanent reaction to gluten. Up to 40% of the world population may have gluten sensitivities.

**Soy**

Soy allergy symptoms can include tingling in the mouth; hives, itching or itchy, scaly skin (eczema); swelling of the lips, face, tongue and throat, or other parts of the body; wheezing, runny nose or trouble breathing; abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting; and redness of the skin (flushing).

Soy may be difficult to remove from our diets as it has become prevalent in so many foods. In addition to avoiding anything that includes the word “soy” (also known as edamame), the following ingredients may include soy: tempeh, miso, tofu, natural flavorings, hydrolyzed plant protein, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, vegetable broth, vegetable gum and vegetable starch.

**Fish and Shellfish**

Salmon, tuna and halibut are the most common kinds of fish to which people are allergic although many are allergic to many other types.
Those with fish allergies should also avoid fish markets and places where fish are cooked as the proteins in the steam may present a risk. Other foods that may contain fish include Worcestershire sauce, salad dressings, Caesar salads and barbeque sauce.

Shellfish include abalone, clams, crab, crawfish, crayfish, lobster, oysters, scallops, shrimp, cockle, sea urchin and mussels. If you suffer from a shellfish allergy, strictly avoiding shellfish and foods containing shellfish is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction.

Be careful with fried foods. Some restaurants use the same oil to fry shrimp, chicken, and fries. Also, keep in mind that imitation shellfish may still contain shellfish as many manufactures add shellfish for flavoring.

**Identifying Your Triggers**

Because symptoms of intolerances and allergies can take anywhere from 30 minutes to two days to appear, the best way to identify the source of the problem is to follow a strict elimination diet.

Working with one possible allergen at a time over a two week period, completely eliminate the allergen from your diet. Read all labels carefully and ask about ingredients when you dine out. When in doubt, avoid it.

After the two-week period, reintroduce the eliminated food into your diet on a set day. Start with the highest quality and least processed form and eat a small amount two different times during the day.

On the following two days, go back to your elimination diet and see if you experience any of the reactions you noticed before you removed the possible allergen. If you have no reactions, introduce another food that contains the same allergen. Follow the two-day rule again. If you have no reactions after two or three two-day experiments with the same allergen, you can generally rule out that allergen and move on to a
different one.

The process is time-consuming but it’s still the best way to identify where your allergies and sensitivities lie.

**Living Without Your Triggers**

Now that you know what your negative food triggers are, you may feel like it’s difficult to live without them. Dairy, eggs and wheat are such mainstays in the American diet.

This is a lifestyle change like all the others covered in this program. As long as you associate things that don’t serve you with pain, you’ll find it easier to make the changes.

For example, I thought I couldn’t live without bread and pasta in my daily diet. I loved their taste but never noticed how I felt when I ate them. I consciously removed them from my diet for a month while on a low carb diet (this was many years ago). After a month, I was at one of my favorite restaurants where they serve delicious homemade bread when you’re seated. Although I thought twice about eating it, the aroma twisted my arm and I had a couple pieces.

By the end of the meal and on the drive home, I felt like I had swallowed a lead balloon. Instead of savoring and enjoying the delicious meal I just ate, I experienced significant discomfort. I knew it was from the bread.

Over the next couple of weeks I experimented with adding breads and pastas back to my diet and had the same negative experience. Now, when I look at bread or pasta, I can feel that lead weight in my stomach which makes it quite easy to pass on these things.

**Feel the pains that your triggers create **before you eat them.**

If you’re wondering how to cook or what to eat without your triggers, simply do a quick internet search for your specific needs (i.e. gluten-free muffin recipe, dairy-free ice cream, substitutes for wheat flour, etc.).
There’s a myriad of cookbooks for special diets as well. A quick Amazon search will give you a large selection from which to choose.

Most major grocery stores, and most certainly natural grocers, now have larger selections for those with special diets. Sometimes these foods are mixed in with the other groceries (i.e. gluten-free crackers are in the same section as all the other crackers). Other times a store may have a special gluten-free section.

Make it a habit to read labels and know all the names your triggers may go by. Feel the pain of the trigger before you put the item in your grocery basket so you won’t have to stare at it in your pantry.

Being mindful when you’re making purchases and only bringing home foods and other products that support your health and vitality make it much easier to make healthy choices when you’re hungry.

And you know not to go grocery shopping when you’re hungry or feeling any kinds of strong emotions, right?
Mindful Eating In a Nutshell

- Slow down and consider your emotional state before eating.
- Don’t do anything else when you’re eating. Savor every aspect of your food.
- Drink more water.
- Eat smaller portions.
- Consider how you’ll feel, physically and emotionally, an hour and a day after eating.
- Focus on a diet rich in high quality, organic fruits and vegetables and limited quantities of pastured, well-fed meats and dairy products.
- Everything in moderation.
- Listen to your body.

Changing how, when and what we eat is a journey. Lasting change happens over time. Every day is a new adventure. Keep it exciting!

What small change can you make today to move you closer to a healthier way of eating?

- Drink more water.
- Replace processed or conventionally-grown foods with simpler, organic foods.
- Find great recipes and learn about cooking with foods as they are naturally in season with cookbooks like Simply Organic: A Cookbook for Sustainable, Seasonal, and Local Ingredients
- Search for other organic cookbooks on Amazon or at your favorite bookstore.
- Replace a serving or two of meat in your diet with vegetables.
- Replace your artificial sweetener with honey.
- Eat half of the portions you’re used to eating for a day.
- Visit an organic farm.
• Read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver.

Continue to take one or two baby steps like these every day. Slow down to consider how each change affects you. Take the next step based on the lessons you learn along the way.

There’s no one right way to eat. We’re all different.

We humans weren’t designed to eat chemicals. Removing them as much as possible from your life is one of the few rules that I would encourage everyone to follow. Beyond that, feel how each change affects you and your body.

Pay attention.

Be mindful of each bite.

*Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Weeks 3 and 4. These exercises will help you identify and clean out the unhealthy foods and beverages in your life so that you can focus on nourishing your body only with the most nutritious ingredients. You’ll identify any food allergies or intolerances you may have and get rid of them for good, allowing you to feel more vibrant and energetic.*

*These are the steps to fine tune your eating and drinking habits to ensure that you look and feel truly radiant.*
Mindful Lifestyle

Toxins In Our Environment

We’re surrounded by toxins in our environment. Some we can control. Many we can’t. They’re in our air, water and foods.

There are a variety of toxins in the products we use every day that the government claims are safe. Most of the testing that supports this safety claim was performed on animals at lower levels, in isolation, for short periods of time. Very few, if any, studies have been done on long-term exposure or the cumulative effects of exposure to a combination of these toxins over time.

The effects that toxins have on us vary widely depending on a person’s overall toxic load, the strength of their immune system, systemic weaknesses, age, lifestyle, exposure levels on a daily basis and a host of other variables.

What are these toxins? There’s no way I could include a complete list here but some of the big ones are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toxin</th>
<th>Where it’s found</th>
<th>What it does</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides, herbicides,</td>
<td>Fruits, vegetables and commercially raised meats that ate treated foods</td>
<td>Parkinson’s disease, miscarriage, nerve damage, birth defects, blocking the absorption of food nutrients, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fungicides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals like arsenic,</td>
<td>Drinking water, fish, vaccines, pesticides, preserved wood, antiperspirant,</td>
<td>Neurological disorders, Alzheimer’s disease, foggy head, fatigue, nausea and vomiting, decreased production of red and white blood cells, abnormal heart rhythm, damage to blood vessels, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mercury, lead, aluminum</td>
<td>building materials, dental amalgams (fillings), chlorine facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>and cadmium</td>
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<tr>
<td>These are prevalent in</td>
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<td>environment and can</td>
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<td>accumulate in soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>tissues of the body</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxin</td>
<td>Where it’s found</td>
<td>What it does</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorine</td>
<td>Household cleaners, drinking water, swimming pools and hot tubs, air when living near an industry (such as a paper plant) that uses chlorine in industrial processes</td>
<td>Sore throat, coughing, eye and skin irritation, rapid breathing, narrowing of the bronchi, wheezing, blue coloring of the skin, accumulation of fluid in the lungs, pain in the lung region, severe eye and skin burns, lung collapse, reactive airways dysfunction syndrome (RADS) (a type of asthma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flame retardant compounds called PBDE’s</td>
<td>Mattresses, some children’s pajamas, building materials, electronics, furnishings, motor vehicles, airplanes, plastics, polyurethane foams, and textiles</td>
<td>Can seriously impact thyroid, reproductive and neurological functioning at normal, household functioning levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phthalates</td>
<td>Plastics like baby toys, plastic wrap, plastic bottles, plastic food storage containers. All of these can leach phthalates into our food and should never be microwaved or heated. Phthalates are also found in anything containing “fragrance.”</td>
<td>Endocrine (hormone) system damage which leads to cancerous tumors, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. Specifically, they are known to cause learning disabilities, severe attention deficit disorder, cognitive and brain development problems, deformations of the body (including limbs); sexual development problems, feminizing of males or masculine effects on females. Phthalates chemically mimic hormones and are particularly dangerous to fetuses and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxin</td>
<td>Where it’s found</td>
<td>What it does</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formaldehyde</td>
<td>Building materials such as insulation and pressed wood, vaccines</td>
<td>Reproductive system damage in women, headaches, a burning sensation in the throat, and difficulty breathing, and can trigger or aggravate asthma symptoms, fatigue, allergic reactions, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloroform</td>
<td>Air, drinking water and food, swimming pools and hot tubs</td>
<td>Potential reproductive damage, birth defects, dizziness, fatigue, headache, liver and kidney damage, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parabens</td>
<td>Most health and beauty products</td>
<td>Breast cancer (parabens mimic estrogen), endocrine (hormone) system disruptor, skin irritation and contact dermatitis and rosacea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCB’s (polychlorinated biphenyl)</td>
<td>Most farm-raised salmon, which accounts for most of the supply in the United States, are fed meals of ground-up fish that have absorbed PCBs in the environment.</td>
<td>Impaired fetal brain development, endocrine (hormone) system damage, neurotoxicity, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxin</td>
<td>Where it’s found</td>
<td>What it does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPA (bisphenol A)</td>
<td>Plastic bottles (including baby bottles and cups), lining of cans used to can foods, thicker plastic bags, dental sealants</td>
<td>Endocrine (hormone) system damage which leads to cancerous tumors, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. Specifically, they are known to cause learning disabilities, severe attention deficit disorder, cognitive and brain development problems, deformations of the body (including limbs); sexual development problems, feminizing of males or masculine effects on females. Endocrine disruptors chemically mimic hormones and are particularly dangerous to fetuses and children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC’s (Volatile Organic Compounds)</td>
<td>Drinking water, carpet, paints, deodorants, cleaning fluids, varnishes, cosmetics, dry cleaned clothing, moth repellants, air fresheners</td>
<td>Eye and respiratory tract irritation, headaches, dizziness, visual disorders, and memory impairment, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dioxins</td>
<td>Animal fats: Over 95% of exposure comes from eating commercial animal fats</td>
<td>Reproductive and developmental disorders, chloracne (a severe skin disease with acne-like lesions), skin rashes, skin discoloration, excessive body hair, mild liver damage, cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos</td>
<td>Insulation on floors, ceilings, water pipes and heating ducts from the 1950s to 1970s</td>
<td>Scarring of the lung tissue, mesothelioma (a rare form of cancer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you’re curious about those mysterious ingredients in health and beauty products with long names you can’t pronounce (and some more common-sounding ones), go to www.CosmeticsDatabase.org. Search for ingredients or products by brand name to learn about the toxicity of the product (like your favorite shampoo) and all of the product’s ingredients. The site also describes the negative effects of each ingredient (if there are any).

Removing Toxins

While it’s impossible to completely remove all toxins from our environment, there’s a lot we can do to minimize our daily exposure. Here are things you can do that, cumulatively, can make a big difference.

Foods

- Choose organic and free-range foods whenever possible.
- Avoid processed foods.
- Read labels and look up ingredients you don’t understand (Wikipedia and www.CosmeticsDatabase.org are great resources).
- Avoid artificial food additives of all kind, including artificial sweeteners and MSG.
- Have your tap water tested and, if contaminants like chlorine are found, install an appropriate water filter on all your faucets (even those in your shower or bath). Ensure that the filter you’re using filters the contaminants in your water. Filters differ in the contaminants they remove.
Mindful Body: Create the Happy, Healthy Body You Want Through Mindfulness

Bath

- Replace vinyl (PVC) shower curtains that contain phthalates with nylon, linen, or PEVA plastic.
- Use only natural brands of toiletries, including shampoo, toothpaste, antiperspirants and cosmetics.

Home

- Replace toxic cleaners with natural or homemade products to reduce the risk of asthma, allergic reactions and eye, skin and lung irritations:
  - bathroom and kitchen scrubs: baking soda, BonAmi, or simply hot water and the green, scrubby side of a sponge
  - window cleaner: wipe glass with a clean, wet sponge followed by a clean, dry towel (“flour sack” kitchen towels work best and don’t leave lint trails)
  - bleach: lemon juice
  - floor cleaner: hot water
  - wood polish: olive oil and lemon juice
  - Understand that all the toxic chemicals you were cleaning with are being washed down the drain and returned to you in the drinking water you’ll be drinking in a couple days.
- Avoid using artificial air fresheners, dryer sheets, fabric softeners or other synthetic fragrances as they can pollute the air you are breathing and create skin and lung reactions.
- Replace laundry detergents, especially those with heavy fragrances, with natural detergents with no or naturally-based fragrances.
- Use no-VOC paints, stains and primers on walls and furniture.
- Choose furniture made of all-natural components and avoid PBDE’s found in most foam.
- Replace foam mattresses containing PBDE’s or other chemicals with natural or organic mattresses made of wool, rubber or latex.
• Replace synthetic carpets and padding with natural fabrics like wool or natural flooring products like safely-treated wood, bamboo or cork and natural fabric rugs.
• Avoid using stain guards on fabrics.
• Place houseplants throughout your house. Through photosynthesis, plants naturally filter toxins out of the air and can reduce stress.
• Buy gently used electronic equipment, furniture and household items to avoid breathing the off-gas from new plastics, vinyl, solvents, paints, and metal treatments.
• Let in the fresh air. Open windows as often as possible. Stale, re-circulated indoor air is much more contaminated than most outdoor air.

**Vehicle**

• When looking for a new vehicle, consider buying used. That “new car smell” is a toxic blend of plastics and other chemicals off-gassing. You’ll also save a ton of money.
• When you get in a hot vehicle, drive for a few minutes with the windows down to release the build-up of toxic fumes from plastics and adhesives that off-gas when heated.

**Lawn and Garden**

• Replace conventional fertilizers and pesticides (weed killers) with natural or organic options (do you really want your kids and pets rolling around in and breathing those chemicals?)

**Health**

• Remove any metal fillings in your teeth as they’re a major source of mercury. Be sure to have this done by a qualified biological dentist.
• To the extent possible, replace pharmaceuticals with natural
remedies and better lifestyle choices.

As you implement some of these changes, share your experiences with others. Many people taking small steps make a big difference for all of us.

_Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 5. You’ll be surprised how much more energy you’ll have when you take baby steps toward lowering the level of the nasty chemicals in your environment._
Mindful Exercise

Do you feel like you have to go to the gym or get on a treadmill to say that you’ve exercised? If so, you’ll be surprised to know that you probably exercise much more than you think. Exercise is anything that gets your body moving.

Here’s Wikipedia’s definition of physical exercise:

*Physical exercise is any bodily activity that enhances or maintains physical fitness and overall health and wellness. It is performed for various reasons including strengthening muscles and the cardiovascular system, honing athletic skills, weight loss or maintenance, as well as for the purpose of enjoyment. Frequent and regular physical exercise boosts the immune system, and helps prevent the "diseases of affluence" such as heart disease, cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and obesity. It also improves mental health, helps prevent depression, helps to promote or maintain positive self esteem, and can even augment an individual's sex appeal or body image, which is also found to be linked with higher levels of self esteem. Childhood obesity is a growing global concern and physical exercise may help decrease some of the effects of childhood and adult obesity. Health care providers often call exercise the "miracle" or "wonder" drug—alluding to the wide variety of proven benefits that it provides.*

**Who wouldn’t want more of that?**

Finding Time to Exercise

And yet we say that we don’t have time to exercise. We have too much on our to-do list or too many other people to please – kids, partners, bosses, clients, friends, etc. Finding the time is too hard.

Know that we never “find” time for anything. We’re all too busy filling our lives with busy-ness. We *make* time for what we deem important to
us. How we spend our time says a lot about our values.

Setting aside a consistent time every day for something helps to reinforce it as a habit.

Right now, look at your schedule and book a non-negotiable appointment with yourself (include someone else if you like). Make it a recurring appointment every day. This is your movement time.

It doesn’t matter how much time you set aside. The important thing is to start where you are and grow from there.

Make the commitment to yourself to make movement happen at this time every day.

I put a recurring appointment in my Outlook calendar that beeps at me every day at 3pm to “do yoga.” I find this incredibly helpful when I get absorbed in work and lose track of time.

I used to think that I would remember to exercise but I frequently pushed it off to get one more thing done. Then the day would be over and I wouldn’t have done anything.

Setting a reminder works.

**Make Moving Fun**

If exercise isn’t fun or we don’t derive some benefits from it, why would we make time for it on a consistent basis? That’s the problem.

I once joined a gym and enlisted the help of a personal trainer, thinking that I would turn this into my new routine. I went to the gym all of three times and have never returned. It was a great gym and an awesome trainer but it didn’t work for me.

On a whim I picked up a couple books on yoga about eleven years ago. I started small with no expectations. I was simply giving it a shot to see what it’s all about. I was hooked. Whenever my body or mind isn’t quite
right, I practice my yoga. If I skip a day of yoga, I can feel it and I can’t wait to get back on the mat. I’m not complete without my yoga. Yes, it’s my yoga. It’s a part of me.

Some people feel this way about running. It’s their quiet time or social time. Running breathes life back into them, sparks creativity and turns bad moods around. They run every day, no matter what.

My body hates running. There are many bodies that can’t get into the groove of yoga.

Every body is different, unique and beautiful and isn’t designed to be able to do every kind of movement well. If you find yourself thinking about doing something because you should, don’t do it!

**Find something you love, something you can’t wait to do every day, something you crave. If you go a day without it, you feel like your day wasn’t complete. Find that thing for you.**

Don’t think about what you’re doing as exercise. The word exercise has many negative connotations for many people.

**You’re simply moving your body. Anyone can do that.**

Take baby steps exploring different types of movement that bring you joy and a sense of excitement or peace.

Have fun experimenting. If getting outside consistently is a challenge, find something fun you can do inside. It doesn’t have to be the same thing every day. I love practicing yoga alone but, on Sunday’s, I trade my yoga practice for hikes in the woods with my family.

If you’ve been completely sedentary for a long time, moving may not feel that great at first. I know people who were fifty or more pounds overweight, sat at a desk all day and in front of the TV most of the night. They decided that something had to change so they started with eating
more mindfully and taking a short walk after dinner (2 or 3 minutes is a great place to start). In baby steps, their exercise progressed to where they lost all the excess weight and run a few marathons every year.

**Start where you are. No judgments.**

Know that every day will be different. Some days your energy levels and mood will be high and you’ll have no problem doing something active for longer periods of time. Other days your energy will be lower. Adapt your activity to your energy level to keep it interesting and fun.

Many people wonder how long they should exercise move for each day. Please forget about that question.

**The best thing you can do for sustained wellness is to simply do something healthy every day.** That something can be a few minutes of activity throughout your day (a couple five minute walks). It can be time you devote to yourself at the same time every day (a 45 minute yoga and meditation practice in the late afternoon). Whatever works for you.

Here are some ideas to get you thinking and moving. Combine some of these or create your own. The possibilities for ways of moving your body are endless.

**Simply get up and move every day. And move in a way that feels good for you.**

- walk in nature, around your neighborhood, around your office, anywhere, any time
- hike
- garden
- clean your house, hand-wash your car
- play sports
- row
- hoola hooping (it’s bigger than you think)
• play with your kids or grandkids
• take your pet for a stroll or play in the park
• swim at a local pool, hot springs, rivers and lakes
• bike (alone, with a friend or find a club in your area)
• yoga (find an instructor as there is a type of yoga for every body of every size, shape, age, physical limitation and activity level)
• jump on a trampoline
• learn how to belly dance or ballroom dance (you don’t need a partner)
• kayak or paddle boarding
• run in the sand on the beach
• Pilates
• aerobics classes
• rollerblade
• take an Aero Yoga class and learn to fly
• kickboxing (great stress reliever, especially if you’re dealing with difficult people)
• salsa dancing

There’s all kinds of information that will tell you that you have to have the right balance of cardiovascular/aerobic, flexibility and weight-bearing/strength-training exercise. While I agree with this in general, I believe it’s much more important to find a couple activities that you enjoy that you’ll do almost every day because you love them. Many of the activities in the list above combine these types of exercise.

Start where you are. If walking across the house is painful, break it down into manageable chunks that aren’t painful. If you’re experiencing any kinds of pain, use the information in the section on Aches and Pains on page 91 to understand and resolve the source of the pain.
Creating a New Habit

If you’re bored with your current exercise routine or don’t have one, you’ll need to overcome inertia to get started. You’re creating a new habit – something that shouldn’t be taken lightly.

At first a new habit will seem hard to make time for and hard to do. That’s the nature of change. Remind yourself frequently of the worthwhile reasons you’re making this change.

Here are some ideas to make mindful, fun movement a part of your everyday routine that I borrowed from Leo Babauta at ZenHabits.net, the master of creating habits:

1. **Find a trigger.**

   In order to remember to do something new, you’ll need a trigger – something that’s already a part of your daily routine.

   If you want to move your body first thing in the morning, your trigger could be getting dressed or having your coffee. At midday, it could be when you break for lunch or during the mid-afternoon lull when you get a snack. At the end of the day, it could be when you get home and change clothes.

2. **Set up a reminder.**

   At first you’ll need a reminder to practice the new habit after the trigger. Consider putting your exercise clothes where you put other clothes you might have put on in the morning or evening. Or put a note where you drop your bags when you get home. Put the reminder where you’ll see it when you’re performing your trigger.
3. **Work on one habit at a time.**

When we want to create change in our lives, we tend to go gung ho, trying to change everything at the same time. Don’t do it. It’s not sustainable.

Pick one new habit and practice only that habit for at least thirty days before moving onto the next one. It takes at least thirty days to ingrain a new habit. Give it the space it needs.

4. **Start small – very small.**

If you want to add walking for thirty minutes a day as your new habit, walk for five minutes each day for the first month. Add five minutes every couple of weeks after that until you’re up to thirty.

You may feel great walking thirty minutes the first day because you’re excited but, if you haven’t been moving, you’ll have some soreness the next day which will probably keep you from walking again. This is how you kill a habit before it ever sees the light of day in your daily routine.

By keeping it very small, you’re keeping it fun and easy. Your new habit won’t “take” if it’s not fun and easy. Even if you want to do more and doing more will be easy, don’t. Start very small and make the increments toward your end habit small. You’ll get there before you know it.

5. **Log it.**

Create a way to visually show that you performed your new habit every day for the first thirty days. Create a chart. Post a calendar.
Write “I did it!” on a piece of paper next to numbers counting from one to thirty. Whatever works for you.

One idea that has been very effective is to put a big, red X on each day of a calendar that you practice your new habit. You’ll feel motivated to see the beautiful chain of X’s build across your calendar.

This is a very effective way of creating accountability with yourself.

6. **Tell others.**

In addition to creating accountability with yourself, you’ll want to create accountability with other people. Enlisting a friend or two who gets out and has fun with you is especially effective. You’re more likely to show up if you know that someone is waiting for you.

You could also email, text or call friends telling them what you’re up to and that you’ll report your progress to them every day. You can also accomplish this by posting your progress to Facebook or tweeting about it.

7. **Focus on the fun.**

If you see your new habit as a chore at any time, stop and figure out how to infuse it with fun again. If you find that you don’t enjoy the form of movement you chose, find a new one. There’s no rule that says you have to stick with the same type of movement for the full thirty days.

Every time you practice your new habit, do your best to stay in the
moment, enjoying how your body feels as it moves. Feel how open your mind is. Be grateful that you can practice your new form of movement and have the freedom to choose anything you want.

**Reward yourself after you’ve practiced the new habit.** Do something you love or something that makes you feel special. There are infinite ways of rewarding yourself.

*Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 6. This is the really fun part! Here’s where you get to experiment with new and different ways of moving your body and finding something you love to do. This section will also support you in making your fun experiments part of your daily habits.*

*When was the last time fun became part of your routine? Now is the time!*
Aches, Pains and Illness

Most of us live with varying levels of maladies. Some are chronic, some due to old injuries, some we attribute to “getting older,” and others we’re not sure about.

Our bodies have a wisdom that runs much deeper than anything our logical monkey mind could fathom. Our bodies are constantly feeding us valuable information, frequently in the form of some type of dis-ease, if we slow down and get quiet enough to listen.

By listening to our body’s signals, we can gather valuable clues that can lead to our own healing. Developing awareness is the first step. Many of us were taught to ignore our body’s signals as we were growing up. We may have received the message that our mind was the most valuable part of ourselves resulting in living “from the neck up.” Re-discovering the wisdom of our bodies unlocks the door to achieving wellness and more happiness.

It’s all in your head

Through personal experience and research I have learned that most physical issues are the manifestation of emotional issues. Our body’s aches, pains and diseases are its way of telling us that we need to address something inside ourselves (fears, blocks, anger, negative beliefs, etc.).

All emotions can generally be boiled down to a form of love or fear. The “good” emotions like happiness, joy, elation and connection are all forms of love. The “bad” emotions like anger, anxiety, sadness and frustration are forms of fear.

We all experience fear in its many forms. Whether it’s the fight or flight fear of someone following us in a dark parking lot or the anger created when we feel that our ego is threatened.

www.simplemindfulness.com
Sometimes it’s anxiety created from a fear of not having enough money, time, freedom or love. Or a frustration over never seeming to have enough. Or sadness from the fear of life no longer being like it was.

We worry incessantly about things for fear that something will or won’t happen as we would like.

All this creates stress which negatively affects our bodies in many ways (back aches, headaches, digestive issues, immune system deficiencies, chronic diseases).

Louise Hay’s book, *Heal Your Body A-Z: The Mental Causes for Physical Illness and the Way to Overcome Them*, opened my eyes to the possibilities of curing myself by clearing my mental and emotional issues. The book is an alphabetical listing of physical ailments with their corresponding emotional causes. Whenever I have a physical issue, I refer to this book and meditate on the emotional issue, face it and deal with it. When I do, the physical issue is usually gone in a few hours.

Louise Hay and others have cured themselves of cancers using these methods. Her strong belief is that people who undergo surgery to remove an illness and have recurrences of the illness simply haven’t completely cleared the emotional issues that created the illness. Quoting Ms. Hay, “Incurable only means that the particular condition cannot be cured by “outer” methods and that we must go within to effect the healing.”

I lived with back pain for decades. Sometimes it was so bad I couldn’t get out of bed or was severely limited in my movements. I spent tons of money on every kind of traditional and alternative therapy imaginable with no relief. I had to experience all of this before I discovered that the cure was inside me. No one was going to fix me. I learned how to fix myself. I’ve been without back pain for almost ten years.
Our thoughts create our reality. This also applies to our physical bodies.

When we habitually have negative thoughts, the energy of these thoughts will manifest in dis-ease in our bodies.

Below is a short list of some of the dis-eases and their emotional causes from *Heal Your Body*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Probably Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Deep hurt. Long-standing resentment. Deep secret or grief eating away at the self. Carrying hatreds. “What’s the use?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Problems: Lower Back</td>
<td>Fear of money. Lack of financial support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Problems: Middle Back</td>
<td>Guilt. Stuck in all that <em>stuff</em> back there. “Get off my back.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck</td>
<td>Represents flexibility. The ability to see what’s back there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knees</td>
<td>Represents pride and ego.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joints</td>
<td>Represents changes in direction in life and the ease of these movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>Feeling unloved. Criticism, resentment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>Invalidating the self. Self-criticism. Fear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Long-standing emotional problem not solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Probably Cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atherosclerosis</td>
<td>Clogging the channels of joy. Fear of accepting joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>Refusing to release old ideas. Stuck in the past. Sometimes stinginess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Anger you feel you do not have a right to have. Hopelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartburn</td>
<td>Fear. Fear. Fear. Clutching fear.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While acknowledging your dis-ease is the first step, acceptance is the next. Without acceptance, nothing can change. If you’re not accepting then you’re resisting and what you resist persists.

*Acknowledging:* I have a sore back.

*Not acknowledging:* My back isn’t sore. It’s just a nerve thing that will go away.

*Accepting:* I have a bad back now and I’m finding a way to cure myself.

*Not accepting:* This can’t be. I’ve never had a problem with my back before. What did I do to deserve this? I’ll just take some pain killers and it will go away.

As you work through a painful dis-ease, it may be more beneficial to take pain killers for a short period of time to better focus on the emotional healing process. Intense migraines or shooting back pain will interfere with a restful, mindful state.

I do not advocate taking pain killers to simply numb the pain while not doing the emotional work. This is avoidance of the problem and will ensure that the problem persists and potentially worsens.
Learn from your dis-ease

Fighting is a form of resistance to what is. Instead of fighting dis-ease, open to it and receive the message your body is trying to give you. Work with it to guide you in your own healing.

Sit in a quiet place with no distractions. Go into a room away from phones and electronics so you won’t be tempted by their little notifications.

Sit and breathe deeply. Start by taking ten deep breaths, counting each breath. Focus on the breath filling your lungs deeply and exhaling slowly out of your nose. Try to clear your mind of its incessant chatter and just focus on your breath and the counting.

If your mind wanders, don’t beat yourself up. Just release the distracting thoughts and start back at one. You may have to repeat this process a few times before you finally reach ten. This will help you to focus and center yourself so that you can listen to your body.

Slowly perform a body scan from your head, down your neck, arms, fingers, back, hips, legs and feet.

What kind of sensations do you feel?

Be curious about the painful sensations you may be feeling. Exactly where are they in the specific muscles and joints?

If you notice an area that’s sore or tense, don’t try to relieve it or judge it as bad. These are forms of resistance and will only guarantee that the dis-ease will persist. You’re going to make friends with it. Open up and take a good look at it.

Think of that area as something separate from you. Another being that has inhabited a part of your body.

Ask that part of your body what message it’s trying to tell you. What is
the negative emotion trying to protect you from? How is it trying to help you? It wouldn’t be there if it weren’t trying to help you. Wait for the answer.

Our body is always looking out for us and would never seek to cause us harm. While we may be experiencing self-destructive thoughts and behaviors, when we look deeply into this, our body is seeking our highest good. We may not be choosing the most productive ways to manifest these goals.

Know that there is good behind these feelings. Ask the pain what the message is and be open to whatever comes up. Listen. You may hear things you don’t want to hear. Listen anyway. Without listening and really hearing, you’ll go back to repeating the negative things you’re trying to resolve.

Each time you receive an answer, ask again to go more deeply. You’ll have to peel off many layers to get to the essence of the feeling.

Once you feel that the answer is about unconditional love, you’ll know that you’ve gotten to the core.

Feel the love throughout your body. Know that this love is always there to be accessed whenever you want.

Growing older
We can do everything possible to take the best care of ourselves and feel our best. Unfortunately, we can’t stop time and the aging process, however we can change our perceptions of what growing older is supposed to look and feel like.

We can also stop getting attached to a fixed vision of our external selves. We’re constantly changing. If we think that “who we are” is some version of a physical body, we’re doomed to disappointment. Healthy at 50 looks and feels different than healthy at 20.
I love the quote: *We don’t stop playing because we get old. We get old because we stop playing.*

I’ve seen men and women in the 70’s, 80’s and beyond skateboarding, roller blading, running marathons, teaching aerobics and yoga classes and going back to college. These people are in amazing shape both mentally and physically.

In addition to exercising our bodies, it’s critical to continue to exercise our minds. Read. Take classes. Learn new skills. Challenge yourself. Make it a habit every day.

You don’t have to try to be like these people but don’t use “getting older” as your excuse not to do what you love or discover new things.

**There’s no such thing as being “too old” for anything.**

Our society tells us that we’re supposed to slow down at some point – stop being as active, stop trying new things, stop playing. The message seems to be: You don’t have much time left so what’s the point in pushing yourself so hard and trying new things. I think that’s crazy.

Yes, our bodies change as we get older. I’ve certainly noticed some significant changes in my hair, skin and hormones over the past few years. It makes no difference whether I like these changes or not. They’re there and it’s not my nature to pretend they’re not (I don’t color my hair, wear makeup or go for plastic surgery – but that’s me).

**The best thing we can do is accept these changes and focus on the benefits of being older and wiser.**

Rather than focusing on how I’m turning into an “older woman” in a negative sense, I’m so grateful for how far I’ve come in my emotional development. I’m grateful for how I look for a woman my age who has given birth to three amazing kids. I’m constantly learning something new
and helping others to learn more and grow.

We all get older and things change. That’s the way life is. Our job is to accept and embrace these changes and continue to live awesome, full, happy lives until we breathe our last breath.

*Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 7. You’ll begin to better understand the sources of your dis-ease, allowing you to shed them from your life forever. Imagine what could be possible for you when you have energy and feel good all the time.*
Sleep

Sleep is a basic human need right up there with eating, drinking and breathing. Why do we need to sleep? Here are some of the main reasons:

- It allows the mind and body to rest and heal itself from the day’s activities which improves memory and mental acuity.
- It improves our mood with the release of hormones like melatonin and serotonin. Lack of sleep can lead to depression.
- It gives the body time to release negative hormones like cortisol. Stress causes the release of cortisol and cortisol is one of the main causes of belly fat. Sleep better. Lose fat.
- It gives our gut a rest and time to eliminate bad bacteria that build up while we’re awake. Because our gut is the core of our immune system, this boosts our immune system’s ability to fight off pathogens.

Without enough sleep, we can run into a variety of problems like:

- forgetfulness
- depression
- increased stress
- moodiness
- inability to focus
- a variety of illnesses due to a compromised immune system
- weight gain
- fatigue
- muscle pain.

How much sleep do we need?

There are plenty of statistics that say we all need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. That’s a nice statistic but may not apply to you. Every body is different and we need to listen to our bodies instead of studies...
performed in staged environments with a handful of people.

Some studies say that we’ll live longer with five to six hours of sleep while others insist that the range is eight to nine hours. If you’re living an unhealthy lifestyle that includes lots of stress, processed foods and little exercise, an hour more or less sleep isn’t going to matter much.

If you went to bed when you were tired and got up when you felt like you had slept enough, how long would you sleep? This may vary depending on whether you’re chronically sleep-deprived, you exercise and get outside regularly (exposure to the sun matters) or you’re dealing with a condition like depression.

Some people need as little as five hours of sleep while others need up to nine to feel rested. I swore that I needed at least eight hours every night until I had kids. Now I’m just fine with six to seven hours of sleep. If I get less than that, I’m a zombie the next day.

Many of us go to bed much later than our bodies would advise due to electricity in the form of lights, televisions, computers, smart phones and a myriad of other electronic devices. They keep us entranced and waiting for the next scene, notification or message.

When our family goes camping, it’s surprising how much earlier we all go to bed (and with no complaints from the kids). We tend to follow the sun and our own natural rhythms and feel perfectly rested when we get up.

Simple Steps

To get an idea of your own natural sleep rhythm, consider turning off all electronic devices, including all televisions, one hour after you finish dinner (earlier would be even better so you could mindfully enjoy your food).

Simply relax and have a great conversation. Have sex. Play with your kids (board games can be exciting!). Enjoy your unplugged time.

Go to bed when you feel tired.

Instead of waking up with an alarm clock, wake up when you feel rested.

Do this for three days straight and see how you feel. Give yourself a gift and take a three day weekend to do this.

**Sleep Issues**

Besides the interference of electronic devices, there are many other sources of sleep disturbances. Some we can easily control and others may be out of our hands. Some of these gremlins are:

- Stress from work, relationships or anything else in our lives;
- Medications (prescription or over-the-counter);
- Excessive light and/or noise in our sleep environment;
- Sleep environment is too hot or cold;
- Physical issues (pains, difficulty breathing, snoring, digestive issues, etc.);
- Emotional issues (depression, anxiety, migraine headaches, chronic stress, etc.);
- Hormonal fluctuations due to pregnancy, menstruation and the phases of peri-menopause and menopause;
- Alcohol or caffeine consumption;
- Lack of exercise;
- Job schedules that require us to sleep at abnormal times.

No wonder so many of us are strung out and sleep-deprived.

Sleeping well is critical to our physical health and emotional well-being. Minimal sleep loss can negatively impact our mood, energy, efficiency, and ability to handle stress and can lead to illness, accidents, impaired job performance, and relationship stress. To feel our best, stay healthy,
and perform up to our potential, sleep is a necessity, not a luxury.

Most of the impediments to sleep list above can be alleviated by practicing many of the other ideas in this guide: eating well, exercising regularly, meditation, reducing toxins and practicing mindfulness throughout our day.

Specific steps that you can take before bedtime to support you in getting a good night’s rest are:

- Go to bed at the same time every night. Creating a routine tells your mind and body that it will get a break at a certain time each evening. When you vary your schedule, your system is slightly stressed by not knowing when it will be able to rest. Don’t skimp on sleep during the week thinking you’ll “make it up” over the weekend. It doesn’t work.
- Eat a light dinner at least two hours before going to bed. Make breakfast or lunch your biggest meal of the day. Eating big before bedtime keeps your internal systems busy into the night which can interfere with the rest and cleansing processes that normally happen during sleep.
- Stop using all electronic devices (TV, phone, computer, games, etc.) an hour or two before bedtime. Whether you realize it or not, these devices, their screens and their output keep your mind racing long after you turn them off. Give yourself time to decompress before attempting to sleep.
- Take a hot bath before bed to relax your muscles and your mind.
- Read something relaxing.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine at least two hours before bedtime. While alcohol might make you sleepy at first, it interferes with normal sleep patterns causing you to wake up in the middle of the night.
- Using your journal, a notebook or anything else you can write on
(do not use a computer), write out all the thoughts, questions and worries swimming around in your head. Getting them out of your head and onto paper helps to clear and relax your mind so you can sleep. It also helps to move things from your conscious mind where ‘what if’s’ and other worries plague you to your subconscious mind where your ingenious solutions come from.

- Practice some light exercise and stretches to work out the kinks from the day and relax your muscles. For example, take a walk after dinner or do some stretches before bed. Save the more vigorous exercise for mornings or mid-day when your body has time to calm down.

Create a bedtime routine that you enjoy and that you can follow every night. You’re creating a new habit so you’ll need triggers that you’ll follow without thinking about them.

At first the routine will take a bit of effort. Don’t feel silly about writing the routine on a post-it and putting a copy on your bathroom mirror and another on your refrigerator. Program reminders on your electronic devices to remind you to turn them off at a certain time. Do whatever it takes.

Every night that you follow your routine, put an X on your calendar to create accountability to yourself and maintain motivation. Your routine should feel pretty routine after about thirty consistent X’s. And you should be getting a good night’s sleep.

**Naps**

If you’re feeling run down during the day (most of us feel this in late afternoon), napping is a great idea. Your body is trying to tell you something. Listen to it.

Unfortunately, most of us never make the time to nap. We’re too busy being busy. We go for the caffeine and/or sugar buzz that keeps us going
until dinner and we wonder why we feel so wiped out at the end of the day.

I used to be one of these people. I couldn’t imagine taking an hour out of my busy day to do something as unproductive as sleeping.

Working from home, I tested out napping on a couple occasions. I was tired so I lied down and fell asleep for over an hour. I felt like a zombie for the rest of the day. I deduced that naps were not for me.

After performing a bit more research, I realized that I wasn’t following the cardinal rule of napping. Instead of sleeping for as long as I wanted (usually an hour and a half), I found that napping should only take about 20 minutes (30 minutes, max). If we sleep longer, our bodies drift into the deeper phases of sleep causing us to feel drowsier when we get up.

A related lesson is not to nap in bed. It’s much harder to get up after 30 minutes when we get all comfy in our big bed. Try napping in a sitting position in a chair (put your head on your desk) or in your car (if you can’t close an office door).

If you can’t fit a 20 minute nap into your day, consider even shorter power naps of about 5 minutes. Any length of complete rest helps.

It also helps to tell yourself that you will wake up in 20 minutes (or however long you choose to nap). This sounds strange but it works. With practice, it’s also a way to get up in the mornings without an alarm clock. As you’re going to sleep, tell yourself what time you want to get up. You’ll be waking up a little before your alarm goes off after about three days.

Taking one or two naps a day will help you to stay awake and feel refreshed. If you’ve been trying to wake up earlier in the morning to practice your passions or squeeze a bit more out of each day, naps are the way to make that happen.
To boost the benefits of your nap, follow it with a ten minute walk outside. The exercise, sunshine and fresh air will revitalize you and you’ll be much more effective at whatever you do for the rest of the day.

Open your Mindful Body Workbook, read and complete the exercises for Week 8. You’ll learn how to implement healthier habits when it comes to getting enough rest. No more surviving on caffeine and sugar. You’ll feel alive and awake naturally.
Putting It All Together

After taking in all the information here, you may think, “Boy, do I have a long way to go!” or “Wow! I’m closer than I thought.”

Regardless of how far you think you need to go, your first question is probably, “Where do I start?”

And the answer is: Start where you are. If you don’t, you’ll never start.

This means removing “I’ll start when...” from your vocabulary. The stars and actions of the universe will never come into that perfect alignment you’re looking for before starting. Just start now.

The Workbook

Your next step is to open your workbook and go through all the exercises there, if you haven’t already. I’ve broken everything down into weekly sections although you may choose to go at a much slower pace.

If you try to implement too much at one time, you’ll fail. Science has proven it many times.

As you progress through the program, make sure to keep your “why” front and center every day. Your why is made up of the strong emotional reasons you decided to make changes now.

In order to make lasting change, you need to feel awesome when you think about making the changes you want. You also need to feel very painful emotions when you consider staying where you’ve been.

Apply the steps on developing new habits on page 87 to any change in your lifestyle. Take very small baby steps in one area at a time. Allow one change to become part of your routine over the course of a month before moving on to the next change you choose.

You must take action in order to create the change you want. Reading all this wonderful wisdom without acting on it will get you a bit more
enlightened but not any healthier.

Putting one foot in front of the other, taking baby steps each day will change your life.

**Mentoring and Guidance**

If at any point in your journey you feel that you could use someone to help you focus, keep you accountable, walk through the process or simply someone to talk to, I’m here for you.

I offer a variety of [mentoring packages](http://www.simplemindfulness.com) that include one-time or ongoing email and phone support. Your success is my highest priority and I will do whatever it takes to support you toward being healthier and happier.
About Paige and Simple Mindfulness

I hope you enjoyed and, more importantly, will get a lot of benefit from this program. May it serve you well on your journey.

It’s my mission to support you in new, mindful ways of being that will allow you to live a happier and more fulfilled life.

If you have any comments or feedback, I would love to hear from you. Feel free to contact me at Paige@PaigeBurkes.com.

To help spread the good word, tweet about the program on Twitter or post about this program and my blog on Facebook. Check out my blog at www.simplemindfulness.com and sign up to receive the latest posts, updates and your free Mindful Living Guide. It only takes a second and it would mean a lot to me.

Thank you for being here and being so awesome!

Paige

www.simplemindfulness.com