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Healthy Habits

Spring 2022

Motivation is what gets you started
Habit is what keeps you going.

Finding Discipline

Written by Brenna Fels Photo by Alexander Jawfox

A healthy lifestyle not only changes your body
It changes your mind, attitude, and mood



Finding the motivation to begin implementing positive, healthy changes in your life can be difficult. Maybe you've been pushing it off because you don't know where to begin. Or maybe you've been pushing it off because every time you have started to try some new healthy habits, they never end up lasting for very long. To find the motivation to make long-term healthy changes begin by creating a clear goal and understanding why you want to reach this goal. It's important to know the goal you want to achieve, whether it's just to be healthier, lose weight, or become more fit, to remind yourself of what you are trying to accomplish to maintain motivation to reach that goal. Taking the time to understand how and why you want to achieve this goal can also help you maintain motivation as you will be able to implement expectations to achieve the goal.

Now that you have the motivation to begin a healthier lifestyle, you have to find habits that will be sustainable. But first, let's talk about what a habit is and how we can sustain it. A habit is a behavior that is continuously repeated until it becomes a routine and occurs subconsciously. To find behaviors that you can repeat until it becomes an unconscious routine, begin with small changes. It's very common for people to make too many significant changes at once, making it harder to keep up and maintain them. Making changes to your life can be challenging, so don't overwhelm yourself with too much at once. Begin by finding small, realistic goals that you can achieve.

When you first begin trying to implement a new behavior into your life, it's important not to be too hard on yourself if you make mistakes. Even once a healthy behavior has become a habit, it's still ok to take rest days. What's important is that you stick with the habit and don't give up after taking a day off. Even if you feel like giving up, push yourself to keep going because part of making a habit is pushing through the tough times and staying motivated. Setting short-term goals can help you stay motivated in achieving your habit. Reaching milestones along the way will help you recognize the progress you are making. To achieve a habit, you have to remember, habits are not a finish line to be crossed, they are a lifestyle to be lived. Healthy habits don't come from dieting or unrealistic health trends. They come from making it a lifestyle. Small goals help you live and embrace your new lifestyle rather than having one big goal to earn at the end.

Now that you have the motivation and understand how to maintain a habit let's talk about important healthy habits you can implement into your life. Incorporating physical activity into your daily life can help you live a happier and healthier life. One of the biggest reasons people struggle with maintaining a workout routine is that they don't enjoy the workout and get bored from doing the same thing. Finding the right kind of workout for you and having a variety in your routine can help you get the well-rounded exercise that you won't get bored of. Cardio is a fun and popular activity that can be achieved through walking, running, cycling, swimming, dancing, and more to help elevate your heart rate. Weight training can help build muscle, burn body fat, strengthen your bones, and improve heart health. Yoga and Pilates work to regulate body movements and breathing through stretching, body exercises, and meditation. These exercises can help strengthen muscles and improve coordination, balance, and

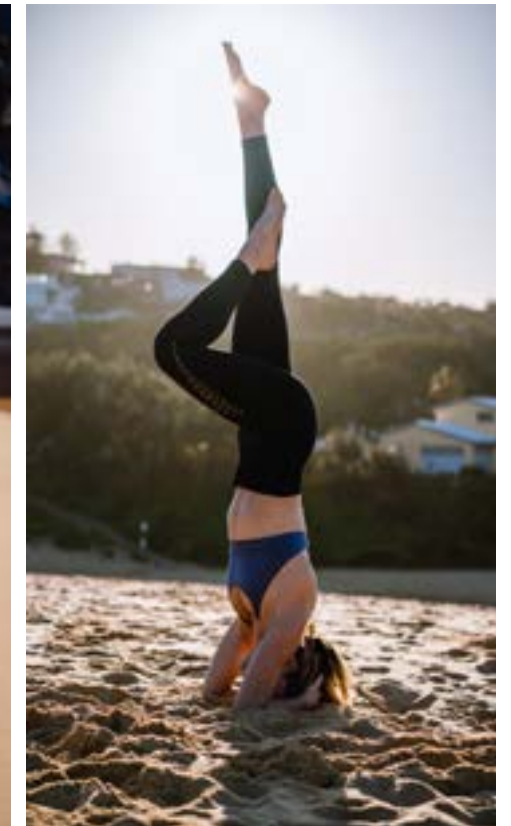
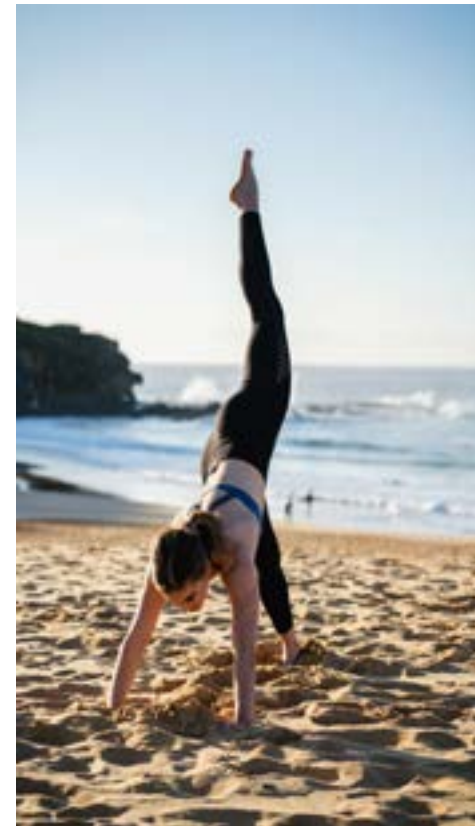
stability. Taking the time to learn about different workouts and what they do can help you find the right kind of exercise for you.

Another important healthy habit is to supply our bodies with healthy nutrients so that it can properly function. How we fuel our bodies can affect our mood, health, and ability to perform daily activities. Eating organic foods is a smart choice for improving your health. Organic foods reduce the number of chemicals we are exposed to, like pesticides and antibiotics. These chemicals are a cause of many cancers and other health concerns. Organic foods also give us more nutrients and vitamins. From the way that organic crops are grown, they can extract healthy minerals and nutrients from the ground, causing them to become enriched in vitamins. Meat and dairy products that are organic are also healthier because they aren't raised with hormones, antibiotics, or GMO-feed. Research also shows that organic foods can contain more omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are important nutrients your body needs to stay healthy. They are also a good energy source to help our heart, lungs, blood vessels, and immune system. If a food product is organic, it also means it is GMO-free, meaning the food was not genetically modified.

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Cutting out added sugars is also a good habit to maintain in your daily life. There are many health benefits to reducing your intake of added sugars. The first benefit is that your cognition will improve. The less sugar you eat, the healthier your brain will be, allowing you to be more focused, have a clearer mind, and better memory. Cutting out added sugars also reduces your risk of getting diabetes. Type 2 diabetes's leading cause is from overeating sugar, so the best way to protect yourself is to reduce the sugar you eat. Overeating sugar can also throw your hormones responsible for keeping a healthy weight off balance. The area in the brain that controls your appetite can be affected by sugar because it tricks your brain into thinking you're still hungry when you're really not. Sugar can damage your immune system making you more susceptible to getting sick. This is because your white blood cells lose 50% of their ability to fight off bacteria for up to five hours after eating sugar.

The power of sleep is often overlooked. Most adults need at least 7-9 hours of sleep every night but get 6 hours or less on average. Not getting the proper amount of sleep can hinder one's cognitive abilities and affect memory, learning, and attention. Sleep helps your metabolism and blood sugar stay regulated. This helps control your mood, energy levels, and mental function. Sleep plays a significant role in memory consolidation, where our recent experiences are transferred into our long-term memory, so to improve our memory, we need to get enough sleep. As you



Photos of beach workouts by Thomas Yohei

sleep, your body repairs and heals from any damages by building more proteins that form the cells needed to keep you healthy.

Even after finding the motivation and proper habits to adopt into your life, you may find that there are days when you are tempted to give in to bad habits again. Having self-discipline is important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle to resist the urge in the moment to break your healthy habit and continue working towards your long-term healthy goals. Self-discipline is needed to make significant long-term changes in your life.

Often, people struggle between self-discipline and balance. Most people forget their healthy plans after a while because they deprive themselves too much to the point where they crack and then give up. While it's important to have self-discipline to maintain the habits, you need to find a healthy balance in your life so that it becomes a lifestyle and not a burden.

So how do you find the right balance to maintain healthy habits? First, remind yourself that it's ok to take days off. Especially when it comes to working out, always listen to your body. Rest days are normal and needed. If your body is telling you that it needs to rest, listen to it. Don't push yourself, or you won't be happy and love what you're doing. There are many benefits to taking a day off from working out. Rest days can help your muscles grow stronger, allowing you to perform better during your next workout. Taking a day off can also reduce the risk of getting injured. Giving your body a chance to recover before continuing can help muscles and bones strengthen. Rest days help you maintain your motivation because if your body needs to rest, you'll be ready to perform better the next day, keeping your

excitement and energy up. If you can only give half the energy in the workout, you'll feel lazy and want to quit.

Taking a day off from your healthy eating habits is also ok. Nobody is perfect, and you shouldn't deprive yourself of food if you want it. Having a break from healthy eating once in a while will not harm you. Balance is key. By calling this day a cheat day, you will associate it with guilt and regret. But there is nothing wrong with having a day off, so again listen to your body. If your body is telling you it wants something, don't deprive it! Think of this day as a reward that you earned for all of the hard work you have accomplished. Incorporating days off helps you have a balanced eating plan.

Living a healthy lifestyle reaps so many benefits and rewards. By taking care of your body and health, you can reduce your risk of early death by 66 percent from cancer, 65 percent from cardiovascular disease, and 57 percent from other causes. Physical activity and a balanced diet with proper hydration increases your energy, strength, and endurance, allowing you to enjoy daily activities more. If you're ready to take the leap and begin finding healthy habits, start by finding the motivation. Make a clear goal and understand why you want to reach that goal and how you can achieve it. Learn about what habits can help you reach your goal to find the right ones that will be sustainable for you. Remember to start small and find stability between being disciplined and balanced. Healthy living requires you to take responsibility for your decisions, leading you to make smart decisions for today and the future. Investing in your health is one of the most important choices you can make to live a balanced and healthy life.



Top 5 Healthy Habits

1. Organic food

Organic foods don't allow artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives which eliminates thousands of chemicals that are added to conventional foods that can cause many health problems like obesity and diabetes. Organic foods are also a healthier option because they contain more enzymes and micronutrients.

2. Daily exercise

Regular exercise can help improve muscle strength and endurance because exercise helps provide more oxygen and nutrients to your tissues, which allows your cardiovascular system to function better. Daily exercise also improve cognitive function and can help manage or prevent health problems.

3. Drink plenty of water

Drinking water helps your body absorb nutrients from your food by dissolving and delivering vitamins to the rest of your body. Water also helps your cognitive function by improving focus, alertness, and short-term memory.

4. Get enough sleep

Getting enough sleep is essential to allow the mind and body to recharge to function properly. Sleep affects brain functions like attention and productivity. Getting enough sleep can help to strengthen your heart.

5. Cut out added sugar

Cutting out added sugar from your diet can decrease the chance of having diabetes, heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, and liver disease. It can also reduce cholesterol levels and improve dental hygiene.