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One of the reasons I enjoy working on this magazine is that I truly enjoy learning and applying new things, and I believe that lifelong learning is an important tool for helping to maintain health and wellness as we age. What better way to engage in lifelong learning than working on a magazine that constantly challenges me to research new topics and stay at the forefront of nutritional knowledge and at the same time help inform so many others?

Lifelong learning is an important tool in the art of growing young, but it’s one that can be intimidating. For some people, just the words “learning” and “education” send up red flags. But lifelong learning can be something completely different from formal education.

Oftentimes in school we are forced to learn things we really don’t care all that much about. However, lifelong learning gives you the opportunity to research the things you care about the most. It can take place anywhere, from a classroom to a nature hike, and with lots of structure and leadership or completely independently. Most of all, it can be fun! Learning any new fact is good for the ongoing efficient functioning of your brain and cognitive abilities, regardless of where you learn the fact and what it concerns.

That said, I think when you apply a desire to never stop learning to your health, you begin to realize that the results are far greater and last much longer. The chances are good that if you are reading this magazine, you are interested in health and wellness. You probably even do a fair amount of research on the topics already. But I still would like to remind you how important it is to stay updated on current topics and learn new pieces of information. I can personally attest that the staff members of this magazine experience something new with every issue, and we are all better for it. If The Art of Growing Young is the only place you look for new nutritional, health and wellness information, I encourage you to branch out and look in new places.

Every piece of new information learned is a tool that will help you live a happier, healthier life. And as I’ve already said, beyond learning these new tools the very act of learning new information is wonderful for cognition, which makes lifelong learning a vital process as we get older. So I hope you enjoy this issue and learn a few new tips and tricks that will help you on your path to wellness.
Sitting at a desk all day?

There is important news for everyone who cringes at the thought of sitting at a desk all day. A recent three-year study of more than 200,000 adults discovered that people who sat 11 or more hours most days of the week were 40 percent more likely to die younger than were people who sat less than four hours a day. Every little step away from your desk can help. Frequent trips to the water cooler, restroom, mailroom or anywhere else you can walk will help get you out of your chair and in motion.

Nutritional News

Want a memory-boosting meal?

Eat more fresh coldwater fish. Yet another study has come out saying that DHA, a particular omega-3 fatty acid, may have an important role to play in helping ward off degenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer’s. Your body can’t manufacture DHA on its own, so you have to get it from food and supplements. By far the most abundant natural source of DHA is coldwater fish, including tuna, salmon and mackerel.

Fight against aging

There’s a new dietary tool in the fight against aging. An important new study points to fiber consumption as a possible way to live a healthier, longer life. According to this new research, making an effort to consume 25 to 30 grams of high-quality fiber a day can help reduce your risk of dying younger by as much as 22 percent. This is in addition to the myriad other reasons a high-fiber diet is good for your health — improved digestion, lower LDL cholesterol, more stable blood sugar, easier weight loss and more.

Feeling down about your body image?

Stop talking about it. Researchers have uncovered a link between body image and depression in both men and women. Moreover, people who frequently talk negatively about themselves are much more likely to have negative body images. Because we tend to attract into our lives the things we focus on, changing the way we think about ourselves can greatly impact our lives. The next time you see yourself in a mirror, find something positive to say and see what a difference it can make in your mood.

Yoga

Middle-aged people who struggle with weight control may find help with yoga. In one recent study, overweight people ranging from 45 to 55 years old gained 18.5 FEWER pounds over a four-year period when they practiced yoga. This slow and relaxing exercise also helps improve balance, promotes flexibility and helps reduce stress levels.
Fitness

“Finding a friend to work out with who has similar goals can greatly increase your chance of success.”
Start by picking activities that you actually enjoy. Don’t start an exercise routine that you hate just because you think it will be good for your body. If you don’t enjoy what you are doing, you will be far less likely to continue doing it. And when it comes to exercise, there are so many choices that everybody can find something they enjoy. If you are just starting out, keep it simple and keep it fun. Don’t choose an activity that will lead you overexerting yourself or you may end up with strained muscles that prevent you from exercising at all.

If possible, try picking a few different options and vary what you do. Being in the habit of getting regular exercise does not mean you must do the same monotonous task every time. Adding variety to your routine will also help keep you interested until the habit is formed. For example, if you enjoy running, make sure that is your primary activity, and also be sure to change up your route from time to time to keep it fresh – but be sure to include a few other activities, such as light resistance training to build muscle or playing a favorite sport with friends, throughout the week.

Once you have your routine picked out, set small goals for yourself. Having something to work toward will make sticking with the routine easier. But make sure that your goals are realistic and timed correctly. Setting a goal of losing 20 pounds in a month is unrealistic and likely to fail, and you may become discouraged. Instead set small, realistic weekly goals to work toward. Meeting these goals every week will give you frequent rewards, build confidence and keep you on track to solidly forming your exercise habit.

Finding a friend to work out with who has similar goals can greatly increase your chance of success. Knowing that somebody is relying on you to meet him or her at the gym is a big motivator to not cancel. And your friend will experience the same feelings, so both people win. And during the workout you can feed off each other’s energy and encourage each other to work harder.

Stay positive and focus on the good feelings and experiences you have. If you find yourself wanting to skip a routine, think about how good you will feel afterward if you do it. Physical activity stimulates the brain into releasing feel-good chemicals, which means you are guaranteed to feel good after a workout. Other positive things to focus on are how good you feel meeting your next goal, fitting into that special outfit, hearing friends and coworkers comment on how great you look, etc. Staying positive will also help you better understand the reasons why you want to exercise in the first place. This will give you even more things to focus on. Keeping a positive attitude will make your new routine much more likely to become a habit. On the other hand, if all you focus on are negatives, you will be much more likely to abandon the routine.

Finally, don’t beat yourself up if you miss a day. The more times you work out, the more likely you will be to form the habit. However, instead of worrying about missing last night’s trip to the gym or working too hard to try to make up for a missed night of exercise, focus on just getting some workout time in. Even if it is only for a few minutes, the more times a week you are able to exercise, the healthier you will be and the more likely it is that your habit will be cemented into a permanent routine in your life.

These are just a few tips for excuse-proofing your exercise. The effort that you put into forming a new healthy habit of any kind will reward you many times over if you stick with it. When you find yourself struggling, just remember that after those first six weeks, it will be much easier to stick to your healthy routine, because good habits are hard to break.
Feature Article
One of the principal reasons tea is considered to be such a healthy beverage is because it contains high concentrations of catechins, a type of potent antioxidant. In a tea leaf picked freshly off the plant, up to 30 percent of the dry weight can be composed of catechins. Not all teas are equal, however; white and green teas contain more catechins than do oolong and black teas. On the other hand, oolong and black teas contain more theaflavins.

White, green, black and oolong teas all contain a group of antioxidants known as polyphenols (which includes catechins), best known for helping guard against cardiovascular disease. In addition, all true teas contain a unique amino acid known as L-theanine, which is thought to be able to help the brain both relax and focus.

The health benefits of catechins have been studied extensively in humans and in animals. These are the same nutrients responsible for the health-boosting properties of red wine and dark chocolate.

Of the many benefits of catechin-containing teas, one of the greatest may be the nutrients’ role in healthy aging. Research studying mice found that consuming ample amounts of catechins and engaging in regular physical activity delayed some forms of aging in mice as well as reduced oxidative stress in mitochondria, the primary energy-producing component of every cell in our bodies.

Because different teas contain different amounts of various nutrients, they can produce a variety of different results. If you are in need of a warm beverage to help ward off the chilly night air and help you relax before bed, black tea has been shown to affect a specific stress hormone and help one recover from life’s stresses (though you may want to choose a decaffeinated form if you are not a heavy caffeine user).

Further scientific evidence of the health benefits of tea comes from clinical trials done at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. In this particular study, researchers discovered a positive relationship between green tea and metabolism. Green tea seems to help stoke your metabolic fire, which helps increase the rate at which your body burns fat and calories.

Yet another study, published by the Imperial College of London, found teas containing theobromine, a diuretic and stimulant, to be particularly effective at reducing coughs (even more effective than is codeine, according to the study).

One more component of tea that many people look for is caffeine. Though amounts can vary greatly depending on brewing methods, freshness, species and drink additives, tea is generally one of the healthiest sources of caffeine available. This is one of the reasons that hot and cold teas are popular

The healing power of tea was first discovered more than 4,000 years ago when the emperor of China, Shennong, claimed in *The Divine Farmer’s Herb-Root Classic* that certain tea infusions were useful for treating a variety of health conditions, including abscesses, bladder problems and lethargy. According to modern science and recent research, the emperor may have been on to something. Teas contain high concentrations of a variety of nutrients we know to have health-boosting properties. Read on to discover the science behind Shennong’s observations.
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This patented whole-lipid extract has long been prized in coastal New Zealand, and offers extraordinary support to maintain healthy joint function.

Patented Whole-Lipid Extract
beverages around the world. Many people turn to tea to help support a modern lifestyle that causes them to try to wake up early and stay active later into the night.

Caffeine is a natural stimulant. It affects the nervous system by increasing coordination, energy and awareness. There is even evidence that caffeine can temporarily boost memory function. And the benefits don’t stop there. Countless other studies on tea and its nutritional content have shown that caffeinated teas can also lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

There is much evidence that tea can be a healthy boost to nearly any diet, but tea drinkers need to read labels closely. There are many herbal “teas” on the market that are not actually teas at all. They are actually herbal infusions more properly called tisanes. While these drinks can be delicious and relaxing and possibly supply other types of health benefits, they do not contain the same health-boosting nutritional content as actual tea (Camellia sinensis).

So always read labels carefully, especially when looking at teas described as “herbal infusions.”

No matter why you choose to drink tea, always drink it freshly brewed. As time passes, tea can lose some of its nutritional content. So if you drink it throughout the day, brew several small batches rather than one large one in the morning. This will help ensure optimum freshness, taste and nutritional content.

From traditional Chinese medicine that used tea to treat a wide variety of ailments, such as peripheral vascular disease and coronary artery disease, to modern research that is continually discovering new ways that tea affects our bodies on a cellular level, it does appear that many teas possess potent healing powers. Ongoing research continues to find new ways tea may be good for our bodies. So the next time you are trying to decide what to drink with your snack or meal, try brewing a cup of one of nature’s healthiest beverages.

“One of the principal reasons tea is considered to be such a healthy beverage is because it contains high concentrations of catechins, a type of potent antioxidant.”
“Do something you enjoy, even if it is for just 15 minutes. Read a book, listen to music, take a bath, write a letter – it doesn’t matter what you do as long as it is an activity that lowers your stress level and brings you joy.”
There is an old saying: “Stop and smell the roses.” It is simple but profound. We tend to get so busy balancing work, family and friends that we can forget to stop and appreciate what we are experiencing. Have you ever thrown a party and afterward realized that you were so busy trying to be the perfect host or hostess that you didn’t have time to enjoy your own event? If you can answer yes to that question, it is because you were not able to stop and smell the roses. Unfortunately, this is all too common for many people. After years of conditioning from living in a fast-paced world, we would be much better off learning how to slow down and pay attention to what is going on around us.

Slowing down and paying attention to your feelings may seem difficult at first. But the joy and peacefulness you experience when you do it are worth the effort. Start by monitoring your feelings. You don’t need to keep a running list of every thought and emotion you feel throughout the day, but begin to take notice at several points throughout the day during your normal activities. Do you find you feel stressed and hurried a lot of the time? Then it may be time to make a change and reclaim time for yourself.

Set aside a block of time at least once a week for you to just stop and observe your inner self and the environment around you. The more days you can find time for yourself, the better, but start with at least once or twice a week and gravitate to once a day. Even a few minutes can be beneficial. Let your family know that you will be unavailable and turn off your cell phone and computer. Do something you enjoy, even if it is for just 15 minutes. Read a book, listen to music, take a bath, write a letter – it doesn’t matter what you do as long as it is an activity that lowers your stress level and brings you joy. And more important, pay attention to how you feel. Don’t skip this “you” time. Make it a regular part of your family’s routine, and eventually your spouse and children will automatically know that during this time they shouldn’t bring you the phone when it rings or interrupt you with a question that can wait.

If you feel like you just can’t escape the world long enough for your alone time, there are many ways to find a few minutes of personal joy throughout the day. If your commute to work is a safe one, you can spend that time focusing on things you enjoy while listening to relaxing music. Shift your mental process so you are no longer thinking about what you will be doing once you get to work. Let those thoughts come when you actually get to work. Live in the moment and allow your mind to wander to topics that bring feelings of joy and happiness.

Another good time during the day to focus on yourself is during lunch. Instead of letting your work duties interfere with your lunch break, make a conscious effort to turn this into time for you. Physically remove yourself from your work space, even if it means just sitting in your car instead of at your desk. If you work from home, take a walk around the block. Changing your physical location will help create a mental divide that leaves more time for your own thoughts and happiness. Spend this time taking care of yourself and focusing on things that bring you joy – call a friend, read a book, take a walk or watch children play in a park. This is your time to do whatever you want.

Modern technology has a way of invading our lives without us even knowing it. Cell phones can be especially invasive. But they can also be used as a tool to help bring peace and joy into your life. The next time your phone rings, don’t answer it. Instead use the ringer as an alarm that reminds you to center yourself. Take a couple of minutes, or even just a few seconds if that is all you have, to stop, assess your feelings and make sure that you are in a positive frame of mind. Remind yourself that this is your time and you have control over your own actions. Focus on something that brings you joy; allow yourself to truly feel happiness and smile. This activity works well with incoming text messages and emails too.

There are countless ways to refocus your thoughts in order to take care of yourself and ensure that you don’t miss out on life. Making a conscious effort to slow down and find the ones that work for you in order to bring joy and happiness into your life may be one of the most rewarding changes you will ever make.
1. OATMEAL
Oatmeal is rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates, and fiber adds bulk to food without adding a lot of calories. Complex carbohydrates can also help stabilize blood sugar levels, which prevents spikes and lulls in energy. Steadier blood sugar levels also help curb cravings. Fiber promotes healthy digestion, so you feel fuller for a longer period of time after eating. Consequently, a bowl of oatmeal in the morning can be a healthy way to keep you energized and feeling satisfied until lunchtime. Other foods rich in fiber include other whole grain cereals, whole grain breads and pastas, wheat bran, and fruits and vegetables.

2. LEAN MEATS
Lean meats contain protein — and lots of it. Multiple studies have found that eating protein causes the intestines to secrete glucose. This is sensed by the liver, which, in turn, sends signals to areas of the brain that control hunger. Therefore, enriching meals with a little extra protein can be an easy way to help control cravings later in the day. The next time you make a salad, add a small amount of chicken breast or a few thin slices of lean ham or turkey. Vegetarians can boost their protein content with soybeans or tofu. This added protein will help keep you feeling full and satisfied so you won’t want to snack later.

3. MIXED NUTS
Nuts are incredibly protein- and energy-dense. Due to nuts’ protein content, just a small handful can trigger feelings of fullness. And their energy content can help quickly pull you out of an afternoon energy slump. Many people find that reaching for a handful of nuts in the afternoon is the perfect way to stay satiated and energy filled throughout long working afternoons. Nuts also make a good addition to nearly any meal. Almonds, peanuts or walnuts can be added to any salad for a protein and energy boost. Nuts are high in calories, though, so just a small handful is all that is needed to keep you feeling full and working hard.

4. WATERY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
Fruits and vegetables with high water content, such as melons, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, mushrooms and grapefruit, can help fill you up with fewer calories so you will be less likely to snack later. Many fresh fruits and vegetables are also good sources of fiber, which will further promote feelings of being satisfied after eating your meal or snack. The combination of fiber and water is perfect for anyone also dealing with weight control, because the low-calorie combination will leave you feeling fuller for longer without adding lots of extra fat and calories.

5. SPICES
Throughout the years, nutritional research has shown that people often feel more satisfied after eating less food when the meal is spicy. Hot foods also tend to lead to eating more slowly and drinking more water between bites, and both actions tend to reduce the number of calories consumed at a meal. Seasoning your meals with chili peppers, hot sauce, salsa, curry and other hot spices can lead to feelings of fullness and satisfaction without overeating. Spices were the original food preservatives. Modern science has shown them to be very potent antioxidants and to contain many compounds that provide powerful prevention against cancer and degenerative diseases.

Have you ever eaten an entire meal and by the time you stood up from the table you were wishing for more because you weren’t satisfied? Some foods are better at satiating you than are others. Here are five healthy foods that are sure to leave you feeling satisfied so you can make it to the next meal without needing to visit the vending machine at work for an unhealthy snack.
The next time you pass by a magazine rack at a bookstore look at the different body types you see on magazine covers. Muscle-building magazines will feature huge-muscled body builders in elaborate poses, cooking magazines often have people with larger bodies and big smiles in front of delicious meals, and fashion magazines tend to have incredibly skinny women in tight-fitting clothing.

Those are just a few examples of what you see every day, and they don’t take into account what you see on television or online or even the differences in body types around your office. It’s no wonder there are so many people with different opinions on what represents a healthy body.

To understand the truth of what a healthy body actually is, you may need a quick lesson on how weight has been viewed throughout history. The very concept of being overweight, let alone obese, is actually relatively new. Thousands of years ago our hunter-gatherer ancestors struggled to consume enough calories simply to avoid starvation. And they ate a diet vastly different than what we know today. Overindulging on unhealthy junk food simply didn’t happen because that food didn’t even exist.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, being overweight or obese was often viewed as a sign of wealth because the economic elite were able to afford rich foods and had staff to handle manual labor. The health detriments were not fully known, so many people wanted to be overweight because of the association with wealth. Painful conditions such as gout were known to be associated with rich foods and alcohol but were not understood.

As time passed, lifestyles slowly changed and unhealthy foods became more accessible; as a result, being overweight or obese has become much more common, to the point that it has reached epidemic proportions around the world. As the epidemic spreads and we see more and more people with larger waistlines, the accepted definition of what constitutes healthy body weight has become blurred.

The term “obese” means that a person has gained enough weight that it may have an adverse effect on his or her health. That definition hasn’t changed; it’s our perception that has. You don’t need to go all the way back to our lean hunter-gatherer ancestors to see the change. Just 50 years ago an obese person was easy to spot because there were so few of them. Now when an overweight person compares himself to others, he doesn’t see anything different than what he sees when he looks in a mirror. That is a problem. Some waistlines you see are so large, they can make overweight seem healthy and healthy seem undernourished.

If we can’t compare ourselves to others in order to judge weight, we must find another way. For many years the standard way of measuring being overweight or obese was the Body Mass Index, or BMI. Your BMI is a calculation based on height and weight. While it is good for tracking weights over large populations, it falls short for individuals interested in their own health. This is because the BMI does not take into account factors such as how much lean muscle mass a person has. If you lift weights intensively, there is a good chance a BMI reading would tell you that you are overweight or obese, because muscle is so much heavier than is fat.

A much more accurate way to measure being overweight or obese is the waist-to-hip ratio, which compares the size of your waist to the circumference of your hips. Much like the older BMI method, you simply do a quick calculation and then compare your results to a chart, which will give you a good idea of your health. Unlike the BMI, the results of the waist-to-hip ratio do take into account lean body mass.

Yet another way to calculate obesity is the waist-to-height ratio. This newest method is becoming more widespread because studies are showing it may be an even more accurate method. Waist-to-hip and waist-to-height ratio calculators can both be found online, and both are far more accurate than is simply comparing yourself to others or weighing yourself on a bathroom scale.
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- Vitamin B12 which contributes to cell metabolism and also helps reduce fatigue.

- Folic Acid which contributes to amino acid synthesis.

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Being overweight and being obese essentially cause the same health problems, although obesity can cause more severe problems because it is a more severe condition. The more overweight a person is, the more likely he or she is to experience health problems. This is an unavoidable fact. The more a person weighs, the higher his or her risk becomes for having a heart attack or stroke and for developing high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, metabolic syndrome, sleep apnea, high triglycerides, multiple types of cancer and other health issues.

Keeping weight off isn’t just good for the body; it’s good for the mind as well. When you perform cardiovascular exercises in order to lose weight, you are also increasing blood circulation throughout the entire body, including your brain. More blood flow to the brain means more oxygen and higher-functioning cognition. Exercise also stimulates the release of feel-good chemicals that can boost your mood. A post-workout increase in the levels of a particular hormone responsible for brain cell growth has also been observed. In fact, scientists have seen anatomical differences in the amount of gray and white matter between physically fit and less-fit people. There is simply no denying that physical exercise can impact mental function, which is yet another reason to get in shape and shed those excess pounds.

Understanding what it means to be obese and what the repercussions are is only the beginning. Once you have educated yourself and discovered whether you are at a healthy weight, the next step is to take action. The two best ways to avoid gaining excess weight are to eat a healthy diet and to live an active lifestyle.

An unhealthy diet of fast-food meals combined with a sedentary lifestyle is a sure way to gain weight. But a diet based largely on fresh fruits and vegetables and lean sources of protein, combined with a lifestyle that includes time for regular physical activity, will greatly reduce the chances of becoming overweight.

“A diet based largely on fresh fruits and vegetables and lean sources of protein, combined with a lifestyle that includes time for regular physical activity, will greatly reduce the chances of becoming overweight.”
Herbs & Supplements
By far the healthiest way to cure a sweet tooth is to eat sweet fruits and berries. A bowl of non-fat yogurt topped with raspberries and blueberries is a decadent treat that will satisfy your craving without requiring any added sugar. Fruits such as pears, mangoes, oranges, dates, raisins and grapes can cure a sweet tooth as well. When mixed with a low-fat dairy product such as cottage cheese or yogurt, these fruits are easily transformed into a sweet and creamy dessert everyone is sure to love.

However, if you are looking for a sugar alternative in a recipe, here are a few options to choose from.

**HONEY**
Honey has been used as a sweetener for thousands of years. Because of its chemical makeup, honey is digested more slowly than is table sugar (sucrose). This means you will receive a steadier source of blood sugar and therefore energy. In addition, while table sugar has virtually no micronutrients, honey contains antioxidants, minerals, vitamins, amino acids, enzymes and phytonutrients. Many people believe that raw, unprocessed honey from local farmers is good for allergies. But take care to choose your honey wisely. Processed honey is not the same and is far less healthy.

When used as a sugar alternative in cooking, remember that honey tends to be sweeter than table sugar, which means your recipe will require a little less of it for equal sweetness.

**AGAVE NECTAR**
Originating in Mexico, agave nectar or syrup is made from the sap of the blue agave plant. Unlike honey, it can easily be blended into both hot and cold liquids. Agave nectar has a lower glycemic index rating than does sugar, so it will not cause the rapid spike and subsequent lull in blood sugar levels.

Agave nectar is usually a little sweeter than is honey. One advantage of agave nectar is that it comes in multiple varieties – light, amber, dark and raw. You can experiment with each to find the one that best suits your taste. Or stock your kitchen with multiple varieties and use them depending on your needs. You may find you like to sweeten your tea or coffee with a darker, richer syrup but prefer replacing sugar in recipes with a lighter one that has less noticeable taste. Unfortunately, as agave has gotten popular, some unscrupulous producers have been diluting it with cheaper corn syrup, which provides few nutrients. Read labels closely before buying to ensure that you are getting what you want.

Even though honey and agave nectar have some nutritional benefits over regular table sugar, one must remember that they still stimulate the pancreas to produce insulin, which can contribute to glucose metabolism upsets.

**STEVIA**
Stevia is one of the newest and sweetest natural sugar alternatives on the market. Stevia comes from a plant originally from Paraguay, but it is now grown in many countries because it has gained popularity. The compounds in its leaves are used as a sweetener approximately 300 times sweeter than sugar when extracted and refined, making stevia far sweeter than both honey and agave nectar. The sweetest of the compounds found in the stevia leaf, and the one used in most commercial stevia products, is rebaudioside A, or reb A.

Stevia is a natural product with hundreds of years of use as a plant food and medicine and actually provides valuable support for the pancreas. It appears to be an excellent sugar alternative because it is very sweet yet comes with a negligible glycemic index rating, which means it won’t cause a spike in blood sugar. This helps control cravings, maintain energy and avoid lulls in energy after a meal. Its very low glycemic index rating also makes it a good option for diabetics who need to monitor their blood sugar levels closely.
“As families grow, adjustments need to be made and traditions might need to change. Choose the ones that are the most important to you and let others go in order to simplify your life.”
The holiday season is one filled with happiness, laughter and joy. But it can also be filled with high expectations, busy schedules, big bills and other stresses. Don’t let holiday stresses ruin the season. Use these tips to stay calm and make the most of this wonderful time of year.

During the busiest times of the year, being organized is helpful. Plan ahead and fill out a family calendar that stays in the kitchen, living room or other prominent place. That way everyone in the family will know when and where they are needed. In addition to keeping a family calendar, being organized can mean making and sticking to a budget, asking friends or family for extra help with party preparations and cleanup ahead of time, planning weekly menus and making sure that regular tasks such as grocery shopping don’t get overlooked.

Don’t completely abandon your healthy habits. Try to maintain as much of your healthy routine, such as going to the gym, walking during lunch and eating healthy, as possible. Undoubtedly, the demands of the holiday season will lead to missed workouts and rich foods. Enjoy the experiences and foods that replace your normal ones, but make an effort to stay as healthy as you can. Exercise, healthy sleep habits, stress-reduction activities and proper nutrition will help keep you energized and mentally sharp. This will ultimately help you deal with the increased demand the holiday season will put on your lifestyle and body.

Keep your expectations realistic. Not every holiday is going to be perfect. Each holiday season will have its joyful memories and its negative ones. As families grow, adjustments need to be made and traditions might need to change. Choose the ones that are the most important to you and let others go in order to simplify your life. Staying flexible and adapting to these changes instead of fighting against them can greatly reduce the amount of stress you feel.

Let yourself say no. Accepting every party invitation and agreeing to every favor asked during the holidays are sure ways to overload yourself to the point where you make yourself sick from stress. Despite any pressure you may put on yourself to be helpful, there is nothing wrong with politely refusing an invitation or request. True friends and family will understand that your life is busier during this time of year and you won’t be able to do everything for everyone. Chances are good that the person who issued the invitation is feeling just as stressed.

Put your needs first. This is the season of giving, and there is much joy to be received from giving. However, sometimes you need to give yourself the gift of putting your needs first. When your calendar starts to fill up, be sure to leave a little time for yourself. Even if it’s just 15 minutes before your family wakes up, make time to be alone in order to refresh and recharge. Use this alone time in any way you need. Do you need to take a walk around the block in order to clear your head? Or a hot shower to wash away the day’s stress?

Finally, use this season of happiness as a reminder to adjust your thought patterns and focus on the positive aspects of your life. There will be many moments during this holiday season when you feel joy and happiness. Embrace these feelings and experience them as fully as you can. When you align yourself with the positive, healthy aspects of your life, you will attract more positive things, people and experiences. As you do this, you will find that your stress melts away because your life will simply include more natural stress busters, such as positive-minded friends and stress-free get-togethers where everyone helps out. The more happiness and positive things you focus on, the less room there is to feel stressed — and the more fully you will be able to appreciate this wonderful season of friends, family and happiness.

**Holiday stress-busting tips:**
- Get organized
- Keep healthy habits
- Manage expectations
- Say no when you need to
- Put yourself first
- Focus on happiness
While colds and the flu are definitely seasonal diseases, they are caused by exposure to germs and viruses. Our winter actions and lifestyle choices are responsible for increasing how frequently these illnesses are contracted and transmitted.

One of the biggest factors in determining why the flu is seasonal is the amount of sunlight we are exposed to during the winter. Shorter days during the winter mean less exposure to sunlight and a lower component of shortwave ultraviolet rays (UVB) in that sunlight. This is compounded by cold weather that prompts us to wear more clothing and spend less time outdoors.

So what exactly does less sunlight have to do with the flu? According to doctors and researchers it may be the single biggest factor in explaining why winter is “flu season.” This is because the amount of sunlight you are exposed to is directly proportional to the amount of immune-boosting vitamin D your body makes from skin’s exposure to the sun’s rays.

While most of us learn in school that vitamin D is important for healthy bone growth, we are not always taught that the vitamin also plays a critical role in the immune system. Vitamin D has been seen to help offer broad-spectrum protection against illnesses such as colds and the flu. Because there are many types of influenza, the broad-spectrum protection against illness that vitamin D offers may make it extremely important during flu season. A recent study performed at the University of Copenhagen found that vitamin D is crucial to the body’s ability to activate the killer T cells as part of our immune defenses against infection.

Spending more time outdoors is the easiest way to increase the amount of vitamin D your body produces. But your skin needs to be exposed to the sunlight, so don’t cover your face with a scarf, because it will be one of the only areas exposed to the sun during the colder winter months. Only in the tropics and subtropical regions does the UVB portion of sunshine remain strong enough to produce significant amounts of vitamin D in the winter months – so supplementation becomes more important in colder climates.

Another reason winter is cold and flu season is because the cold weather causes many of us to stay indoors more. That means more time in tight quarters with other people. This, in turn, exposes us to more germs from other people.

Most experts believe that many illnesses spread from person to person mainly by droplets made when people cough, sneeze or talk, and also by hand-to-hand contact. Other people then come in contact with these droplets and often inoculate them via their eyes, noses or mouths. Avoid putting your hands to your face, especially your mouth, nose and eyes, where germs (viruses and bacteria) can enter the body.

Good hygiene is always important no matter what time of year it is, but it can be especially helpful during winter. Washing your hands with soap and warm water helps keep your hands free of illness-causing viruses and bacteria. Always wash your hands before eating and after using the restroom or sneezing or coughing.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. It’s a good idea to keep a small bottle of hand sanitizer at your desk during the winter, because office mates tend to pass germs around easily.

Keeping your home and office clean can also help deter the spread of germs in winter. Cleaning surfaces such as desks, phones, keyboards, door handles and counters with household disinfectants can remove germs and bacteria before they have a chance to spread to another person.

You don’t need to lock yourself in at home to avoid getting sick during the winter. Spending more time in the sunlight, supplementing your diet with vitamin D, practicing good hygiene habits and using common sense can help minimize the amount of time you spend sick in bed and maximize the amount of time you are up enjoying the many wonderful aspects of beautiful winter weather.
“One great way to build resiliency is to set realistic goals. Every small goal you successfully meet will boost your resiliency and make meeting the next goal easier.”
Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adversity. A person can be resilient in any area of life. Mentally or physically, at home or at work, spiritually or intellectually – having resiliency will help you recover from setbacks and achieve your goals. Being resilient is not always easy, but with just a little work and the right attitude, you can build your resiliency and ensure a healthy, happy future.

Don't take rejection personally. Everybody experiences rejection from time to time. Dwelling on rejection in a negative way is an easy trap to fall into. A resilient attitude is one that accepts rejection for what it is but doesn't take it personally. It's helpful to step outside of the situation and look critically rather than emotionally at what happened.

One great way to build resiliency is to set realistic goals. On the other hand, setting unrealistic goals that are too hard to achieve is a surefire way to lower your resiliency. Goals need to be challenging in order to spur you into action, but at the same time they must be achievable. Every small goal you successfully meet will boost your resiliency and make meeting the next goal easier.

Never stop learning and looking for new ways to better yourself. Every new fact you discover and every new skill you learn are tools that you will use as you work toward your goals. The more knowledge and skills you have, the more resilient you will be because you will be better equipped to face unexpected challenges.

Open your heart. Studies have actually shown that performing acts of kindness can trigger the release of serotonin, a natural feel-good chemical. Having more of these mood-boosting chemicals in your body can help you overcome difficulties. Think about how you interact with the world around you depending on your mood. Most people find they are much more likely to give up when faced with difficulty if they are in a bad mood. However, when faced with adversity when they are in a good mood, people are more likely to find positive ways to overcome challenges.

Keep things in perspective. When you come across challenges or miss a goal, always try to keep things in perspective. For example, let's say your goal was to lose two pounds this week, but you ended up gaining one instead. Without a resilient attitude, you may be tempted to give into cravings because you don't see the point of trying. Worse, you may give up on your healthy diet altogether. But if you have a resilient attitude, you will be able to remind yourself that there is always next week. And another week after that. Missed goals and unexpected challenges are not the end of the world. If you keep things in perspective you will be able to bounce back from any setback.

Take care of yourself in as many ways as you can. Caring for your mind, body and spirit will prepare you for unexpected challenges. A healthy body is much better prepared for encountering setbacks, a healthy mind is able to discover ways to overcome adversity; and a healthy spirit will let you bounce back and stay positive.

Don't be afraid to scare yourself. If you are too afraid to try something new, you are guaranteed to fail. However, if you can take that first step you could surprise yourself and find that maybe it isn't as scary as you thought. In addition, every time you are able to overcome something that scares you, the next time you are afraid you will be more likely to continue anyway. Scaring yourself occasionally can be a good way to build resiliency and confidence.

The right mental focus can boost resiliency in ways you may not even be able to imagine. Aligning your focus to the positive aspects of life will attract more positive people, experiences and circumstances into your life. But focusing on negatives will attract more negative people, experiences and circumstances. Positive-minded friends will support you when you need it. Positive experiences will give you the confidence needed to overcome adversity. Positive circumstances will help keep your thoughts focused where they need to be. It's easy to see how attracting positives into your life will boost your resiliency.

Finally, the most important step in building resiliency is to never give up. No matter what happens, no matter what setbacks you experience, never give up on achieving your dreams. With the right outlook, a healthy lifestyle and an open heart there is no limit to what you can achieve in life.
“If your child seems to shy away from all fruits and vegetables, try serving them in a way that makes them fun to eat.”
It is essential that our kids learn how to make healthy choices at the dinner table. A healthy diet is required to fuel our children as they grow, go to school and play with friends. Here are seven tips for making sure that your children get all the nutritional support their bodies need in order to grow up healthy and happy.

1. Shop Smart
Never forget that as the adult, you control the foods that enter the house. That can be a big responsibility if you struggle with healthy eating yourself. It can be helpful to make a full list of healthy foods before you go to the grocery store, and stick to it. Never shop on an empty stomach, because you will be more likely to make less-healthy impulse buys. Occasionally letting your child pick out one sweet treat is okay, but don’t let him or her convince you to regularly buy junk food he or she may have seen on television.

2. Lead by Example
A child who grows up watching his or her parents eat a healthy diet will be much more likely to continue that healthy eating style later in life. If you make your son eat a healthy dinner but he sees you coming home with empty fast-food containers, he will resent that and only want junk food more. If your daughter is made to eat her vegetables before she can have dessert but you don’t do it yourself, that will be seen as unfair and create conflict.

3. Make Meal Preparation a Family Activity
Letting your children assist in meal preparation will help them feel invested in what they are about to eat. From weekly meal planning to shopping to cooking, the more involved your children are, the more likely they will be to eat the foods served. This will also help teach your children more about nutrition and how to make healthy food choices.

4. Leave Room for Choices
Of the foods you do bring into your house, allow your children to choose which they want to eat and how much to eat. Children need structure, but they also need to feel that they have some control over their own decisions. This applies to all areas of their lives, even at the dinner table. If you have followed steps one, two and three, your child will make good decisions when allowed to.

5. Start Young
Don’t wait for your children to be old enough to help before starting them on a healthy eating plan. Many food preferences are developed early in life. So the earlier you begin to serve healthy, wholesome foods, the more likely these kinds of foods will become favorites. However, don’t worry if your child doesn’t immediately like a new food. You may need to serve it a few times. This is especially true if the child is older and new to learning how to eat healthy.

6. Make Meals Fun
Even the most intimidating food can be made more palatable to your child simply by presenting it in a fun way. If your child seems to shy away from all fruits and vegetables, try serving them in a way that makes them fun to eat. Cut them into different shapes and serve them with a favorite dip or sauce.

As your child becomes more used to the idea of eating fruits and vegetables, you can slowly remove the dips or replace them with healthier options. Young children and picky eaters are more likely to try unfamiliar foods when they are served in fun and creative ways. Arranging vegetables into the shape of a funny face on a pizza is a great example of how you can turn a food your child might normally avoid into something fun and different that he or she looks forward to seeing on the plate.

7. Be Creative
When all else fails, get creative. Pureed vegetables can be hidden in all kinds of recipes. A cup of pureed pumpkin can be slipped into a pizza or pasta sauce for added fiber and nutritional content, and your children will never know the difference. Minced veggies can be added to meatloaf or hamburgers. When a recipe calls for sugar, swap in raw local honey or date or palm sugar instead.

It is essential that our kids learn how to make healthy choices at the dinner table. A healthy diet is required to fuel our children as they grow, go to school and play with friends. Here are seven tips for making sure that your children get all the nutritional support their bodies need in order to grow up healthy and happy.
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Can I care for my hair, nails and skin with my diet?

Every part of your body is affected by the nutritional content of the foods you eat. Foods containing sulfur, such as fish, meat, nuts and some vegetables, can help promote healthy hair and nails because sulfur is critical for maintaining the very building blocks of the protein component that is part of your hair and nails. Beans, whole grains and other vitamin B-rich foods help ensure that your hair follicles receive a constant supply of blood and oxygen. Citrus fruit can be important too because vitamin C is essential for creating collagen, which is the major component of the protein in hair, skin and connective tissues. These are just a few examples of foods that can help promote healthy hair and nails. But it is easy to see how important a healthy diet is for overall health.

What beverages can contribute to my daily water intake?

When it comes to staying hydrated, water is the main beverage you should think about. Some drinks, such as coffee and tea, can have a healthy place in your diet due to their antioxidant content, but they should not be regarded as being as worthwhile as water. Coffee, tea, both regular and diet sodas, and other caffeinated drinks have a net dehydrating effect on the body. That means if you drink too many of them, you actually need to consume even more water. Worse still, sodas add a tremendous acid load to the bloodstream, which can cause calcium and magnesium to leech out of the bones as the body tries to maintain its pH balance. Fruit juices, even ones labeled as 100 percent juice, are far healthier than soda but still contain sugars. When you’re thirsty, the best choice by far is fresh, pure water.

Which exercise is better for me, aerobic or resistance?

Aerobic exercises are those that burn calories and elevate your heart rate for extended periods of time. Resistance exercises build lean muscle mass. Both are equally important for a healthy body, and both help the other become more effective. Because muscle tissue is responsible for burning calories, the more muscle you have, the more calories you will burn during aerobic activities. Running, biking, swimming and other aerobic exercises will increase stamina, which can help improve your weightlifting regimen. Additionally, a third category, flexibility training, can help improve the results you gain from both your aerobic and resistance exercises. None of these exercise options is better or worse than the others, but all will maximize the benefits gained from each other. Consequently, the best exercise routines involve aerobic activity, resistance training and flexibility exercises.
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