

MARIGOLD FREDERICK

THE EVERYDAY
HOLISTIC
HEALTH
GUIDE



DITCH THE DIETING AND DEVELOP A
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD
AND LIFESTYLE THROUGH AYURVEDA
PRACTICES, INTUITIVE EATING,
HOLISTIC NUTRITION, AND WELLNESS

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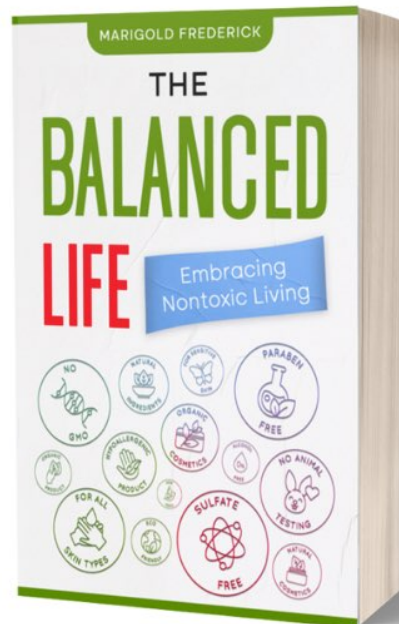
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INTRODUCTION

In today's society, it is quite common to stumble upon someone who has a tumultuous relationship with food or eating in general. The reality of our relationship with food, at least in the United States, is quite harrowing—around 30 million people in the U.S. have an eating disorder of some kind (ANAD, 2021). This is quite sad because eating is one of the most important things in life since it keeps us happy and healthy and provides us with the energy we need to survive. Yet so many people struggle with eating in accordance with what their body needs. If you are reading this, chances are that you struggle with food in some way or the other. Maybe you experience a poor relationship with food due to the way society views and handles it through the prevalence of diet culture. Maybe you want to develop intuitive eating habits, but your current unhealthy habits make it difficult. Or maybe, you want to implement a holistic approach to healthy eating but are not sure how.

Whatever your case may be, I understand where you are at right now. As someone who has struggled with eating on and off throughout my life, I have finally found something that works—a holistic approach that avoids the dangers of diet culture while, at the same time, allowing me to live my best life. I am here to share that with

you. A few of the concepts you will discover while reading this book include the dangers of diet culture, why health is more important than weight, how to quit unhealthy eating habits, how to develop a healthy nutritional mindset, and so much more.

As someone who has developed a holistic approach to eating and overall wellness, I think that I am the best person to guide you on your journey. Many books will tout experience and then pass off unhealthy diet culture tactics as “healthy eating skills,” which is not what I am about. Rather, I want to encourage you to listen to your body and develop a unique sense of health and wellness that only you can grant yourself. By the end of this book, I guarantee that you will feel more prepared to deal with any unhealthy eating habits that come your way.

Without any further delay, let’s get started on your journey to healthy, holistic eating!

INTRODUCTION TO HOLISTIC HEALTH

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.

— HIPPOCRATES

When someone says the words *holistic health*, it might not be immediately apparent to everyone what they are talking about. This concept is in stark contrast to other nutrition-based terms that are often used. For instance, if someone tells you that they engage in binge eating, you are more likely aware of what they mean than if someone said that they are interested in holistic health. It is a shame, because one is infinitely better for you than the other, and it is not the one that encourages you to avoid eating no matter what your body says. In order to begin a journey into holistic health, one that actually promotes a healthy relationship with food and helps you heal, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the concept of holistic health.

WHAT IS HOLISTIC HEALTH, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Let's start by defining the word *health*. Health refers to when all aspects of a person are in a complete homeostasis of well-being during the most regular lifestyle they engage in (St. Catherine University, 2022). In other words, provided that nothing out of the ordinary occurs, to be in good health means that you are in a state where your mind, body, and spirit are in balance. So what does the *holistic* part mean? The word holistic refers to the idea that all parts of a system are interconnected, meaning that if one part suffers then the whole system will suffer. From this, we can infer that holistic health means taking a health-based approach that focuses not on healing the mind and the body separately, but on seeing it as an interconnected system and focusing on health in every sense of the word. That does not sound so bad!

Going a little bit deeper into this idea, we can see that holistic health and healthcare pertain to a holistic approach that includes a far wider understanding of health. This approach to health considers every aspect of life to be important—and it is. Holistic health does focus on the body, including what nutrition and exercise we need, but it does not stop there, as it also pays attention to what the mind needs to be healthy, including care, rest, stimulation, and creativity. This also expands into our spirituality, relationships with others, engagement with our culture and environment, and much, much more. So, it is far more beneficial than any diet plan could ever be because it takes into account the fact that you are—at your core—a whole person, not just a body or a brain or a soul.

Holistic health is tied to a specific form of healthcare referred to as holistic healthcare. Within this form of healthcare, there are an array of healthcare providers who take a holistic approach by using specific methods under the umbrella of holistic health. For instance,

when asking you about a specific health concern, they not only want to hear about your symptoms but want to know about your overall health and lifestyle as well. This way, the healthcare provider can make an informed decision that helps you maintain your overall health instead of focusing on one area while the rest suffer. It is a process far more preferential to the one many Americans are used to within the common healthcare system. This also makes healthcare more accessible and more reliable, because it considers the fact that something like a headache could have an underlying cause that is not medical or necessarily related to the patient's head.

Holistic healthcare is important for various reasons, first and foremost because it allows for medical professionals and individuals alike to provide and access healthcare that addresses the cause of the problem rather than only the symptoms. You can take a pain pill for a headache but if you are chronically dehydrated, it does not fix anything. One of the best aspects of holistic health is that instead of only targeting the symptoms, it helps you understand and address the cause(s) of your ailments. Beyond that, holistic health is a more balanced approach that considers more than just one aspect of your health. By considering not only physical health, but mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health as well, you are more in-tuned with your overall health and less likely to suffer from a hidden ailment.

STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH

Lifestyle choices and the stress that everyday life brings have a considerable impact on your health. Let's start by defining the concept of stress. Stress is a natural response that just about every animal, including humans, experiences as a result of challenges, threats, and

stimuli within our lives (World Health Organization, 2023). It is a natural state of tension or worry that occurs within the mind when something difficult arises. You most likely know what stress feels like in your body, because you have lived with it for your whole life.

The key symptoms that frequently accompany stress are probably also something you have experienced before. For example, stress can cause you to feel irritable or angry as a result of being overwhelmed (Mind, 2022). It can make you feel impatient, as if you are wound up tightly and cannot release that tension. You might also feel anxious or overwhelmed, as if your mind is racing without relief. Stress can cause you to feel dread, like you cannot enjoy your life or that you are experiencing significant difficulties. As far as physical symptoms go, stress can cause breathing and sleep issues, heartburn, stomach problems, weight fluctuations, and more. It is important to understand that while stress is healthy in small amounts—even motivational for some—feeling stressed in excess for too long can cause some undesirable health issues.

The term *chronic stress* refers to experiencing consistent stress for a prolonged period of time, without any sense of relief. Stress can impact the body in a variety of ways and ultimately take over your life. One way it does this is by causing different aspects of the body to be unable to function to their fullest potential. Chronic stress can have the following physical impacts (American Psychological Association, 2018):

- Musculoskeletal impacts. This can include muscle tension throughout the body as a result of stress, which can cause pain, headaches, and difficulty in performing certain move-

ments. Many people suffer from chronic pain as a result of their chronic stress.

- Respiratory impacts. Stress can make it difficult to breathe comfortably, preventing the body from receiving the air it needs to operate.
- Cardiovascular impacts. Stress can increase your heart rate and release undesirably high levels of specific hormones, impacting your heart and blood vessels. Repeated stress can also cause inflammation within your circulatory system and heart, increasing your risk of heart attack.
- Nervous system impacts. This can cause you to be tired and get ill more frequently.

How does this connect to holistic health? Well, holistic health emphasizes a focus on all aspects of your life. When you pay attention to how you feel physically, emotionally, and spiritually, it becomes easier to preempt and avoid the experience of chronic stress. By paying attention to how and in which areas of your life stress has an impact, and employing various holistic health tools to deal with the impact of stress in these areas, you can minimize the experience of chronic stress altogether.

THE PROBLEMS WITH DIET CULTURE

One of the most common reasons behind people's tumultuous relationship with food is diet culture. At a glance, diet culture might sound like a good thing—is it not true that being on a diet is good for our health? Well, yes and no, but the important thing to bear in mind for the moment is that having a healthy diet is not what diet culture is about. Diet culture is not about dieting for health; rather, it is

about taking the idea of being thin and equating it not only with beauty but health as well. Diet culture postulates that people with bigger bodies are unhealthy whereas those with smaller bodies are healthy. As you may be able to tell, that is not always the case. A skinny person can be just as, if not more, unhealthy than someone of a larger size because how healthy someone is, is not determined by the size of their body.

How can we identify the presence of diet culture in our lives? The following signs and symptoms indicate that someone may be conforming to diet culture, (Dube, 2022):

- Labeling food as either good or bad.
- Feeling as though you must work out to burn off calories in order to have a treat or eat something.
- Restricting food intake as a form of punishment.
- Experiencing feelings of guilt for eating.
- Using various methods to suppress appetite.
- Viewing weight loss as the ultimate sign of health.
- Feeling jealous of other people's bodies.

As you can probably tell, there are innumerable drawbacks to diet culture because it supports a pattern of eating that is extremely unhealthy. But maybe you looked at the list above and could not really figure out what is wrong with it. Therefore, I will elaborate on some of the key reasons that diet culture is just a culture of *dieting* and not a culture of *health*.

For starters, a negative aspect of diet culture is that it emphasizes that size is the same thing as health. It might seem that way at first, but in reality, there are various circumstances in which having or

pursuing an "ideal" weight can actually be incredibly bad for you. The truth is that our bodies are incredibly complex organisms, and when trying to determine health, it is not as simple as looking at weight. Weight can also be influenced by a person's genetics, body type, and chronic health issues, none of which we can control. Furthermore, diet culture promotes the idea that bigger bodies are less desirable by worshiping thinness as a standard. This can promote a lack of self-worth and self-esteem, which in turn, causes many health issues on its own. Moreover, the stigma that viewing larger bodies as unhealthy creates can contribute to people avoiding the healthcare they need due to a fear of being judged about their size. Diet culture's tendency to worship thin bodies is nothing but toxic all around.

In addition, diet culture can be quite destructive because it inspires people to follow external laws about eating that are governed by society and not by what their body actually needs. Having healthy eating habits means eating when you are hungry; diet culture tells you to starve yourself for a "perfect, healthy" body. Diet culture contributes to poor standards for eating, labeling foods as good and bad and treating food as something you are not worthy of unless you complete specific exercise-related tasks. This makes food the enemy when the truth is that food is not the enemy at all, it is the fuel that gives us life. In this way, diet culture promotes unhealthy eating habits that contribute directly to restrictive eating disorders.

Diet culture is toxic in other ways as well. For instance, it equates a person's body size to how "worthy" they are by saying that thin people are more worthy of food, nice clothing, love, and acceptance, whereas bigger people need to "work harder" to be worthy. Someone who grows up with the idea of diet culture will be more prone to

having a poor self-image, believing that to be a good person they must be thin. They might also experience an overall lower quality of life due to spending an overwhelming amount of time on diet-related activities instead of listening to their bodies.

If diet culture is something you are conditioned to believe, it is very difficult to free yourself from its clutches. As we progress through the book, I will share some tips for freeing yourself from the negative impacts of diet culture, so do not worry if you find yourself subconsciously aligning with many of the aspects of diet culture—it is not your fault that you live in a society that trained you to respond this way.

FICKLE BODY TRENDS AND HEALTHY EATING

Social media plays a significant role in body image and body standards because in this day and age, it is what connects us to each other the most. Studies have demonstrated that social media shapes our concept of beauty in very specific ways by exposing us to constant images and commentary regarding dieting (Fleps, 2021). Constantly seeing people who are skinnier or “more perfect” than you on social media, can lead to a negative body image that causes you to feel like your body should look different to how it does. This can lead to unhealthy eating habits that eventually lead to eating disorders. Social media tends to have this influence because everything on social media is curated; you would not purposefully post an “ugly” photo of yourself on social media—in fact, it is quite the opposite. People strive to present the internet with the most polished versions of themselves, hence the levels of Photoshop and other photo manipulation tools used in social spaces. Everyone wants to look the best they can

according to modern beauty standards, even if we are aware that those beauty standards are not real or harmful.

For example, a beauty standard and trend known as heroin chic recently made a return, influencing body image perceptions and the media that people posted of themselves (Baxter, 2022). Heroin chic is a trend that emphasizes “beauty” as looking somewhat sickly due to starving oneself. It poses that to be pretty, one must be dainty, essentially looking as if one were a glamorized heroin addict. The trend has a deep and negative history yet made a resurgence through popular social media apps like TikTok. The heroin chic trend is just one of many with the capacity to damage self-esteem and give people unrealistic standards of what they should look like. Because of trends like heroin chic and others blowing up online, there is an even further need to look “perfect,” which has made its way from still photos into videos now as well. These fickle body trends form one large piece of the puzzle that depicts how our health relies on other people instead of our own view of ourselves and our bodies.

WHY YOU LOOK THE WAY YOU DO

As we know, it is really hard for most people to attain such impossible standards. Not everyone can be a pale, white, skinny female with a button nose and dainty limbs—and there is a reason for that. How you eat is not the only thing that influences how you look. In fact, there are many other reasons that you look the way you do, and most of them have nothing to do with the aspects of ourselves that we can control.

One potential reason why you look the way you do is because of genetics. You are more likely to look like the people that you are relat-

ed to than some stranger on the internet. Things like height, weight, blood pressure, hair, and skin color all depend on the genetic line that you come from. For instance, if you have a family history of being shorter or having a bigger body then it is more likely that you will be the same as well. This is completely normal. Gender can also influence why you look the way you do. As a result of the hormones within our bodies, someone who was born female will have different characteristics than someone who was born male. This is natural as well and is not something that can change incredibly easily. For instance, females typically have more curves and slight stature than males, although this is not always the case. Moreover, your age can impact how you look—influencing your hair, skin, and nails for instance.

Therefore, you should not blame yourself for how you look, nor should you consider it to be a bad thing. Viewing the natural way that your body looks as something bad is what the diet industry wants from you. Instead, it is important to work on developing a mindset that bodies are not good or bad, just natural. Does your body work, take care of you, and keep you alive? Then your body is doing exactly what it should!

MAKING THE CHOICE: HEALTH OR WEIGHT

It should be clear to you by now that body weight is not—and never really was—an indicator of health. Someone who weighs 300 pounds can be just as healthy as someone who weighs 130 pounds. This is because there is a lot of information that you cannot tell just by looking at someone's body weight, including things like blood pressure and muscle mass. Someone who weighs 130 pounds with a lot of muscle and good heart vitals is healthier than someone of the same

weight who consumes processed foods, never exercises, and has high blood pressure, for example. There are a lot of factors that play a role in what makes an actual healthy body, and most of them have absolutely nothing to do with what your body looks like on the outside.

But if body weight is not a good indicator of health, then what is? Any medical professional will tell you that many other considerations other than weight play a role in how healthy you are. It is why the following factors are more reliable indicators of health (“Why Body Weight or BMI Isn’t an Indicator of Health,” n.d.):

- Blood sugar levels may indicate the risk of diabetes.
- Blood pressure can reflect heart health.
- Cholesterol levels can predict potential cardiovascular complications and reflect heart health.
- Sleeping patterns may indicate the risk of complications such as heart disease, hypertension, or diabetes.
- Regular exercise promotes overall wellness and reduces the risk of premature death.
- Consumption of fruits and vegetables is crucial for wellness.
- Alcohol intake levels may indicate the risk of various health problems related to excessive drinking.
- Hydration is important for our overall health.
- Smoking status is crucial as smoking causes many health complications, including cancer, COPD, and heart disease.

So, when it comes down to it, the choice is yours—do you want to be thin, or do you want to have a healthy body that is equipped with everything you need to thrive in life, from energy to healthy organs and tissues? If you answered the latter, as I am sure you did, then

this book is truly going to revolutionize your relationship with health. Once you choose to view health as more important than just weight, you choose to begin caring about yourself for your own sake and not for what other people think of you. It is one of the best decisions you will ever make.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

In case you were still hesitant—or even just curious—I wanted to take a moment to enumerate the vital importance of having a healthy relationship with food. Having a healthy relationship with food is not the only thing you need to be healthy, but in a society where our diet revolves around a fundamentally *unhealthy* relationship with food, it is necessary to understand why a healthy one is important.

A healthy relationship with food is necessary primarily because food is what fuels our bodies. Food is not something to be afraid of; it is something that allows us to have energy and enjoy life. There is nothing wrong with having a treat every once in a while, the same way there is nothing wrong with eating “enough” vegetables. Having an unhealthy relationship with food is the best way to deprive yourself of the energy, nutrients, and support that your body needs to survive and thrive. It is important to have a healthy relationship with food because it keeps you alive and is not the enemy, despite what social media might try to tell you.

FOOD AND I

The first wealth is health.

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

There is truly nothing comparable to having a healthy body. For most people, the feelings that accompany having a healthy body are elusive; millions of people live and die without ever knowing what true health feels like. Do not let that be you. To help you avoid this, we are going to dive deep into our personal relationship with food. In doing so, you will learn everything you need to know about developing a positive relationship with food in order to improve your eating habits.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND FOOD AND NUTRITION

Nutrition is a science, just like biology, physics, or astronomy. It is based on research and fact, things that can be observed objectively and replicated in a lab setting. To help further your understanding of nutrition, you first need to understand some basics of the science of nutrition. Nutrition can be defined as the study of the relationship

between diet and health, how the body uses nutrients, and how food is made up of nutrients (“Basic Principles of Nutrition Science,” 2019). Nutrition is one of the most important things in the world because we all rely upon it to survive.

The human body relies on six different categories of nutrients that help it stay healthy, growing, and alive. These nutrients include water, carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins, and minerals. These can also be broken down into something called macronutrients and micronutrients, which refer to the quantity in which they can be consumed. Macronutrients can be consumed frequently and in large quantities, which includes everything except vitamins and minerals; the latter are micronutrients, and are usually only consumed in smaller amounts.

These nutrients are important because they provide the building blocks for everything that our body needs to survive. Each nutrient can be found in different types of food. Water is obvious, but where can we find the rest of these macro- and micronutrients? Carbohydrates are found naturally in foods that are plant-based, such as nuts, beans, fruits, and milk. Contrary to what diet culture touts, carbohydrates are not bad for you; in fact, they are the body's first source of energy. Carbohydrates are good for your body and your energy levels while consuming whole grains and fiber can reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Furthermore, consuming carbohydrates is good for your digestive system as well, which allows your body to process things more effectively.

Proteins are made up of something called amino acids, of which there are twenty different types. You might have heard from product advertisers that their supplements contain all of the essential amino acids, and you might have wondered what a non-essential amino

acid is. Essential amino acids are nine of the amino acids that can make up a protein, and these are the ones that we rely on for the protein intake that allows us to build up muscle and maintain fluid and appropriate levels of hormones within our bodies. For the most part, you will find these amino acids in meat and some plant-based sources as well. In fact, some plant-based sources have even more protein than meat, leaving the door open for healthy levels of protein no matter your diet.

Fats are also essential to our survival, but many people assume that fats are bad for you because of the unkind rapport they have been given online and in the media. Contrary to what you may think, there are good fats and bad fats, and fatty foods that are natural and unprocessed are essential to keeping your blood sugar stable, improving your brain function, and lowering the risk of inflammation and diseases. To live a healthy life, you cannot simply cut out fatty foods. Instead, you need to opt to find foods that serve as a natural source of healthy fats.

Vitamins are also necessary for survival, but what even is a vitamin? In short, vitamins are organic, natural substances that contain one of the main substances we need for life: carbon. You will benefit best from a vitamin-rich diet sourced from healthy foods. A wide range of vitamins is necessary since they provide different nutrients. You have most probably heard of many of these vitamins and their benefits before but in case you have not or need a refresher, let's quickly go through the main ones. Vitamin A is necessary to help our skin and eyes remain healthy. Vitamin B, including all of the variations of B vitamins, serve as the building blocks upon which we develop healthy bodies. These vitamins help with brain function, metabolism, and energy. Next, we have vitamin C, which supports the

immune system as well as the bones and muscles. Vitamin D is important as well, as it helps with keeping the bones and heart healthy and helps support our immune systems. And finally, there is vitamin E, which serves to protect cells from becoming damaged. Vitamins A, C, D, and E are the vitamins that you hear people refer to as antioxidants.

Finally, we have minerals, which include oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen, and can be found in well-balanced and nutritious diets. Minerals further support our body's health by allowing us to have everything we need for our bodies to thrive.

ASSESSING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

How would you describe your personal relationship with food? Do you think that you have a good relationship, a bad one, or something in between? It might seem silly—how could there be a way to understand your relationship with food? However, there are, in fact, many things you can consider to help understand your relationship with food, and doing so is necessary to maintain or improve your health. By understanding your relationship with food, you can better understand your food choices and nutritional intake and what changes you would need to make to allow you to benefit from being the healthiest version of yourself.

Healthy Relationship

A good relationship with food is one where you can eat freely for pleasure, especially on social occasions and according to your personal and cultural traditions without worrying about the consequences. There are clear signs that indicate that someone has a healthy relationship with food. For example, when you allow your-

self to eat foods that you enjoy without feeling bad afterward, restricting yourself too much, or putting them behind a wall of sorts (Boswell, 2022). In other words, if you have a healthy relationship with food, you will not tell yourself that you cannot eat foods that bring you joy. Likewise, a healthy relationship means that you do not have foods that you see as “forbidden.” Many people with unhealthy eating habits—eating disorders included—have entire lists of foods that are off-limits to them, such as bread or chips. By making these foods off-limits, you are setting yourself up for an unhealthy relationship with food by forcing food into the categories of good and bad.

Another sign of a healthy relationship with food is a refusal to obsess over calories and macronutrients. Your body will naturally let you know if something is missing so by obsessing over something like calories or the specific grams of protein or fat in your food, for example, you are not maintaining a healthy relationship. Someone with a healthy relationship with food understands that calories and macronutrients are not the end-all deciding factor of whether something is healthy and they avoid constantly looking at the nutrition label and instead, consider what they want to eat and what their body needs.

Furthermore, people who do not really care about what other people say about their dietary practice are often those with the best relationship with food. Many people react negatively to comments about their food choices and eating habits. For example, it is not uncommon to hear someone say something like “oh, you are eating *that?*” or “I could never eat bread,” but for those with a healthy relationship to food, it is easy to ignore these comments. And they also tend not to make these comments or comment on what others are eating

in this way. When you have a healthy relationship with food, you do not care about what other people say about your dietary habits, because what is most important is what your body wants and needs.

Another good sign of a healthy relationship with food is understanding various hunger cues and responding to them accordingly. For example, many people engage in fasting and refuse to eat even if they are hungry in pursuit of the perceived health benefits of fasting. This might *seem* healthy, but what is actually healthy is listening to your body and eating when you are hungry. Similarly, a good relationship with food means being able to stop eating when you notice that you feel full. Forcing yourself to finish a dish or meal just to have finished it is not healthy, nor is eating past the point of fullness. Part of maintaining a healthy relationship with food is understanding when to start and stop eating with ease.

Finally, another major sign of a healthy relationship with food is that you can allow yourself to eat all kinds of food with ease and in moderation and in a way that makes you feel good. For example, if you spend one day eating nothing but pizza and the next day you feel a bit sluggish, listening to your body and eating some fruit and healthy fats is a wonderful way to not only maintain a balance and exhibit a healthy relationship with food but also to effectively listen to your body. Having a healthy relationship with food does not have to be difficult, but unfortunately, it is something that a lot of people struggle with.

Unhealthy Relationship

For the most part, I would say that it is more common for someone to have an unhealthy relationship with food than a healthy one, especially nowadays. There are various telltale signs that indicate that

someone has an unhealthy relationship with eating. For instance, if you feel guilty about eating, then it might be an indicator that you struggle with unhealthy eating habits. For many people who struggle with such eating habits, it can seem normal to feel guilty about eating foods that they have deemed as bad. This is problematic for two reasons. First, this labels food as good and bad, which implies that you should feel guilty when you eat certain foods. Second, this type of food-related guilt indicates that you have made listening to your body into something negative, which should not be the case at all.

Another indicator of unhealthy eating habits is having a list of foods that you have banned yourself from eating or having strict food rules. For example, if you have banned bread in your house, then you definitely do not have a healthy relationship with eating unless, of course, you have a severe grain allergy or gluten intolerance. Banning food items and having strict rules about food means that you are not listening to your body and what it needs. Rather, this perpetuates the idea that your eating habits and food choices should follow some arbitrary rules that you likely set for yourself to conform to some societal expectation of what your diet should look like. This is different from religious and ethical exemptions to eating certain foods because they keep in mind what the person setting those rules wants first and foremost—a healthy relationship with their spirituality—without harming their physical health.

One clear indicator of an unhealthy relationship with food that many people overlook is experiencing anxiety when a diet deviates from a set calorie amount or other food goals. Dieting or changing the way you eat can be done in an entirely healthy manner. However, getting worried to the point of becoming anxious about something like calo-

ries—a number that represents the amount of energy in a food item—is a sign of an eating disorder and not of a healthy diet. By feeling anxious when it comes to the topic of food, you have essentially conditioned yourself to interpret listening to your body as a bad thing, which should not be the case if you want to be healthy.

If you are still unsure of whether or not you have a healthy relationship with food, try asking yourself these questions and then evaluate the answers, bearing in mind that even one “yes” indicates unhealthy aspects of your relationship with eating:

- Is food the main focus of your thoughts throughout the day?
- Do you feel anxious, ashamed, or guilty about eating?
- Do you believe that you must exercise or be active to deserve certain foods?
- Have you ever skipped out on social events or occasions because of the food involved? For reasons other than religious or ethical exemptions.
- Do you limit your food intake because you are afraid of gaining weight?
- Do you think that certain foods are acceptable for others to eat, but not for you?

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD AND EATING DISORDERS

As unfortunate as it is, eating disorders are one of the most common and most deadly mental illnesses around. Eating disorders are responsible for the death of thousands of people each year, all because of the unhealthy relationship that we as a society have with food. Eating disorders are the result of just that—an unhealthy relationship with food—and it might be that you realize while reading this book

that you have an eating disorder or perhaps you already know that you have one. Either way, do not be discouraged, acknowledging the existence of an eating disorder is the first step in the healing process and regaining a healthy relationship with food.

Developing a healthy relationship with your eating habits is important—not only is eating necessary for our survival but improving your eating habits can save your life. Deciphering just how to go about improving your relationship with food can be rather difficult because recovery can be a long, hard road. Rebuilding your relationship with food is the most necessary aspect of overcoming an eating disorder because that is where it all started. This often necessitates seeking professional help, which is what I recommend as a primary intervention for disordered eating. In treatment, you would receive nutrition therapy as well as other forms of therapy to assist in your mental recovery. The reason that I highly recommend professional intervention—or at least incredibly in-depth research—for recovery is that you cannot just go from eating nothing to eating everything, otherwise, you will find yourself becoming ill(er).

Moreover, the most significant key to avoiding disordered eating is to avoid restrictive eating, in other words, avoiding strict rules about what or how much you eat. These restrictive habits are the focus of the next section and although they might seem like a good thing, they are by no means good.

THE DANGERS OF RESTRICTIVE EATING AND YO-YO DIETING

The dangers of something like restrictive eating or yo-yo dieting cannot be overstated. By engaging in either, you are putting your health at significant risk because it puts you in danger of having a lack of

nutrients, which leads to deficiencies and health concerns and restricts your ability to have a healthy relationship with food and eating. Yo-yo dieting is the result of restrictive eating; if you have ever gone on a severely restrictive diet only to regain all of the weight you lost—and sometimes more—then you have first-hand experience with yo-yo dieting. Much like the toy yo-yo, a yo-yo diet involves rapid weight fluctuations as a result of going back and forth between restriction and normal or binge eating habits. The main reason for these fluctuations is that the restrictions you place on yourself because your body did not lose the weight you wanted to create an unhealthy mindset that makes it difficult to maintain the weight loss progress in a healthy way. Not only is this incredibly discouraging, because you feel like you put all this work in only to get nowhere, but it is also incredibly detrimental to your health. Let's take a look at how exactly a yo-yo diet negatively impacts your health.

First, yo-yo dieting can negatively impact your muscle mass. As a result of losing weight quickly over and over again, it is quite common to also shed muscle mass when you lose that weight, even if you exercise properly (Watts, 2022). This is because you are not absorbing enough nutrients to keep your muscles healthy and strong due to the amount of weight that you are losing. In fact, you are simply depriving every part of your body of the nutrients it needs. Based on this, you might not see a problem, because you might think that you can just regain the weight and resolve the issue later on. However, it is not exactly that easy. When you yo-yo diet, once you begin to eat normally again or trigger a binge eating pattern, you are not actually regaining your muscle—you are only gaining fat. The worst part of this entire process is that it makes it harder to lose weight the next time because you have lost the muscles necessary to

burn fat and you have also slowed your metabolism down dramatically.

Another issue that can arise from yo-yo dieting is stomach issues. Those who engage in this type of dieting are more likely to experience digestive issues, such as chronic constipation or diarrhea, stomachaches, and nausea. These stomach issues arise as a result of your body's inability to digest food normally; when you fluctuate between restriction and normal eating, your body loses the capacity to understand how to digest what you are putting into it. For example, if your body is used to eating one sandwich a day, suddenly eating three is going to make your digestive system freak out. This is a common issue that yo-yo dieters experience as a result of their rapidly changing eating habits.

Yo-yo dieting can also result in decreased gut health. The rapidly changing weight of your body can impact your gut biome, which might not sound like a big deal, but it is quite significant. The gut plays a crucial role in allowing the brain to produce the happy chemical known as serotonin, as well as regulating neurotransmitters, mood, and sleep. When you restrict your diet, you are potentially destroying the carefully cultivated biome of your gut, thus disrupting various other aspects of your body and life as well. Restriction can cause significant mood issues that disrupt your life in various ways, and that is not something you should take lightly.

Moreover, you could experience heart problems as a result of the rapid weight fluctuations associated with yo-yo dieting. For instance, your heart rate, blood sugar, blood pressure, and lipid levels can all fluctuate dramatically—in a potentially harmful way—as a result of the drastic changes in your diet. This is extremely dangerous because it can cause significant distress to your cardiovascular sys-

tem, potentially overworking your heart and causing additional health issues later on.

A final of the many disadvantages to yo-yo dieting is that it can lower your self-esteem, even if you feel like it is making you more confident in the moment when you have lost weight. The weight cycling—the repeated weight loss and gain—associated with yo-yo dieting can actually be incredibly psychologically damaging. Yo-yo dieting dredges up a particular feeling in the majority of people who engage in it, and it is not success or motivation. No, it is the feeling of *failure*. As a result of meeting and failing to meet the same weight targets over and over, yo-yo dieting can, in essence, make you feel like a failure. This is because even if you reach your goal weight, you almost immediately gain weight again and lose sight of your goal. Furthermore, your self-esteem can be lowered even further when you regain that weight as a result of the inconsistent weight fluctuations—sometimes you even end up at a higher weight than you started with. There truly is not one benefit to yo-yo dieting.

IDENTIFYING YOUR EATING LIMITATIONS AND HOW THEY CAME TO BE

Eating limitations most often take the form of eating disorders or behaviors that eventually lead to an eating disorder. An eating disorder is a mental condition that prevents you from having a healthy relationship with food. It might start with something small, such as obsessing over food or your weight, but it can quickly spiral into something much worse. An eating disorder commonly has symptoms like weight loss, anxiety about eating, and obsessively thinking about food, among others, but can eventually result in symptoms as severe as death. You might think that it is impossible for you to have an eat-

ing disorder, but they are more common than you think. Understanding the causes of eating disorders and the different types of eating disorders is the key to help identify your eating limitations and their origins.

There are a lot of factors that contribute to eating disorders. For instance, genetics can be a contributing factor since it is more likely that if you are related to someone with an eating disorder than that you will develop an eating disorder yourself (Petre, 2019). You might also find that personality can contribute to the development of an eating disorder. Those who are more impulsive, perfectionistic, or neurotic, especially those who have a combination of all three characteristics, are at an increased risk of developing an eating disorder. The cultural pressure to conform to a societal norm of thinness and beauty contributes to eating disorders as well. This is perpetuated by the significant portion of American and other Western media that is dedicated to perpetuating facets of diet culture and contributing to impossible beauty standards and the development of eating disorders.

Types of Eating Disorders

There are four major types of eating disorders that you should be aware of and able to recognize the signs of. Let's have a brief look at each of them.

Anorexia

Anorexia is probably the first eating disorder that comes to mind since it is the most well-known. It is a disorder that a person usually develops earlier in life and affects more women than men. If you have anorexia, you are more likely to perceive your weight as higher than it is—a condition called body dysmorphia—even if you are ex-

tremely close to death. Those with anorexia tend to monitor their weight excessively. Symptoms of anorexia usually include restricted eating, fear of gaining weight or compulsive behaviors to avoid weight gain, pursuing thinness at all costs, and usually a very low body weight—though individuals with higher body weights can also be diagnosed with anorexia.

Bulimia

Bulimia is perhaps the second most common or well-known eating disorder, although many people wrongly conflate it with anorexia. People with bulimia typically engage in a binge-purge cycle, which is what sets this disorder apart from anorexia. During a binge-purge episode, someone with bulimia will eat large amounts of food in a short period, even if they are incredibly full. They will keep eating compulsively until they cannot eat anymore, and then they try to purge the food by forcing themselves to throw up.

Binge Eating Disorder

Binge eating disorder has only gained recognition recently, as in the past, people refused to even recognize that it exists; however, it might be even more common than anorexia. When someone has a binge eating disorder, they engage with the binging aspect of bulimia, but they do not engage in purging or restriction afterward. Eating a lot of food at once—very fast and often in secret—is a common indicator of binge eating disorder, along with symptoms like feeling ashamed when reflecting on eating, feeling a lack of control while eating, and more.

Avoidant-Restrictive Intake Disorder

Also abbreviated as ARFID, this is a disorder that has been around for years but is only recently being granted recognition as a true eating disorder. ARFID typically involves being disinterested or disgusted by certain textures, tastes, and scents. This goes far beyond picky eating; someone with ARFID will struggle with getting enough calories or nutrients and experience severe issues with maintaining a healthy weight.

If you engage in any of these behaviors, even on an occasional basis, you have an eating disorder. Fortunately, recovery is possible and there are things that you can do to develop a more positive relationship with food and your body.

DEVELOPING A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

Developing a positive body image can seem like something impossible to achieve, especially as you age. For most people, body image is something that is constantly at the mercy of diet culture; ideas of what a perfect body looks like can drive people to develop an increasingly negative view of their own body, as they are influenced by social norms and rules dictating what bodies “should” and “should not” be. Fortunately, it is never too late to begin working on developing a positive body image. At any age or stage of your life, it is still possible to transform your body image into one that is full of positivity. With just a few tips, you can learn to love your body as you should.

One way that you can work to develop a positive body image is to work toward appreciating yourself and practicing positive self-talk. A lot of people are prone to talking about their body in negative ways—especially when it comes to socially reinforced imperfections—

but how often do we take the time to appreciate our body and all it does for us? If you have a negative body image, then chances are you rarely step back to appreciate everything that your body does for you. Appreciate how your body functions more often, and you will notice a stark improvement in the way that you think about your body. For example, appreciate your legs carrying you where you need to be, your tummy processing the nutrients you need to be healthy, or your eyes being able to view a beautiful sunset. This re-frames your perspective into one that is much more positive.

Furthermore, you can improve your body image by paying attention to the positive things. You might jump at the opportunity to say that you do not like anything about your body, but I bet that that is not entirely true. There are probably at least one or two aspects that you can confidently say you like about your body; so, pay attention to these. This goes hand-in-hand with appreciating your body. Your body cannot be all that bad if it helps you with so many different aspects of life. As such, learning to pay attention to things you like about your body will help you expand your positive self-image.

My most important piece of advice to you is to stop comparing yourself to other people. Think about it: When you think that you are not “good,” “beautiful,” or “thin” enough, how often is that thought *not* a comparison? Rarely, if ever. When you catch yourself trying to compare yourself and your body to others and their bodies, stop that train of thought at once. You do not have to meet society’s or someone else’s standards to be beautiful, nor do you have to be beautiful to be worthy. By refusing to compare yourself to others, you will do your body image wonders.

BUILDING HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Maintaining a positive body image is only half the battle, though. You also have to work on building eating habits that are conducive to true health—and not the version of “health” that diet culture perpetuates. The secret to healthy eating habits does not start with developing new ones, but with getting rid of old ones that are holding you back. Some eating habits that may be holding you back include (Top 10 Worst Eating Habits, n.d.):

- eating out too often
- consuming processed foods or food with added sugar
- eating mindlessly, especially when you are eating alone
- rushing through meals
- eating too much and not enough throughout the day
- drinking calorie-filled beverages

All of these can be rather difficult habits to break, but by working to swap your unhealthy eating habits with positive ones—such as swapping soda for flavored water—you can revolutionize your eating habits in a way that will actually teach you to love yourself.

SELF-LOVE IS NOT SELF-LIMITATION

At the end of the day, it is important to understand that self-love and self-limitation are not synonymous. Self-love involves embracing a state of appreciation for yourself as a result of actions that support your growth in some capacity (Khoshaba, 2022). Self-limitation, however, involves doing something to hold yourself back in some way, which is exactly what poor eating habits, self-hatred, poor body

image, and other bad habits do—it holds you back from growing spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Instead of focusing on self-limitation, you need to reframe your mindset to instead focus on self-love.

The truth is that self-love is not hard to cultivate, despite what social media might tell you. Self-love is something that you can easily achieve with actionable steps and progress toward your goals and changing yourself for the better. For instance, a good way to help develop self-love while pushing self-limitation away is to cultivate a practice of mindfulness. Paying attention to the way you think and feel—and acting on those feelings—is a lovely way to boost your self-love.

Something else that you can focus on is setting boundaries. It can be easy to let people into your life who fundamentally disregard your boundaries and ignore your comfort—millions of people do it every day—but it is one of the worst things that you can do for your ability to love yourself. In fact, one of the best ways to practice self-love is to set immovable boundaries that protect not just what you want, but what you need as well. By setting physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries that you refuse to let others cross, you are protecting yourself in a meaningful way and ensuring that your environment is conducive to your growth as a human being.

Finally, you have to be willing to forgive yourself. A lot of people are far too hard on themselves for absolutely no reason and it is one of the biggest reasons that people have a difficult and tumultuous relationship with self-love. You have to be able to forgive yourself to move on from things that happened in your past, mistakes that you have made, and slip-ups on your road to recovery. By being less hard on yourself when you make a mistake, you open the door to

improved self-love and the ability to be kinder to yourself in general. For someone struggling with eating, health, and diet-related habits, being kind to yourself is truly a game changer. Overall it is important to be kind to yourself and practice self-love on your road to recovery and developing holistic health. Understanding that self-love does not mean self-limitation is going to be your best friend in this journey. By loving yourself you are pushing yourself forward, not holding yourself back.

AYURVEDA PRACTICES

The great thing about Ayurveda is that its treatments always yield side benefits, not side effects.

— SHUBHRA KRISHAN

Now that we have a comprehensive background on some of the more personal aspects of holistic healing and health, it is time to get started on ayurveda practices and how you can use them to optimize your health. Overall, this is a field that not many people know about and often overlook, even though it has incredible benefits—as the quote above states. There are very few, if any, side effects to this practice that has been around for centuries and exclusively yields benefits. With your health in the hands of ayurveda practices, you are bound to flourish. Let's get started with learning about this amazing concept and how it can be used to improve your overall holistic health.

WHAT IS AYURVEDA?

Ayurvedic medicine is one of the oldest holistic practices that we know of and it is also used as a form of healing (Miller, 2016). Ayurvedic medicine focuses on healing the entire body instead of just focusing on one area, as modern Western medicine does. It is a practice that is based on the belief that in order for somebody to maintain good health they need to have a balance between their mind, body, and soul. The point of ayurveda is not to fight diseases or avoid illnesses or anything similar; rather, it is to promote good health. Those who practice this healing path believe that everything is connected and that to have good health your mind, body, and soul must be in line with the universe. And that when there is a disruption in this connection between ourselves and the universe, we get ill.

THE THREE DOSHAS (VATA, PITTA, KAPHA) AND HOW THEY AFFECT OUR HEALTH

Ayurvedic medicine relies on something called doshas which are three life-force energies that can be found within the body. These energies are said to control the way in which your body works and need to be aligned with the five basic elements of the universe which include earth, air, fire, water, and space. It is also said that in each individual person, the doshas manifest in a different combination, meaning that your body and the body of your best friend will not have the same mix of doshas. Each dosha within the body controls something idiosyncratic, and it is believed that the illnesses that you are more prone to getting are a result of how your doshas balance within your body. The three doshas are called Vata Dosha, Pitta Dosha, and Kapha Dosha.

Let's start with learning about Vata Dosha. Vata Dosha is believed to be the most powerful of all of the doshas because it controls basic bodily functions down to how our cells work. According to some practitioners, the Vata Dosha is in charge of how we think and breathe and how our heart works. Furthermore, it is said that the Vata Dosha is associated with the elements of air and space. When your Vata Dosha is disturbed you are more likely to develop conditions that involve anxiety and issues with breathing, arthritis, or heart issues. Your Vata Dosha can be disturbed by eating too much too quickly, being afraid, when you are grieving, or not getting enough sleep at night.

The next dosha is the Pitta Dosha, which is combined with the elements of fire and water. The Pitta Dosha has to do with how you eat and digest food, how well your body is able to break down those foods, and anything else in the body related to eating. Those who experience imbalances with their Pitta Dosha are likely to encounter issues with eating, medical conditions like Crohn's and heart disease, and infections throughout their body. Eating spicy foods and getting sunburned too fast and too often, are examples of reasons that there can be disruptions within the Pitta Dosha.

Third and finally, there is the Kapha Dosha, which is linked to the elements of water and earth. This dosha is in charge of things like growth throughout the body, including overall muscle and body growth, weight fluctuations, and the immune system. If your body has a strong balance in this dosha, meaning that there is more of this dosha present than the others, it is likely that as a result of disruptions you are prone to developing things like cancer, obesity, and diabetes. This dosha is most often disrupted by sleeping too often dur-

ing the day, eating too many sweet foods, and drinking things that are too high in sodium.

You can understand which dosha is most present in your body by taking a look at the side effects and parts of the body that are controlled by the dosha and learning what your body most closely aligns with. For example, if you are prone to eating significant amounts of sugary food and as a result feel ill very often, you might be stronger in your Kapha Dosha. However, if you are prone to experiencing issues with your digestion you might take a look at the Pitta Dosha and how that impacts you.

12 AYURVEDIC PRACTICES TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

Now that you have a fundamental understanding of each dosha and how your body responds to them, it is time to take a look at some ayurvedic practices that can help improve your health holistically. Most of these practices have to do with our food choices and eating habits—and this is for a specific reason. It is often said that food is the medicine of the soul and as a result, ayurvedic practices focus on better eating habits that are founded in what the body needs instead of what diet culture dictates that we do. The following are 12 ayurvedic practices that you can use to help optimize your holistic health and your eating habits (Formosa, 2018):

1. Make a point of it to sit down when you eat. Do not eat sitting down where you work and do not eat while you are driving; instead, decide to sit down with the specific intention of eating and do nothing else during this time.
2. Eat in an atmosphere that is not tumultuous, choosing one where you can find peace and calm instead, and do not eat

during the times that you are feeling upset, emotional, or in a certain state that can influence how much you eat or what you choose to eat.

3. Pay attention to the signals that your body is sending you. Do not eat just because it is lunchtime; this is not necessarily what is good for your body. Make sure that you are actually hungry before you begin eating, and stop eating when you feel full. Do not simply continue eating just to finish a meal.
4. Eat slowly and avoid inhaling your food. Make sure that you chew food at least 30 times before swallowing in order to aid your digestion and prevent yourself from eating in a manner that is entirely too fast for your body.
5. Eat raw food as little as possible, as it is more difficult for your digestive system to handle.
6. Consider food to be medicine and your body to be fundamentally out of balance. With medicine, you would not intentionally exclude something that you know to be good for you. As such, try to include all six tastes that the ayurveda practice dictates should be included in each meal: sweet, salty, sour, astringent, pungent, and bitter.
7. The best way to start your day is with a glass full of lukewarm water with some lemon, honey, or ginger. Do your best to drink herbal tea throughout the day as much as you can.
8. Exercise regularly and engage in physical activity. I recommend practicing yoga, since it is not only a physical practice but a mental and spiritual one as well.
9. Try to receive an oil massage as often as you can. These are great for helping your body relax at a deep level and in a

- spiritual capacity and working to detoxify your lymphatic system, resulting in you getting sick far less often.
10. Every day, find time to relax, meditate, or spend time in nature.
 11. Consider the herbs that you have in your kitchen to be medicine. This is a common spiritual practice that many people use to make medicine more accessible, and it actually works. Using herbs like ginger and turmeric to detoxify and de-swell your system can be a great way to get started.
 12. Finally, engage in regular detoxes and cleanses.

As you can probably tell by reading through this list, every single tip focuses on your health in some way, be it your eating or your exercise habits. These ayurvedic practices can improve your life overall by helping guide you through how to improve your health and prevent disease. A lot of people overlook the lessons they can learn from this list and other ayurvedic practices, but the reality is that people would benefit a lot more from these practices if they tried more often. For example, considering your food and things in your cabinet to be medicine is a great way to heal your body without having to go to the doctor or being told that you should or should not be eating something against your body's wishes. And speaking of eating, next, we will look at the ayurvedic diet.

THE AYURVEDIC DIET

The ayurvedic diet is a pattern of eating that bases itself on the practices of ayurveda. Within the system, you will find food items and other practices that you should engage in and you should avoid. What sets this practice apart from other practices such as diet culture

is that these guidelines are not based on a standard of beauty that is entirely subjective; rather, the system is based on the idea that doshas control your body and your health and that balance is the key to overall health. The ayurveda diet emphasizes eating fresh foods instead of processed foods, picking the right foods, and being mindful of how you eat.

As with anything in life, there are both benefits and drawbacks to this practice. I will start with the benefits. One thing to keep in mind is that this practice helps you lose weight in a healthy way, and actually helps you maintain the weight loss. If you are looking to lose weight without the drawbacks of yo-yo dieting and other unhealthy practices, this is definitely the route for you. Another benefit is that many people who participate in this practice say that it helps with keeping their hair and skin healthy, as well as keeps inflammation at an all-time low. Ayurveda and associated dieting practices can also help reduce stress and lower cholesterol levels.

On the other hand, there are some drawbacks to this practice, though I consider them to be relatively minimal. One of the major drawbacks is that ayurveda is sometimes confusing to people. A lot of people have a difficult time understanding what they can and cannot eat according to this practice. For others, this practice may feel too restrictive, because depending on what dosha is dominant within your body you may need to cut back on certain foods. Beyond that, it can be very difficult to determine what exact practice your body needs to stick to because ayurveda contains various “mini” practices within the overarching concept, and which practice you should follow depends on your dominant dosha. Again, I do consider these drawbacks to be relatively minimal, and I encourage you to try the practice before you knock it!

Ayurvedic Principles for Healthy Eating and Digestion

When it comes to ayurvedic principles for healthy eating and digestion, there are only 10 rules that you have to follow (Easterly, 2019). This might seem quite excessive, especially if you are not used to dieting or having your food restricted in any way; but, consider it in comparison to typical diet culture standards. When following an ordinary diet, you might be told that you cannot eat your favorite foods or that certain foods are bad, or you might find that the rules have suddenly changed without warning. This is because a lot of diet culture practices are not based on any logical explanation; they are based on what would make you look the most “beautiful” according to an unachievable standard. In contrast, ayurvedic standards are a consistent practice that will not change suddenly and catch you off guard. These practices are based on balance and what your body needs instead of what diet culture dictates you should have. Let’s look at the 10 principles in a bit more detail.

Select Foods That Match Your Dosha

Each person has a unique balance of the three doshas and after you find out which dosha is dominant within your body, you can figure out what you need to eat to keep it in balance. For example, the Vata Dosha has a nature of being cool and light yet rough at the same time. To counterbalance this, you need to eat foods that have opposite characteristics. This might seem a bit counterintuitive compared to what you have been told about dieting before, but dieting does not really make sense when it is based on beauty standards instead of what is good for your body. Ayurvedic dieting dictates that you create balance, which means that to counteract imbalance you must use contradicting methods. For example, if you are experiencing excess Vata Dosha energy, you need to eat foods that are warm, hydrat-

ing, and full of fat. You are going to want to eat lots of soups, avocados, foods that are slightly spicy, and similar foods. For Pitta Dosha, which tends to be hot, oily, and sharp, you are going to want to eat cool foods such as mint and cucumber, as well as beans, green tea, and other mild foods. Finally, for the Kapha Dosha, which tends to be calm and smooth, you are going to want to eat foods that are light, dry, and warm such as beans or popcorn.

Do not Snack Throughout the Day

According to ayurvedic principles, each dosha takes a role in digestion, and snacking during the time that your body is digesting your food can throw off your digestive cycle. As a result, you should try not to eat for approximately 4 to 6 hours after a meal, because this can interrupt your digestive cycle. By doing so you can cause the accumulation of ama, which are essentially toxins that can accumulate in the gut as a result of snacking. I do not encourage you to avoid eating if you are truly hungry; however, by following other ayurvedic practices you will not be hungry during these times in which your body is trying to digest food.

Eat Until You Are Satisfied, Not Until You Are Full

You should only eat when you start to feel hungry. Just because it is breakfast time or lunchtime does not mean that you need to go eat something. If your body is not hungry, then it is simply not hungry. Instead, focus on eating when you are hungry but not starving. Start eating once you are hungry and eat until you are satisfied, but do not rely on feeling stuffed to know that you should stop eating. You should eat until your body is no longer hungry, which is a much better gauge of whether your body has enough nutrients to continue about the day. Eating to the point of fullness is often bad for diges-

tion and for our ability to continue to complete tasks throughout the day, as this practice makes us quite tired. Furthermore, the body feels full far before you actually register it in your brain, which means if you are eating to the point of fullness, you have actually overeaten.

Focus on Eating Fresh Foods

You should be focusing on eating fresh foods instead of processed foods. Eating fresh foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients is the best way to improve something called Prana, which refers to our life force. According to ayurvedic practices, these nutrients are reflections of Prana and the best way to increase them is to actually eat the natural foods that contain these nutrients. Increasing Prana increases something called ojas, which is the supplier of the life force that you feel throughout your body and gives you the ability to be fully energized. The idea behind eating fresh food is that every food has an individual level of Prana which develops as a result of exposure to sunlight, water, soil, and other natural forms of existence. As soon as you pick a berry from a vine, for example, ayurvedic practices dictate that its Prana very slowly begins to diminish until eventually it is entirely depleted. This is why it is important to eat whole, fresh foods as fast as you can from the time it has been harvested. You can increase the impact of this practice by eating locally as well because that means there is less time between when the food was harvested to the time that it enters your stomach.

Include the Six Tastes in Your Meals

This principle revolves around including the six tastes or flavors that we talked about in the previous section. By including a small amount of each taste, even if it is only a little pinch, you are allowing

your body to create the energetic makeup that allows you to develop Prana and align your doshas.

Eat According to the Principle of Agni

Agni is the ability of our body to digest and feel the power inside of us. Imagine that there is a campfire that resides deep within the source of your belly. This allows you to continue to digest food and grow, which is why the next principle of ayurvedic dieting is to avoid eating foods and drinking beverages that are the temperature of ice or similar. According to this practice, eating ice-cold foods and drinking ice-cold beverages can reduce your fire and digestive ability. Try to avoid these foods as much as possible.

Avoid Distractions While Eating

The seventh ayurvedic principle is that you should try to avoid distractions while you are eating. According to ayurvedic practices, you should be focusing on connecting with your food and the energy within it as you eat. To get the most out of eating, focus on the colors, the flavors, and anything else about the food that you can observe with your five senses. This is referred to as deep awareness, and you can start the practice of eating with deep awareness by eating in silence and focusing on each one of your senses during the course of a meal. Sharing your meals and describing your food to others can also help develop your awareness of what you are eating.

Stop Eating Three Hours Before Bedtime

This is one of the many ayurvedic principles that are backed by science; according to scientific principles, you should not be eating food shortly before bedtime because this can disrupt your sleep, since your body is still in a digestive mode. In fact, in most bodies, the

process of digestion has halted, and by eating close to your bedtime you are causing a build-up of food within your stomach that is going to linger there all night. This will throw your doshas out of balance, and cause issues for your sleep schedule as well. However, if you stop eating three hours before bedtime your body can digest the food that you have eaten properly and avoid the imbalance altogether. At night, your Prana needs to rest, and the best way to allow it to do so is to stop eating three hours before bedtime.

Drink Herbal Teas Between Meals

A lot of people like drinking soda, coffee, or other beverages that are full of caffeine and other unhealthy substances like sugar with and in between their meals. However, by choosing herbal tea, not only are you getting something delicious to drink, but you are getting something that can heal your body in many ways. Between meals, it is a good idea to drink as much tea as you can comfortably handle and view it as something similar to liquid medicine. This is because herbal tea is full of just that: herbs. Herbal remedies are a common practice within ayurvedic and many other cultures because herbs can heal us naturally unlike any other treatments. Drinking herbal tea between meals is a good way to tie yourself over between meals, letting the digestive process slow, and it is also a good way to avoid sugar or caffeinated beverages that are not that good for you in the first place.

Make Lunchtime Your Largest Meal of the Day

The final major tenant of ayurvedic dieting is that your largest meal of the day should be at lunchtime. According to ayurvedic practice, the fire inside of you is the strongest in the middle of the day, which means the body is able to digest and use those nutrients as best pos-

sible after lunch. This means that you can digest more readily and freely and that you can use those nutrients in a better capacity. Eating your meal around noon and making lunch the biggest meal of the day is going to keep your body energized throughout the day, alleviating that common energy drain that many people experience in the late afternoon or early evening. Furthermore, you will not feel tired as a result of eating too much early in the day, nor will you inhibit your sleep by eating too much at night.

AYURVEDIC DAILY ROUTINE FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH

Many people look to daily routines to give them direction in life. This is because daily routines give us something to look forward to and allow us to understand what we are going to be doing at different times of the day. Having a daily routine is a good idea because it allows you to understand what you are spending your time on, helps you stay focused on your goals and be aware of where you can allot time to other more beneficial things. When it comes to ayurveda, there are still plenty of ways that you can look forward to a daily routine without it being something negative like diet culture tends to perpetuate. In fact, there is a specifically developed daily routine that is included in ayurvedic practice that you can employ in your daily life to get the most out of your newly formed ayurvedic diet practice. This practice is referred to as dinacharya (“Dinacharya - Ayurveda Daily Routine, n.d.).

Dinacharya is an ayurvedic routine that allows you to understand what you need to be doing at every point in the day in line with your new diet and lifestyle. Dinacharya promotes self-care through different activities and provides a wide variety of holistic health benefits because it allows you to align yourself more closely with nature.

It works based on natural clocks that are more aligned with our natural bodies to allow us to be more self-aware, care for ourselves in a better capacity, and experience holistic health.

Within dinacharya, there are two daily cycles: The sun cycle and the moon cycle. The sun cycle runs from sunrise to sunset, which is typically 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in most ayurvedic practices. While the moon cycle runs from sunset to sunrise, which is 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. in most practices. During each cycle, there is a 4-hour window for each dosha where they are stronger, and the windows that correspond to each dosha allow you to keep them in balance within your body. From 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the sun cycle, we have the window for the Kapha Dosha. From 6:00 to 10:00 is also the nighttime cycle for the same dosha and this applies to every other dosha as well. From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. is the window for the Pitta Dosha, and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for the Vata Dosha. If you switch a.m. and p.m. for each of these you have the dosha windows for the moon cycle as well. Dinacharya ayurveda dictates that during different phases of the day, you should engage in different activities that benefit both your ability to care for yourself and your health.

According to dinacharya, it is ideal to wake up before the sun rises. The ideal time is somewhere between 4:30 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., which might seem like a big deal to some, especially those who are not used to waking up at such an early time. However, the benefits of doing so are incredible. According to dinacharya, pre-dawn is when the Vata Dosha is most dominant, which will allow you to wake up more easily. Furthermore, because this time is earlier in the day before the energies from everybody else engaging in activities, going about their workday, and otherwise experiencing life have clouded

the atmosphere, your soul has the opportunity to exist within a more peaceful state than it can by waking up later at, say, 8:00 a.m.

According to dinacharya, the next thing that you should be doing in the morning is to rinse your face with cold water. The purpose of doing so is that it allows you to become alert for the day. Furthermore, Arvada dictates that you should also perform an overall cleansing of your sinuses and your nose with the use of a neti pot. It can be quite bothersome the first few times that you do this because, for most people, it is a rather unpleasant sensation. However, after a few trials and once you get used to the experience, it will be more pleasurable and you will understand the benefits of making it part of your morning routine. After this rinsing process, the next thing that you should do is cleanse your sense organs. This refers to the parts of your body that you use in correspondence with your five senses: your hands, your mouth, your eyes, your nose, and your ears. Since we have already addressed cleansing your nose with the rinse, let's focus on the other senses. According to ayurvedic practices, you should be washing your eyes with rose water, and your ears with sesame oil. You should also brush your teeth thoroughly and scrape your tongue to stimulate your taste buds and digestive responses. And of course, during the process of using the restroom in the morning, you should be washing your hands.

The next step in your morning routine is to drink some warm water. Most people opt to drink coffee or even tea in the morning, but ayurveda recommends that you drink warm water instead because it enhances your ability to digest, enhances the ability of your organs to function as they should, and flushes any toxins from your kidneys. Then, according to ayurveda, you should be taking a bowel movement in the morning because this is what allows your digestive

system to run smoothly and prevents constipation. Constipation can result in the buildup of harmful toxins in the body, which is not good for you in any sense. The next step involves massaging your body with essential oils every single day to prevent skin dryness, improve circulation, and allow your body to flourish.

It is also important that you include exercise in your daily routine at some point in order to experience the full benefits of a dinacharya ayurvedic routine. I recommend yoga; however, according to dinacharya you can engage in any exercise that you feel could benefit you. Exercise helps your body prevent any form of stagnation, improve circulation, reduce weight, and strengthen the muscles throughout your body. You do not necessarily have to exercise at this point in the routine; however, you should be exercising at some point earlier on in the day to give you the energy to tackle the tasks that you encounter throughout the day.

Dinacharya also stresses the importance of bathing every single day. Bathing, whether taking a bath or a shower, removes any excess sebum and other substances that secrete from your skin throughout the day, allowing you to feel fresh and energized and allowing for your skin to be healthier. This is also beneficial for removing toxins from the surface of your skin. At some point, you should also make time to meditate, because this allows you to focus on your goals and balance out the different aspects of who you are as a person, including your mind, body, and soul. Meditation is also beneficial for calming the nervous system, alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression in the process. Meditation is a very beneficial practice and according to dinacharya should be done every single day.

Finally, it is important to unwind and relax your body. Lying down with your eyes closed and listening to some instrumental music is

one of the many ways that dinacharya recommends that you relax. Finding something to do that you find healing is a great way to relax at the end of a long day. Even if you feel like you have not done a lot during the day, it is important to wind down and relax, because the world expects a lot from us. It is a false belief that every single second of every single day needs to be productive. Just resting your body is productive in and of itself, and dinacharya dictates that you need to be doing this every single day no matter what you spend your day doing.

SIMPLE AYURVEDIC REMEDIES FOR COMMON AILMENTS

Ayurvedic medicine is extremely beneficial because it comes with so many remedies and benefits for the body. Among other things, it can help benefit those who have arthritis, for example, with zero side effects for those who struggle with the impact of the condition (“4 Amazing Ayurvedic Remedies to Common Ailments,” n.d.). The oil massages that form part of ayurvedic practice is a great way to reduce swelling and inflammation throughout the body. Furthermore, the all-natural diet that is encouraged by ayurvedic medicine is a great way to reduce inflammation as well.

Ayurvedic medicine is also wonderful for remedying insomnia, which is an all-too-common sleep disorder that many people have as a result of the things that we eat, do throughout the day, and experience in the form of stressors. Chronic insomnia is definitely something that pervades our society at a disproportionate level. Fortunately, ayurvedic medicine has the remedy for that, because a lot of ayurvedic medicine practices can help alleviate the anxiety that is associated with unhealthy habits, medication, disorders, and other issues that we develop in life and that can make it very difficult to

sleep. Because of ayurvedic medicine and other medicine practices, we now know that things like passionflower, chamomile, St John's wort, and other herbal remedies can help us treat insomnia. Using ayurvedic medicine practices on a daily basis is a great way to alleviate the symptoms of insomnia that you may be experiencing, allowing you to experience a much more restful sleep and energized day.

Another benefit of ayurvedic remedies is that you can experience a boost to your immune system as a result of the herbal medicine that is encouraged. In fact, ayurvedic medicine is actually incredibly beneficial to those who are experiencing the symptoms of a cold and flu. Because a cold or a flu travels through viruses that are spread through droplets in the air, it is important to be able to flush out these toxins, which is exactly the type of thing that ayurvedic remedies and practices seek to offer. For example, the use of neti pots as mentioned in the last section is beneficial for flushing out toxins from the sinus cavity and preventing yourself from getting sick. There are many other benefits to ayurvedic medicine as well, but this is just to give you a short little sample of all of the benefits that you can experience as a result. Remember that a herbal remedy can also be considered to be an ayurvedic remedy, and if you are interested in more ayurvedic remedies in order to improve your life you can definitely look into herbal remedies as well.

LIMITATIONS OF AYURVEDIC MEDICINE

Unfortunately, as with everything in life, there are limitations to ayurvedic medicine that we need to discuss so that you do not have unrealistic expectations for the practice. One of the limitations is that ayurveda is technically not a scientific medical practice. This is because ayurveda is more of a traditional practice that is passed down

from generation to generation. It has objective benefits that people who practice it over the long term can identify, but science has not yet studied ayurveda in any in-depth manner that would facilitate its use in a medical capacity. To me, this just says that science has not yet decided that ayurveda is an area that it wants to expand into; however, this does not mean that ayurveda does not work. In fact, we have so much evidence that says it does work despite the lack of scientific backing.

Another limitation that might be posed as a result of using ayurveda as a medicinal treatment is that it does not have immediate results. One of the many reasons that people opt to use medical treatments that stem from Western medicine instead of ayurveda as a practice is because allopathy, which is what these practices are referred to as, is far more immediate in its results. The way that I recommend working around this issue is to use ayurveda as a lifestyle and preventative practice, not a treatment. If you are already sick, sure, ayurveda might not do the most for you in response to your immediate needs. However, if you are not sick yet and use ayurveda as a preventative method, you are more likely to have much more success.

On a similar note, ayurveda cannot cure the worst stages of diseases like cancer and diabetes. This is a significant disadvantage for people looking for remedies for life-threatening illnesses. I definitely recommend the use of ayurveda to help alleviate the symptoms of these illnesses, but I do not recommend using them as the only method of treatment because they do not provide an immediate effect and cannot be used to save lives. Instead, opt to use ayurveda in combination with Western medicine for the best results if you are experiencing a severe life-threatening condition.

Overall, the biggest drawback of ayurveda medicine is that it is preventative and not a cure. So long as you are not using ayurvedic medicine as a cure, and only using it as a preventative measure or as a lifestyle change, there is nothing to be worried about in my eyes.

In this chapter, we have learned so much about the different advantages and ways to use ayurvedic medicine that can truly help you transition your life into one of health in a holistic manner. These practices focus more intently on what your body needs instead of the way that diet culture and other practices focus on unattainable beauty and health standards that are not really going to help you in the long run. By focusing your time on ayurvedic practices instead of diet culture, unhealthy dieting crazes, and other toxic habits that are going to be negative for your health, you are going to experience so many more benefits. In the next chapter, we will learn about the advantages of intuitive eating and how it can benefit your health and life.

INTUITIVE EATING

If you do not love it, do not eat it, and if you love it, savor it.

— EVELYN TRIBOLE

Intuitive eating is way more than just a buzzword. A lot of people online say that they are engaging in intuitive eating, but not many people know what it actually means to do so. Intuitive eating is something that I recommend everybody engage in; it is not just for a certain body type or a certain type of person. Intuitive eating is something that everybody should be engaging in if they have the desire to get in tune with what their body finds most natural and what is most healthy for them specifically. One of the major drawbacks of diet culture is that it is a one-size-fits-all approach to bodies that are not one size nor do they respond to a particular diet that fits all. In contrast, intuitive eating encourages you to do what is most important for your body and what makes you feel healthy instead of what makes others feel healthy. Let's discover more about intuitive eating and how it can change your life.

THE DIET CULTURE ANTIDOTE: INTUITIVE EATING

Intuitive eating is often thought to be the antidote to diet culture, since it is practically everything that diet culture condemns. Diet culture wants you to think that your body needs to be fixed, and it wants you to conform to that and align your habits and food choices with this belief. The truth is that this is not how our bodies work. Intuitive eating is a much better approach to eating in a way that actually benefits your body. It encourages an entirely individualized approach that has nothing to do with what anybody else says about your health. Of course, there is a right way and a wrong way to use intuitive eating, but that right way and wrong way depends entirely on each person and what their body needs. For this reason, intuitive eating is often referred to as the exact opposite of diet culture; it is a way of healing from the negative impact of diet culture and everything that it represents.

Engaging in intuitive eating includes not only rejecting the diet mentality but also honoring your body when you feel hungry (Joho, 2022). Diet culture will say that you can only eat what fits within your calorie recommendation for the day; however, intuitive eating says “no thank you” to these limitations. One of the aspects of intuitive eating that I appreciate the most is that it allows you to give yourself unconditional permission to eat. This means that no matter what you are craving and no matter how much you are craving, as long as you are hungry, it is okay to eat. There are no good foods or bad foods. Intuitive eating posits that you should be eating exactly what you feel like you should be eating. Beyond that, intuitive eating encourages you to decide when you are full based on your body instead of what is seen as the recommended portion size. Not everybody needs the same amount of fruits, vegetables, protein, or other

food groups on their plate, and not all plates are going to provide the specific nutrients that each individual needs if they are the same. You might still be hungry after eating five times the amount that somebody else can eat, but as long as you are not eating your emotions or overeating, intuitive eating says to go right ahead. And speaking of emotions, intuitive eating encourages you to cope with your emotions from a perspective of kindness instead of one that encourages either restriction or binge eating.

At its core, intuitive eating encourages you to eat whatever you want and whatever amount feels right for your body, without worrying about what anybody else says. This powerful concept stands in stark contrast to the prevailing norms of diet culture, which often impose strict rules and external standards upon us. In a world where we are constantly being bombarded with conflicting messages about food and body image, intuitive eating emerges as a compassionate and empowering approach, offering a pathway to liberation from the chains of societal expectations.

In today's environment, where diet culture is considered the norm, intuitive eating allows you to break free from its restrictive grip and embrace a more holistic and nurturing relationship with food. It invites you to reconnect with your body's innate wisdom and trust its signals, guiding you to make choices that honor your unique needs and preferences. By allowing yourself to eat without judgment or guilt, you embark on a journey of self-discovery and self-compassion, fostering a profound sense of acceptance and love for your body.

Listening to your body is a fundamental aspect of intuitive eating, and it holds tremendous significance regarding your overall well-being. By tuning in to your body's cues of hunger, fullness, and satis-

faction, you cultivate a deeper understanding of your body's unique requirements. This heightened awareness allows you to nourish yourself in a way that supports your physical, mental, and emotional health. By honoring your body's signals, you become an active participant in your own nourishment, building a harmonious relationship with your body and with food that transcends mere sustenance.

In the pursuit of health and happiness, intuitive eating encourages you to let go of external judgments and embrace your inner wisdom. It recognizes that each individual is unique and that what works for one may not work for another. This personalized approach to eating empowers you to make choices that align with your individual preferences, values, and cultural background. By letting go of the need for rigid rules and adopting a flexible mindset, you open yourself up to a world of culinary exploration and enjoyment. Intuitive eating is not just about what you eat; it also encompasses a holistic approach to well-being. It invites you to consider the nutritional aspects of food as well as the joy, pleasure, and satisfaction it brings to your life. It encourages you to savor each bite, to engage all your senses in the experience of eating, and to cultivate a mindful connection with the nourishment that sustains you.

BENEFITS

Intuitive eating has far more benefits than you might think. Most people think that eating intuitively is going to cause them to gain a lot of weight or be unhealthy, but that is not the case at all. One of the main benefits of intuitive eating is that people actually tend to lose weight and lower their BMI when they follow an intuitive eating approach. This is because you are actively listening to what your body needs. You can read all of the health magazines and books you

want, and get all of the advice you think you need from somebody else, but our bodies have survived as human beings for centuries; your body has everything it needs to know how to survive already equipped in its system. By incorporating intuitive eating into your daily eating habits you can lose significant amounts of weight just by listening to what your body needs because when you eat intuitively you are never overeating. Some days might look a bit different from others. For example, when you listen intuitively to your body you might eat way more one day than you do the next day. But what balances this out is that your body understands and intuitively knows that if you eat a lot one day, then the next day you do not need to eat as much. This is a natural cycle that your body falls into when you simply listen to it.

Intuitive eating is also incredible for weight maintenance instead of yo-yo-ing with your weight. This is because intuitive eating allows your body to figure out what it needs and what it does not need instead of having your brain try to figure that out. When you listen to all of the contradicting advice on dieting that diet culture perpetuates, you are more likely to fall into a cycle of restriction and weight gain based on your perceptions of the muscles, fat, and other aspects of your body. However, when you eat based on intuitive methods, your body is more likely to maintain the weight it should be at—no matter what that weight is. This does not contradict the last point about weight loss, however. You can lose weight from intuitive eating if your body is meant to weigh less. If your body is meant to weigh less, then your body will lose weight naturally and maintain a healthy weight. But if your body is meant to be at a higher weight or the current weight that you are at, then your weight will change, or not change, accordingly. And that is perfectly okay and even desirable.

Another benefit typically associated with intuitive eating is that people tend to have an overall higher level of satisfaction with their bodies as a result of the process. This is because intuitive eating does not encourage comparing yourself, your body, and what you eat to other people. It encourages you to eat what you need and what you want sometimes as well. Those who engage with intuitive eating report feeling happy and satisfied with their body at a much higher level than those who engage in restrictive diets or even binge eating. As a result of intuitive eating a lot of people also experience results in lowering their depression and anxiety levels as well as lowering eating disorder symptoms.

In my opinion, all of these benefits are fantastic. They are reasons to continue moving forward with this book and with your new improved lifestyle that engages in holistic health. Intuitive eating is part of holistic health because it inspires you to do what is best for your body and your mind at the same time, without worrying about what other people might think or say.

PHYSICAL VS. EMOTIONAL HUNGER

When it comes to learning how to eat intuitively, one of the most difficult aspects that people struggle with is the ability to understand the difference between emotional versus physical hunger. As such, learning to distinguish between physical hunger cues and emotional hunger cues is going to be your best friend when it comes to learning how to eat and appreciate food.

Let's start with understanding physical hunger. Physical hunger occurs as a result of your brain communicating with the rest of your body and telling you that your body needs food (Hartley, 2022).

Physical hunger can be the result of emotional hunger, but that does not mean that you are really hungry. When it comes to physical hunger in the truest sense, though, the best way and only way to address physical hunger is to eat. A lot of people tout diet tricks that allow you to avoid eating food when you are physically hungry, but that does not mean they work. Diet tricks do not actually resolve your physical hunger sensations; rather, they trick your body into thinking you are not hungry temporarily, but in reality, your body becomes hungrier as a result. This is often a tactic used in disordered eating because it encourages restriction when your body is actually hungry and really needs food.

Physical hunger can be determined through physical sensations. When you are physically hungry, you are going to feel an emptiness in your stomach, a growling sensation, even some light pain, or a gnawing feeling that is overall uncomfortable. Physical hunger can also express itself as tightness in the stomach, chest, or throat, and it can manifest as changes in your mood or energy levels as well.

On the other hand, there is emotional hunger. Emotional hunger is a desire for food that fundamentally stems from an emotional place. For the most part, emotional hunger comes from negative emotions like sadness or stress; however, this is not always the case. Many people also feel hungry as a result of positive emotions such as happiness or joy. It is also possible to feel emotional hunger as a result of neutral emotions like boredom, which is often the biggest reason that most people experience emotional hunger. It is also important to understand the difference between being hungry for nutrition and being hungry for taste. For a lot of people, emotional hunger comes as a result of wanting to taste something. It is not actually hunger in

a physical sense because you just want something delicious to put into your mouth in order to satiate an emotional desire.

For a lot of people, it is difficult to tell if they are emotionally hungry or physically hungry because there is a lot of overlap between the sensations, the symptoms, and the cues that allow you to understand that you are hungry. In addition, if you are experiencing physical hunger at the same time as you are experiencing emotional hunger, it can be an even more confusing ordeal. In my personal opinion, if you are not sure, you should eat anyway. It is better to eat a little extra when you are not actually hungry than to deprive your body of the nutrients that it needs.

HOW TO TUNE INTO YOUR BODY'S HUNGER AND FULLNESS CUES

Something else associated with intuitive eating that many people struggle with is understanding their hunger and fullness cues. These are cues that the body physically feels when we are hungry or full and tell us to either start or stop eating. This is also connected to ayurveda, because the practice encourages us to eat when we are hungry and stop before we are full or when we are starting to feel full. As you can tell, there will be some overlap between these practices because both encourage actual healthy eating. But if you do not understand your hunger fullness cues, what are you supposed to do?

To start with, hunger and fullness cues are there for a reason. If they were meant to be ignored, they would not be there in the first place. Hunger and fullness cues change depending on your energy levels and what your body needs, which means that you might experience

a wide variety of hunger or fullness cues depending on what your body needs. If you have been exposed to diet culture throughout your life you may have lost touch with your hunger and fullness cues. Diet culture encourages you to ignore these cues, which is fundamentally unhealthy because these cues are your body's natural program for survival. To get back in touch with your hunger and fullness cues, you need to check in regularly to see if you are hungry or full. This is commonly done by using something called the hunger fullness scale, which can be quite helpful for people who are just starting out with intuitive eating.

The hunger fullness scale rates how you are feeling nutritionally on a scale of 1 to 10 based on how hungry you are to how full you are. Hunger and fullness naturally form the two opposite ends of the spectrum, with hunger on the lower end and fullness at the higher end. The hunger fullness scale is as follows:

1. You are ravenous, feeling dizzy, or physically ill as a result of not eating.
2. You are extremely hungry, experiencing a significant emptiness in your stomach and maybe even a headache or moodiness.
3. Your stomach is growling and you feel low on energy.
4. Your stomach feels a bit empty, but you are not exactly hungry yet. You could eat if any food was presented to you, though.
5. This is the neutral state where you are neither full nor hungry.
6. You feel kind of full. You are not completely full, and you could definitely eat more or maybe even need to eat more, but your stomach is not feeling hungry anymore.

7. If you eat any more you will definitely feel a sensation of discomfort.
8. You feel somewhat uncomfortable as a result of how much you have eaten.
9. You are feeling stuffed. This is the feeling you will experience on Thanksgiving or other major family holidays where you eat a lot of food and feel extremely bloated as a result.
10. You are feeling physically ill as a result of how much you have eaten. You are nauseous or sick.

The scale can be used very intuitively. Rate how you feel from 1 to 10 based on the scale, and if you find you rated yourself as feeling hungry, then you definitely should eat. If you are more on the full or bloated side, it is time to stop eating for now. This is the best way to get back in tune with your hunger and fullness cues to understand how hunger and fullness relate and what your body feels like when you are experiencing each.

HOW TO HONOR YOUR CRAVINGS WITHOUT GUILT

Honoring your food cravings is an important part of the healing process, especially for people who experience diet culture at an extreme level throughout their lifetimes. Please note that all of these tactics and methods do not eliminate the potential for you to honor your cravings. In fact, you should interact with your cravings when you feel them arise. I am not encouraging over-eating, but that you do not deny yourself the things that you want. How do you honor your food cravings without overdoing it?

The best way that I have discovered to honor cravings without overdoing it is to not deny yourself those cravings. A lot of the reason

that people end up binge eating is that they have denied themselves something that they really want for a long time. If you have ever experienced this, it probably manifested as denying yourself something and then later, uncontrollably eating way more of it than you originally would have. This is not unusual for people who restrict their diet in some capacity. To honor your cravings in a way that facilitates healing, you need to allow yourself to eat things that you believe, for whatever reason, you should not eat. One donut, for example, will not kill you. It will not even ruin any progress that you have made. But six donuts as a result of denying yourself the one is definitely going to make a dip in the progress you have made in addressing your relationship with eating. I recommend honoring your cravings by allowing yourself to, in moderation, eat whatever it is you are craving.

MINDFUL EATING PRACTICES

Another aspect of learning to eat intuitively involves mindful eating, which is a practice that involves paying attention to how you eat. It involves paying attention to your food and how it makes you feel, whether or not you are actually hungry, and other related sensations or feelings. There are many benefits to mindful eating, including learning how to engage in healthy weight loss. Mindful eating is part of intuitive eating because it allows you to know when you are hungry and what you need to eat to satiate that urge.

There are many ways that you can engage in mindful eating. For example, eating more slowly is a perfect way to start incorporating this practice into your eating habits. Paying attention to what is going into your mouth, how long you are chewing it, how it tastes, the temperature, and any other sensations you are experiencing are all

ways to focus on slowing down your eating to avoid rushing your meals. Not only is this good for digestion, but it is good for your mental health as well. It associates eating with being a mindful act and something that you should be doing regularly for the sake of your health. Those who engage in mindful eating are less likely to have disordered eating habits that lead to binge eating, restriction, and significant health concerns.

It is also a good idea to practice eating without distractions. A lot of people sit on their phones or watch TV while they are eating. But a good way to get in touch with mindful eating habits is to eat in silence, paying attention to nothing but yourself, the food you are eating, and how the food and the process of eating makes you feel. Eating in silence makes sure that you can pay attention to your hunger fullness cues to prevent yourself from overeating or undereating on accident. Furthermore, eating while you are watching TV or doing something else distracting prevents you from connecting to your food and understanding the importance it serves in your life. By focusing only on your food, you are forging a connection that will last you a lifetime and save your health.

To practice mindful eating, you should also stop eating when you are full, and focus on why you are eating, if you are actually hungry, and what you are going to eat. A lot of people opt to sit in front of the TV and binge-eat a bag of chips. If you really want chips, by all means, have your chips. But that does not mean you need to be sitting in front of the TV with the entire bag of chips just eating it mindlessly. Instead, portion out a small amount of chips and eat each one mindfully, paying attention to how they taste, the flavor in your mouth, and your hunger fullness cues. Eating nutritious food in place of unhealthy food is also another way to practice mindful

eating. While satiating cravings is a positive aspect of mindful eating and intuitive eating, replacing unhealthy snacks that you are not actually craving and just picking up mindlessly is a great way to improve your health. I recommend swapping out chips for apple slices or celery and candies for berries, therefore replacing unhealthy snacks with healthy and nutritious ones with the same elements you crave, whether it is something sweet, salty, or crunchy. This helps you to satiate cravings and provides you with a health boost.

By practicing mindful eating techniques in the right way, you are also actively working against eating habits that neglect your body. Combining mindful eating and intuitive eating techniques is the best way to go because they fold into one another like a neat little origami swan. By eating mindfully and intuitively you are listening to your body in a way that any diet promoted by diet culture cannot provide for you.

LIMITATIONS TO INTUITIVE EATING

Much like ayurveda practices, intuitive eating also has a list of limitations that are important to be mindful of. While these limitations are not necessarily bad nor a reason to avoid intuited eating, being aware of them will allow your practice to be more effective and allow you to settle into a new dieting technique. One of the main cons of intuitive eating is that it can take time to tune into your body and pay attention to what it actually needs. This is especially the case if you are used to the way that diet culture encourages you to ignore intuitive eating cues. Furthermore, it is often difficult to understand your hunger fullness cues when you first start intuitive eating but with practice, it becomes easier. Especially if you use a tool like the hunger fullness scale.

Another main disadvantage of intuitive eating, and in my opinion the only other disadvantage of intuitive eating, is the fact that it is not really a structured practice. A lot of people prefer more structure in their dieting practices, and intuitive eating does not fill that need for structure. Intuitive eating involves listening to your body and doing what your body finds best, which has nothing to do with counting calories, paying attention to nutritional labels, and other dieting techniques that we are often used to. For a lot of people, this lack of structure can be a major turn-off to the practice.

In this chapter, we learned all about intuitive eating, the advantages of this practice, and how to implement it in our lives. This is an incredible step forward in understanding holistic health dieting and how you can benefit your health overall. In the next chapter, we will talk a bit more about holistic nutrition.

HOLISTIC NUTRITION

Health is like money, we never have a true idea of its value until we lose it.

— JOSH BILLINGS

Holistic nutrition is the idea that your health is dependent upon all aspects of your life—the physical, emotional, and spiritual—being in balance in a rather unique way. Those who study and practice holistic nutrition approach it from the perspective of understanding who you are as a whole person. When you walk into the office of a holistic nutrition practitioner with a dietary or health concern, they will go far beyond merely considering your nutrition; they will also consider things like your lifestyle, exercise routine, and emotional well-being.

CONNECTION BETWEEN FOOD AND OTHER AREAS OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

There is an obvious connection between holistic nutrition, food, and other areas of life. Food is the main way that we get the nutrients we need for our bodies to function properly. If we do not get the nutri-

tion that we need, our bodies and our overall health will suffer. However, if we eat too much, we can also be at risk of being overweight or malnourished, and at risk of developing conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. Everything we eat plays a role in our health; within our bodies, food gives our cells and organs the instructions that they need to function properly. Think about food as the information or instructions for the body. So, when we feed the body something healthy, it gives the body healthy instructions; when we feed the body something unhealthy, it gives the body unhealthy instructions. This is why it is so important to pay attention to what you eat since it can shape not only your physical health but your mental health as well.

We know that there is a close relationship between the food we eat and the mood we are in. Our gut biome is a major contributor to the way we feel because good bacteria within our gut can produce more desirable neurotransmitter functions. However, eating a lot of processed foods and other foods that are not good for us can lead to the inability of neurotransmitters to function properly, thus resulting in a negative emotional state. In other words, you will be in a bad mood if you eat unhealthy food. Paying attention to this connection helps you ensure that your overall health does not suffer as a result of neglecting either your mind or body.

BIO-INDIVIDUALITY AND HOLISTIC NUTRITION

Bio-individuality is another area that is important to the field of holistic nutrition. Bio individuality is a field of philosophy related to biology that primarily focuses on discussing what constitutes a species and what makes it unique (Occhipinti, n.d.). What does this have to do with the topic of holistic health? As it turns out, more

than you might think. Bio individuality implies that because we are all unique, the key to health is honoring that uniqueness. This means that not everybody needs to meet the same nutritional expectations and thus not everybody needs to eat the same amount and types of food. What's good for you and what is good for the other people around you will differ dramatically. One of the main beliefs that bio-individuality seeks to dismantle is the idea that each person needs 2,000 calories per day. However, when we get into the science and philosophy of how bodies differ, we realize that this is not true at all. Each person's body has different needs and as such has different energy requirements. And that is just what calories are: energy. So, we all need different amounts of calories each day.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHOLE FOODS AND NUTRIENT-DENSE EATING

Something else that is important to understand when it comes to holistic nutrition is the idea of whole foods. We hear a lot that we are supposed to eat whole foods, but what exactly does that mean? What is the true benefit of eating healthy whole foods? For one, studies have shown that healthy whole foods can help in the prevention of diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Another benefit of eating healthy whole foods is that they are rich in nutrients which can be very beneficial to the body. Depending on who you ask, whole foods might mean something slightly different. For some people, the idea of whole foods regurgitates the idea of eating fruits and vegetables. But for other people, a diet that lacks preservatives, additives, and processed ingredients is the ideal image of whole foods. In fact, processed foods and additives are the enemy when it comes to eating a healthy diet. This is because nutrition all but evap-

orates from food when it is tampered with when it is processed or additives are included to make it last longer to taste sweeter or more flavorful. Preservatives and additives are therefore the main two things that you want to avoid when it comes to a holistic nutrition diet.

UNDERSTANDING NUTRIENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

One of the more elusive aspects of holistic health, and health in general, is understanding what nutrients actually do. We often hear that we are supposed to eat specific amounts of fats or include specific amounts of each vitamin and mineral in our diet, but what does that even mean? As it turns out, this is not just a nonsense discussion with no point. There are actually six essential nutrients that the body needs to survive, and each of them plays an idiosyncratic role in keeping us healthy. The six nutrients that you need every single day to keep your body functioning and healthy, no matter what diet you follow, are protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water.

As mentioned, each of these nutrients plays a unique role in keeping us healthy. Protein, for example, is necessary for our skin, organs, and cells to remain healthy. It is also responsible for hormones throughout the body and keeping the immune system healthy. Carbohydrates also serve an essential function throughout the body. You might have heard throughout your life that carbohydrates are bad for you. This is not the case at all. Carbohydrates are a source of energy for the body, and they provide the cells with everything they need to remain structurally sound. Carbohydrates are not a bad thing at all, especially when consumed in moderation. The next nutrient to understand is fat. Fat is responsible for storing energy for the body, providing structure to the cells, and allowing different

structures throughout the body to communicate with one another. Fat also insulates our vital organs to prevent them from being damaged by the activities of daily life. Protein, carbohydrates, and fats constitute what is referred to as macronutrients, which we need in large quantities throughout the day.

There are also micronutrients, which are otherwise referred to as vitamins and minerals. We also need these on a daily basis but in smaller amounts. Vitamins are responsible for regulating processes throughout the body, and minerals are responsible for allowing the cells to function as well as comprising our body tissues. Water is neither a macro nor micronutrient, however, it is vital for our survival and health.

HOW TO CREATE BALANCED MEALS AND SNACKS

Something else that we need to discuss that a lot of people typically struggle with is how to create a balanced meal. A balanced meal is one that has a variety of foods that are in balance with each other, including the nutrients within each food. A meal must have at least two or more different food groups to truly be balanced. A properly balanced meal contains carbohydrates, proteins, fat, and multiple servings of fruit and/or vegetables. Ideally, for most meals, half of your plate should consist of fruits or vegetables. It is not necessary to meet these requirements each time you sit down to eat; however, this should be what you eat generally since this is what your body naturally desires. Although I place the importance of listening to your body above that of adhering to having specific percentages of each food on your plate, it is important to note that most bodies want to eat according to these considerations.

Following a balanced diet is important because it increases the variety of what you eat. A lot of people fall into the habit of eating the same foods so often that they eventually lapse into an unhealthy dieting pattern. But by including at least one of each food group mentioned above into each meal, even if you eat the same meals every single day, you are at least providing your body with the base essential nutrients that it needs to survive. I do not necessarily recommend eating the same meals every single day, but you definitely cannot go wrong with one of everything on your plate. Eating balanced meals also helps you feel full and satisfied after each meal. This is because including one ingredient from each food group will help you satisfy cravings, fulfill your dietary necessities, and fill you up all at the same time. Even if you are craving something like a salad, including protein and carbohydrates in your salad will help make sure that you are fulfilled afterward instead of just full. Furthermore, a balanced meal will improve your overall energy levels throughout the day, eliminating any afternoon tiredness.

The most important advice I can give you is to not overthink balanced meals. A balanced meal looks different for everybody. The usual recommendation is that half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables, but in reality, that is not going to happen at every single meal, and that is okay. A balanced meal just necessitates that there is a little bit of everything on your plate, even if it is not as much as you feel like you should be eating. Balance your meals by going through each food group and including a little bit of everything into your meal, even if the main source of your food is something like protein.

TIPS FOR MEAL PLANNING AND PREPPING

Something else that I find to be particularly important when it comes to holistic nutrition is meal prepping and meal planning. A lot of people do not understand how to do this, but it is something that saves you a lot of time and grief when it comes to figuring out what you are going to eat. If you prepare your meals ahead of time, you are more likely to eat balanced meals without the stress of having to deal with cooking from scratch every time that you need to eat. Let me share a few tips that will make your meal-planning and meal-prepping process a lot simpler.

First, do not completely scrap everything you know and love about what you eat. You do not have to start from scratch when it comes to your meal planning (“10 Easy Tips for Meal Planning,” n.d.). If there are one or two meals that you typically repeat every week, you can start with those and then build your meal plan around them. Use your go-to meals as a basis for your weekly planning. Plan to have these meals every week or two and buy the necessary groceries when you go to the store, and then work on adding other meals around it as you decide to cook them. Another tip that I have is to always check what you have in the refrigerator. Meal planning around what you have in the refrigerator and when it goes bad is the best way to save food and money at the same time. See what you have in your fridge and what needs to be used before it goes bad, and use that to plan. Simply add anything you do not have but need to your grocery list for the next trip.

Another tip that I really like using in my own kitchen is to pick something that can serve as a building block for each meal. My favorite thing to do is pick a side that can be repeated in different recipes and in different ways because it makes your meal options more versatile. For example, I often use vegetables or protein for

this. One night's meatball meat can be the next night's hamburger meat. This saves you a lot of grief when it comes to shopping trips and having to figure out what you are going to do for dinner. Another essential tip is to cook your food ahead of time and then freeze it. Some of my favorite foods to cook and then freeze include soups, casseroles, lasagna, and stews. These foods often keep in the freezer for longer periods of time, and you can defrost them throughout the week as needed for your meals. Meal prepping is a great way to take the stress out of coming up with balanced meals every single night because you know what you are eating ahead of time and can therefore just enjoy your meal.

HOW TO READ NUTRITION LABELS AND MAKE INFORMED CHOICES

The final skill for holistic nutrition that I want to teach you is how to read nutrition labels to make an informed decision about what you are going to put into your body. Nutrition labels can seem very straightforward, but a lot of people struggle to actually understand what is going on back there. Allow me to demystify nutrition labels for you once and for all.

The first thing that you need to look at is the serving size, which is usually at the top of the nutrition label. I do not necessarily recommend eating based on serving sizes; however, the serving size on the back of a nutrition label tells you how much of each nutrient is in the amount of food that you are purchasing. For example, if there are two servings in a package, there will be x amount of nutrients within half of the package. if you eat more than half of a package, then you are getting more than half of the nutrients. Serving sizes are also a great way to understand how much you are buying at one time.

The next thing that you need to look at is the 13 nutrients listed on the back. The calorie listing tells you the amount of energy within a food. While it is recommended that you aim for 2,000 calories a day, I recommend finding the number that works for you and using that for dietary purposes. Everybody is different, and as such, everybody has different nutritional needs. The next nutrient you will want to look at is fat. Trans fats and saturated fats specifically are the fats that you should avoid, because these are the ones that your body forms into cholesterol and other negative substances. However, it is still essential that you include fat in your diet. I recommend going for natural forms of fat such as oils, avocados, and nuts. Cholesterol and sodium are two more things that you will want to keep an eye on, and you need to make sure to consume lower amounts of these. Carbohydrates are next, and you will want to make sure that you are eating a good amount of carbohydrates.

When it comes to maintaining a healthy diet, sugar is a factor that requires careful consideration. Currently on food labels, natural sugars and added sugars are grouped together unless specified otherwise. This means that you need to be vigilant in monitoring your sugar intake. While added sugars should be avoided, natural sugars can be beneficial or have a neutral impact on your health. Understanding the distinction between the two is key. In addition to being mindful of sugar, it is equally important to pay attention to your protein consumption. Including an adequate amount of protein in your daily diet is vital, particularly when you are opting for fresh and lean protein sources. Protein plays a crucial role in various bodily functions and can contribute to overall health.

As you navigate food labels, you will notice that vitamins and minerals are typically listed toward the bottom. These essential nutrients

are necessary for your body to function optimally. So, it is important to take note of the specific vitamins and minerals present in the foods you consume. By being aware of how much of these are present in your food, you can ensure that your diet is well-balanced and that you are providing your body with the necessary nutrients it needs to thrive. By considering the sugar content, protein intake, and vitamin and mineral composition of the foods you consume, you are taking an active role in prioritizing your health and making informed dietary choices. Developing the habit of reading and understanding food labels empowers you to make conscious decisions that align with your nutritional goals and overall well-being.

Once you have checked off all of these vital spots on the nutrition label, you can benefit highly from checking the ingredients list. As a general rule, the closer to the top an ingredient is, the more of it is in the portion contained in the package. Furthermore, many proponents of an all-natural diet say that you should not eat anything with an ingredient that you cannot pronounce. Generally, you will want to avoid food dyes as well.

Do not live your life based on a nutrition label. A lot of people feel the need to use the nutrition label to dictate their each and every dietary choice, but this is definitely not what you should be using the label for. In fact, misusing nutritional labels is a common way that people develop eating disorders. Instead of letting the nutritional label rule your life, use it as a loose guide for what nutrients are in your food to help you plan a balanced meal.

WELLNESS PRACTICES

My own prescription for health is less paperwork and more running barefoot through the grass.

— LESLIE GRIMUTTER

Most wellness practices are centered on the idea that your mind and body are connected. The way that you treat your mind will have an impact on the health and wellness of your body and vice versa. If you are kind to one but neglect the other, you will experience various unintended health issues. Understanding the connection between your mind and your body is essential in developing wellness practices that take you far in life and have holistic benefits. This chapter is focused on teaching you how to develop wellness practices that you can use and benefit from in your everyday life.

CULTIVATING EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

The first thing that we are going to focus on is cultivating emotional wellness, which is the ability to handle the stresses that life throws at you. In order to develop emotional wellness, you first need to under-

stand your current level of emotional wellness. You can do this by evaluating how you feel throughout the day. Do you respond well to stress? Does stress cause you to break down and lose control? These are all things to consider when it comes to developing emotional wellness. In fact, engaging in self-reflection is a good way to cultivate emotional awareness by helping you consider the areas of life that you typically neglect.

Practicing mindfulness is also a great way to develop emotional wellness. Mindfulness involves becoming aware of yourself and others in the interaction between the two. Understanding your emotions and practicing your mindfulness of them increases your ability to be compassionate towards others while decreasing your tendency to feel ashamed or embarrassed about your emotions. Mindfulness emphasizes letting your emotions be as they are and not feeling any shame or condemnation towards them.

One of the best things that I could advise you to do to improve your emotional wellness is to develop a self-care routine. A self-care routine will allow you to relax and feel better overall. Taking care of your body is one of the best ways to relax and reduce stress and anxiety. In developing a self-care routine, you are taking care of your emotional state because your emotions impact the health of your physical body.

I also recommend focusing on thinking positive and practicing gratitude. Thinking positive is a great way to train your brain to recognize the good things in life instead of focusing solely on the bad. The best way to develop a daily gratitude practice that involves positive thinking is to write down three things that you are grateful for. Every day, try to select three different things than the day before. Gratitude has the capacity to improve the relationships that we have

with ourselves and others, and our overall satisfaction with life. It is truly a practice that I recommend to everybody.

And the last thing that I recommend for cultivating emotional wellness is to be kind to yourself. In today's world, it is incredibly easy to be hateful towards yourself and others. I think that kindness towards others extends from kindness towards yourself, and if anybody deserves to feel kindness, it is ourselves. When you are mean to yourself, your overall health suffers because everything is interconnected. But by being kind to yourself, you gain the ability to make decisions more effectively, based on what is objective instead of your emotions. Working to negate negative self-talk is one of the best ways to work on emotional wellness.

ENHANCING SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

Wellness does not stop with your emotions, though. It is also important to take care of yourself spiritually. The best way to do so is to try and connect with people who share the same faith or beliefs as you. This allows you to feel a sense of connectedness and greater good when it comes to your spiritual beliefs. I know that it is not always possible for everyone to find a community that shares their faith or beliefs, especially when they are looking in their local area. This is why it is so important to be personally comfortable with your faith and aim to build wellness within that area of your life too.

Yoga and meditation are two of my favorite ways to increase spirituality and take care of my spiritual self, and I think that this can be the case for anybody no matter what path they follow. Yoga involves taking care of your body and connecting to who you are fundamentally. The breath work involved and the connection that you feel to

the earth around you is an insightful way to connect with your faith. Furthermore, meditation can help you reduce stress and anxiety and connect more to your spiritual purpose. By practicing yoga and meditation daily, you benefit spiritually and you are bound to experience indescribably positive benefits. I also recommend keeping a journal where you write about your spiritual journey, faith, and other things that are going on in your life. This also connects to your mental wellness, which we will discuss next.

Finally, I recommend spending time in nature and focusing on your hobbies. Connecting to the natural world around us is a great way to connect your spirituality no matter what faith you practice because almost every faith emphasizes the fact that a Divine Creator, or whatever you believe to be a higher power, created the universe. Connecting to that universe is the best way to connect to our spirituality. Furthermore, focusing on your hobbies can be spiritually healing because it connects you to what you are good at and who you fundamentally are as a person. Taking care of your spiritual wellness is an important step in taking care of your overall wellness.

IMPROVING MENTAL WELLNESS

Another aspect of wellness to focus on is mental well-being. Improving your mental well-being is beneficial for your holistic well-being and there are many ways to work on it. One thing you can do to improve your mental well-being is to connect with other people by finding friends who can be your support network, and connecting with your family and other people that you care about. Additionally, getting enough exercise, which we will discuss later on, is phenomenal for improving your mental well-being because this helps you raise your self-esteem, accomplish goals, and improve your health

and physical well-being. You can also improve your mental well-being by learning new skills since it gives you the confidence that you need to achieve things in other aspects of your life. Being mindful and giving to others also contributes to an improved mental state. Those who are giving to others in the form of volunteering, kindness, and lending their support tend to have overall increased life satisfaction as compared to people who are not giving. Plus, the focus on mindfulness and the here and now is what makes a lot of people happier long-term.

SIMPLE STRESS-REDUCING PRACTICES

In the world we live in, it can be rather difficult to find time to de-stress, focus on relaxation, and practice self-care. Day in and day out, it can seem like life just gets increasingly stressful with no relief, especially if you do not do stress-relieving activities in between the stressful activities. Learning different stress relief tactics is the best way that you can develop a sense of relaxation and maintain holistic wellness. Stress relief tactics benefit you not only physically and mentally, but spiritually and emotionally as well.

Something that you can do to help alleviate stress is to exercise more often. Exercising, especially intensive exercise, is beneficial for relieving stress because it allows you to physically get up and, in a sense, shake out any stress that you are feeling. Exercise also helps in improving your mood, sleep, and digestion, making it a wonderful option for relieving stress. Likewise, healthy dieting as outlined in this book is beneficial for relieving stress as well, because processed foods and added sugars, for example, are common deterrents to good mood. By eating things that are healthy and natural, you are

able to ensure that you are in a good mood and therefore less stressed throughout the day.

You should also work to avoid using your phone, laptop, and television as much as possible. Studies have shown that people who stare at screens for too long have an increased level of the stress hormone cortisol. Furthermore, there is an epidemic of phone and other screen addiction within our society, which has been tied to lower psychological well-being and increased stress levels. Beyond that, when we are staring at our screens too late in the day it can result in the inability to sleep at night, which can harm our ability to reduce stress naturally.

Self-care is another way that you can benefit your overall well-being and reduce stress. Caring for yourself is a good way to relax after a stressful day because a lot of the different methods involved in self-care are inherently relaxing techniques. Going for walks, taking baths, doing things you enjoy, and doing yoga or meditation are all great ways to relax and take care of yourself while also distressing. Those who take care of themselves experience less stress and benefit more overall from improved life satisfaction as a result. You do not have to take hours and hours of your time to devise the perfect self-care technique—you can do what feels natural and what feels best to take care of yourself in the moment.

One of the things that I recommend as well is reducing your caffeine intake. A lot of people have caffeine addictions, which is not good for you at all. Caffeine hijacks the nervous system in a way that can cause more stress throughout the day, even in situations where a stress response is not necessarily rational. While certain amounts of caffeine are healthy in moderation, drinking more than a certain

amount of caffeine, usually 400 mg per day, is associated with higher levels of stress and difficulty relaxing.

My final piece of advice on this topic is to learn how to set boundaries and say “no” to people. A lot of people are prone to letting others walk all over them, as a result of their inability to set strong boundaries. By setting strong boundaries that you refuse to let others walk over, you are setting the stage for creating respect and health in all aspects of your life.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF HOLISTIC WELLNESS PRACTICES

When it comes to holistic health and wellness, there are many different methods that you can employ to your benefit. If you enjoy alternative methods of therapy, healing, and other forms of overall wellness, I recommend trying out massage therapy, talk therapy, acupuncture, acupressure, breath therapy, meditation, hypnosis, aromatherapy, herbal therapy, Reiki healing, among others (Recovery, 2022).

HOW TO IMPROVE SLEEP QUALITY

Another important aspect to focus on when you want to improve your holistic wellness is your sleep. Unfortunately, a lot of people cannot name the last time that they had a good night's rest. This is a problem because sleep is one of the most important things in our lives. Sleep allows us to get the energy we need back from the day, it allows our brains to process events from the day before, and it allows our bodies to continue to perform various functions that we need in order to survive. When it comes to holistic health, there are various options for remedies to help you sleep better.

One such remedy is herbal supplements. Herbal supplements are a powerful way to help you sleep better at night. Most of these come in the form of herbal teas, which is a personal favorite of mine. Drinking tea with chamomile, St John's wort, lavender, and other herbal supplements before bed is a fantastic way to get to sleep at night faster and sleep with better quality. I recommend looking for all-natural, organic herbal teas at your local grocery store, many of which will be labeled as sleepy time teas, which are teas directly blended to help you sleep better at night.

Meditating mindfully is another way to help you sleep better at night. Meditation and mindfulness are both tactics that can help reduce stress, as scientifically proven by various studies. Those who practice mindfulness meditation are prone to experiencing a decline in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses, making mindfulness meditation a wonderful candidate for helping you sleep better at night. When you practice mindfulness meditation, you are more likely to experience sustained relaxation throughout the day, which results in sleeping better at night.

Other sleep remedies include not using screens three hours before bedtime, not eating three hours before bedtime, dedicating an hour before bedtime to your bedtime routine—one that is specially curated to help you get to sleep at night—and taking some time for self-care before bed. Most professionals will recommend as well that if you cannot get to sleep at night, you should get out of bed instead of staying in bed tossing and turning. This is because if you toss and turn in your bed, you are more likely to associate your bed with a place to toss and turn and feel symptoms of insomnia as opposed to a place to sleep. By combining these different methods, you are more likely to have a more beneficial and successful night's sleep.

HOLISTIC WELLNESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Something else that I encourage you to be mindful of is the relationship between the natural environment and wellness. Wellness is an approach that allows you to prevent yourself from getting ill or falling into a health imbalance. However, a lot of people overlook the power that the environment can play in facilitating overall wellness. Generally speaking, those who live in a location where there is more nature surrounding their homes are more likely to experience overall life satisfaction. This is because nature is where we are meant to be. It is an incredibly healing place, and those who have nature at their doorstep are more likely to experience health benefits just by spending time in it. Spending time in nature, even if you have to take a little walk or drive to get there, can be incredibly beneficial for your overall health. There are many methods that you can look into if you are interested in connecting to your environment as a form of wellness, including forest bathing, and grounding, among others.

The first step to developing an understanding of how the environment can play a role in our wellness is awareness. I recommend that you start here if you are interested in seeking more guidance from the environment as to how you can improve your overall well-being. Start by visiting your local park or outdoor areas and thinking about the overall quality of the location. How is the air? Is there a lot of litter around? Is there water, animals, or other facets of nature to take note of? Paying attention to your local environment is going to tell you what you have available to you. I recommend developing and cultivating an awareness of the nature around you before you begin delving into environmental wellness as a skill set. Once you have developed an awareness of your environment, start spending time with

it in a way that can facilitate your wellness by simply sitting outside at first. See what calls to you and work from there.

In this chapter, we talked about all the different methods of stress reduction and the overall wellness techniques we can apply. In the next chapter, we will discuss the importance of movement in your overall health and wellness. This is such a major aspect of health and wellness that it deserves its own chapter. A lot of people overlook the benefits of health and exercise, but by getting up and moving around, you are experiencing benefits that sustain themselves and you over a long period of time. Exercise is truly a method that everybody should engage in if they care about their health and wellness, and I am going to teach you just how to do so in the next chapter.

INCORPORATING EXERCISE IN HOLISTIC HEALTH

Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.

— HIPPOCRATES

HOW DOES EXERCISE FIT INTO THE HOLISTIC HEALTH APPROACH?

Exercise is an area that a lot of people typically overlook when it comes to their health. This is because exercise involves getting up and moving around, which can be a bit demanding for some people. Exercise plays a unique role when it comes to holistic health because everything is interconnected. Exercise is beneficial because it benefits the body; what's more, when you understand health from a holistic perspective, you know it can benefit your mind and your soul as well.

Exercise improves your mental health by improving the serotonin and endorphin receptors in your brain, which are pleasure centers that allow you to feel things like joy and happiness. Exercise also improves our ability to sleep, our circulation, and our self-esteem. Fur-

thermore, exercise is a great coping mechanism when it comes to focusing your attention on something more positive. When you are sad or feeling otherwise down, exercise can give you something to focus on that takes you away from those negative thoughts. In these ways, exercise can benefit your mental health.

As such, it is important to work on cultivating a good relationship with exercise in order to improve your health, especially from a holistic perspective.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Some of the benefits of exercise happen to be more obvious than others. For someone who's not used to exercising regularly, it can be a bit difficult to spot some of the more nuanced benefits that exercise can provide. However, let's start with the physical benefits. Exercise provides you with increased circulation, strength training, and the release of endorphins that create positivity within your brain. By exercising, you are improving your body's ability to handle physical labor and other tasks, which are very simple yet necessary benefits.

When it comes to mental health benefits, however, the story is a bit different. Overall, we can tell that people who exercise regularly have better mental health than people who do not. Those who exercise regularly experience lower rates of mental illness due to the physical and mental benefits that exercise provides. Exercise can benefit those with mental illness especially, because it boosts a person's mood, concentration, and awareness, and improves their physical health. When you feel physically healthy, you are more prone to feeling mentally healthy as well. It is important to note that in order to have these benefits, exercise does not have to be strenuous. Mild

or moderate exercise that is not very strenuous, just exercise that gets your body moving, can be impeccably beneficial to your mental health.

Something that I find to be particularly interesting is that exercise can be used to benefit chronic diseases and illnesses. Exercise gets you up and moving, which is something that with age or with certain diseases can be quite troublesome. However, exercise does have a striking potential to benefit various physical illnesses and diseases (Mayo Clinic, 2023). One such physical element that exercise can help alleviate is arthritis since it can allow you to build muscle strength and relieve joint tension and inflammation. Those who exercise say that, on average, they experience fewer symptoms of arthritis even with age as compared to people who do not necessarily exercise often.

Exercise is also great for alleviating back pain. As a result of the tasks we complete every day, many people struggle with intense back pain. However, studies have shown that practicing low-impact aerobic exercise regularly can raise the heart rate without putting any stress on your lower back whatsoever. But this does not mean that it cannot benefit your lower back. In fact, exercise that is low impact and aerobic can help you strengthen the muscles in your back, making them less susceptible to pain. Furthermore, stomach and back muscle exercises can also help alleviate pain in the spine and lower back.

Other diseases and illnesses that regular exercise can help be treated or alleviate in some capacity include cancer, dementia, depression and anxiety, diabetes, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Exercise has so many health benefits that it is important to consider it a vital as-

pect of your holistic health routine, no matter what your lifestyle may be.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EXERCISE FOR YOU

A lot of people are dissuaded from exercising because there is a wide variety of exercises available and it can be very hard to choose which exercise is right for you. I have some tips that can help optimize your decision of which exercises are right for you and your lifestyle, making the ability to exercise even easier. Coupled with the benefits that exercise has to offer, it should be an easy decision from here to start your exercise routine to experience optimized holistic health.

First and foremost, I encourage you to seek out an exercise that you actually enjoy. One of the main reasons that people fail to stick to an exercise routine is that it is quite boring or does not fit what they actually enjoy. If walking is something that you enjoy, for example, then go for a walk every day. However, if you find walking to be incredibly boring and would much rather engage in something like yoga or weightlifting, do that instead. You do not need to feel like it is necessary to conform to somebody else's standard of what a proper exercise routine is to appreciate the benefits exercise has to offer. Choose something that you enjoy as your form of exercise and stick to it, expanding your routine as you find it necessary. You will be able to stick to your exercise routine for longer without being discouraged by boredom or other circumstances.

Engaging in multiple types of exercises also contributes to an overall balance. The best thing to do is include aerobic exercises as well as muscle strength exercises. Aerobic exercises include things like walking, running, or sports that involve moving rapidly. Aerobic exercis-

es are important because they help your heart pump blood through your body and increase your overall heart health. Muscle training exercises allow you to strengthen your muscles and ease the ability of your body to carry out various tasks throughout the day. Incorporating both of these types of exercises into your routine will give you the most benefits. You can choose whatever you want within these categories, whether walking and weightlifting is your thing or whether it is swimming and yoga. When you choose the types of exercise that fit you the best personally, you are taking a more holistic approach to exercise in which you honor your body and make exercise part of your existing lifestyle.

Another piece of advice would be to switch up the intensity of your exercises. You might think that it is a good idea to engage in high-intensity exercises at all times, because the harder you are working the more benefits you must be receiving, right? Well, that is not exactly the case. It is actually best to follow a high-intensity day of exercise with a low-intensity day. Not only does this give your body a break, but it also varies what you are doing with your body, allowing you to work muscles and parts of the body that you do not necessarily think of or even know about. By varying your exercise, you will experience the most benefits, even compared to people who engage in high-intensity exercise consistently.

Another reason that a lot of people do not actually engage in exercise is that they feel compelled to follow an exercise regimen that does not fit their lifestyle. We all know that life can get incredibly busy. There are so many obligations to interact with each and every day that can make it difficult to find time to exercise. What's more is that when you feel compelled to follow a certain exercise schedule, you feel like you need to exercise at a certain pace, and it can be difficult

to start exercising in the first place. I would encourage you to exercise when you can according to your lifestyle. For example, if you have time to exercise before work, then take advantage of that time instead of feeling like you have to exercise after work. It is also a good idea to try to join a sports organization or other exercise group that keeps you motivated, helps you interact with others, and fits within your lifestyle and schedule.

Engaging in exercise activities that do not rely on external circumstances to be completed, also makes it easier to do so consistently. If rain or cold weather prevents you from exercising, then there is something missing from your exercise routine. You should have exercises that you feel like you can do no matter what the circumstances are. Similarly, you should also include exercises that can be squeezed into different aspects of your routine if needed, such as in circumstances where you are in a time crunch and only want to get a little bit of exercise in. This means having exercise activities that do not require being outside, certain equipment, or being done in a set place. But instead, to have exercise activities that you can complete anywhere and at any time.

You should also make it a point to set aside a specific amount of time each day to exercise. Of course, if your days change rapidly from one day to the next, or you genuinely do not have time to set aside for exercise, it is fine to set aside time wherever you can find it. Personally, I find it best to set aside time at the same time each day to exercise, but that is not always possible for everybody. If you can, try to make it a point to exercise consistently at the same time every day, such as before work, or after work. If you cannot find that time, try to work with your schedule and see where you can schedule in time on a day-to-day basis.

Another reason that people often shy away from exercising as a solution to health concerns is that they feel like it is not accessible to them based on a health condition or an accommodation that they need in order to physically move. A lot of exercise stresses intense movement or strength that many people simply do not have. As such, it is important to be able to find exercises that accommodate these health conditions. For those who are elderly, overweight, are not used to exercise, or have other physical or chronic conditions that make it difficult to exercise, it can be rather discouraging to hear that you should be engaging in certain exercise routines regularly. However, I encourage you to, instead of listening to what other people are doing, find exercises that work for you. One of my favorite things to recommend to people who have trouble with strength and movement is to get into a swimming pool. Even if you are just walking around in the swimming pool, swimming a little bit, or floating, you are still getting in some exercise and it relieves some of the tension on your body because you weigh less in water than you do on land. Finding alternatives to movement and exercise that fit your personal needs is the best way to exercise and will keep you motivated to continue the process of exercising regularly.

With all of this said, it is important to exercise according to what meets your needs and what feels best for your body. Do not push yourself to do something that is not comfortable for your body, and do not force yourself to exercise to the extent that it is harmful. Exercising for 20 to 30 minutes every day is perfectly fine if that is the time that you have available and what you can handle physically. All in all, remember to vary the intensity of your exercises and switch between muscle strength training and aerobic exercises when you can.

COMBINING EXERCISE WITH MINDFULNESS

One of the best things that you can do for yourself when it comes to exercise is to combine exercise, meditation, and mindfulness. Exercise and meditation when in combination have so many more benefits than what they can possibly ever have on their own. This may contradict what you have learned about meditation in the past; you might think that you have to be seated, calm, and still to meditate. However, this is not the case at all. You can meditate and practice mindfulness while exercising, in fact, it is even encouraged.

One of the benefits of meditating, while you exercise, is that it improves your ability to coordinate your mind and body. Meditation is a very mental process and exercise is a very physical process, which means that when you combine the two you are experiencing a level of mental-physical coordination that you do not otherwise receive in everyday life. Furthermore, engaging in both of these can improve your levels of depression and anxiety, and when combined they promote even further reductions of symptoms of depression and anxiety. What's more, when you combine these methods you are able to increase your energy throughout the day. You might feel like you have more energy or less need to sleep as a result. The final major impact of combining mindfulness meditation with exercise is that it helps you recover from intense workouts more quickly. Mindfulness and meditation actually have the capacity to heal us physically, and when employed and combined with exercise, can do wonders for making exercise less strenuous.

COMBINING EXERCISE WITH SELF-CARE

Combining exercise with self-care is something else that can help you achieve the optimum holistic health benefits that you are aiming for. Physical exercise offers many benefits for physical, emotional, and mental health, so it makes sense that you can extend your exercise as a form of self-care. When it comes to taking exercise and transforming it into something that can be utilized for self-care, there are a few tips to keep in mind.

Primarily, make sure you do not overdo it. A lot of people have the tendency to, when they start exercising, exercise way too much, way too fast, with way too high expectations. The only expectation that you should have for your exercise routine is that you are doing it. Do not expect yourself to do more than you can physically handle, and be kind to yourself when you do not meet your goals. The best way to achieve your goals without failure is to start small and then increase the amount of exercise that you are doing every single day. It can be rather difficult to jump right into exercising when you are not used to doing so with any sort of frequency; however, if you start small and build up your exercise routine from absolutely nothing, you will eventually have far more successful routine compared to if you jumped right in and forced yourself to do things that you could not handle.

To get the most out of your exercise routine, it is also important that you get enough sleep. Your body needs to be able to rest in between exercise days or sessions to recover. Every day, you can do a little bit of exercise, but you should also be accounting for at least one day of rest where you do minimal to no exercise to allow your body to recover. Anywhere between one and four rest days for the week is typical and usual for people who exercise regularly, and by giving yourself the appropriate amount of rest days, you are ensuring that your

exercise routine is more successful and beneficial to your overall health. Moreover, if you do not get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep at night and do exercise regularly, your muscles will eventually become weaker and give out even if you are exercising them. This is because your body does not have the time that it needs to recover and build up those muscles that you spent time strengthening. Giving yourself time for rest and relaxation is the best way to ensure that your body is actually strengthening those muscles and increasing your level of stamina.

Part of exercising as a form of self-care also involves eating healthy foods. If you are eating unhealthy foods or junk foods, your body will not have the nutrients that it needs to take care of itself during your exercises. Consider eating healthy to be a form of self-care. You are taking care of your body so that it can continue to function in the best way possible to allow you to meet your goals and achieve health. If you do not eat the foods that you need to eat throughout the day, your body will not have any of the energy that it needs for exercising, resting, maintaining hobbies, and engaging in other activities. You should be eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, protein, and carbohydrates, and getting in the right vitamins and minerals as you progress throughout the day to be taking appropriate care of yourself.

One of my favorite ways to encourage people to take care of themselves through the process of exercise is to take a regular walk through nature to nourish your mind, body, and soul. Nature is an incredible healing force, and by just spending time breathing in the fresh air and experiencing all that nature has to offer, you will experience plenty of healing benefits.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EXERCISE

One of the most common complaints I hear from someone who does not want to exercise is that they do not have a certain capacity to exercise as a result of a circumstance present in their life. I hear a lot of people talk about how they lack the time, experience, or enjoyment of exercise which prevents them from exercising in the first place. Fortunately, I have some tips and tricks that can help you avoid some of the most common barriers to exercise, allowing you to persevere and exercise in spite of what might seem to you like a potential barrier.

One of the most common barriers to exercise is that people do not have enough time. Especially with all of the things that we have to do each and every day, including work, school, childcare, and more, it can seem really difficult to squeeze in time for exercise. The best way to overcome this barrier is to squeeze in time for exercise throughout the day. I said earlier that 20 to 30 minutes of exercise is wonderful if that is what you can afford to do, but some people report that they cannot even manage that. That is okay. Instead of trying to squeeze in 20 to 30 minutes all at once, consider breaking it down into chunks of 5 to 10 minutes. The exercise does not have to occur all at once in order for it to be beneficial. For example, if you work in an office job, finding time to take a 5 to 10-minute walk throughout the office can be incredibly beneficial. You also have the ability to wake up earlier and get in some exercise before work, which has benefits in its own right. Exercising early in the morning is a great way to energize yourself and prepare for the day. A third alternative I have for people who do not think that they have enough time to exercise is to put down the car keys and start walking more. A lot of people opt to drive everywhere, but in reality, it is not neces-

sary. Not only is walking better for the environment, but it is good for your overall health and it is a great way to get exercise when you can.

Another common complaint that I hear is that people think exercise is boring. The best way to remedy this is to choose activities you enjoy, differentiate the activities you perform day to day, and exercise with other people. We talked a bit about the power of differentiating and varying activities in the last section. In addition to that, you can also work out with a partner, which can make exercise more exciting because it adds somewhat of a competitive nature. You can find an exercise buddy, join a sport, or even go to the gym. I highly recommend this as a solution for pushing yourself forward with exercise. In addition to simply having somebody to work out with, doing so allows you to find new ideas and new opportunities.

Something else that many people see as an obstacle to exercising regularly is that they are self-conscious about the way they look when they exercise. This is a very valid concern, but there are ways to circumvent it. First of all, remind yourself that you are doing yourself a service by exercising. Exercising actually does wonders for boosting a person's self-esteem, and you are less likely to feel bad about yourself the more you exercise. In addition, you do not have to exercise in public. You can exercise in private in the comfort of your own home, and even purchase at-home exercise equipment. It is also a good idea to focus on the future and how much you will thank yourself as a result of the exercise that you are doing now.

Being tired after work is another common barrier that many people experience. This is a rather tricky situation, because exercise actually provides you with more energy, but it can also be difficult to get up and exercise if you have no energy in the first place. What I recom-

mend is getting up 30 minutes earlier than you usually would to try and exercise in the morning. Not only does this get it out of the way before you get too tired as a result of work, but exercising will give you an additional boost of energy before you begin your day. In addition, you can use the time allotted for your lunch to get in some exercise in the middle of work, which should allow you to feel more energized throughout the rest of your workday.

Finally, I want to address the people who feel like they are too lazy to exercise. Well, it is understandable that you might feel like you just simply cannot exercise because you do not have the energy, it is important to set realistic expectations. A lot of the reason that you feel too lazy to exercise is that you have way too high of an expectation for yourself regarding what exercise should be. In reality, all you need to expect yourself to do is get up out of bed or out of your chair. Furthermore, work with who you are as a person and not against that. If you are prone to sitting down, buy equipment that you can work with sitting down. There are so many different equipment options that can be placed under a desk or even in front of a lazy chair that can be utilized for exercise when you do not feel like standing up.

In reality, if you want to exercise then there is no true barrier to exercise that you cannot overcome. By exercising every single day, at least for a few minutes, you are experiencing many health benefits that are unmatched by many other health and medicinal treatments. In this chapter, we focused on the benefits of exercise. In the next chapter, I am going to tie everything together for you neatly so that you can truly begin to get started on your revolutionized lifestyle as a result of holistic health and healing.

TRANSITIONING TO A HOLISTIC LIFESTYLE

By cleansing your body on a regular basis and eliminating as many toxins as possible from your environment, your body can begin to heal itself, prevent disease, and become stronger and more resilient than you ever dreamed possible!

— DR. GROUP, DC III

Now that we are nearing the end of the book, it is important to take a moment to consider what a lifestyle of holistic health really means to you. A lifestyle of holistic health combines every single element of this book to allow you to live your best life. Personalizing your holistic health practice is going to take a bit of tweaking. You will have to spend a bit of time learning what works for you and what does not. Maybe intuitive eating works for you but ayurveda practices do not. Maybe ayurveda practices do work for you, but holistic exercise methods do not. Feel free to take what resonates best and leave what does not, in order to combine methods to create your ultimate holistic health routine. As it stands, all you need to develop the perfect holistic health routine is an understanding of who you are as a person, and have a basic understanding of the aspects cov-

ered in this book including diet, sleep, exercise, and well-being, among others.

So, knowing all of this, how do you get started with personalizing and implementing holistic health concepts? The first thing you need to do is discover why you want to live a holistic lifestyle. Take some time to think about the reasons that have inspired you to seek out this book and the methods that it teaches. Keep this reason in your mind at all times. It is going to be instrumental in serving as the motivation for your practice. When things get harder and you feel like quitting, remembering why you started in the first place is going to be your biggest superpower. Remember that holistic lifestyles are not the end result; rather, holistic lifestyles are something that you work on throughout the entire course of your life. At no point is it going to be a complete journey, because the point is during and of itself. Keeping your reason for doing this in mind is going to make your journey all the more fulfilling.

Implementing holistic health habits also begins with eating healthy foods and eating clean, organic, and whole foods, that are devoid of processing and added preservatives. Eating healthy is difficult when you first start, but the benefits you notice and the way your body feels, as a result, will be life-changing. Eating foods that are devoid of harmful chemicals and toxins that can be found in so much mass-produced food is an instrumental part of holistic health and healing. In general, you should maintain more of a focus on your physical health than what other people say you should focus on when it comes to your body. Your physical health has nothing to do with your weight, how many calories you eat, or that donut you had yesterday for breakfast. Paying attention to your personal physical

health should come first and above anything that anybody else has to say about your body.

Moreover, you should make it a point to take care of your mental health and rest. At the end of the day, resting is still a form of productivity. Anybody who tells you that you should spend your day being productive and excludes resting as a form of productivity, is not somebody whose advice you should be taking, because they do not have your best interest at heart. Resting and taking care of yourself and your mind is one of the most important things that you can do.

DETOXIFICATION

I also want to talk a bit about the concept of detoxification to finish off our journey together. Detox foods are foods that help you get rid of toxins in your body. Foods like lemons, ginger, garlic, beetroot, green tea, fresh fruit, brown rice, and more all work to detoxify the body through the natural power of food (Narayana Health, 2013). Detoxing is not as the media typically portrays it, it is not something unnecessary that people do just because they think it is trendy or cool. Moreover, detoxifying foods can help to remove toxins from your body and improve your health in a way that you cannot get when eating processed or junk foods. By consuming these foods in the forms of tea, side dishes, or as main ingredients in your diet, you are benefiting your health overall by getting rid of toxic substances in your body, free radicals that damage your skin, and so much more.

There are many detox practices that you can look into further if you are interested in the process, including:

- Lymphatic drainage: This process involves massaging certain areas that encourage the drainages of lymph nodes, moving waste away from tissues and back to areas of the body that can repurpose it.
- Epsom salt and clay detox baths: This involves bathing in products that can absorb impurities.
- Light therapy: This practice involves exposure to various sources, forms, and colors of light as a method of detox.
- Sweating: This involves sitting somewhere warm, like a sauna, so that the body sweats and naturally excretes any impurities.

And there are so many more as well. Diving into detox options is a great way to add a boost of health to your holistic routine.

STAYING MOTIVATED TOWARD YOUR HEALTH GOALS

Part of remaining healthy and sticking to a holistic lifestyle involves staying motivated toward reaching your health goals. You can stay motivated by, for starters, giving it time and sticking to your habit. It is said that it takes three weeks completely to develop a habit. If you think that something's not working, my recommendation is that you give it at least three weeks of time with consistent effort and practice before deciding that it truly is not working for you. If after that point it is truly not working for you, then switch up your routine and see what does. One of the biggest reasons that people fail to meet their health goals is that they do not give it adequate time to become a habit and actually see results.

Something else that is important is understanding what motivates you, which is where your motivation for beginning a holistic healthy

lifestyle comes into play. Whatever motivated you to start a holistic health journey should be the main reason that drives you in maintaining your holistic health routine. Avoiding health fads, setting goals that you actually want to achieve, keeping your motivations in mind, and always remembering that health does not equal appearance are going to be instrumental in the process of your success.

CONCLUSION

Congratulations! You have reached the final pages of this book, and I want to express my heartfelt commendation for your dedicated effort in absorbing all the valuable information presented here. Throughout this journey, we have delved into diverse subjects that hold the potential to enhance your life significantly. From exploring the principles of Ayurvedic medicine to unraveling the complexities of diet culture, from embracing intuitive eating to embracing holistic health as a way of life, you have equipped yourself with an arsenal of transformative knowledge.

In our society, the influence of diet culture is pervasive, but it does not have to dominate your existence. Armed with the insights and wisdom you have acquired from this book, you possess the power to dismantle the detrimental impact of diet culture on your life. Moreover, you now have the opportunity to become an advocate for change, to educate others about the pitfalls of diet culture, and to guide them towards a healthier and more fulfilling path.

I am sincerely grateful to you for allowing me to accompany you on this enlightening journey of self-discovery and healing. If the knowledge you have gained here has resonated with you and brought you

value, I kindly request that you consider leaving a review for this book. By doing so, you can help others stumble upon its transformative content and embark on their own path to personal growth.

Now, it is time for you to embrace the world with the tools and insights you have acquired. Utilize them to shape your life in ways that bring about positive change, growth, and happiness. Believe in yourself and the immense potential within you to create a life that is fulfilling, healthy, and aligned with your true desires.

Once again, congratulations on your accomplishment, and may your journey toward a more holistic life be filled with endless possibilities and profound fulfillment.

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