



Ways to Balance Your System

Often, embarking on a new fitness/lifestyle can feel very overwhelming! Because of this, we tend to give up easily. Instead, of having an all-or-nothing approach to lifestyle changes, resolve to implement changes slowly over time so that they become new habits instead of overwhelming deviations from your usual routine. Choose just one or two of the following to begin blending into your life. When these changes turn into habits, consider adding a couple more!

“Eat Food, Not Too Much, Mostly Plants” -Michael Pollan

One of the easiest changes to begin to make is to find more natural swaps for your favorite foods. Think: small ingredient lists, foods you can pronounce and, ideally, single ingredient foods (often found on the perimeter of the store because they require refrigeration).

Consume more vegetables!

A serving of vegetables is generally going to be ½ cup. For “fluffy” vegetables (like kale or spinach), you need to measure based on what they would measure at if cooked and base the serving on this. For instance, a ½ of raw broccoli would still be ½ cup when cooked. However, a full cup of kale will likely reduce in size down to ½ cup when cooked. Therefore, if consuming raw, “fluffy” vegetables, they would need to be approximately a whole cup to qualify as a serving. Ideally, we want to work up to 7-11 servings of veggies per day. Remember, Potatoes and corn are not veggies...I know, I’m sad too.

Be Mindful of Carb Consumption: While carbohydrates can often be an important part of a diet that helps keep us satisfied, energetic and balanced, they can also be problematic if they are consumed excessively and/or in the wrong form.

Incorporate Prebiotic/Probiotic Foods: Gut health is essential for everything in your body to function properly, even your brain...in fact, *especially* your brain! Fiber is a prebiotic and is the “fertilizer” for creating a healthy gut (your soil). Fermented foods are probiotics and are the “seeds” in your soil (gut). Examples of fermented foods include yogurt, kefir, miso, tempeh, beet kvass, fermented chili paste, pickles, kimchi, sauerkraut.

Dramatically limit or completely abstain from processed sugar, grains, dairy and alcohol.

All are inflammatory, hard on your digestive system as well as your entire system. Replace them, instead, with moderate amounts of fresh fruit, potatoes and avocado. Also avoid synthetic artificial sweeteners as they are inflammatory, disturb the balance in your gut and cause cravings. Instead, you can use stevia, xylitol and small amounts of honey, especially manuka honey.

Stop Snacking: For some people snacking may work to help avoid overeating. However, for many of us, we find ourselves grazing all day long which keeps insulin constantly circulating through our system. When insulin is present in our bloodstream, we are in a fat storing mode. It's okay to have longer periods of time where we consume no calories!

Intermittent Fasting: Bottom line, don't feel like you need to eat all the time! We've always heard of "times of fast and times of famine"...when is the last time you've experienced the latter?

Limit Caffeine: While some caffeine can actually have a positive effect on your metabolism, too much can overtax your system and throw you out of balance. One or two cups of coffee in the morning is much different than depending on a steady supply of caffeine throughout the day. Another great habit is to wait 90 minutes after waking to consume caffeine. If we don't let our bodies fully wake up and clear out certain "sleepy hormones," after the caffeine wears off, we will have a slump of fatigue as those hormones are no longer suppressed.

Sleep More

Sleep is vital for well being! Not only does it help with brain function, it also is when our bodies regenerate and detoxify. There are many factors that play into a good night's sleep. Here are the most important:

-Don't go to bed with a full belly. If your body is busy digesting, it can't do the aforementioned regeneration and detoxifying its meant to do while asleep.

Limit or avoid alcohol. Alcohol is often great to help get you asleep but staying asleep seems to be a problem. Both alcohol and marijuana keep your body from getting into those deepest levels of sleep.

-Get your Magnesium!

You can get it from natural sources like pumpkin seeds, leafy greens like spinach and kale or you can get it from a supplement. There are a couple different forms of Magnesium supplements. The one most beneficial for sleep seems to be Magnesium Glycinate. I take 240mg before bed on an empty stomach. If it upsets your stomach to do this, however, take it right after dinner. You can also try pairing it with 200mg L-Theanine. This combo has all but eliminated my nightly 3am jolt awake where I would lay awake for hours with my mind racing!

-Lights Out!

Light exposure to your body (especially your eyes) tells your primordial brain that its still daylight and your body doesn't begin to prepare for sleep or, once asleep, doesn't go into as deep of a sleep.

Find ways to increase dopamine naturally! While you never want to rely on large amounts of dopamine to feel "okay", sometimes we seek things like alcohol, sugar, etc because we aren't producing enough dopamine naturally. There are two ways to remedy this. The first is to go on a "dopamine fast". This is where you deliberately avoid anything that gives you significant pleasure. It can include anything from alcohol and drugs to television and extreme exercise. When we do this, we make the brain receptors more sensitive to dopamine and, hence, we feel better with less dopamine. The second way is to increase dopamine with healthy activities such

as exercise, outdoor activities, laughter and even supplements such as [Curcumin](#). It is suggested that you take a dose of up to 1000mg twice per day, with a meal, for best absorption.

Meditation/Deep Breathing: Stress and anxiety might not seem to matter when it comes to trying to detoxify and balance the body. However, when we are in a chronic state of stress, we are utilizing important resources that our body needs to fulfill all kinds of other tasks. Meditation is an excellent way to learn to control our stress/anxiety response.

Remove Toxins from Environment, including what you put on your skin.

Just as stress and anxiety can overtax our system, we can also overwhelm our system's detoxification abilities by exposing ourselves to environmental toxins. Many can easily be avoided in ways such as switching to filtered water, finding shampoo that doesn't contain parabens and eat organic vegetables to avoid the consumption of pesticides found in regular produce.

Move, Move, MOVE!

Stop saying "I need to start exercising" and, instead, say, "I want to move." Regular and frequent movement does so much more than burn calories, it changes us chemically and, the older we get, we can feel the effects of regular movement in the form of less fatigue and achiness. Even just easy stretching can be more beneficial than you may believe!

"Messy Bed, Messy Head." Organize Something!

This might not seem related to wellness but I assure you it is! If your surroundings are chaotic, your mind will be too. Not only does this create stress, it creates overwhelm or, worse yet, apathy! Start small. Pick one drawer, one shelf and make it something peaceful and clear for your eyes to land on. Feel how it calms your brain and makes you feel more in control. Let this one space inspire you to work on your next space. Bonus: It's extra movement!

Brainwash Yourself!

Don't feel like doing any of these things? Well then start with simply exposing yourself to wellness-related material. This can be in the form of books, movies, Youtube videos or even just posting wellness related pictures or phrases around your spaces. "Energy flows where attention goes."

Please Note: I am not a doctor. I am not even a nutritionist! I am providing the following for informational purposes only. I encourage you to do your own research!