

Get REAL Philosophy

The Get REAL Guide to Health and Fitness focuses on a philosophy, a “Get REAL” approach to traditional health and wellness teaching. The following is a summary of the heart of this philosophy and the founding principles that were used to construct the contents—the “at a glance” version of what I believe. This information should summarize the basis for many of the concepts offered, along with refreshing some key points. My best to you on your personal journey toward lifelong wellness! It is all in you, just waiting to emerge.



Traditional weight-loss diets do not work.

Well, diets may work temporarily, but not in the long term. Why? Because no one will continue to live in deprivation and restriction. As you return to “normal living,” you will eventually gain back what was lost, plus some.

Why plus some? Because weight that is lost quickly is not all fat. Muscle is lost as well. The body is not capable of dumping that much pure fat in such a short time. As the previously lost weight is regained, the metabolism will now be less efficient due to the reduced muscle mass (because muscle helps burn calories at a faster rate). Long-term dieters educate their fat cells to store fat. They are now worse off than before trying to lose weight. The suffering will be for a temporary gain and can cause long-term frustration. This leads to yo-yo cycling of weight, which severely damages the body’s metabolism and response to hunger.



Keeping your metabolism revved up, not stalled out, is essential to maintaining a healthy long-term relationship with food.

Studies show that your metabolism increases as you eat more and gain weight, and it decreases as you eat less and lose weight. In an attempt to maintain homeostasis, your body will adapt to the number of calories that you regularly consume. If you stay on a long-term restriction plan, you may get stuck there. Any deviation will cause the dreaded weight gain.

The only way to bust out of this sad situation is to go ahead and eat. You will gain some weight at first. However, by combining an increased healthy calorie intake with regular exercise, you will begin the process of resetting the damage you have done through past overrestriction. During this time, you can add *short* periods (up to seventy-two hours) of reduced-calorie eating.

A diet? Maybe, but think of it more as a tool to stave off “starvation hormones.” By weighing weekly and utilizing a three-day calorie reduction to take off the extra pounds that show up, you will keep your metabolism on track for the long haul.



The battle of the bulge is often a battle of the *mind* more than the body.

If you are not in the frame of mind to make small, consistent lifestyle changes, you will not find the success you desire in the long run. Life is what you make it. You need to have the energy to enjoy every day of it. Grumpy, dieting people are *not* fun to be around. They constantly talk about what they can’t have, want to have, and need to do. This behavior keeps the brain on food and sacrifice!

Remember that what you keep your mind on is what you will attract to yourself. Always focus on the good you are *adding*, not that which you are limiting. When you spend time adding the good things, the negative things become less important. Think about what you are thinking about. It is time to get off the judgment wheel.

Constant negative self-talk (internal dialogue) leads to feelings of failure for not living up to the way you think you “should” live. Remember, don’t “should” on yourself! Always thinking about how you “should” do this or “should” do that leads to constant frustration and prevents progress. Learn to forgive missteps and make corrections at the next opportunity. Improving wellness is a mental and physical experience.



For results to last, you must determine what consistent changes you are willing to stick to—day in and day out.

You must change your mindset from restriction and deprivation to small, daily modifications. Decide what is actually doable for you. Just because someone tells you “this is the standard” does not mean that is where you must start. Health and wellness are by-products of small endeavors repeated consistently, day in and day out. See what just a few small changes, done consistently for a length of time, will yield.

For example, by consistently taking in fifty fewer calories daily or burning an extra fifty calories per day, you can lose five pounds in a year. The opposite is also true. If you take in an extra fifty calories per day, you will gain those five pounds in a year. Yikes! You can see how consistently changing your habits even just a little will affect your waistline.



Set REAL goals, even if they are below what fitness books or experts tell you.

If you wait to start your weight loss program until you have more time to commit to it, you will never do it. Do what you can and will do now, and then add to it later if you choose. Too much too fast always sets you up to crash! This is the missing link in most failed plans. There is such value in increasing aerobic endurance, building lean muscle, and improving your nutrition!

Now is the time to set those REAL goals and begin. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Don’t be overwhelmed by the big picture. Just bite into it and keep chewing! Eventually you *will* meet your goal, *if* you do not give up. You have to start somewhere. No excuses—start today and stick with it!



Learn the supreme value of moderation.

You will never succeed with an all-or-nothing attitude, because you are either absorbed in your plan or you have chucked it. Either way, you are setting yourself up for failure. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare, and embrace your inner “Turtle Power!”

Almost everyone gets “hare syndrome” when it comes to healthy living attempts. We start out at full speed, but get so worn out from the all-out effort that we end up taking a little nap along the way. Remember, in the end, the turtle wins the race. Allow your efforts to be more turtle-like, slow and steady. Slow and steady wins the long-term race, after short-term leaders have fallen by the wayside.



Focus on fitness, not fatness.

Being fit and healthy is much more important than being thin or just looking good. I know many naturally thin people who are neither fit nor healthy. In the genetic lottery, they won a highly efficient metabolism. Down the road, however, this can turn out to be a problem for them. Since they do not have the outside social pressure to exercise, they often miss out on all the health benefits it can bring.

Just as there are unhealthy thin people, there are also very fit and healthy fuller-figured people. As the saying goes, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” It’s what’s going on inside that matters. This is what will ultimately affect how you look, feel, and perform daily. Being able to walk up a flight of stairs, lift a child, or fight off an illness is a gift that money cannot buy.

When you eat right and exercise to improve your health and fitness, you will see the most REAL benefit for your time. The exterior will take care of itself. Get right on the inside, and you will be able to live a longer, stronger, and more joyful life.



Food is your friend and your fuel.

Don’t overly restrict your food options. Focus on the quantity and quality. Choose your food carefully and purposefully. Make eating whole, unprocessed and unenhanced, foods a regular part of your day. Learn to enjoy processed foods in moderation. People tend to think they must totally sacrifice true food wants, and then they end up giving in (eating too much) and feeling like a failure. There is a better option.

You must learn how to enjoy good-tasting food and feel good about it. Learning how to eat so that emotions do not cause pleasure-food seeking is difficult, but it can be done. Make it a priority to eat for health rather than taste, and you will develop your own healthy tastes. Plan your eating to ensure that your body’s daily nutritional needs are met. This involves learning about how your body responds to certain foods and uncovering your food habits. Developing intentional eating will allow you to eat what your body needs and respond to natural cues.



Don’t be fooled by the pleasure response to food.

When foods are eaten that you enjoy, it creates a pleasure response in your brain that is comforting. When you eat the same kind of food again, it will trigger that “food = happy” association. This is a strong chemical reaction! When you are low on the feel-good brain hormones, you will get the urge to eat those comfort foods. This is the body’s way to recreate that pleasurable feeling. Your mission is to create new programming that associates things other than food with comfort and pleasure.



Learn about carbohydrate sensitivity and determine whether it is an issue for you.

How you eat and plan your diet will be greatly influenced by this information. Go through the section of this guide that talks about carbohydrate sensitivity and see if you fall into that category. If you are carbohydrate sensitive, you will want to gear your changes toward balancing the carbohydrate-insulin-serotonin connection. Learning about what causes your hunger and fullness

cycle is important. Use this knowledge when choosing a healthy eating style that fits you.



Don't overly restrict calories.

I want to cry when I hear women say they eat only 1,000 calories a day and still can't lose any weight. Over time, this pattern can severely alter your metabolism. As your body adapts to this meager calorie intake, it will actually signal a need to store more fat. The body senses that you are starving, which you are, and it will hold on to every ounce of fat it has. What was meant to protect you during the "survival of the fittest" days is no longer beneficial during this time of plentiful food options. The body will work to protect your "set point," and this creates a "push-pull phenomenon" (see Glossary). If you are in this situation, you will require a serious lifestyle overhaul to reset your delicate metabolism.



Embrace activity.

The changes that exercise brings to your body are incredibly beneficial to your overall health. Your challenge is to find activities that you will stick to and benefit from. Start associating exercise with *fun* activity and things you enjoy. Stop the exercise you associate with *work*. It is time to create positive movement memories! Look for fun and nontraditional ways to get moving. A moderate and enjoyable plan to improve your fitness level is essential.

Start to have fun with movement and experience "recess" again. Discover the incredible benefits that an improved cardiovascular system will bring. Building your endurance and stamina will add years to your life and life to your years! Begin to see the improvements by tracking your progress through timed distances and heart rate monitoring. You will be encouraged to set goals and meet them.



Get hooked on resistance training.

This guide will give you some basic "get started" exercise plans. If you need more, there are numerous books, magazines, and websites that will give you step-by-step workouts for any fitness level or situation.

Weight-bearing exercise is vital to overall health and can halt or reverse the body's aging process. If you do not know what to do or how to do it, seek out help from someone who does. The possibilities are endless! Building lean muscle improves your body's overall functioning in ways that not only will improve health and manage weight, but can also prolong life.



Once you find an exercise plan that you feel comfortable following—get to it!

For resistance training, start out two times a week. Come on, you can do that. Even ten or twenty minutes will be better than doing nothing. Once you have mastered that level of exercise, you can add more minutes, more exercises, more weight, or more days.

For cardiovascular exercise, follow one of the three plans mentioned in this guide. All are designed to gradually build your endurance and stamina. You will choose a plan based on your current fitness level. Build your experience and confidence slowly, and stick to it. You might even like it. If you go zero to sixty, you will burn out and go back to what you used to do—nothing.



Start taking time for yourself.

This needs to be a *nonnegotiable* part of your schedule. It is vital that you allow yourself the time you need to stay charged up. If your batteries are dead, you will be no good to anyone. This includes not only those you care for, but *yourself* as well. Being more stress resistant will help turn off those fat-storage hormones that come from chronic stress exposure. To be a truly healthy person, keep your cup filled up and overflowing. When this happens, you are able to give from the overflow, which helps you maintain your health while you give to others.



Accept responsibility for your current condition.

It is time to stop complaining and blaming. Personal accountability is essential for progress to be made. Excuses are just roadblocks that halt growth. When you understand the actual roots of your healthy living issues, you can begin to deal with them. Until that happens, you will be doomed to keep fighting the same battles each time that you attempt healthy change. Acceptance empowers you to move forward and overcome your perceived past mistakes. Those same mistakes will become lessons and allow you to press past your past and press into your divine future. Many great opportunities await when you accept personal accountability and are willing to seek them.



Surround yourself with things and people that support your new lifestyle.

Avoid buying those grocery-store magazines that have gooey recipes, stick-skinny models, and stories of how to “Shed 20 lbs. in Just Two Weeks!” Replace them with *Shape, Fitness, Prevention,* or *Men’s Health*. Fill your brain with ideas that support your new endeavors. The stories of success from REAL people who did it the right way, and the exercises and healthy recipes, will *reinforce* your new lifestyle, not make you long for what you have decided to change.

Groups like First Place, Weight Watchers, and TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) are helpful because of the support, encouragement, and accountability they provide. They reinforce the lifestyle you are trying to create and provide like-minded people a place to fellowship. A wellness coach or similar professional can also provide that needed support and guidance. Having an active social network is healthy and supports long-term adherence. It also reinforces social habits and behaviors. This creates a strong connection between mind, body, and spirit.



Don’t get stuck in the ruts of life.

Often people fall into bad habits as a result of lack of planning or due to uncontrollable circumstances that put them into a “survival” mode. When you are in survival mode, you are not going to be receptive to new ideas or changes. You are simply struggling to keep your head above water.

The problem comes when the situation improves, but you still continue in a survival, “just exist” mentality. You live like you did when barely making it. Even though you could do more or better, the old habits have become so comfortable that you can’t seem to break out of what has become familiar and routine.

It is time to bust out of it! You must constantly reassess your situation and change to flow with it. Seeking outside help may make it easier to transition into your new life situation.



Value your ability to reassess, evaluate, adjust, and execute a modified plan.

This will help you transition through the ups and downs of life. Being adaptable can affect the way you look, feel, and live. We all know people who still have a hairdo or wardrobe from the eighties. You would like to tell them that it's time to update to this decade. But many of us practice the same personal habits we had back then and think nothing of it. It's safe to say that most people's lives and responsibilities are not the same as they were ten or twenty years ago. So your habits need to be updated and reflect that.



Go with the flow, but stay on course.

Your Personal Wellness Plan must bend as your life changes and as you experience different life events. This is the secret to long-term success. Life is not static, and your idea of wellness should not be either. If you have been out of shape for a while and have weight-cycled through a series of diets and other dramatic attempts to lose weight or become healthier, take heart. There is hope for you! Following the plan you create for yourself will help you fulfill your goals. Today is the day you "Get REAL" and change your total health and wellness!

