

The Art of Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle

written by Yardena Slater
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I wanted to share with you some basic guidelines for leading and maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes within it handling off-routine times!

A lot of my health coaching clients have this question in common: “How do I stick to my healthy eating regimen during off-routine times such as going out with friends, Shabbos, attending a simcha, etc.” And lately, following my foot injury, I got this question a lot: “How did you maintain your weight for the past four months when you weren’t able to walk?”

So... I wanted to share with you some basic guidelines for leading and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, which I follow and share with my coaching clients, and which organically includes within it handling off-routine times.

The first and main thing to understand is the difference between having a healthy lifestyle mentality vs. a dieting mentality.

I stay far away from the diet mentality, which includes very strict thoughts and behaviors about food. When someone has a diet mentality, they tend to do one or more of the following: weigh themselves, weigh their food, count calories or macros, cut out major food groups, eat processed foods or foods with artificial sweeteners. These types of things often lead to being overly strict with oneself, feeling guilty and anxious around food, craving more food, not getting back on track after having veered from the diet, and not enjoying one's food and lifestyle.

The healthy lifestyle mentality is all about knowing which foods fuel, nourish and cleanse your body the most and having a plan for consuming a lot of these foods as well as enjoying them. If this approach is consistently taken, your palate begins to crave the healthier foods and you will become more in tune with your body's needs for good fuel and energy as well as its needs to cleanse itself on a regular basis. A healthy lifestyle may take some time and consistency to incorporate, but it allows you the freedom to enjoy eating, feel good after eating as opposed to only during eating, as well as lose weight or maintain your weight.

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So, practically speaking, here are some guidelines I follow that can help you understand and get started in leading a

healthy lifestyle and maintaining balance even during off-routine times:

1. I do not give any value to things like counting calories and macros, weighing my food, restricting my portion size, and judging myself for what I eat. For me, these things are unenjoyable, stressful, impractical and do not make sense. What makes sense to me is enjoying my food while maintaining good health, high energy, and ideal weight. Therefore, most of the food I eat is nourishing, cleansing and tasty. Instead of restricting portion sizes, I simply lower my window of eating. So instead of eating between 9am – 9pm, I eat from 11am – 6pm, and when I eat, I eat until I am perfectly full!



The healthy lifestyle mentality is all about knowing which foods fuel!

2. I never weigh myself. Rather, I go by how my clothing fits, my energy levels, and how I look and feel.

3. I do not tell myself that I will NEVER have such and such food again. I tell myself that I am going to ADD lots of fruits, vegetables, leafy greens, sprouts, and clean, real food to whatever it is i would like to be eating.

So, for example, if I want to have some feta cheese, a tuna melt or even potato chips, I'll make a large salad or a vegetable platter, and add the feta, the chips, or the tuna melt (no bread) to it. If I want to have chocolate, I'll have it towards late afternoon/early evening, as opposed to the earlier part of the day. If I want to have a burger, I'll switch out the bun for lettuce, alfalfa sprouts, or a sprouted wheat or gluten-free bun, and have it with a side of coleslaw or sweet potato fries as opposed to french fries.

4. I do not feel guilty or in other ways negative if I've eaten something that I normally would not eat or if I ate more than I would have liked to. I either just continue with my routine the next day, or I'll make a plan to rebalance myself by skipping breakfast the next day, having an all fruit and vegetable day or adding 15 minutes to my 30-minute exercise routine.
5. I try not to eat mindlessly. I eat my food slowly, chew it thoroughly and focus on being in tune with when I am satisfied, not eating beyond that point.
6. I find other ways to handle challenges other than with food. I go for a walk, journal, make a gratitude list, get a massage, take an art class, and drink herbal tea, to name a few.

7. I figure out what I can do as far as working out and I stick to it in one way or another. For example, for me, it's doable to workout 4-5 times a week for 30 minutes. If I don't have the energy for high impact, I'll turn my focus to strength and flexibility. Sometimes I may miss a day. I'll either let that day go or make it up by working out twice on a different day or working out on a day that I usually don't work out.
8. I like to focus on the 80% rule. If 80% of your food is fruits, vegetables, and clean, whole foods, you can enjoy with it 20% food that you are craving but is not on the list of the healthiest foods around.
9. Be realistic – perfection is unattainable and not required; consistency, steadfastness and persistence will get you there! It's okay to have times when you are more on the ball and other times when you are more lax. Learning to give yourself a break and to be flexible allows you to be consistent in the long run.

So, for example, if I am going out with friends, I'll usually get a salad plus one side dish that's really yummy and fun. If I'm attending a wedding, I'll eat a lot of the salads, dips, fish, and chicken, and less of the rice, burekas and potatoes. I'll opt for a dessert that's gluten free such as chocolate mouse or lemon meringue. On Shabbos, I wash on sprouted bread, have lots of salads and dips, fish and chicken soup and skip the main. For dessert I'll have sorbet as opposed to cake and cookies.

To answer the question that I've been getting a lot lately of how I maintained my weight while not being able to walk for

the past four months: the first thing I did was listen to my body. My body was not as hungry as it usually is since I was barely moving it. So, I ate a lot less. I had a small meal around noon and a small dinner at 6. I made it a point not to eat food that would “stick” to me like gluten, white rice and heavy foods like meat and potatoes, reminding myself that when I am back to normal activity and exercising, I will be able to have them again every once in a while.

About 8 weeks into the foot injury, I started exercising again, even though I still could not put any weight on my foot. I simply did what I could which was abs, upper body, and lots of stretching.

That’s it. Pretty simple right? Four months later, I am thankfully in pretty good shape, I feel good, and I don’t have to worry about losing the extra weight that I easily could have gained during this time.

Bottom line – when it comes to health and weight, staying realistic and enjoying the process is crucial. Perfectionism and judgment will bring you down, so put these aside. It is absolutely possible for you to become healthy and reach your ideal weight and you know what – Hashem wants you to do this, and He wants you to enjoy the process of getting there!

“And the (state of) mind is a direct result of one’s food. When the body is clean, the mind is clear. Then one is able to derive true judgments and upright ways of conduct.” – Likutey MoharanI, 61:1.

“It is a mitzvah to conduct oneself with good habits and correct behavior to safeguard one’s health so that he will be healthy and strong in order to serve the Creator.” – Tur Orach Chaim, Siman Kuf, Nun, Hey.

Let’s go!