

Strategies for Integrating Healthy Eating Habits

If you are like me, you have considered changing your eating habits...often, and that is as far as you got. Considering changing your eating habits can be intimidating and overwhelming. There is so much information out there and knowing what works for you feels like a mystery. The journey to healthier eating habits begins with taking one small step at a time. By taking small steps, over time, you give yourself the opportunity to learn as you go, to know what fits for you and to integrate gently, in a way that becomes easy and permanent. The following are small, easy steps to take when integrating new eating habits. Each point represents a different aspect to consider when changing your eating habits. Take your time, and get to know yourself.

1. Start adding to your food menu before you start eliminating unhealthy foods.

This gives you an opportunity to discover healthy foods and recipes you like.

Identifying what you like to eat upfront, takes the burden out of giving up old foods. Also, you will not send yourself into the doldrums of deprivation when you give up familiar, unhealthy foods. It is far easier to let go of unhealthy foods when you already know the healthy choices you like.

2. Integrate new recipes one at a time in order to identify what tastes great to you.

Add one new recipe or dish per week. Be creative and go out on a limb. Try spices and ingredients you've never used before. After all, how did you determine what you liked in the first place? You had to try new things.

Attempting to overhaul your entire food menu at once is a daunting prospect. By adding recipes, it is easier to let go of old ones that don't support a healthy eating lifestyle.

3. Transition your cupboards and refrigerator. Pick one new item at a time for replacement. For example, you want to transition potato chips out. Buy fruit chips instead. Have both choices available for a while and then stop buying the chips. Keep your cupboards and refrigerator stocked with healthy choices by preparing snacks that are readily available, such as, cutting up cucumbers ahead of time so that when you reach for a snack, a healthy choice is immediately available without any preparation needed. Eventually, unhealthy foods are transitioned out and healthy foods are all that are available to choose from.
4. Get to know your health food stores. Eating healthy starts with shopping differently. To go from walking into the grocery store without a list and grabbing all the old, familiar foods you always get...to...looking at every label or hunting for items you need, can be very frustrating. Take a day when you have unlimited time and cruise the store. Investigate and ask questions. Familiarity with your shopping environment eliminates the frustrating aspect of having to hunt and find your way through a new environment.
5. Integrate one healthy eating behavior at a time. Often times we are presented with the TOP 10 Things to change about your eating habits. To integrate healthy eating habits permanently, start with just one at a time. For example, if you are not currently drinking enough water to keep yourself hydrated, start with the small step of drinking water regularly as a part of your daily routine. Set-up a schedule for yourself and modify it to fit your day as you practice drinking water regularly. Another example is taking supplements. If you want to integrate supplements as a part of your eating healthy plan, get a schedule going and

practice taking supplements at scheduled times. Trying to throw all eating recommendations into practice at one time sets you up for failure. Start small, and practice one change at a time.

6. Keep a nutrition journal. Writing down your awarenesses solidifies them in your consciousness. A part of eating healthy is making conscious choices. Track your progress in transitioning your eating habits. Jot down your successes and acknowledge where you have done well. Identify emotional eating triggers. Pay attention to your body's reactions to what you eat. Journaling about your eating transition experience gives you the opportunity to identify and repeat what works best for you.
7. Create a list of the healthy foods you like. And keep it handy. When your mind decides to take a break from creativity, having a written reminder keeps you on track with healthy food choices.
8. Start breaking associations with foods you want to eliminate. Do you always have popcorn with your video? Is coffee a must with your eggs and toast? As opposed to eliminating foods right away, try changing up when you eat them. Another example of breaking food associations is using food for celebrating or as a reward. Come up with other ideas to help you celebrate your successes. Let's say you just got a job promotion and you would like to celebrate. Try celebrating by going to a music concert or a play. Unwanted foods are easier to give up once you break the behavioral association or attachment you have with them.

Remember, as you choose and practice a healthy eating habit, you are dealing with far more than just eating. The transition from old eating habits to new ones takes time. After all, you are not only changing your eating habits, you are also adjusting your body to new foods, changing your cooking style, rearranging your cupboards, exploring new shopping environments and expanding your consciousness. Eating differently is only the tip of the iceberg, so take your time. Most of all, be patient with yourself. Your journey of small changes and small enjoyable steps will carry towards your destination. Ease your way into healthy eating habits. You will be surprised what your small steps can result in. Before you know it, you will wake up to a healthy eating life style.