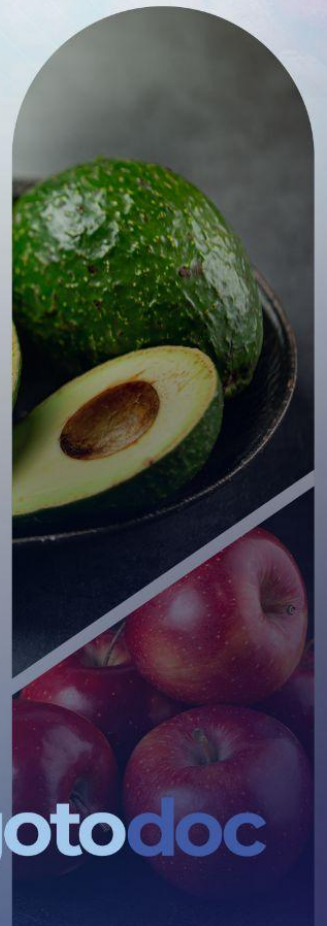


DR. SYED HAIDER

360 DEGREE WEIGHT LOSS

YOUR GOTO GUIDE



mygotodoc

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Disclaimer

IMPORTANT: This ebook is intended to provide information and ideas pertaining to weight loss. It is NOT a substitute for professional advice from a dietician, nutritionist, or family practitioner. You should consult your physician before undertaking any sort of diet or extended physical exertion.

The author of this ebook will not be held responsible for any personal loss, health problem, or hardship that may come as a result of reading this book.

We have made every effort to ensure the information in this book remains accurate and up to date, but if there's anything we all know it's that what we think we know tends to change and may even be flipped on its head, so inaccuracies may creep in from time to time - let us know if you find any!

Introduction

Being overweight is harmful to your health, despite the latest push to normalize obesity.

Excessive weight is due to a multitude of interconnected factors. But to simplify things it is primarily a function of:

1. Meaning & Purpose (bear with me)
2. Calories In, Calories Out
3. Hormones
4. Obesogens
5. Gut Bacteria

And there are numerous other factors involved under each of these headings.

Losing weight requires balancing the above causes using the tools at hand: your mind, diet, exercise, sleep, stress management, sunlight, social engagement, supplements, and avoidance/detoxification of harmful chemicals. Some of these may not seem to apply, but they all work to normalize the 5 primary causes of weight gain.

Meaning & Purpose



"If I gain 20 pounds, it will give me the motivation I need to stick to my diet!"

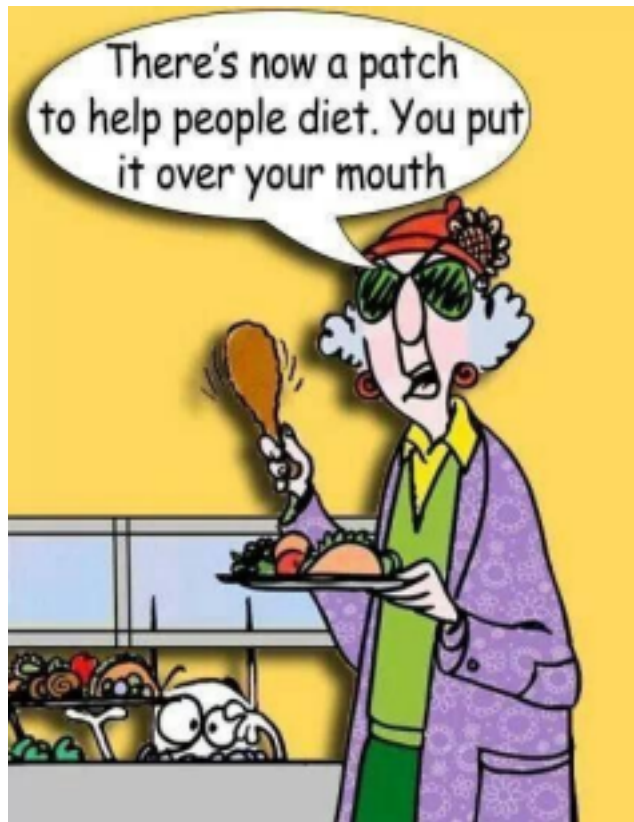
Some people believe food is primarily a means of enjoyment, while others would be happy popping a pill and not eating at all.

These are two extremes and the right way is to find a balance between them. Food is required for you to function. If you primarily eat to live, then food is functional.

If you just live to eat, then food becomes dysfunctional.

Overweight and obesity are dysfunctional because they impede what most consider normal, let alone optimal functioning (or what should be considered normal) as well as longevity.

In other words, you can either eat to live or eat to die.



Of course, it's natural to find enjoyment in fulfilling your needs.

What's unnatural is for the pursuit of pleasure to become an end in itself, especially when it leads to self-harm.

When eating is placed in its natural context it becomes easier to do it normally.

We evolved in communities. Gathering food in a group, preparing it, and then eating together helps to nourish us with more than just calories.

We need emotional sustenance as well as physical, and when the emotional sustenance is missing, we look for it in food and tend to overeat in an attempt to fill a hole that food can't properly fill (later on we'll come back to this idea and flesh it out in more detail in the last section titled [Overweight is Undernourished](#)).

Finally, having a loftier purpose in life than simply maximizing the enjoyment of physical appetites helps to put food in its natural place.

Calories In, Calories Out



Generally speaking, eating more calories than you need over a long period of time means you will gain weight.

If you are a couch potato you will just gain fat.

If you are a bodybuilder you will gain muscle, and also usually some fat along with it.

However, some people eat very little yet are still overweight or obese, which means their bodies have become more efficient at getting by with fewer calories: i.e. their metabolism has slowed down.

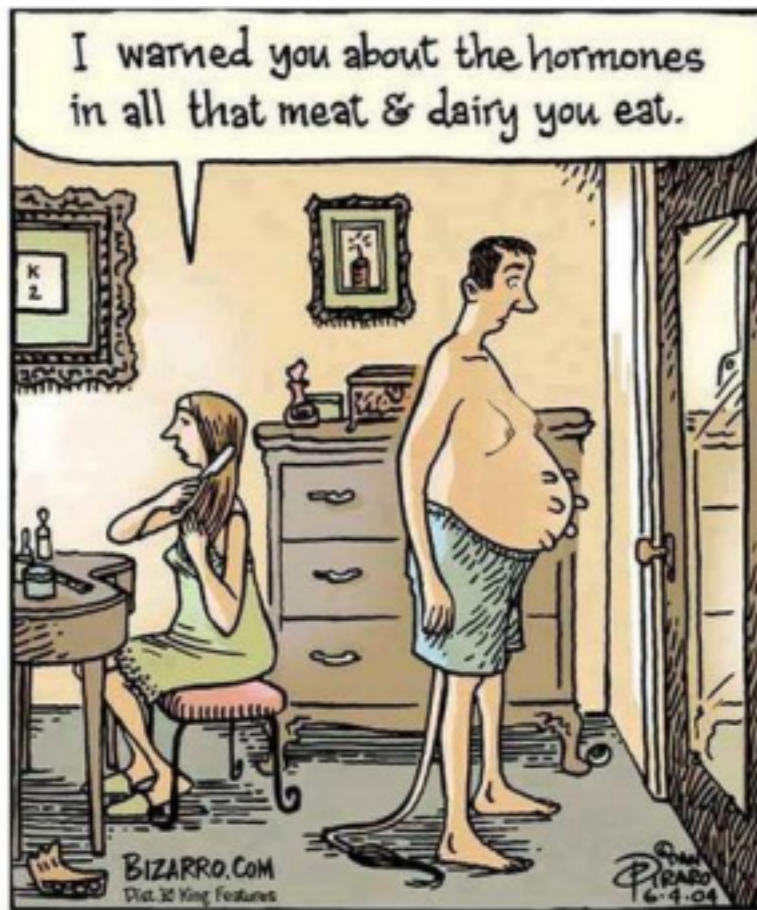
Our basal metabolic rate is linked to genetics, but it also depends on how active we are, our hormone levels and the amount of muscle tissue we have compared with fat.

How To Raise Metabolism

- Exercise that helps build muscle also helps increase metabolism. Any exercise will help, but weight bearing exercises may be especially helpful for building muscle. One of the best low-impact exercises for any fitness level is walking. Try walking for 30-120 minutes daily - it's easy if you combine it with meetings, phone calls, podcasts, or audiobooks.
- Don't starve yourself when trying to lose weight sustainably. If your body has nothing to digest, it may shut down your metabolism and go into starvation mode. Then when you do eat, your body will be very inclined to store every extra calorie as fat to protect itself against another period of "famine".
- Eat breakfast. If you don't start your day getting your metabolism revved up, you may be more prone to store calories consumed later on in the day when your body is naturally winding down.
- Eating smaller meals more frequently may boost your metabolism, e.g 6 small meals instead of 3 larger ones.
- Carb cycling is an advanced dietary way of jumpstarting a slow metabolism. It basically involves alternating low carb and high carb days.

Many other things can influence our metabolic rate, including our hormones, gut bacteria, and obesogenic chemicals. And many other things influence these three.

Hormones



Thyroid hormone

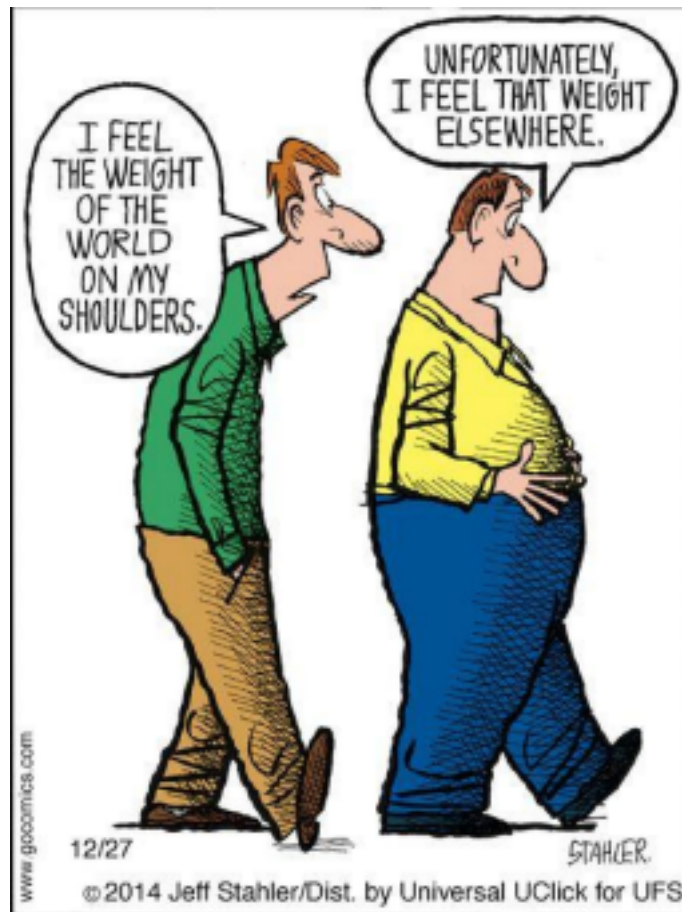
Is released by the thyroid gland in the neck, activated by gut bacteria, and is the primary determinant of the speed of metabolism.

Thyroid dysfunction is very common, and can often be subclinical. Autoimmune disease is the most common cause of suboptimal thyroid function - the body's immune system attacks the thyroid gland.

It is usually possible to correct this with a functional medicine approach, e.g. that outlined at <https://thyroidpharmacist.com/>

In those who no longer have a thyroid gland, a functional approach to the replacement of thyroid hormone, usually involving both the T4 and T3 forms, oftentimes with a natural desiccated thyroid gland extract like Armour Thyroid, can help restore balance to metabolism.

Cortisol



Cortisol is a stress hormone released by chronic over-activation of the sympathetic nervous system.

Over-activation of the sympathetic nervous system is unavoidable outside of some romanticized idyllic existence.

Our fight or flight response is repeatedly stimulated not just by work and family stress, but also by inflammatory foods, poor sleep, lack of exercise, lack of social engagement, and in some people, chronic infections.

This is why many ancient cultures developed simple, brief, daily practices to rebalance the autonomic nervous system (made up of sympathetic and parasympathetic arms) - more on this below.

Insulin

Insulin is a pancreatic hormone that helps your cells soak up the sugar glucose from your bloodstream.

It is also an anabolic hormone, meaning that it helps the body to store and build - in this case, store fat.

Chronic exposure to refined carbohydrates leads to chronically elevated blood sugar and chronic elevation of insulin levels to help put that sugar into cells.



Because the insulin level and glucose uptake into cells are always higher than the body considers normal, the cells that respond to the insulin signal eventually become resistant to it, in order to lower glucose uptake.

This is the body's way of maintaining balance and it happens almost any time a drug is given - e.g. if you take a drug to lower blood pressure, the body will eventually become resistant to it and need a higher dose, same for anxiety medication, sleep medication, pain medication, etc.

This should clue you in that refined carbohydrates are more drugs than food.

Estrogen

Estrogen is a female sex hormone that has many functions including regulating the menstrual cycle.

Too much estrogen, termed estrogen dominance can lead to weight gain.

This state can be influenced by phyto- and xeno-estrogens from the environment, which should be avoided.

These estrogen-like compounds are found in plants like soy, receipts (don't touch with bare skin), plastics, and pesticides (eat organic, don't spray your lawn).

Leptin

Leptin is a hormone released by fat cells that acts on the brain to control and lessen appetite and cause a feeling of fullness.

Levels go up as fat stores increase, but just like insulin, it's possible that when abnormally high levels are present for prolonged periods of time the body becomes resistant to its effects.

Losing weight and keeping it off should over time lead to the reversal of leptin resistance.

Ghrelin



The "Ghrelin Gremlin"

Ghrelin, produced in the gastrointestinal tract, has been termed the "hunger hormone" because it stimulates appetite.

In obese people levels are lower, but sensitivity may be higher

There are no known ways of directly modulating ghrelin levels, but feelings of hunger can usually be lessened dramatically by food choice (low carb) and palatability (how much dry baked potato without salt could you eat if that's all you ate?).

Growth Hormone

Growth Hormone (GH) stimulates the breakdown of fat and increases muscle mass.

Exercise is a powerful stimulator of GH as is intermittent fasting and reducing sugar intake.

High levels of melatonin during good-quality sleep also stimulate GH. In order to achieve this it's important to improve sleep hygiene and especially get sun for 15-30 minutes before 10 am and avoid blue light exposure after dark.

Testosterone



"Sorry I fired you, Maggie. I got my husband's testosterone patches mixed up with my estrogen patches."

Testosterone is the primary male sex hormone (but is also important for women) and an anabolic steroid hormone that stimulates muscle growth.

Low testosterone levels lead to lower energy & motivation, lack of desire, loss of muscle mass and bone strength as well as fat gain.

Unfortunately, testosterone levels in the population have been plummeting over the last few decades for poorly understood reasons that are probably multifactorial and can be inferred from what it takes to raise testosterone.

Testosterone production is stimulated by proper diet (cholesterol is required to make testosterone), avoiding alcohol, sleeping well, getting adequate sun/vitamin D, lowering stress/cortisol levels, exercising, competition, avoiding estrogenic compounds found in receipts (don't touch with bare skin), plastics and pesticides (eat organic, don't spray your lawn).

Melatonin

Melatonin is the sleep hormone and suboptimal levels contribute to weight gain by triggering insulin resistance, sleep disturbance, and circadian rhythm disruption.

Proper sleep hygiene is crucial for optimizing melatonin levels, as is gut health since the precursor of melatonin is serotonin and over 90% of our serotonin is made by healthy gut bacteria.

Obesogens

These are toxic chemicals in our air, water, food, personal care products, and household items that collect inside our bodies and disrupt our hormonal systems (many have estrogen-like effects) leading to overweight and obesity.

The following is a list of suspected and confirmed obesogens to

avoid: **Foods**

Refined sugars - whether white sugar, honey, agave, brown sugar, coconut sugar, molasses, brown rice syrup, maple syrup, jams, fruit juices, date sugar,

high fructose corn syrup, or any other variety, though some are slightly less harmful than others, they are all intolerable in the relatively huge quantities in which they are consumed, and given their highly addictive nature, often require complete abstinence, or indulgence limited to regular “cheat days”..

Zero calorie sugar substitutes like aspartame, sucralose, monk fruit, stevia and anything else that stimulates our sweet tooth without a caloric cost.

Unfortunately there is simply no free lunch when it comes to sweets. Our brains get mixed signals when they taste sweet yet detect no calories and the disconnect seems to stimulate the appetite, so you just eat more food until your brain is satisfied. If you must eat something sweet, just eat a real sweet.

Isoflavones like genistein are phytoestrogens primarily found in soy products. Flavor enhancers like MSG that stimulate appetite.

Industrial Chemicals



These should be avoided or exposures minimized as much as possible by replacing products that include them with natural alternatives. Ensuring your natural detox pathways (urine, stool and sweat) are open and functioning optimally (no constipation or diarrhea, drink plenty of water, and sweat daily for 30 min) can also help mitigate unavoidable exposures.

BPA and even its alternatives like BPS are all toxic. They are found in plastic containers, personal care & beauty products, and shower curtains (released into the air and onto your skin during a hot shower).

PFOA is found in nonstick cookware.

Phthalates are found in cars' interiors, personal care & beauty products, vinyl clothing, flooring, wallpaper, and shower curtains.

PBDEs are used in many home, automotive, and electronic products that need to be flame retardant. Found in contaminated foods, especially high-fat foods and fish, and drinking water.

PCBs are used in paints, plastics, and rubber products.

Pesticides

Glyphosate, chlorpyrifos, diazinon, parathion, etc.

Air Pollution

Benzo(a)pyrene from exhaust fumes, wood burning, coal tar, cigarette smoke, and charbroiled food.

Fine Particulate Matter comes from construction sites, unpaved roads, smokestacks, and fires.

Heavy metals like lead are in the air, soil, water, and inside many homes.

Avoiding Obesogens

Eat all-natural, whole foods without refined sugar, preferably organic, and avoid soy products.

If organic is not always possible then the [Environmental Working Group's](#) (EWG) yearly "[Clean 15](#)" is a list of non-organic plant products that are particularly low in pesticides:



1. Avocados



2. Sweet corn*



3. Pineapple



4. Onions



5. Papaya*



6. Sweet peas
(frozen)



7. Asparagus



8. Honeydew
melon



9. Kiwi



10. Cabbage



11. Mushrooms



12. Cantaloupe



13. Mangoes



14. Watermelon



15. Sweet
Potatoes

And the EWG's "[Dirty Dozen](#)" is a list of those with the highest amount of pesticides that should be avoided or only eaten if organic, especially any thin-skinned fruits and vegetables that soak up pesticides like berries.

Dirty Dozen

EWG's 2022 Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce™



1. Strawberries



2. Spinach



3. Kale, collard & mustard greens



4. Nectarines



5. Apples



6. Grapes



7. Bell & hot Peppers



8. Cherries



9. Peaches



10. Pears



11. Celery



12. Tomatoes

Follow the eastern custom of taking off your shoes when you enter your home to avoid tracking toxic dust inside.

Get a good quality indoor air purifier and a good quality water filter. Avoid using plastic products, especially with heated food or drink.

As a stretch goal you can consider gradually getting rid of home items that are full of chemicals, starting with your mattress, then if possible moving on to other furniture.

In general try to buy products made with organic, natural materials like cotton, hemp, and wool (which is naturally flame retardant).

Detoxing

In order to remove the obesogens that you already have and will likely continue to absorb at some level regardless of how careful you are, it's important to keep your detox pathways open and functioning optimally.

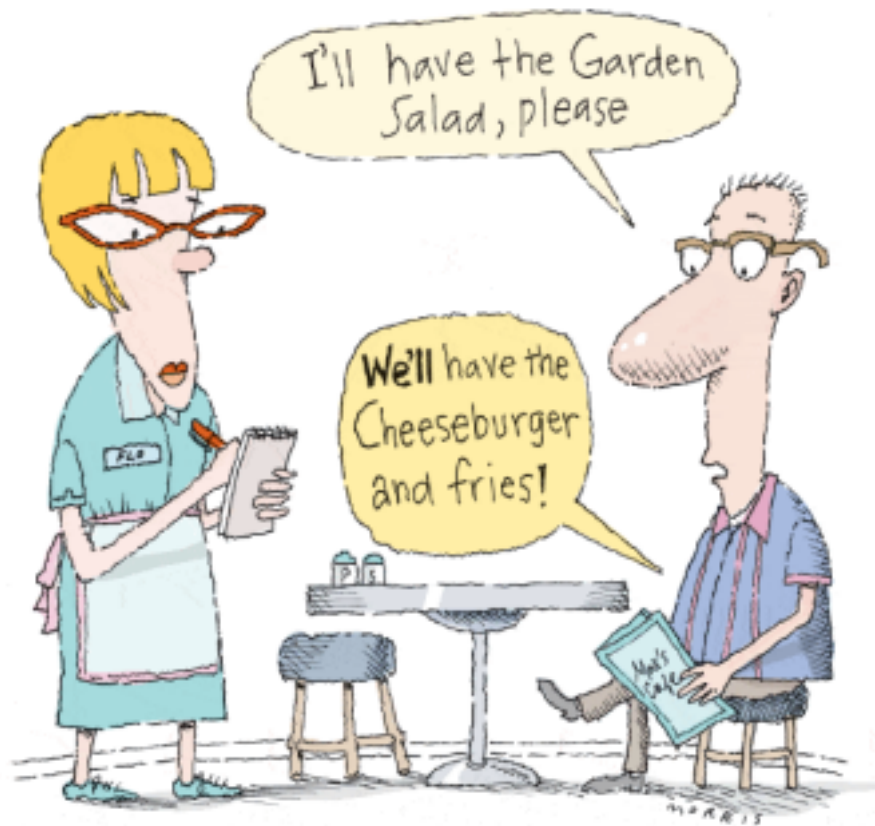
Our bodies naturally detoxify chemicals in our lives and remove them from our bodies primarily via our urine, stool, and sweat - which can even release heavy metals.

In order to keep these systems functioning focus on drinking enough water to urinate a light yellow color, correct any constipation, and sweat daily for 30 minutes, whether while exercising or in a sauna.

Gut Bacteria

We don't yet fully understand all the intricacies of our relationship with the bacteria that call our gut their home.

But we do know that some alterations in gut bacteria can lead to weight gain (and a whole host of other chronic diseases), and similarly weight gain alters gut bacteria.



One way that gut bacteria affect our weight is by affecting our hormones. The thyroid hormone is activated by gut bacteria. All 3 forms of estrogen are made by gut bacteria. Ninety percent of our serotonin, the precursor of melatonin (the sleep hormone) is produced by gut bacteria.

Antibiotics are actually used in the cattle industry to stimulate weight gain.

Studies in mice have shown that a fecal transplant from an obese mouse can turn a skinny mouse fat, and vice versa.

However even if you have an unhealthy composition of fecal flora - another name for what grows in your gut - it is usually possible to alter it back to a healthy state by changing your lifestyle: what and when you eat, your emotional state, your stress levels, exercise, sleep, sun, etc.

At the same time avoid what throws off gut bacteria: antibiotics, steroids, painkillers, acid reflux medication, etc.

Correctives

Tracking

"That which is measured improves. That which is measured and reported improves exponentially."

-Karl Pearson

One of the easiest weight loss hacks is to simply keep a food journal tracking what and when you eat.

The awareness itself tends to change habits over time.

You should also track how you sleep & feel, your waist and hip measurements, and of course your weight.

Breathing

Most people don't know where their excess weight actually goes when they "burn" it off.

The surprising answer is that you breathe it out in the form of carbon dioxide gas (CO₂) and urinate it out in the form of water (H₂O).

But that's just an interesting aside, it doesn't actually help anyone lose weight.

You can't hyperventilate your way thin, because your body can only breathe out so much CO₂, and you can't urinate your way thin either for the same reason.

Where breathing can tie in to weight loss though is in the way modifying your breathing can balance your autonomic nervous system, which affects your stress hormone levels that do affect your weight.

There are a number of simple breathing techniques from pranayama yoga and other traditions that can help you relax your way to weight loss and those will be covered below under stress management.

Diet

Food should deeply nourish and connect us to nature (e.g. seasonality), while rebalancing gut bacteria, promoting healthy hormone levels, and not causing inflammation.

Eat a nutrient-dense, lower-carb, whole-food diet with a mix of primarily animal with some plant protein, traditional healthy fats like saturated fats (butter, ghee, beef tallow, duck fat, coconut oil, etc. if you still think these are bad you've been

sadly misinformed), monounsaturated fats like olive oil, polyunsaturated fats found in fish, nuts and seeds and avoid unhealthy fats like newer industrial-era vegetable oils (canola oil), and avoid refined carbs/sugars.

If there is one point on which every nutritionist of any persuasion agrees it is that whole foods are the key to a healthy diet. Whole foods are minimally processed from their natural forms.



Don't mistake "hole" foods for whole foods!

For example, ground meat is more processed than steak, which would be considered minimally processed.

Likewise, pastry flour is more processed than coarse ground whole wheat flour which is more processed than whole wheat berries.

Some of the most nutrient-dense foods are organ meats, shellfish, sardines, salmon, berries, eggs, kale, seaweed, and surprisingly enough to most people: the humble potato, which has served well as the staple food for many in the past.

Try to get the healthiest versions of foods you can afford, including if possible grass-fed, organic meats, low mercury wild Alaskan salmon, and as discussed earlier under avoiding obesogens: organic fruits and vegetables wherever possible.

Because of soil depletion even “nutrient dense” foods may be somewhat lacking in nutrients, so consider testing and supplementing where necessary, e.g. Chris Masterjohn has an excellent comprehensive nutritional lab testing program built around whole foods and minimal supplements that I use with patients at mygotodoc.

Some important nutrients that are especially likely to be low in most people include sunlight (not a joke), magnesium, vitamin D, vitamin K2, and Omega 3s.

Ensuring optimal micronutrient levels can often help to gradually lessen food cravings over the mid to long term.

Depending on preexisting conditions and food intolerances you might also consider a brief therapeutic diet like nose-to-tail carnivore, keto, autoimmune paleo, etc.

Food Timing

There are a number of options here. As mentioned above under metabolism it may be helpful to eat smaller meals more frequently to boost metabolism, while some may find it more useful to eat less frequently.

Women may find it counterproductive to fast during their menses and in general before menopause and might try frequent small meals, while men often find fasting particularly helpful. Trying different approaches can help you find what works best.

Intermittent fasting can help decrease calories, stimulate growth hormones, and lower inflammation.

There are many different methods of intermittent fasting including daily fasting windows ranging from 12 - 23 hours (usually including 1 to 2 meals), longer once or twice-weekly fasts, multi-day monthly fasts, and even multi-week yearly fasts.

Most people drink water during the fast, but some do short periods of dry fasting, which may help liberate metabolic water trapped in fat.

The most common dry fast is the Ramadan fast where hundreds of millions of Muslims avoid food and water from dawn to dusk for 30 days, in some places this equates to a 16-hour or longer fast.

Water

Water is more important than food for sustaining life and can be helpful in losing weight, because oftentimes dehydration is misinterpreted as hunger.

Drinking water can also replace habitual snacking.

A couple of controversial methods include:

Drinking a glass or two of water before a meal can significantly lessen appetite since water acts as a calorie free filler and impairs digestion by diluting gastric juices, though traditional medicine recommends against interfering with digestion in this way.

Drinking cold water forces your body to work harder to rewarm itself internally and may burn a few extra calories, though traditional healers also recommend against this method as it may cause undue stress to digestive organs.

Exercise

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www.glasbergen.com



“Instead of jogging, can you just set my pacemaker to beat faster for 30 minutes a day while I watch TV?”

In general do what exercise you most enjoy and will keep up regularly, whether a sport, hiking, boating, etc.

The more convenient the better, though traveling out of your way to exercise in a group can also work well due to the added motivation you get from doing it with others.

Ideally aim for a mix of functional resistance training to build muscle and Zone 2 cardio, which helps build mitochondrial efficiency and teaches the body to burn fat for energy. Incorporate short bursts of more intense exercise like interval training.

Walking is excellent for Zone 2 exercise and if necessary you can increase difficulty with a weighted pack.

Aim to increase your overall activity level in any way possible, even with day to day activities you may not think make much difference.

For example the below activities can burn significant calories (based on a 190 pound person), but don't let the absolute numbers discourage you in comparison to a cookie for example. Activity is more important than the calories it burns, because it makes you more whole - it balances your hormones, gut bacteria, mood and motivation - it has multiple positive effects on your physiology beyond just the calories burned.

Chores

1 HOUR ACTIVITY	BURN CALORIES
Heavy housecleaning (vacuuming, scrubbing)	388
Regular housecleaning (dishes, sweeping)	302
Gardening	431
Moving furniture	518
Raking the lawn	345
Mowing the lawn	474

Light Exercise

1 HOUR ACTIVITY	BURN CALORIES
A leisurely bike ride	345
Walking your dog	302
Jumping rope (slow)	690
Shoveling snow	518
Treadmill walking or jogging	518
Playing with children (running around, etc)	345

Moderate Exercise

1 HOUR ACTIVITY	BURN CALORIES	
Aerobics – (low impact)	431	
Aerobics – (high impact)	604 Biking (12-14 mph)	690
Stationary bike (moderate effort)	604	
Hiking (moderate terrain)	518	
Jogging	604	
Jumping rope (moderate)	863	
Running (11 minute mile)	776 Roller skating	604
Swimming	518 Rowing machine (light effort)	388
Push-ups and sit-ups	690	

The best way to be active is to design your life to include activity.

You can decide to never take an elevator again, or always park as far as possible from the front door of any store. Whenever possible combine what you're doing with standing or walking.

Consider a standing conversion for your desk, or even a treadmill desk.

Learn a competitive sport like golf, or tennis and commit to playing with friends.

The competition and comradery can make the exercise effortless.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep and wake at the same time every day, though this might gradually shift with the seasons as the days lengthen and shorten.

- Get direct early morning sun before 10 am for 30 minutes.
- Avoid blue light after dark (eg with blue blocker glasses, or special red light bulbs).
- Stop eating 4 hours before bedtime.
- No caffeine after noon, and minimal to no caffeine in general. If anxiety or insomnia stop caffeine until and unless those are resolved.
- End reliance on sleep aids.

Stress Management



Develop your own stress management routine utilizing a blend of social engagement, meditation, meditative movement (yoga, tai chi, chi kung), breath work, cold and hot therapies, etc.

Social Engagement is as important for mental and physical health as any other lifestyle factor and is one of the easiest ways of relieving stress and lifting mood. It includes romance and intimate friendships as well as general engagement with your local community.

Daily Meditation - Try the Headspace app, even if only for 5 minutes a day.

- General guidelines for yoga and chi kung:
 - RELAX - progressively relax all muscles from your head down to your feet then take a deep breath, breathe out and relax twice as much
 - DON'T WORRY - about anything, including if its working, if your doing it wrong, if you look funny, etc
 - SMILE - from the heart. Before starting the exercises and prior to starting a new exercise
 - ENJOY YOURSELF

Chi Kung Exercises:

- Lifting the Sky:

https://youtu.be/T_WsOEF7TU

12 nerve exercises:

<https://youtu.be/pQl5wYeeJ20>

- Breathing exercises:
 - Wim Hof's 10-minute guided breathing exercise:

<https://youtu.be/tybOi4hjZFQ>

- 4 breaths, 4 times a day of 4,7,8 breathing:

<https://youtu.be/p8fjYPC-k2k>

- Daily 1-2 minutes cold exposure, eg freezing cold shower, or even better an ice bath
- Daily 20-minute sauna at 180F or higher (some people with MCAS or histamine related)

Sunlight

Regular sun exposure is powerfully anti-inflammatory, raises vitamin D which is important for adequate testosterone, improves mitochondrial efficiency and vascular health, raises neurotransmitters like serotonin which is a precursor to melatonin, and prolongs overall cellular survival.

Even more important than its impact on weight is its ability to prolong life:

A recent large prospective study showed that avoiding the sun is a risk factor for all-cause mortality.

The mortality rate among the sun shy was approximately two times higher compared with the highest sun exposure group.

Aim for daily 20-30 minutes of sun exposure without intervening glass and without sunscreen between 10 am and noon.

Some may need to work up to this in order to avoid sunburn.

Weight Loss “Hacks”

Some things will help you to eat less or burn more calories and they are really easy to do.

- Don't drink your calories - drink water or unsweetened teas instead.
- Don't shop when hungry.
- Don't keep unhealthy foods in the house - clear them out. If you have to keep it there, hide it out of sight and out of mind.
- Eat only at mealtimes and at the same time every day.
- Using a small plate and small utensils - you'll eat less.
- Eating slowly, chewing fully, and swallowing the entire mouthful before reaching for the next.

- Socialize: eat only with other people - nourish your soul and your body at the same time by focusing more on your companions and less on your stomach.
- Don't mistake hunger for thirst: try drinking some water.
- Eat low-caloric density foods first, try a salad!
- Have apple cider vinegar on your salad before you eat - it seems this may lower blood sugar rise post-meal, limiting insulin levels as well.
- Check out the soleus pushup a simple repeated heel lift maneuver that burns calories and raises metabolism like nothing else and can be done all day while seated.

Maintenance



A brief diet challenge phase is often exciting and sometimes helpful for getting started, but in order to avoid the typical diet rebound effect you should take it slow and aim for permanent and sustainable changes to your lifestyle.

If you take baby steps and gradually develop new habits you will also rewire your brain along the way.

After 40 days it will be markedly easier to continue a new habit, but it will also be easy to backslide until the 2-year mark, when it will be hardwired in and harder to break than not.

Overweight Is Undernourished

How to Add to Subtract $1+ (-1) = 0$



Millions of people every year make a commitment to lose weight, yet almost all have a difficult time sticking to it and the weight either stays on or after a brief interval rebounds back.

People try diet pills, supplements, prescription weight loss, crash diets, low-carb diets, high-fat-diets, high-protein diets, fasting diets, jogging, kettlebells, HIIT training, P90X – if there is one universal law of the weight loss industry it is that anything that can be sold will be sold.

Of course all of these approaches can trim your waistline, but none of them are truly sustainable because they are so unbalanced.

The problem isn't lack of desire or commitment, it's having the wrong paradigm. So what's the right way of looking at weight gain (I know, the title already gave it away) that can unlock a sustainable healthy weight, or more specifically a healthy body composition (the right amount of fat in the right places)?

Paradigm Shift



Excess weight is malnutrition or what might more accurately be termed actual
and perceived **malnourishment**.

In order to understand why you gain or keep excess weight you have to widen your definition of nutrition or what it means to be nourished.

Your body, mind, heart and soul are just names for different aspects of your self and they all need nourishment.

These aspects of self receive communication from the environment and communicate their needs back to us.

The messages we send to ourselves by the choices we make create the outcome we see: our body composition, mood, energy, enthusiasm, satisfaction and everything else.

If our whole self is not getting what it needs to thrive it will send signal flares back letting us know there is something missing.

But most people misinterpret the “hunger” signals being sent back to them and simply think they are hungry for physical food.

Which is why **people tend to eat more** when they are **tired, stressed, thirsty, or even feeling unloved**.

To be truly well nourished people need to **balance** their **intellect** with both **ideas and daydreams**, their **hearts** with both **positive and negative emotions**, their **souls** with both **intimate connection and solitude**, and their **bodies** with both **food and fasting, movement and rest, sunshine and darkness, heat and cold, stress and relaxation**.

Only when our whole self is truly nourished can our physical self stop taking the brunt of comprehensive malnutrition and itself settle into the healthy weight we're all aiming for.

So in order to achieve sustainable weight loss it's more important to focus on what needs to be added to your life than simply focusing on what needs to be subtracted in the form of calories.

There is science that connects all of these to body composition, but the simplest explanation is that all of these feed into our autonomic nervous system, which is

what controls automatic functions like heart rate, breathing, and digestion. Good health requires balancing the two arms of this system: the sympathetic, fight or flight side with the parasympathetic rest and digest side.

Imbalances common in industrial societies lead to autonomic dysfunction in the form of too much sympathetic activity, and when this becomes chronic the stress hormone cortisol rises which makes us gain weight, while other slimming hormones like thyroid hormone and testosterone fall. At the same time appetite signals go up, healthy gut bacteria are replaced by unhealthy ones, and neuro-chemical levels go awry.

Food & Fasting



Of course it's important to transition from refined foods with empty calories to whole foods, which have less caloric density, but more nutrient density, because part of our out of control hunger signals are due to a lack of food sourced micronutrients.

Intuitive eating is a way of reorienting our relationship with food. Connecting with our bodies to discover what foods actually nourish us and leave us feeling better as opposed to worse.

Making the connection involves not covering up the signals being sent back from our bodies: instead of chugging antacids, choosing to eat differently. But why is it so difficult to change what we eat?

Food prep has moved from the kitchen to the food science lab where PhDs in chemistry, biology and psychology work together to make foods hyper-palatable, just the right amount of crunch followed by just the right amount of chew, and just the right combinations of sugar, fat, salt and artificially enhanced flavors make for irresistible “franken-foods”.

Thankfully a short period of just a few weeks avoiding these monstrosities that pass as food in our supermarkets and fast food outlets will serve to reset your taste buds, the neural pathways in your brain and even the bacterial colonies in your gut, that together drive our consumption choices.

You can often rediscover your natural inclination for real foods within a fortnight.

Any time you decide to make drastic changes, it pays to go easy on yourself, and one way that works for some is to force yourself to take a “cheat day” once a week where you go bonkers and eat whatever you want. This can prevent unexpectedly falling off the wagon and losing motivation.



After just 1-2 weeks of 6 clean days followed by a junk food day, you'll find your appetite for trash will have diminished substantially, often to the point you can barely eat it without being sick.

At the same time if you start to balance out all the other areas of your life you will find it far easier to moderate your intake of food, so that you begin to eat to live, rather than the alternative which is eating to die.

A helpful hack is to eat with other people and begin to focus more on the social aspects of the meal rather than your taste buds.

Fasting is also just as important as eating: we aren't grazed animals and our digestive systems need a regular break from food. As discussed earlier in this book there are many different ways of fasting, beginning with the amount of time you spend without eating in each 24 hour period and extending into weekly, monthly or even longer yearly fasts.

Movement & Rest



Some of us exercise too much and others too little. Many people end up overtraining and burning out.

Monitoring your physical progress, energy levels and susceptibility to injury can clue you in to whether you are overtraining and a helpful tool is monitoring your heart rate variability levels which start to decline when you over do it.

Obviously if you don't move enough you need to move more - in any way you find enjoyable and sustainable, especially with other people. Learning a competitive sport is an easy way to fuel the desire to be active.

Periods of rest from exercise are important for optimal health, and the most important form of rest is regular high quality sleep.

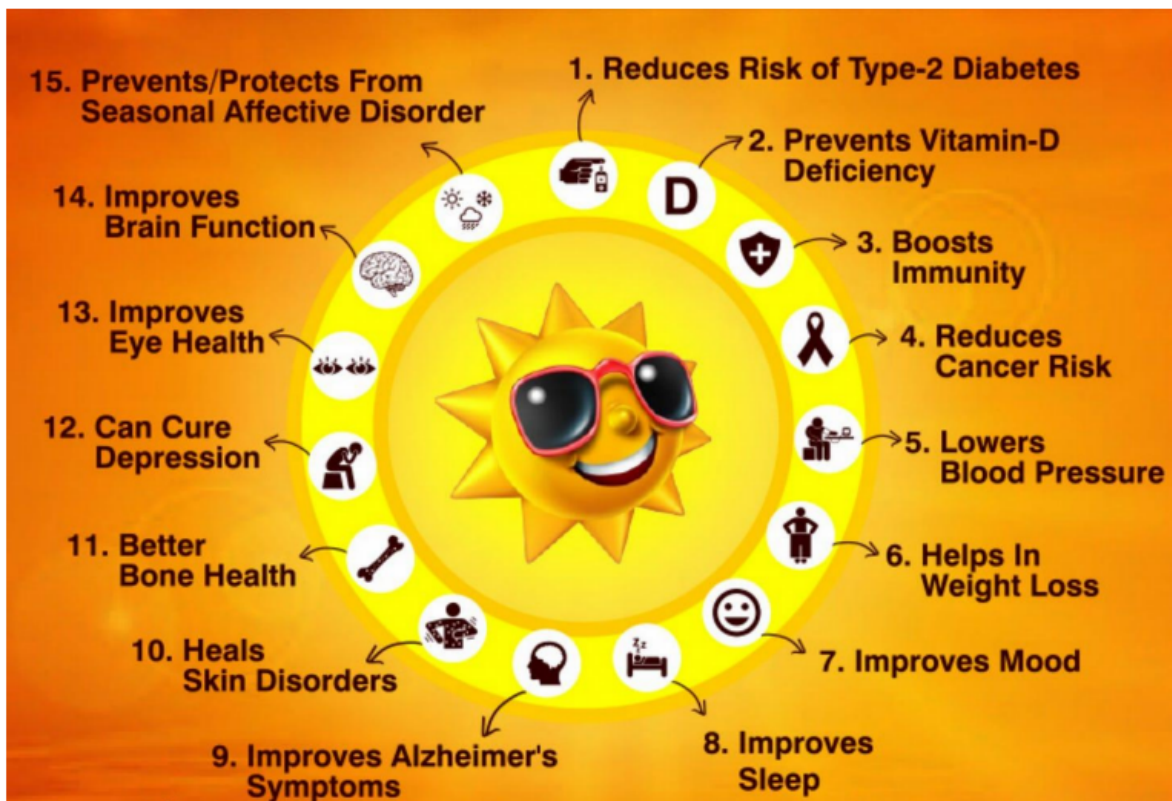
Sleep is the only time our brain enters a healing state of autophagy - the cellular waste removal process. So optimizing sleep with proper "sleep hygiene" is of immense importance.

Light & Dark

The sun is a nutrient that is lacking for most people. We tend to think only plants photosynthesize, but that's not the case.

We need sunlight to photosynthesize both vitamin D and serotonin. And you can't supplement your way out of a sunlight deficit, because sunshine does a lot more than simply create those micronutrients, it also activates mitochondria, changes the microstructure of the water in our blood,

greatly improves our sleep, syncs our circadian rhythms, and has anti-inflammatory effects related to the near infrared spectrum.



Studies show those who get the most sun live far longer than those who get the least, and are far healthier.

At more northern latitudes winter sun will not carry the UVB spectrum light required to create vitamin D, so in those areas you need to get enough sun in the summer and then supplement with functional foods like cod liver oil to prevent depletion in the winter.

For circadian rhythms and optimal sleep being exposed outside to the sun for 30 minutes before 10 am is necessary. For vitamin D production midday sun has the most intense UVB spectrum light.

As important as light is for health, darkness is just as important, and interestingly enough the modern world has banished sunlight as well as darkness and replaced both with artificial lighting.

After dark we need to avoid blue light to maintain adequate levels of melatonin for optimal sleep. This can be achieved with blue blocker sunglasses, or red lights like those used in areas where turtles migrate to the sea.

We are just as sensitive as those turtles to blue light after dark, we just don't know it.

Heat & Cold



Wim Hoff is the “Iceman”

Another aspect of the natural environment that has been effectively banished for most of us by indoor air conditioning are daily temperature variations.

Our bodies do best with regular exposure to heat and cold - both of these induce autophagy - our bodies process of getting rid of cellular trash, as well as rebalancing the autonomic nervous system and having anti-inflammatory effects.

Cold exposure also boosts levels of sparse, healthy brown fat that help burn the bulky, unhealthy white fat that pads our bellies and thighs.

Stress & Relaxation

Stress helps strengthen us in moderation, but too much leads to over activation of sympathetic pathways and long term alterations in hormone levels that make us fat.

Stress management has to be a regular part of our day to day lives and can include breath work, meditation, and meditative movement. Sauna and cryotherapy also help you relax as we discussed earlier.

Learning & Daydreaming



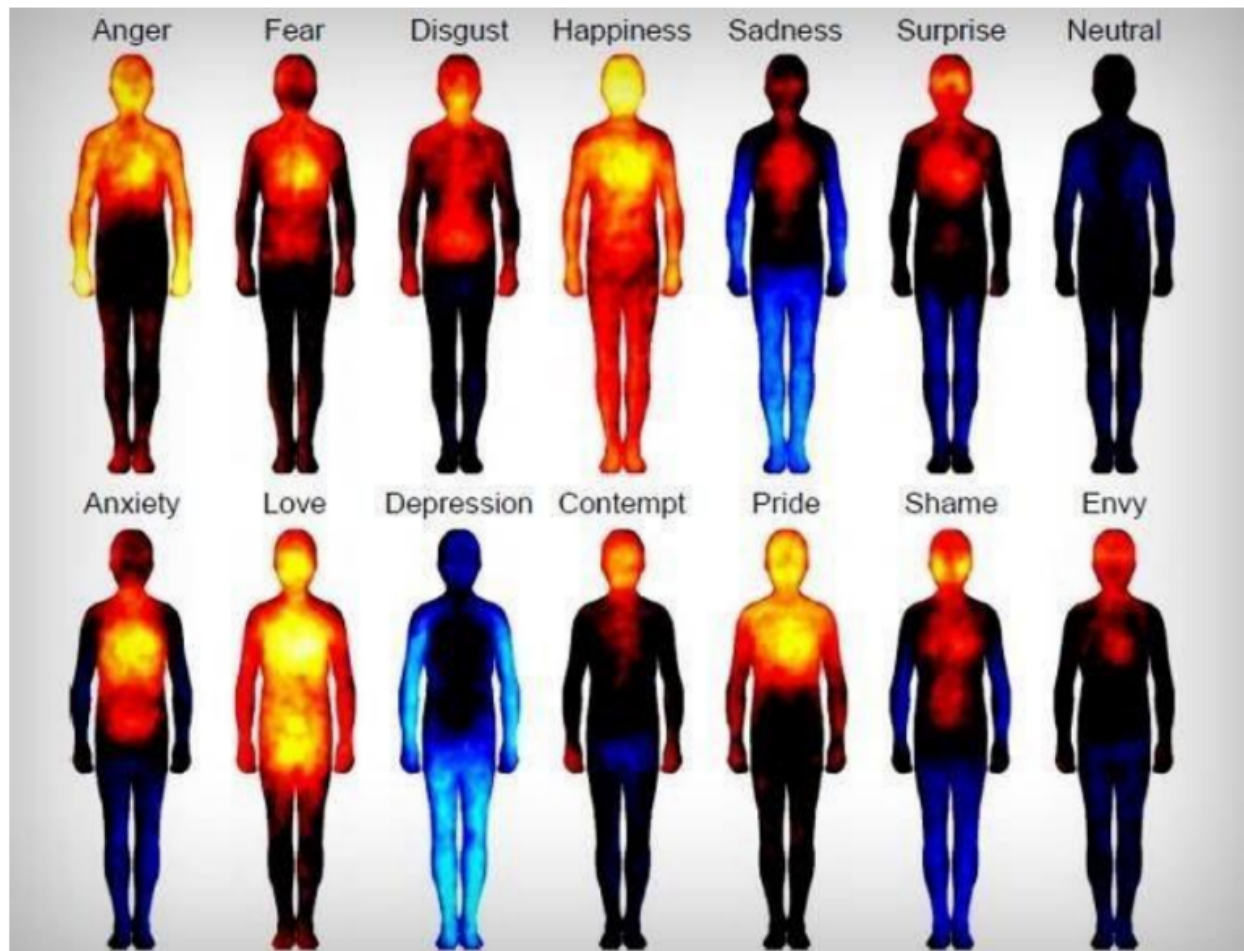
In the realm of the intellect we are overwhelmed with a sea of information the likes of which mankind has never seen.

Information overload is stressful.

Balance here doesn't mean more education, but being highly selective and even more importantly learning to turn our brains off every day: just zone out without an audio book, podcast, social feed, or phone call - what some might call meditation, in its extreme form the polar opposite of the busy monkey mind: i.e. the zen state of "no mind".

This is easier to achieve than you might think. And yes there is an app for that, but just use it to learn if you must and then disconnect.

Fear & Hope



“Heat map of emotional states”

The **heart** is just that aspect of ourselves that feels emotion, you can consider it a part of your brain if you prefer, it's just terminology for a reality everyone experiences.

Fear and hope simply represent positive and negative emotions, and like the two wings of a bird are both required for us to take flight.

Most of us have a preponderance of negative emotions, which trigger stress pathways and weight gain.

So finding balance in this realm for most people means making an effort to think positive.

The most powerful positive emotion is love, but the easiest positive emotion to experience on purpose is gratitude.

You can practice gratitude for what you have, or while imagining having what you want, they are both quite pleasurable, the second surprisingly more so than the first.

On the other hand if you tend to cover up or bury your negative emotions then you may need to learn to experience them in a healthy way and let them go.

Socialization & Solitude



Finding social balance means realizing that human beings need social connection, regardless of how much of a loner you may think you are, but we also need solitude.

Some people tend more towards one or the other extreme here, but both are important for balance.

Solitude is a chance to reconnect with your self and the context of your existence, it can be used for meditation and worship.

For those who tend to be loners it's important to realize that greater social connection correlates with positive health & emotional outcomes and longevity. Everyone needs to cultivate intimate friendships, if not romantic intimacy as well as a wider social sphere of community relationships.

For those who already have friends or loved ones, it's important to go beyond surface connection and develop real intimacy.

One way of doing this is by opening up and sharing secrets.

One study showed increased intimacy could be achieved in just 45 minutes by asking and answering [36 questions](#) followed by staring into each other's eyes without speaking for 4 minutes - choose wisely who you do this with!

Abundance vs Poverty

Some of this may already come easy to you and some of it may be a tall order.

But it doesn't have to be hard. Baby steps can get anyone where they need to be. The more you add to your life the more abundance you'll feel and the less your body will cry out for calories or hold on to excess weight.

It's the difference between a mindset of abundance and a mindset of poverty.

When we feel impoverished our bodies and souls grasp at anything we can get our hands on - including calories - and hold on jealously, unable to let go.

As you start to feel abundance throughout your life your body and mind will shift from poverty and starvation mode into abundance mode, wherein you know that everything you need is already here.