

Shift Happens

RELEASE YOUR
FitChick

**Self-Care
Secrets for
Soul-Inspired
Women**

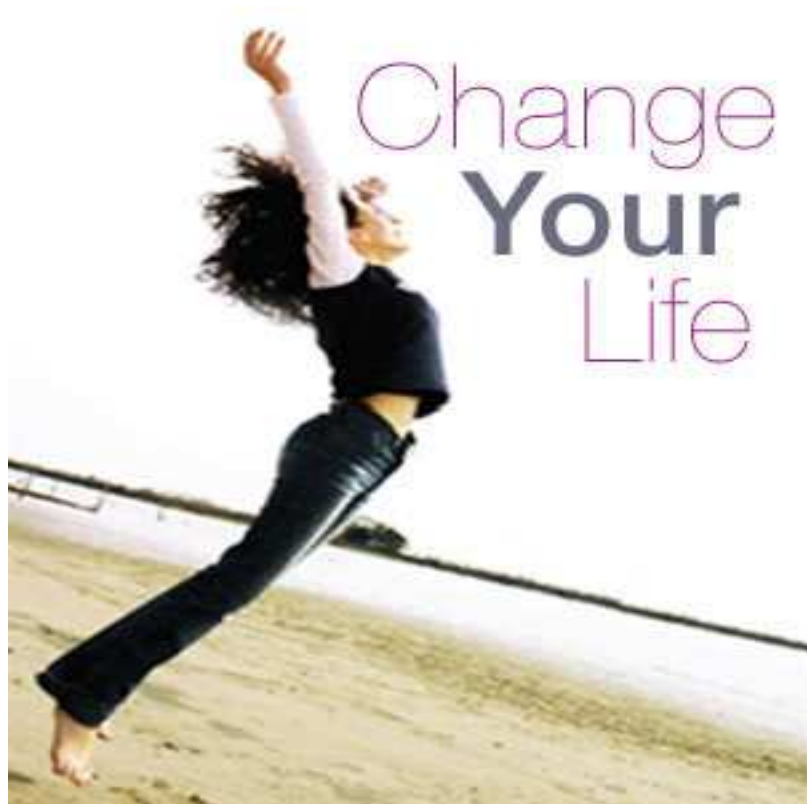


*Your Secret Weapon for Radical
Energy, Motivation and Confidence
in Your Life and Your Business!*

ROBIN STEPHENS

Baby Step Your Way to the Energy-Rich Life and Business of Your Dreams in Just 10 Minutes a Day

Steps, Secrets and Strategies to Life by Design – with YOU as the Focal Point. Eliminate the unnecessary so the necessary can speak in all the places you live - body, mind, spirit and space!



By

Robin Stephens, CEO (Chief Energy Officer), YourLifeinOrder.com

www.YourLifeinOrder.com



Hi this is Robin, and welcome to Life by Design – and YOU are the Focal Point!

*I'll be your personal "soul" trainer to motivate and inspire you give yourself permission to be **Priority 1** so you can create a life you love and deliver your gift with energy and confidence!*

The fact is that when you practice extreme self-care you are more rested, more joyful, more resourceful and more effective. If you want a great life you need to be Priority Number One in it!

Create an energy-rich, on-fire life in just 10 minutes a day. Gain clarity, focus and confidence in your body, mind, spirit and your space.

Get your FREE tools, e-news magazine, podcasts and coaching products and programs!

Check out:

My Personal Blueprint Success Circle Membership Club

I-Space: 4 Steps to Creating a Soul-Nurturing Environment Teleclass Series

At:

YourLifeinOrder.com

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Your Energy Attitudes: How to Step Up and Get What You Want



This home study course is for you if you are inquisitive, open to possibility and growth, committed to success and ready to be inspired in every area of your life. In other words – you’re ready to release your inner fitchick.

Welcome to YourLifeinOrder – self-care for soul inspired women – like you! It’s time to put yourself back at the top of your priority list so you can live the energy-rich, on-fire life you know you deserve. Think of it as an exciting adventure and as an opportunity to explore, expand, and to ignite new possibilities.

Why is self-care so important? Because it’s all about you – and who’s more important than you? It will help you reduce your stress, achieve a health and fitness goal and learn how to make decisions that align with your purpose. It will help you make the mental shift from “I have no time” to “I create ME time.”

The problem for many of us is we’ve bought into the lie that “self” is a 4 letter word. We feel guilty at even the thought of putting ourselves first – it’s selfish right? Wrong! Taking care of self is the only way you’ll have the stamina and energy to deliver your message to the world!

You were created and birthed into this world with a divine purpose and message to deliver. Your message is YOUR message. No one else can deliver it. What’s selfish is NOT taking care of yourself and NOT being able to share your brilliance with others.

You are a role model for an inspired life! When you’re taking care of yourself from the inside out, your brilliance can’t help but shine and you deliver your message with authenticity and power. Through you, someone else gets permission to say, “If she can do it, I can do it. And that’s how we change the world – one step at a time.

The components of self-care that I teach are the foundation. But it’s you who inspires and encourages others to step into their own personal power.

Imagine approaching any life situation from a deeply centered and nurtured place. Imagine just how powerfully you could come to solutions and how effectively you could take action.

Practicing exquisite self-care is a priority to get there!

Creating your personal Plan ME is the best thing – and the first thing you must do for yourself. And admitting that doesn't make you selfish or self-centered. It's. . .

- Getting crystal clear about what's most important in your life
- Dramatically expanding the view of what's possible
- Identifying effective tools and strategies to handle life transitions and embrace ways to keep your joy in the midst of life's storms
- Learning how to create a structure of accountability and support to help you realize your goals
- Rediscovering the authentic, beautiful woman in you

When you practice extreme self-care you have the energy, motivation and confidence to deliver the gift only you can deliver.

I chose a picture of the lotus flower to remind you that you are resilient as well as beautiful.

The lotus is a symbol for courage and awakening. It starts as a small flower down at the bottom of a pond and slowly grows towards the surface - moving toward the light. Once it reaches the surface of the water, it blossoms and turns into a beautiful flower.

Nothing can stop it from blooming. Its remarkable beauty isn't easily destroyed by abuse or neglect. It's resilient. It closes up and sinks underwater at night, but it rises again in the morning.

Regardless of how many times you sink to the "bottom of the pond", you are not a victim of your circumstances. You are strong, beautiful and resilient.

Remember, it's your decisions, not your conditions that determine your destiny.

***"The lotus flower blooms out of the murky depths,
the murkier the pond,
the more beautiful the lotus flower blooms."***

SECTION 1: PLAN ME: “MPOWER” YOURSELF!



YOUR SECRET WEAPON FOR RADICAL ENERGY, MOTIVATION & CONFIDENCE!

"AT THE MOMENT OF COMMITMENT, THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE CONSPIRES TO ASSURE YOUR SUCCESS." - GOETHE



In my career as a professional organizer and fitness coach, I've had the opportunity to help hundreds of women take stock of what's weighing them down and release the clutter in their spaces, schedules, minds, and bodies. ***By making small changes, one step at a time they become clearer and more confident.***

Unfortunately, self care is not generally supported by our culture, and for many of us it equates with abandoning responsibilities or being self centered. As women we often receive rave reviews for taking better care of others than ourselves. Is it any wonder we're suffering near epidemic levels of physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue?

In almost every case when I ask my clients to identify their top 5 priorities – ***at least 70% don't even put themselves on the list. The other 30% put themselves at or near the bottom.***

Those are drastic statistics – and so sad, because it is not only self-destructive, but health-destructive. Your self-care is your secret weapon against life's challenges! When you implement any healthy practice into your routine, you are taking charge of your life. **You are the expert on what you need!** If you don't acknowledge your importance who will? We aren't benefiting our families, our work, and our relationships when we put ourselves last.

When we are overwhelmed, we lack the energy and focus to make good decisions and act from a place of personal power. When we're energized we're motivated to take care of ourselves and we handle life's challenges with less stress.

Here's an example. After my divorce at age 41, my first years as a single parent and business owner seemed to pass by in a blur.

In addition, I had undiagnosed OCD which was making day to day functioning very challenging. Most of the time I could barely figure out what to do to keep my head above water.

Then one particularly frazzled and frustrating day I decided to do something just for me. I love yoga – it is one place I can turn off my head and just BE. I started going a couple of times a week. What a difference that simple class made to my life! It was a little thing – a baby step – but it radically changed my attitude and opened up space for other changes.

When you're living authentically – and putting yourself first – you're energized and motivated in your body, mind and spirit.

Remember creating your Plan ME is your secret weapon for your energy support system!

- Your body is a miracle – act accordingly!
- Your body, mind, and space are powerfully connected and must support each other if you want to live with passion.
- You have a divine purpose and mission on this planet and keeping yourself healthy is your absolute responsibility so you can deliver it.
- YOU are the focal point of your life - priority number 1.
- You transform your life one small step at a time.

YOUR 180° SHIFT – DOING LESS GETS YOU MORE

"THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH ONE STEP." – LAO TZU

We live in a fast-paced, multi tasking world. We're driving while talking on the phone, drinking coffee and putting on makeup at the same time. We work out of our homes, cars, and coffee bars as well as our offices. We're constantly on and constantly connected.

While this may not make sense immediately, extreme self-care starts with this simple premise:

To have more, do less.

You've got to clear your plate a little before you'll have room to make changes. So the first thing you need to do is examine your life and see what it is you can ELIMINATE. Where can you begin to make room for you?

Realize that we make changing our habits harder by trying to change too many things at once. For example you decide that since you've purchased this home study program, you're going to start working out, whip your home and office into shape, re-prioritize what's on your goal list and lose 20 lbs.

What we don't realize is that each ONE of those changes is made up of multiple smaller behavioral changes. We're adding too much when we should be subtracting. Does that make sense?

My experience as coach and professional organizer (and plenty of emerging research) shows that people can typically change only one behavior at a time.

One – Behavior – At – A - Time.

Human beings are impatient. We want everything now - or better yet, yesterday. Sometimes clients who want to start a self-care regimen will want to jump right to the fitness part of the program. They get a little frustrated when I tell them we have to start with the life assessment and managing their priorities first. After all, fitness is a priority so why can't we just dive in and cut to the chase?

That sounds reasonable, doesn't it? I mean, why wait? Couldn't we do more?

NO!!!!

You see, doing more is the problem! We're not programmed to respond well to massive changes. That's why baby steps work. Rapid change sets us up for failure and frustration.

When you continue to heap more onto an already full plate, all that happens is you collapse in a heap of exhaustion and self-loathing when you break that first promise to yourself.

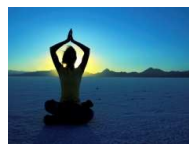
Of course, you COULD change more than one thing at once, but not for long, and never for long enough to see lasting, sustainable change - which is what you really want, isn't it?

So before you try to slap another helping of what you think you need onto your plate, accept the fact that you can only change one behavior at a time.

Try to change more than one thing at a time, and you will fail. It's that simple.

When there's breathing room . . .

- You take better care of yourself – physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- You pay attention to your relationships – you are able to disentangle from unhealthy alliances and nurture those that are meaningful.
- You focus on your work with passion and purpose.
- You find opportunities to connect with your community – locally and globally.
- You find peace, abundance, and inspiration around every corner.



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Step for Today:



You've decided to put your self-care above everything else – even if it feels scary. And that means you choose to spend your time and energy on things that bring you joy, and making decisions based on what you want (and what is aligned with your divine purpose) ONLY.

Write down 3 things you could eliminate from your life right now that would reduce what's on your plate so you could make some breathing room for you. Then over the next week commit to taking these 3 things out of your life equation. They don't have to be really big things, sometimes small makes it easier to give yourself permission to do it. The idea is to begin to shift your thinking toward what makes it possible for you to make changes in your life.

Doing less is a great self-care baby step!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CHANGE HAPPENS WITH A SINGLE STEP

"THE SECRET TO GETTING AHEAD IS GETTING STARTED." – MARK TWAIN

You have to learn how to change - how to get into action and stay focused. If you don't you're doomed to keep starting all over again. Did you know that 90% of us make New Year's Resolutions (the top 2 being getting fit and getting organized!) and only about 8% succeed.

Practicing extreme self-care means changing the way you've been doing things and that can be daunting. Often we'll spend a good deal of time struggling against change or denying we need it. Women in particular are hardwired to spend lots of time ruminating at the bottom of the pool – worrying about what to do, why we haven't done it, when we're going to get a break and so on.

It's self-destructing and health-destructing. It leads us to overeat, over drink, overspend, and overstress. And those habits do nothing to boost our energy and motivation – they drain it.

All change begins with your thoughts. The trick is to adapt and adjust as quickly as possible so you don't spend a lot of time in unhealthy behaviors you have to recover from later – like gaining 20 pounds or racking up a bunch of credit card debt.

The mind is a powerful motivator – it has the power to ignite your energy or drain it entirely – depending on what you're thinking. Negative beliefs and attitudes simply wear away your ability to get moving. (We can pretty much talk ourselves in or out of almost anything can't we?)

To go from where you are to where you want to be takes you getting seriously committed to your own success. Then you'll set in a motion a whole BUNCH of changes you never even thought were possible.

Habit isn't your friend – but motion is. Motion begets more motion. When you take a little step, you almost always take another. If you go out to the mailbox you don't walk to your doorway and just stop and wait for the universe to move you the rest of the way. You put one foot in front of the other – step by step – until you reach the mailbox. It works the same way for anything you want to accomplish.

You take one step – make one choice to break the cycle and you've created momentum. And each time you make that choice it becomes easier and easier to return to it.

Will change be painful? Of course, at times it will. But mental sweat won't kill you. And taking baby steps is the best way I've found to succeed at Plan Me.

Don't let the commitments you make to others prevent you from keeping commitments you want to make to yourself – like eating healthfully, exercising, and getting organized. That's not selfishness – its selffulness!

Look at the 4 mindsets for change below. Read them until they really resonate right down inside you.

- 1. Be honest and authentic.** Accept yourself right where you are – no blinders, no excuses or stories, no blame. If you're unwilling to open up to yourself, to experience the sometimes painful process of self-discovery you'll never know what's really going on with you. Getting to the root of what's holding you back make transformation easier. What does that look like? Procrastination, perfectionism, giving up easily if you don't see results right away or focusing on past failures or mistakes?
- 2. Take responsibility.** Once you've been brutally honest with yourself, you've got to take ownership of what you find. Look at the truth about you and resist the urge to lay blame or play the victim. What kind of life do you really want? Define it and start walking toward it (one step at a time, of course!) Regardless of circumstances, you're in control of your life.
- 3. Make a commitment.** A common trait I see among my clients who struggle with self-care is that they honor commitments they make to other people or their work but neglect to put themselves on the list! Putting yourself first is critical. You do the people you care about a huge disservice when you don't take care of yourself!
- 4. Decide to stay strong and don't give up.** If you've struggled with managing your stuff, your paper, emotional eating or weight gain or loss, chances are your decisions are ingrained reactions – not conscious choices. For example, you come home tired from work, toss the unopened mail on top of the last 3 days of unopened mail, and plop down on the couch with a drink or bag of chips and dip. It's a habit.

A conscious decision means opening the mail and sorting it instead of leaving it to pile up on the counter day after day. It means making yourself a healthy snack or going for a walk instead of sinking into the couch with a bag of chips.

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What takes you to the “dark side” and makes change difficult? Perfectionism? Procrastination? Anxiety? Fear? Once you look at your vulnerabilities you create the freedom to change them.

Write down a circumstance recently that caused you to sink to the bottom of the pool – describe it in detail. What happened and what were the feelings that came up for you? I encourage you to do this exercise daily for at least a week and you’ll notice a pattern emerging. Once you’re aware of what’s standing in the way of change, employ the change mindsets (read them over again if you need to) to help you baby step AWAY from the negative habit and self-talk and TOWARD your healthy self-care choice.

YOUR WHY SHOULD MAKE YOU CRY

"WHEN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS WE LOOK AT CHANGE." – WAYNE DYER

Approximately 44% of Americans set New Year's Resolutions. Only 15% or less of all resolutions are every fully realized. Over half of all resolutions made at the New Year are abandoned by Valentine's Day. Why? It's the difference between **intention** and **resolution**.

Webster's defines them thus:

- **Resolution:** The decision to do something or to behave in a certain manner.
- **Intention:** An anticipated outcome that is intended or that guides your planned actions.

I don't know about you, but just reading the words "a decision to behave in a certain manner" makes me cringe. It's constricting, dull, and boring. "An outcome that guides your planned actions" – that's different. It's energizing, motivating and inspiring. It puts me in creative control.

Resolutions are decisions we feel we SHOULD or MUST make – like lose weight, organize our closets, get our taxes done on time. And shoulds don't inspire. They stand there wagging their fingers at us like a frustrated parent. So it's not surprising that after a few weeks or a month of working on resolutions, you find yourself nestled on the couch with a bag of tortilla chips and dip, your feet resting on the piles of mail you haven't opened in a month.

Intentions are far more effective motivators. They are our WHY. They must be inspirational and nothing less than magic.

You've got to create a why that resonates powerfully in your emotions and your spirit. So powerfully it makes you cry.

You see, there's a difference between your morning commitments and your evening realities. You wake up with determination that today you're going to organize your desk, go for a 45 minute walk; eat a healthy stir fry for dinner. Ever notice how by 5 p.m. those commitments sometimes turn into a desire to just crawl into bed with the remote control and a container of Ben and Jerry's?

The secret to igniting your energy around your goals is creating a motivational target that holds a powerful intention for you. Think about the kind of targets used in archery. It has 5 rings and a bulls-eye.

The target's outer rings are your "global" motivations.

These are short term goal self-care commitments. For example – the little black dress you'd like to get into for an upcoming event. Or perhaps you'd like to lower your cholesterol, blood pressure or treat a health condition. These are great motivators, don't get me wrong. But they will only take you so far. You need to go deeper and here's why.

Chances are when you achieve these goals you'll eventually lose momentum – and possibly slide away from your commitment. That's because those motivators aren't strong enough to keep you going.

You want to aim right for the bulls' eye. This is the heart and soul of who you are and who you want to be. As a soul-inspired woman with a message to deliver - you understand at a deeper level what is important to you and your motivator reflects it.

One of my bulls-eye motivators for self-care my commitment to you! When I feel like skipping a workout because I'm tired, I tap into my purpose and my promise to coach with authenticity and integrity. That's almost always enough motivation to get off the couch!

Anchor your motivation with an affirmation that will make you feel powerful when you're overwhelmed and frustrated. Make it simple and visual.

For instance one of my target motivations is: To live with radical health and unstoppable energy! My affirmation for this is: I run from junk foods that make me feel sluggish and sick, I run towards foods that energize and cleanse my body.

I encourage you to sit down and create a why in any area of your life that makes you cry. Can you do it?

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Write down at least 3 outer ring motivators. Remember, these are personal so there is no right or wrong answer.

Write down at least 3 bulls-eye motivators. These are the ones that reside in your heart and soul. You'll know when you've hit on one because you'll feel that "aha" or "yes" deep within you.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION

"I PLAN TO LIVE FOREVER. SO FAR, SO GOOD." – STEPHEN WRIGHT

Perfectionism is a major way the brain can hold your body hostage. You can't change your circumstances if you're busy engaging in self-abuse because you can't do it all perfectly. Pursuing an energy rich life will never follow a perfect path. And it's not about trying to make it so.

Extreme self-care means growing your life. It's about playing on your strengths, working around the areas where you are vulnerable and just doing it! Nobody works, eats, trains, or functions perfectly all the time. If you're working hard and keeping your focus 70 or 80% of the time you're doing great! And even if you're only on the horse 50% of the time, it's far better than nothing at all.

I see many women, especially in the area of fitness; beat themselves up when they don't meet their exercise or healthy eating goals. Guilt and remorse just suck away the positive energy and leave you feeling defeated and discouraged. And you need to stay positive if you're going to stay engaged in your self-care.

If you fall of the wagon – cut yourself some slack. Don't waste time ruminating on why your day didn't go perfectly. Adjust your expectations. Look for the lessons in what happened, figure out the why so you can handle it better next time, regroup and get back on track. One of the best ways to make this idea work for you is to journal. Reflect on your day and write down three things that you did well and that helped you move forward. It will give you tons of positive reinforcement and help you build momentum because you're giving yourself credit where it's due instead of self-flagellation.

There can never and should never be perfection in any living thing. There's nothing human about it and nothing that inspires or motivates us. When someone falls we gasp, but we cheer when they pick themselves up and tries again. To strive is human and it's the absolute essence of powerful thinking!

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Step for Today:

Do you often have reasons rooted in perfectionism or procrastination that keep you from making time for self-care? List some stories you've used in the past that create obstacles to your self-care goals.

Are you impatient if you don't see results right away? Do you find yourself opting for what feels good now rather than what will benefit you later?

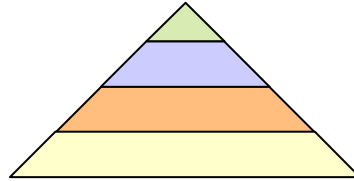
In what ways do you sabotage your efforts to reach your goals? If you can't do it perfectly do you tend to throw up your hands and abandon your efforts? Do you blame your circumstances or other people?

INSPIRED PRIORITIES FROM THE TOP DOWN

"THE KEY IS NOT TO PRIORITIZE WHAT'S ON YOUR SCHEDULE, BUT TO SCHEDULE YOUR PRIORITIES."- STEPHEN COVEY

When life happens, a lot of your plans go out the window. And that creates stress. So to put yourself back on a tranquil track, you need a simple technique to center you and get you out of overwhelm - fast.

Here's how it works:



The point of the pyramid = your top priorities. The "juicy" ones

The base = least important, non-urgent, unimportant tasks.

Top down prioritizing is a simple but powerful time management tool:

1. It creates breathing room and space to move.
2. It clears the decks so you're able to respond to unexpected changes or crisis with less stress and greater clarity.
3. It gives you direction, focus, clarity and self-confidence.

We're already cramming more into our days than ever before. Why is it that you work to get more and more done but feel less and less satisfied or fulfilled?

First you have to realize that you are in charge of your life and your time is limited – so you have to choose wisely.

An easy way to organize your priority pyramid is to create an **Absolute Yes** List of the top 3-5 priorities that need your attention or that you want to manifest in the next 3 to 6 months.

When you're trying to map your personal blueprint for self-care, you want to focus your energy on the things that need attention RIGHT NOW. Like your health, finances, or your career.

Those goals go right at the top of the pyramid.

Let me explain. There are two basic reasons why we do anything:

Because we HAVE to

And

Because we WANT to.

Now if you have to do something you don't want to do your mind will find plenty of reasons why it can't, won't, couldn't, wouldn't.

When it's time to focus on something important it's imperative that you shift yourself to a "wanna" frame of mind instead of a "gotta". And putting that important something at the top of your pyramid will help you focus on getting it done and keep you from wasting time or procrastinating on lower level tasks.

It also makes it easier to say no when you're really clear on what you're saying yes to!

And if that doesn't convince you, here are 5 reasons that top down prioritizing pays off . . .

1. **Increased productivity.** You get more done when you're totally focused on your work.
2. **Peace of mind.** You're in charge of your thoughts instead of the other way around. You aren't worrying or distracted by non-essentials.
3. **Your work takes less time.** Prioritizing the task and getting it done (especially if it's something you don't like doing) decreases the amount of time you spend on it, and saves you time because you're apt to make less mistakes.
4. **Your confidence soars.** The ability to concentrate on thoughts that advance or enhance you instead of doubtful or worrisome thoughts is a key self-care strategy.
5. **You'll actually complete more goals.** It doesn't matter if your goal is to clean out a closet or write a screenplay – prioritizing it will help you continue to stay committed over the long term and not give up when things get tough.

Using the priority pyramid will positively impact every area of your life and give your self esteem a huge kick in the pants!

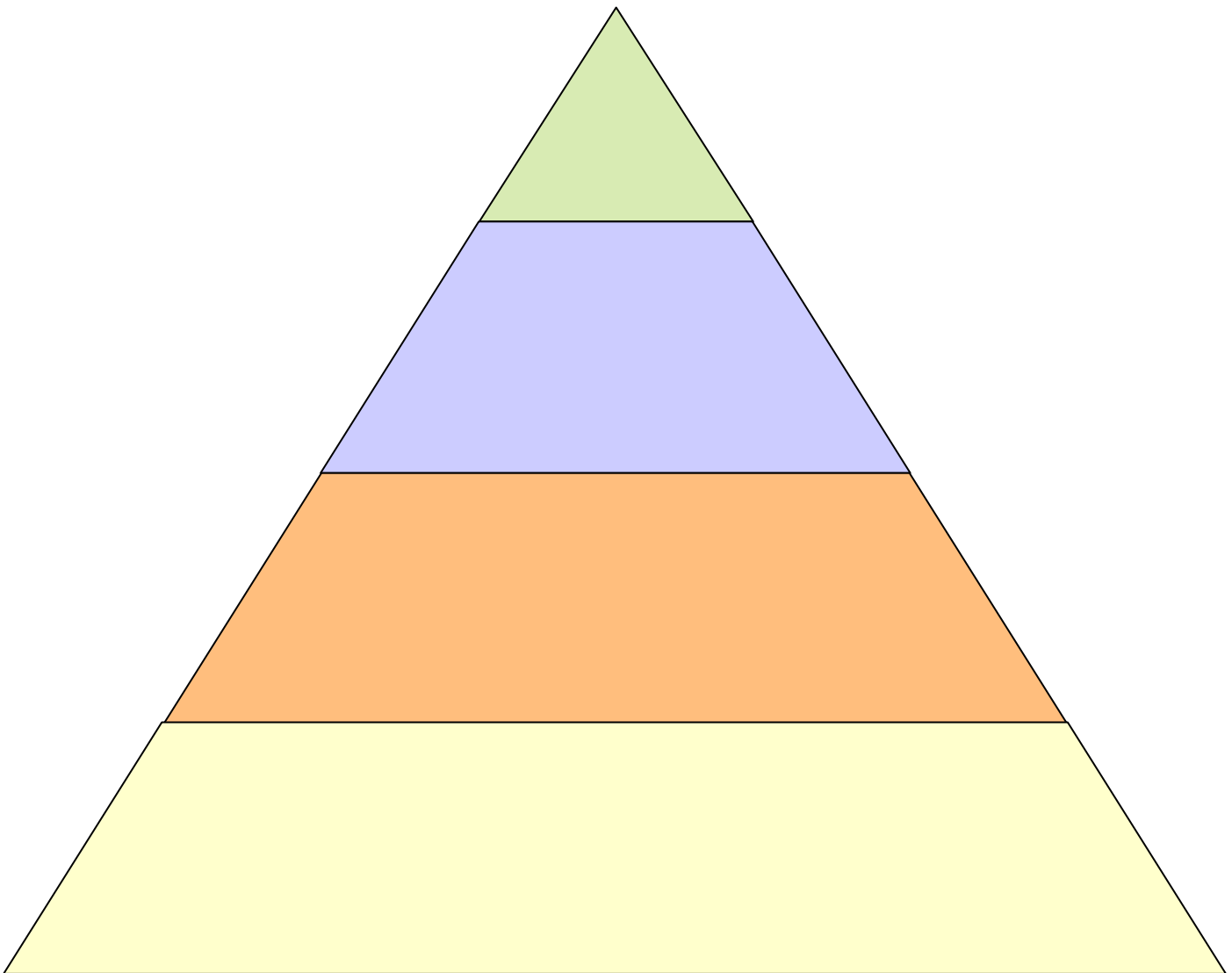
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Build your pyramid! Start with your “Absolute Yes” list. Do this exercise when you have at least an hour to concentrate and relax. Remember, those are your top 3-5 (no more than that!) top priorities that need attention within the next 3-6 months. Plug those into your pyramid (you can use the template below or draw your own). Make copies of this page so you can revise your pyramid periodically. And remember to celebrate every time you keep a promise to yourself or achieve a goal!



PLUGGING THE DRAINS

"TURN DOWN THE VOLUME IN YOUR LIFE AND TURN UP THE SILENCE." – MARIA SHRIVER

Energy drains are physical. There is a distinct physical component to energy that you can feel when you aren't aligned with your values and beliefs or when you're awash in clutter or misplaced priorities.

Imagine cords of energy running from you to all of the unfinished business in your life, to the clutter, the tasks, the misplaced priorities. As I said earlier, it doesn't make any sense to add more work to an already full plate.

Subtraction – not addition in this case – will immediately improve the quality of your life – and increase your energy!

The quality of your life has more to do with what you subtract from it than what you add to it. I've often spent several months working with clients on this one idea alone. Eliminating people, places, and things that drain your energy is a powerful concept and critical to good self-care.

Once you've let go of things that aren't enhancing or advancing your life in a meaningful way, you're freed up emotionally and physically to attract what's in alignment with your purpose and vision.

For example, my work with a home-based entrepreneur involved cleaning up piles of files that were left lying around. All that paperwork represented unfinished business that needed to be completed. Every time my client looked at them, she felt burdened.

She wanted to increase her client base, but at the same time she felt blocked from attracting them because of all the unfinished work. Once we cleared the paper clutter, she felt more energetic, more motivated and confident and went on to add several new clients that month.

There are energy drains that are caused by physical clutter or a packed to do list. But there are also drains that have emotions attached to them – the kind that make you feel anxious, depressed, or fearful. These will cost you dearly if not dealt with.

An example of this would be unfinished projects from the past that no longer hold your interest or that just never got finished. They represent opportunities missed (which often brings up feelings of guilt or shame) and can actually prevent you from moving on with your life. I've seen many times the negative emotional attachment these unfinished pursuits have on my clients and it is heart wrenching.

When you finally are able to let go of the past or handle these energy drains, the action will have a dramatic positive effect on you and your health. You'll feel better physically and mentally and have clarity of focus that will make space for really great things to come into your life.

Your commitment to Plan Me means going through your life and plugging the drains. I guarantee you'll free up enormous amounts of energy and motivation in every area of your life.

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Step for Today:



Identify the top 5 things that are draining your energy – big or small.

Now write down 3 goals you want to achieve in the next 90 days. Put those aside for a moment and write down how those 5 energy drains are keeping you from those important goals.

IRRITANTS AND DOMINOES

"A HABIT CANNOT BE TOSSED OUT THE WINDOW; IT MUST BE COAXED DOWN THE STAIRS ONE STEP AT A TIME." – MARK TWAIN

Irritants are a fact of life, like taxes and dust bunnies. What is an irritant? It's something you need to do or get off your mind because it's preventing you from doing something else. It is generally a low priority item that keeps resurfacing until it finally drives you crazy. And that's not good for your self-care!

These tasks need to be done, but because they aren't high priority they keep getting relegated to the bottom of the list. They nag at you, annoy you, and well – irritate you.

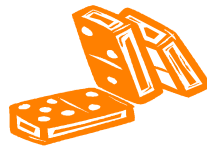
They are reminders of things left undone. They continue to get dragged from list to list and become **THE IRRITANT PHENOMENON**.

For example:

You have a stack of notes from a meeting that need to be compiled into a report. The actual report isn't due until next month. You leave the papers on your desk because you need to remind yourself to do the report. Every time you look at them you think "I've got to do that report" – and bam! You get a mental stab. This happens over and over again until just the sight of those notes becomes extremely - **IRRITATING**.

Irritants multiply! They become Post it notes covering the walls of your office. They are the stack of items in the front hall that have to be dropped off or returned. They are the doctor's appointment you've been meaning to make for months, the form you need to fill out. Irritants build up, like soap scum in the shower.

But what's worse. . .



Irritants product a domino effect. . .

And that drains your energy and increases stress.

Consider Murphy's Law: "Regardless of what needs doing, something else must be done first." This is known as the domino effect.

Often it's the little things that keep us from accomplishing larger priorities.

For example, I had a client who was setting up a home office. All her supplies and papers were packed up in boxes. She could not set up the space until she put in new carpet. She couldn't put in the new carpet until she painted the room. She couldn't paint the room until she fixed a particularly big hole in the wall. And she didn't know how to fix the hole, and didn't know the name of someone who did – so the entire project kept getting shelved because of that one irritating detail.

How many people could have received promotions or raises on their jobs if they had just finished that last bit of accreditation they needed to advance to the next level?

How many of us would entertain more if our homes were more organized? Or work out? You get the point.

Ironically, the average irritant takes only a few minutes to handle.

Apply what I call **3D thinking to clearing away irritants: Do it – Delegate it – or Delete it.**

Target at least 10-15 minutes per day to get rid of irritants and watch your mind begin to unclutter – you'll be able to relax and focus on your more important priorities.

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Chose 5 irritants to get off your plate right now. List them below. Can you delegate or delete any of them? If not, prioritize them and make a decision to get them off your to do list this week. Choose one a day and check it off the list! You'll be amazed at how much more energized you'll feel.

SECTION 2: I-SPACE



DWELLNESS

"WE SHAPE OUR DWELLINGS AND AFTERWARDS OUR DWELLINGS SHAPE US." – WINSTON CHURCHILL

Your home is a reflection of you – in a very real and tangible way. It's no coincidence that a time when America is struggling with an unprecedented epidemic of obesity we live in homes more cluttered with possessions and "stuff" than ever before.

Clients tell me how the decluttering process reaches out to positively affect every area of their lives – including their relationship with wellness. The AHA moment comes when they realize that **letting go means letting in. Eliminating clutter is a powerful way to attract more of what you want into your life.**

What does your home say about you? A chaotic, disorganized home means trouble resides there, and it is usually emotional in nature. Your home should make you feel centered, calm, and focused. This is one place where you can exercise total control – and if you're not, why not? How will you manage the other parts of your life you can't control if you can't manage the space you live in?

There are 3 rooms in your home where a nurturing, supportive atmosphere is critical: the **kitchen, bedroom and the bathroom**. If these rooms need a makeover, chances are your self-care does as well.

If you don't love yourself enough to create a peaceful space that supports you – are you going to treat your body with the respect it deserves? Even people who appear physically fit but whose living areas are chaotic and disorganized generally suffer from some form of "dis"-ease in the form of stress or other imbalance.

Creating space affects you physically and emotionally. Try an experiment. Look at a pile of clutter and pay special attention to how you feel in your body and in your mind when you focus on it. The combination of negative self-talk and visual stuff drains your energy right away.

Organization is about control and balance. That's also a key to healthy living. When your space is organized you feel less stressed and overwhelmed. For instance, an organized kitchen that is well-stocked with healthy, easy to prepare foods facilitates clean eating. You are less likely to reach for a frozen dinner or phone for takeout because you have other choices.

A clutter filled space drains your **energy and motivation**. It takes more effort to focus and make decisions. If you don't make those decisions, the world has a way of sneaking in and making them for you.

Take an informal tour of your home and ask yourself some questions. Write down your answers. How do you feel when you walk through the front door of your home? Do you feel anxious about inviting friends over?

Do you have feelings of overwhelm? Is there just too much stuff or too many unfinished projects? Do you avoid areas in your home because of clutter?

When I begin coaching with a client, we don't start by racing through the house heaving things into the trash. We start by talking about what's important to them – in their home, their schedule, relationships, and body.

I want them to see that practicing good self-care is harder when they don't have the space or support around you to do so. One of the **keys to your Energy Support System is beginning in a physical space that YOU have control over**.

Decluttering your space is a major step toward a healthy, energized life.

- Break decluttering into small, manageable tasks.
- Decide to make it a way of life, otherwise the clutter will crawl right back and multiply.
- Use decluttering to teach you how to verbalize what's important to you and to make choices based on your priorities.
- Rejoice over every space in your home where you've conquered clutter. It will motivate and inspire you.

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What's the Dwellness quotient of your home? Are there clutter piles or areas that are potential or actual energy drains? Choose one area that could use some clearing out and make yourself dispose of a little more than feels comfortable. Weed out old files, go through that stack of magazines or tackle the clothes closet. Letting go of more than feels comfortable is less about clearing the clutter and more about training yourself to deal with the source of your clutter – the fears, doubts and attitudes.

DOES THIS CLUTTER MAKE MY HIPS LOOK BIG?

"OUR HOUSES ARE SUCH UNWIELDY PROPERTY THAT WE ARE OFTEN IMPRISONED RATHER THAN HOUSED IN THEM." -
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I'll repeat what I said in the previous chapter – your home is a reflection of who you are and how you present yourself to the world. It's not an overstatement to say that clutter gets in the way of your relationships, your happiness and your health. How do you feel when you enter a cluttered room or office? Can you feel your energy draining away? There are distinct physical sensations that run through the body. Maybe your shoulders hunch, you may feel tired or drained.

There's a powerful relationship between how you take care of your living space and how you take care of yourself.

Researchers have found that chronic crowding; clutter and disorganization can lead to high levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which can impair memory and concentration. Cortisol (the stress hormone) is also the hormone responsible for "belly fat" or weight gain in the mid-section.

Could the clutter in your home be adding weight to you? Organizational mastermind Peter Walsh says there's a definite connection between the clutter in your house and the clutter on your hips. In his book, [Does this Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat?](#) Peter says if you clean up, you can trim down.

After years of helping people organize their homes, Peter started noticing that other problem areas in people's lives started to turn around. "People were contacting me ... saying that, 'Suddenly I discovered that by clearing my space, I'm making much healthier food choices and I am starting to lose weight,'" he said.

Clutter and weight gain are often symptoms of an unresolved, underlying issue in your life. Eating more and buying more is an attempt to fill the need for something more. Until you get those underlying issues dealt with, you may continue to sabotage your own self-care efforts.

This simple equation has made a huge difference in my life and my self-care practice:

Organization + Healthy Self-Care = Energy Support System

If you don't respect yourself enough to create a nurturing living space, are you really going to treat your body any differently?

One client mentioned how guilty she felt walking past the bookshelves filled with workout DVD's she'd never used and the elliptical machine that was now covered with laundry. (I have NEVER done a major declutter in a home that contained a workout machine that was used regularly.) Another talked about the persistent low level of stress she felt when her home got cluttered. She felt out of control which triggered emotional overeating.

Clearing away the stuff helps you clear away the patterns of thought and the behaviors that prevent you from living the way you want.

Is your clutter making you fat? Quite possibly.

- The clutter on your countertops making it impossible for you to use your kitchen to make healthy meals. . .
- The clothes you're hoping you'll fit into someday that are stuffed in your closet . . .
- The disorganized pantry crammed with unhealthy food . . .
- The boxes and boxes of papers and files that you trip over. . .
- The guest room so filled with clutter that you can barely open the door. . .
- The dining room table you can't sit down at because the surface is covered with unopened mail. . .

I'm not suggesting that every person who lives in a cluttered space is overweight. Or the other way around. But there is always a burden when clutter is present – whether it manifests physically or emotionally – it exists.

Everything is connected. You'll never be truly healthy if the majority of your life is cluttered, stressful and overwhelming. You won't have the energy to pursue exercise and healthy eating. It's that simple. Think through your body-home relationship and resolve to clean up what's cluttering them both. Then watch the weight just fall away!

Keep these Home Shape tips in mind. . .

1. **Your home should support your self-care goals.** Does your environment reflect what you say is most precious to you? For instance, you want to cook healthy meals for yourself and your family. But are the counters piled so high with stuff that you couldn't make a cup of tea much less a meal? Organize to enjoy what really matters to you and your health.

2. **Take baby steps.** Don't try to revamp your entire house at once. Not only will you fail, but the mental clutter of discouragement will make your situation worse than before you started. Take it one step at a time - start with a drawer, a cabinet, a closet, one pile. With a little patience you'll baby step yourself right to your goal.

3. **Follow the In-Out Rule.** For every new thing that comes in, something else must go out. This one step alone will reduce your clutter by 50%.

4. **Detoxify your food supply.** Go through the pantry, cabinets and fridge. If whatever you've got in there doesn't support your extreme self-care "fit to live" mantra, toss it. Or give to a food bank if you feel guilty about wasting food. Then restock with good for you foods like lean proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain breads.

5. **Bag up your guilt and power up!** One of the biggest problems I see every day in my business is the shame and guilt that come up for clients who have allowed clutter to take over their lives. Negative self-talk like "how could this happen?" and "what's wrong with me?" consumes a lot of energy and then drains you of motivation. Instead, deep breath in - walk into the fray and resolve to stick with it until you've dug out from under. For every pound of clutter you remove you cut 10 times that of mental clutter. Then feel the light!

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Choose an area in your home or office where clutter may be linked to poor health habits. (Buried kitchen counters or table, workout machines that serve as laundry baskets, pantry or fridge filled with junk food, etc.) Choose 1 area to clear away that will support your goals for healthier living. Write down how you can repurpose that area to make it a supportive space.

SOUL INSPIRED SPACE

"ELIMINATE THE UNNECESSARY SO THE NECESSARY CAN SPEAK." – HANS HOFMAN

This chapter is a longer than most of the others – but I think it's that important! So please stick with me.

Your home or office isn't just a roof over your head. And organizing is only part of creating a supportive environment for your self-care. Do you love where you live? Do you feel energized and motivated in your office at work?

Your environment should fill you with joy, feed your energy and inspire your creativity and best work. Where you live and work both need to reflect the things that are important to your heart. Then you can express your highest self in an environment of peace and calm.

When your space becomes cramped or cluttered it suffocates you. Navigating piles and trying to cook, work, or just relax becomes frustrating and draining. When I moved into my current home the tiny fenced backyard was barely more than a patch of grass and an unattractive concrete patio slab. Over time I transformed it into my own little garden oasis which inspires me year round.

When I need a change, I'll move out of the office and set up my laptop on the dining table so I can look out at the garden and the pots of flowers on the patio. In an instant I become a different person – lighter, more expansive. My home is literally my sanctuary – a holy place.

The power of living in a space that feels fully aligned with your soul is highly underrated.

From a coaching perspective it is one of the **easiest ways to jumpstart your self-care program**. It's dramatic and impactful - which is one of the things I've enjoyed so much about professional organizing – its immediate effect on your quality of life.

This is about the impact your home or office has on your emotional and physical health, your energy levels, your relationship to yourself and others and your spiritual well-being.

A soul-inspired environment is a home or office free from clutter and disorganization AND filled with elements that inspire us to be our best. During the years I worked with hoarders, sometimes the sadness in the space overwhelmed me so much I'd feel like weeping.

Like weeds that eventually take over the garden if left unchecked, we adapt to our environment – positive or negative.

Eventually this becomes our way of life. If we're tolerating a home or office that's not our best, we're likely to tolerate other things that won't give us the life of our dreams – like poor health, relationships that aren't right for us or a business that won't grow, a job we hate.

How we live at home translates into how we live out in the world.

Your space says a lot about your life. Take a look around your home or office and ask yourself:

- What does this space say about you?
- Does it reflect the authentic you?
- How does the space make you feel?
- What have you been tolerating for too long that needs change?
- What's working? What's not? Why?

The fact is, a soul-deprived home or office steals our clarity, focus, motivation and energy.

When you're brave enough to let go of what isn't enhancing your life anymore you make room for opportunity and possibility. You will automatically raise your standards for your own self-care because this new way of being feels so much better!

Here are my 4 simple steps to creating soul-nurturing space:

1. **Identify & Assess.** The first step is to look at where you are right now. How does this space function right now in terms of nourishing your soul? What do you want it to do for you?
 - a. Before you begin, identify what "soul-nourishing" translates to in your chosen room.
 - i. What does this room mean to you?
 - ii. What is the primary purpose of the room?
 - iii. What must have do you need here in order to honor your spirit?
 - iv. What will you absolutely not tolerate?

Example: You determine that the primary purpose of your kitchen is to nourish your body in healthy ways, replenish your strength and help you maintain a healthy weight and body image. You realize that in order for this room to be soul-nourishing, the countertops and surfaces need to be clean and clear. The fridge and pantry need to be stocked with simple, healthy foods that are easily accessible. The room needs to be organized for the natural flow of food prep, serving and cleanup.

2. **Evaluate:** This is the “what” and the “how”. What do you want to change? Make a list of what needs to be done and the steps needed to do it.
 - a. Starting with a simple 1-10 scale, with one being you hate being in the space and 10 being you adore it – how do you rate the overall room?
 - b. When you think about what needs to change, what immediately comes to mind?
 - c. What items are important to you?
 - d. What things could you easily let go of?
 - e. What needs to be added to make this room more soulful?
 - f. What are some of your favorite elements in this room? For example, the view from a window, the natural light, or color of the walls.
 - g. What do you need to do to be sure that this space remains clutter free and soulful?

For example, imagine a bedroom. You look at the space you realize that you love the light and layout of the room, but it feels cluttered. When you think about the changes you need to make, you notice the pile of books and magazines next to the bed that you have to climb over to get into bed drains your energy. When you evaluate this area using the 1-10 scale, your dissatisfaction level is at a 2 or 3 (and this might surprise you if you’ve become used to living with the clutter).

Is the cost of keeping the room this way interfering with you getting a good night’s sleep?

Clear the piles and you’ll not only be more relaxed, but there’s a chance you may get to bed earlier which is a huge energy boost.

Finally, before you move to step 3 – eliminate – make note of what you’ll need in order to prepare for it. When you look at the bedroom for instance, you may note that you’ll need a place for all those books on the floor. You may want to find a place to donate the ones you don’t want to keep. See how it works?

3. **Eliminate:** Be open to moving past attachment to things you don't absolutely love or need. Go deep with this one if you're having trouble letting go – ask yourself why? Can you give yourself permission to make your happiness and self-care your #1 priority? If not, why not? What's underneath that's holding you back?
 - a. What do you do to contribute to making this a less than desirable space?
 - b. Do you let the mail pile up?
 - c. Do you hoard paper information insisting that you might need it or “just in case”?
 - d. Are you depriving yourself of the tools you need to stay organized like a better closet system or filing cabinet?

It's critical to look at the source of your space problem before you start clearing out – otherwise you'll wind up right back in the same dilemma in a very short period of time.

Trace the problem to its source. If you can't hang up your clothes because there's no room in the closet, then you need to do something about the closet.

Once you have a handle on what needs to be changed, start clearing the space. Make 4 piles:

Things you want to give to friends and family. These are sentimental items or things that hold special meaning. The value of giving away once-beloved items to loved ones is enormous! For one thing, it's easier to pass on something meaningful to someone who will appreciate its value and can actually motivate you to let go of more than you normally would. That said; don't use family and friends as a dumping ground for your stuff to ease the discomfort about paring down.

Things you donate. Your no longer loved or useful items are a huge blessing to someone else who will use them. You are sharing the wealth and this is a powerful motivating force for letting go of more than you think you can. It helps to have an emotional connection to the charity of your choice – it will inspire you to give more.

When I worked with the local low income housing authority, connecting my clients' donations with those who needed those household items to furnish their homes, it was empowering for them to know that real-life people were enriched by the things they gave away.

Things that can be recycled. You'll feel great knowing you are taking an ethical interest in our planet – and many items (like cell phones) can be put to good use helping others.

Things to be disposed of. Make sure you know a place to dispose of these items before you start. For example, do you need to call a junk removal service or find a place where you can take documents to be shredded? Preplanning provides motivation you'll need to follow through.

4. **Enhance:** Here's the fun part. Turn your space from ordinary to extraordinary! Let it speak volumes about the authentic you! Let it proclaim to the world about who you are and what you stand for. Let it be an expression of your creativity, dreams and values. And most importantly, let it infuse you with contentment, peace, clarity and clear energy every time you enter it!

What does beauty mean to you? It could be a wide-open space with lots of light, artwork, photos of family, or a new coat of paint.

Once you've finished creating your soul-nourishing room, take time to relax and enjoy the peace and calm you feel each time you enter. Then use those feelings to motivate and energize you to work on the next room!

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During the next week, I want you to focus on creating your own soul-inspired space in ONE room where you spend a lot of time. Please choose a room where you spend a lot of time – that way you will see and feel immediately the rewards. I guarantee this process will serve as a motivating force for other areas of your home (and your life) where you want to create energy and better self-care!

Use this page and the following to write down the 4 steps in the soul-loving space process and create your own simple plan for your room choice.

My Soul-Nurturing Space Design

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR INNER KITCHEN

"IF YOU CAN ORGANIZE YOUR KITCHEN YOU CAN ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE." – LOUIS PARRISH

While every room in your home should have a clearly defined purpose, there's none more important than your kitchen. Would you eat in a restaurant whose kitchen was a disorganized, dirty mess? So don't do it at home! The kitchen is the heart of your home!

Do you enjoy spending time in your kitchen? Does it foster warmth and growth? Or is it messy and chaotic? Are the pantry and fridge filled with nourishing, healthy food or crammed with junk?

If your home is a reflection of who you are, the kitchen is a reflection of how you feel about your body and food.

Take a minute to walk around your kitchen with an objective eye. See it for the first time. How do you feel when you walk into the room? What do you notice? Are the countertops clear and clean? Are the cabinets and drawers organized around the activities you perform? Is the "good for you" stuff located within easy reach?

If just the thought of sifting through the countertop clutter and overflowing sink to cook a decent meal makes you shout, "Let's get takeout!" – Your kitchen needs a makeover!

The kitchen not only feeds the family in the obvious sense of the word – but in a much broader sense it feeds the mood, motivation, health and attitude of well-being of your home. It's the first place you want to cultivate in your home because it's so basic to your physical and emotional health.

Start by taking inventory of your kitchen space and take note of what it's used for beyond the normal kitchen function – home office, kid's homework, crafts, etc. Then adapt these 5 organizing tips to help you **create a kitchen with heart and soul**.

- 1. Define your vision for the kitchen you want.** Write it down. The primary purpose of your kitchen is eating (healthy, I hope!). That should be goal Number 1: to organize it to make food prep simple and enjoyable. After getting good food on the table, make a list of what else you'd like your kitchen to do for you – and resolve to **eliminate** anything that doesn't fit your vision!

- 2. Zone it.** Divide the kitchen into specific zones will help organize and make the most use of your space. Zones related to food prep and storage are the most important and should be created first. After that you can create other zones – like bill paying, hobbies or homework – if you have the space.

Remember – **healthy eating takes priority!** There are 4 main zones: food prep, cooking center, eating area, and cleanup. Keeping in mind the space you have, and the layout of your kitchen, decide where each of these areas will be. Some may be obvious (like cleanup).

- 3. Shed the weight.** Help your kitchen shed some of those excess pounds it has put on over the years. I visit could be an advertisement for “As Seen on TV”. Kitchen gadgets and unused appliances (and duplicates of everything) take up valuable space and just contribute to confusion and disorder. Paring down the amount of food, dishes, appliances, and tools is a serious first step to organizing your kitchen space. Take an inventory of what you have and resolve to remove what isn’t necessary or regularly used. Be BOLD! Making the kitchen lighter will make you lighter – I guarantee it. The Lighten Up Process is actually a two part process I call the Speed Weed and Spring Clean. It’s simple and fast and the results will astound you.
- 4. Keep horizontal surfaces clear.** After “zoning”, this is the most important thing you can do to keep your kitchen fit (and its good home fitness for any room in the house!). Clear countertops are easier to clean. It makes food preparation simpler and more enjoyable, and makes the kitchen look welcoming and peaceful. Once the horizontal surface disappears under the clutter, you start to lose your motivation to stay organized. And that attracts dirt. Flat surfaces are for working – not for storing!
- 5. Beware of clutter foods.** You know what I mean – the food you have in your house for all the wrong reasons. The junk food secret stash. The spontaneous entertaining foods – jars of olives and artichokes (and those marinated green beans!), boxes of crackers and quince paste. My downfall clutter foods are the “good intention” foods. The ones I buy with the hope that I’ll somehow magically start becoming someone I’m not. For example - the antioxidant Tibetan berries that taste terrible but are really good for you. Emergency preparedness non-perishables are another culprit. Store these away from the kitchen or consume over time and replace with fresher ones.

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Clear your kitchen or dining room table and countertops today! Remove the appliances and gadgets you rarely use. Put items within easy reach you use every day (or would like to use) to make it easier to prepare healthy food. Draw a diagram of your kitchen space below and divide into the 4 zones so you can organize and make the most use of your existing space.

DISCOVER AN OASIS IN YOUR OFFICE

IT'S NOT THE TRAGEDIES THAT KILL US. IT'S THE MESSSES." – DOROTHY PARKER

Since so many of us spend a large percentage of our time in an office (and many of us now work from an office at home), it is vitally important to make sure your work environment is supporting your health. Over time your office can make you or break you in terms of your health, energy and motivation. Think about a disorganized, chaotic space that's poorly lit, reeking of stale or reconditioned air – and you'll feel your energy draining away.

Creating a healthy, organized work space is just as important to your well-being as a healthy home environment. It's part of your success support system – and an investment in your career! You can't function or focus in a cluttered workspace. So how do you create your OASIS? In a nutshell you. . .

- ➔ **ORGANIZE:** Get out of chaos, eliminate the clutter from your desk, your computer, and your schedule.
- ➔ **ADAPT:** Practice flexibility with systems that coordinate effectively with your organizational workstyle and the people you work with.
- ➔ **STREAMLINE:** Continually evaluate your space, time, and priorities and apply "3D" thinking (Do it, delegate it or delete it). What can you eliminate in order to grow your business?
- ➔ **IGNITE:** Energy, motivation, creativity and confidence – because you're on top of your game!
- ➔ **SYSTEMATIZE:** Create simple maintenance systems that resonate to you. Remember, maintenance is 80% of organization!

Organization is a process and it's unique to each one of us. Remember that:

- Neatness does not equal organized.
- A clear desk does **not** necessarily mean effective or efficient! (It's not how it looks – it's how it works!)
- Neatness is about form – organization is about function.
- Messy does not equal disorganized.

Chaos is not clutter, change, or disorganization – it is the disruptive consequences of a person or person's disorganized actions.

Take a look around your office and answer these questions:

1. How clean is it? Apart from obvious paper and clutter piles, your office needs to be cleaned on a regular basis just like your house. I'm talking vacuuming, dusting, and washing the windows. If you work in a corporate setting, there's probably a cleaning service that takes care of this. Don't be afraid to speak up if they aren't doing a good job. If you work from home, don't overlook cleaning (or having someone else do it) your office regularly. It's a huge energy booster!
2. What's kind of lighting do you have? If you have florescent tubes, you may want to shut these off and use desk or floor lighting instead. Consider using full-spectrum light bulbs to help give your body some sunlight – especially if you spend very long periods of time in your office. Proper lighting is not only important for your eyes, but will enhance the mood and atmosphere of any work space.
3. Do you have any personal or “creature comforts” in your office? You'll ramp up your energy, motivation and creativity if your space is comfortable and makes you happy when you walk in the door. Plants, fresh flowers, some art, candles, photographs and comfortable pillows are just a few ways you can enhance your workspace. One client of mine incorporated a beautiful water feature into her office.

A clean, well-organized office is a healthier, happier place for you to be more focused and productive. And that makes good business sense!

Sound familiar?

“I can't trust myself to put things in their proper places...I'll forget to do something important if I file it away. The result is "urgent action" papers piled all over every available horizontal surface.”

“A file for me is stacking things on top of each other. I've been in this office two years, and I have two years worth of papers on my desk...soon I'm going to be choked out of my room.”

“My urge to get it together invariably...begins with the purchase of yet another organizer. You name it, I have bought it. Colored files, multiple date books, calendars, a wall of pigeonholes, a thousand color-coded stickers, in-and-out boxes.”

“I misplaced a certified check for \$6000. I knew I had put it in a safe, flat place, but couldn't remember where. Five months later I found it tucked under the cloth on the dining room table.”

6 Quick Ways to Get Control of Your Office or Workspace

1. Follow the Clear 180° Principle:

As you sit at your workspace all surfaces in 180 degrees around you should be clear of everything except:

Your tools: (phone, computer, pen, etc.)

Limited decoration (a very few photos, plant or positive association pieces)

The project you are currently working on

2. Establish a workflow management system behind you.

The inbox: all incoming information goes there –not on your desk

Outbox

Create a “To Read” station next to inbox for all reading materials

Designate a place for individual project folders

Separate “hot” from “cold” items with a file area

3. Develop strategies to handle information overload.

Saying no to the deluge of information constantly flowing into your office electronically and otherwise can greatly simplify your work life.

- Use anti spam software programs to cut down on unwanted email
- Delete emails you don't need immediately - don't respond to them
- Cancel subscriptions to magazines, newsletters or ezines you aren't reading
- Have your contact information removed from databases by signing up with the National Do Not Call Registry. Register at www.the-dma.org.

4. Use a planner or workbook to record ideas and jot down notes. Break the habit of jotting down notes on paper scraps. All your information will be in one place and you can move the information to a separate file if needed.

5. Set aside at least 30 minutes to an hour each day for paperwork. Choose a time of day when you will be least distracted and don't let a day go by without handling that day's paper.

6. Clear your desk every night before leaving work.

Place the next day's projects, appointments, and deadlines where you will see them when you arrive the next morning. Put everything else away.

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Go through at least one pile of old papers or files this week in your office and file or dispose of them. Remember that 80% of what we file is never looked at again! Ask yourself if keeping this paper is really necessary. Could you find it again somewhere else if you needed it?

Remember to differentiate between records and references. Records are information you need to prove or keep track of something legally. So when it doubt, don't throw it out right away. References on the other hand are generally easy to find elsewhere or it information that is updated regularly.

SECTION 3: YOUR BODY MEANS BUSINESS



PHYSICAL INTELLIGENCE – MIND/BODY FITNESS

“NOTHING HAPPENS UNTIL SOMETHING MOVES.” – ALBERT EINSTEIN

The Scripture says “Treat your body like a temple.” Not a wood shed.

Creating a healthy body is a holistic process. I think that’s why staying fit is a difficult for many of us women. We forget that getting fit is more than just eating right and exercising. It’s an emotional, spiritual and psychological experience as well as physical. If you don’t integrate all 4 areas in your Plan ME you’re setting yourself up for failure.

Physical well-being is essential if you want to have the energy and confidence to carry your message to the world. There’s no point in planning what you’re going to accomplish if your body won’t cooperate.

An active life is a productive life. And that requires energy. Feeling energetic and productive is invigorating isn’t it? Endorphins clear away the mental fog and make you feel great.

Consider a stagnant pond. When the waters are stirred and new water is introduced the water clears. Exercise is like stirring the waters in the body. A sedentary lifestyle causes cellular garbage buildup which contributes to degenerative diseases.

The good news is that a fit body benefits other areas of your life as well. Living a healthy life gives you a real sense that you can accomplish anything. So get moving! And if you absolutely hate the idea of exercise – I’m going to encourage you to tap into your “physical intelligence.”

Forget everything you’ve ever heard about exercising. You can have an amazing relationship with your body when you bring the physical, mental and spiritual together.

It’s not possible to educate your mind and leave your body out of it. They are one. Our mental intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply what we learn. Our physical intelligence is the body’s ability to apply strength, alignment, timing and flexibility to our mind and physique.

There is no one size fits all approach to fitness. Your body and its response to how you move it and what you feed it is as unique as a fingerprint.

So it stands to reason engaging in activities you enjoy and moving your body through space in a way that is organic and natural to you is a powerful way to connect with yourself – and get healthy too!

Now that doesn't mean that if your idea of fitness is a walk to mailbox, that's all you need to do to stay healthy. But what I'm asking you to think about here is a CONNECTION with your body and your mind.

When I asked a fitness professional what type of cardio machine was the best for overall fitness she responded simply, "The one you'll use." You have to move – but do it in ways that you enjoy. If you hate your body you can't align yourself with your best health. How can you reject something and improve it? It doesn't make sense.

A healthy body is an ongoing process and will only work if you love yourself right where you are now. Don't think about how much weight you have to lose or how out of shape you are. And don't force yourself to do things you don't like. (However, do make a commitment to do something!)

You'll resist or get bored with exercise that doesn't fit who you are. If you absolutely hate driving to the health club after work, then don't join a gym with the intention of getting fit. You may go for awhile, but your motivation will drop off quickly.

Physical intelligence means listening to your body's wisdom and paying attention to what it wants to tell you. Loving your shape and "factory settings" as Dr. Oz calls them, is an incredibly positive self-care tool that will ramp your energy and your joy.

You will never be more beautiful than when you look at yourself through eyes of acceptance and love.

And there are some very practical reasons for moving your body too!

- ➔ Every decade after age 20 we lose about 7 lbs of muscle mass. Regular exercise can help you maintain muscle mass well into advanced age.
- ➔ Exercise helps lower heart attack risk and reverse and prevent obesity.
- ➔ Regular exercise controls stress better than any other solution – it burns the primary stress hormone – cortisol – which is responsible for added weight around your middle.
- ➔ Exercise lowers blood sugar. Type 2 diabetics have been weaned off insulin by healthy diet and regular exercise.
- ➔ Low impact exercise will prevent almost every degenerative disease.
- ➔ Exercise boosts our immune system, which helps protect us from viruses and bacteria.
- ➔ Exercise prolongs your life and will help you fulfill your soul's divine purpose! You will be able to run your race - because you have the health to do what God has planned for you to do.

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Consider the obstacles that might prevent you from starting or sticking to a fitness plan. For example, are you making yourself go to the gym every day when you'd rather work out outdoors? Do you have food allergies or a health condition that makes exercising difficult? Maybe a too full schedule? In the space below list five obstacles and next to those list a possible solution that will help you to overcome them so you can move forward.

Choose one problem and solution and implement the change this week. Baby steps yield big results!

Obstacles

Solutions

A REAL FOOD KIND OF LIFE

"TO EAT IS A NECESSITY, BUT TO EAT INTELLIGENTLY IS AN ART." – LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

Remember how you used to eat when you were a little kid? Chances are when your plate was put in front of you, you took time to give your food the once over, inspecting it, smelling it and touching it before you ate.

You didn't just cram it into your mouth without thinking and swallow it with hardly a chew. You pushed your plate away when you were full and no amount of cajoling would make you eat more. And as a rule, you didn't plunge headfirst into a bowl of ice cream when you felt sad or lonely.

That's because as a child you were your own dietary Jedi Master and you didn't even know it. You were a master of intuitive eating. **Intuitive eating is the practice of mindfully listening to your body's natural hunger cues instead of dieting or emotionally eating** - and it can help you not only lose weight but maintain a healthy weight.

New research shows that women who eat intuitively have lower BMI's (body mass index) than non-intuitive eaters. They also **report higher levels of appreciation for their own bodies**, and were less apt to judge their appearance as critically as those who did not eat intuitively. There are more studies that show that mindful eating can help you get control over binge eating and lower cholesterol levels and risk of cardiovascular disease.

An important part of your self-care journey is creating a positive relationship with real food. You have to eliminate the diet mentality from your life once and for all!

This takes a lot of time and it's likely this new way of eating will bring up lots of feelings and some resistance. Personally, I practiced intuitive eating for more than a year before I felt totally comfortable with it.

That's okay. Start slowly and take time to fully digest (no pun intended!) each of the following principles over a 4 week time period and journal your feelings. You'll be amazed at how your relationship with food will blossom into something really beautiful! There are lots of resource materials available on mindful and intuitive eating. Geneen Roth's books are wonderful – [Women, Food and God](#) and [Break Free from Emotional Eating](#) are two of my favorites. [Intuitive Eating](#) is a complete how-to on eating mindfully, and their website is www.intuitiveeating.com

Mindful Eating Principles:

Pay attention. Eating can often be automatic behavior, like getting dressed or brushing your teeth. You have to think about what you're doing and focus on your eating. Dinner at my house used to be called the "festival of wolves." Everyone in our family descended on the meal as soon as it hit the table like ravenous beasts and literally "wolfed" it down - despite my poor mother's entreaties to "take your time - taste it!" Before you pick up your first bite ask yourself:

Are you really hungry? Is your craving from the head or from the stomach? Is it emotionally driven or is it real hunger? Rumbling in the stomach, low energy, headache or dizziness indicates you need to eat something. Craving a pint of Ben & Jerry's all afternoon means you probably don't need to eat. Keep your body biologically fed with adequate energy and carbohydrates. Otherwise you can trigger a primal drive to overeat.

Once you reach the moment of excessive hunger, all intentions of moderate, conscious eating are fleeting and irrelevant. Learning to honor this first biological signal sets the stage for rebuilding trust with yourself and food.

Am I aware while eating my food? My grandfather used to try to get us to chew each mouthful of food at least 20 times before swallowing. At the wolf table, that was impossible! My brother and I were astonished this was even possible! Do you use all of your senses when you eat? Mindful eating means awareness of not only food's taste, but its texture, smell and sound. It helps you slow down and get pleasure from your meal or snack.

Am I multitasking while eating? Eating while driving, watching TV, or working at your desk greatly limits your ability to pay attention to what and how you're eating. It doesn't do much for your digestion either.

Am I listening to my body's signals to stop eating? The same way you consider when to start eating, be mindful of when you should stop. You should feel satisfied, but not stuffed or full. Stop eating when about half your food is gone and ask yourself whether you're still eating to satisfy hunger or are you just continuing to eat because it's there.

Make peace with food. Lose the diet mentality and make peace with your food indulgences – whatever they are - chocolate, potato chips, French fries. If you tell yourself that you can't or shouldn't have a particular food, it can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that build into uncontrollable cravings and, often, bingeing. When you finally “give-in” to your forbidden food; eating is often so intense it results in “Last Supper” overeating and guilt. Set boundaries for yourself.

Throw out the diet books and magazine articles that offer you false hope of losing weight quickly, easily, and permanently. Don't allow even one small hope to linger that a new and better diet might do the trick because it will prevent you from being free to rediscover intuitive eating.

Enjoy eating! The Japanese have the wisdom to promote pleasure as one of their goals of healthy living. In our obsession with getting thin and healthy, we often overlook one of the most basic gifts of existence--the pleasure that can be found in the eating experience. When you eat what you really want, in an environment that is inviting and conducive, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content. By providing this experience for yourself, you will find that it takes much less food to decide you've had "enough".

Honor Your Feelings Without Using Food. Find ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your issues without using food. Anxiety, loneliness, boredom, anger are emotions we all experience throughout life. Each has its own trigger, and each has its own appeasement. Food won't fix any of these feelings. It may comfort for the short term, distract from the pain, or even numb you into a food hangover. But food won't solve the problem. If anything, eating for an emotional hunger will only make you feel worse in the long run. You'll ultimately have to deal with the source of the emotion, as well as the discomfort of overeating.

Respect Your Body. Accept your genetic blueprint. Just as a person with a shoe size of eight would not expect to realistically squeeze into a size six, it is equally as futile (and uncomfortable) to have the same expectation with body size. But mostly, respect your body, so you can feel better about who you are. It's hard to reject the diet mentality if you are unrealistic and overly critical about your body shape.

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This week choose one meal each day to eat with mindfulness. That means no distractions (TV, reading, working on the computer), even if it makes you feel a little uncomfortable. Stay present during the meal and notice the taste, texture and the feeling of actually eating. How hungry were you? When did you start to feel full? Did you continue to eat? Write down what meal of the day it was, and note what feelings came up.

EAT TO LIVE

"WHO BOTHERS TO COOK TV DINNERS? I SUCK THEM FROZEN." – WOODY ALLEN

We now know that diets that raise blood sugar abnormally and continually over a period of time put you at risk not only for weight gain but heart disease, inflammation in the body and even cancer. It affects your mood, memory and your metabolism. Here's a quick summary on how to simply incorporate 7 healthful eating habits into your lifestyle. Print this out and post it on your fridge!

1. **Choose complex carbohydrates** and limit carb portions. Low-GL (glycemic) carbs like brown rice, sweet potatoes, oatmeal, and whole wheat pasta) keep blood sugar steady. This is the best place to start if you're trying to start clean, healthy eating. Just eliminating the white stuff (white potatoes, rice, potato chips, pretzels, and white flour products) is a VAST improvement.
2. **Make 3 of your daily carb serving's whole grains.** Here's another easy change. Examples include whole wheat bread, brown rice, oats, whole wheat pasta, exotic grains (like quinoa – don't laugh it's getting pretty popular!)
3. **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Aim for at least 7 to 9 small servings per day. You'll be adding a lot more fiber, antioxidants, and vitamins. And they are blood sugar friendly. Choose whole fruit over juices or fruits packed in juice.
4. **Eat protein at every meal.** Protein lowers the glycemic level of meals and helps curb hunger since it makes you feel fuller and takes longer to digest. This makes weight release easier as well. There are lots of options including nuts, seeds, legumes, low fat cheese and yogurt, and fish.
5. **Choose healthy fats.** Saturated and Trans fats (like those found in chips and French fries) will interfere with your body's ability to control blood sugar. But fat is not bad for you! Monounsaturated fats like olive oil, nuts, canola oil, flaxseeds and avocados don't raise insulin levels (they can help reverse it) and help your body metabolize carbohydrates better.
6. **Add acidic foods to your meals.** It helps blunt the blood sugar effect of meals and regulate levels in the body. Use mustard instead of mayo, lemon or lime juice, pickles and citrus fruit.

- 7. Watch portions.** A 3 ounce serving of cooked meat is the size of a deck of playing cards. An ounce of cheese is the size of 4 dice. A half cup of pasta or rice is about the size of a baseball cut in half. A cup of cold cereal is the size of a baseball. A medium baked potato is the size of a personal sized bar of soap.

WATER: THE WILD CARD OF WEIGHT LOSS

"TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY WITH STEADFAST FIDELITY. THE SOUL MUST SEE THROUGH THESE EYES ALONE, AND IF THEY ARE DIM, THE WHOLE WORLD IS CLOUDED." - GOETHE

Is water important? You know it is. It makes up to 50%-60% of our bodies, regulates body temperature, helps our breathing, transporting nutrients, carrying away waste and helps our muscles function. Oh, and you need water or, after three days without it, you'll die.

So in other words, water is essential. It can even be an extremely important (and often unappreciated) weight loss factor.

Somehow, though, water is one of the most neglected parts of our diet. Some of us possibly go an entire day at times without one glass! Every part of your body is dependent on and comprised of water, and the most important parts need even more. Your brain is made up of 75% water, your blood 82% and your lungs nearly 90%.

Besides being a vital component of your body, water also helps to release weight. The more hydrated you are, the quicker your metabolism works. When you are dehydrated – even before you start becoming thirsty – your liver has to help the kidneys function and can't metabolize fat as quickly. Your metabolism slows down, causing some unwanted fat to remain.

If your body is used to not getting water, it actually stores more in ankles, hips and thighs. In other words, it doesn't trust you to keep bringing water, so it keeps what it can get, like a thirsty cactus. Once it realizes the water will keep coming, your body will get rid of the stores and you'll lose weight!

Plus, if you're suffering from cravings or having trouble controlling hunger, drinking water is a quick, healthy way to feel full. Drink a glass when you normally snack, and have one before your meal and right before going out.

Staying hydrated is not restricted to drinking water; milk, juice and other liquids – even some fruits and vegetables – are good sources of water. But avoid caffeinated beverages (coffee, soda), as they actually cause you to lose fluids and become dehydrated.

The recommended daily amount of water is approximately 80 oz. a day, but don't feel bad if you have neglected your water intake. Even if you constantly drink coffee or soda, you can make some simple changes to increase the water in your diet.

Here are just a few ways to get more water every day:

- Keep a water bottle in the car.
- Take a water break instead of a smoke break at work.
- Set a rule with your water glass: once it's empty, it gets filled back up right away.
- Get two water bottles, one for work and one for home. Fill up one every day when you leave to go home, and fill up the other before you go to bed each night.
- Order water at restaurants instead of soda. Even if you have something else to drink, have water too.
- Weekends are the toughest, so be aware of your water and fluid intake throughout Saturday and Sunday. Keep more than one water bottle in the fridge so you always have a cold one.

MUSCLE UP: RIDE THE STRENGTH TRAIN

"STRENGTH IS NOT GAINED OVERNIGHT; IT IS CULTIVATED OVER TIME." - DAVID SHAW

What's strength training got to do with good self-care? Well, everything! Not only do you build your muscle strength, tone, and definition, but you'll burn more calories (even while you're at rest!). That's because muscle burns more calories than fat. You'll increase your bone density and mass which means your bones will be stronger. And you'll look great which will do wonders for your confidence and self esteem. Need I say more? Here's how it works.

You know exercise is good for you. And maybe you're doing cardiovascular exercise several times a week already. At least I hope you are.

But if your **aerobic workouts** aren't balanced by a proper dose of strength training, you're missing out on a key component of overall health and fitness.

Strength training is important for everyone. With a regular strength training program, you can reduce body fat; increase your **lean muscle mass** and **burn calories** more efficiently.



Use it or lose it

Muscle mass naturally diminishes with age. If you don't do anything to replace the muscle you lose, you'll increase fat. But strength training can help you preserve and enhance your muscle mass — at any age.

Strength training also helps you:

- **Develop strong bones.** By stressing your bones, strength training increases bone density and reduces the risk of osteoporosis. If you already have osteoporosis, strength training can lessen its impact.
- **Control your body fat.** As you lose muscle, your body burns calories less efficiently — which can result in weight gain. The more toned your muscles, the easier it is to control your weight.

- **Reduce your risk of injury.** Building muscle protects your joints from injury. It also helps you maintain flexibility and balance — and remain independent as you age.
- **Boost your stamina.** As you grow stronger, you won't fatigue as easily.
- **Improve your sense of well-being.** Strength training can boost your self-confidence, improve your body image and reduce the risk of depression.
- **Get a better night's sleep.** People who strength train regularly are less likely to struggle with insomnia.

Most fitness centers offer various resistance machines, free weights and other tools for strength training. But you don't need to invest in a membership or an expensive home gym to reap the benefits of strength training. Hand-held weights or homemade weights — such as plastic soft drink bottles filled with water or sand — work just as well.

Resistance bands are another inexpensive option. These elastic-like cords, tubes or bands offer weight-like resistance when you pull on them. They're available in different tensions to fit a range of abilities. Of course, your own body weight counts, too. Try push-ups, pull-ups, abdominal crunches and leg squats.

Getting started

Check with your doctor before beginning any physical fitness activity. Warm up with five to 10 minutes of stretching or gentle aerobic activity, such as brisk walking. Then choose a weight or resistance level heavy enough to tire your muscles after about 12 repetitions.

On the 12th repetition, you should be just barely able to finish the motion. When you're using the proper weight, you can build muscle just as efficiently with a single set of 12 repetitions as you can with more sets of the same exercise.

To give your muscles time to recover, rest one full day between exercising each specific muscle group. When you can easily do 12 or more repetitions of a certain exercise, increase the weight or resistance. Remember to stop if you feel pain. Although mild muscle soreness is normal, sharp pain and sore or swollen joints are signs that you've overdone it.

When to expect results

You don't need to spend hours a day lifting weights to benefit from strength training. **Two to three strength training sessions a week lasting just 20 to 30 minutes are sufficient for most people.** With regular strength training, you can increase your strength 50 percent or more within six months — even if you're not in shape when you begin.

Remember – you have to lift weight to remove weight! Strength training both builds more muscle and increases the calorie burning efficiency of the muscle you have.

And you can use your own body weight to get strong – no barbells or dumbbells required!

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Strength training is an important part of your fitness program. The good news is you can do it with little or no equipment – even just your own body weight! Try a simple, 15 to 30 minute resistance workout once a week, then work up to twice a week.

Hint: Start with your arms – biceps and triceps. These muscles pump up quickly (in as little as 2 weeks) so you'll get results quickly to stay motivated!

[Contact me](#) for help designing your resistance work out or create your own at one of the many online resources:

[Women's Health](#) (great resource for all things fitness)

[Prevention Online](#)

[MSN Health & Fitness](#)

You can download free workout apps for your Ipad (visit iTunes.com) too!

7 SIMPLE WAYS TO REV UP YOUR METABOLISM

"OUR FOOD SHOULD BE OUR MEDICINE AND OUR MEDICINE SHOULD BE OUR FOOD."- HIPPOCRATES

There's something working nonstop inside your body to help you burn calories and fat. It's your metabolism! Every time you eat enzymes in your body's cells break down the food and turn it into energy that keeps your heart beating, your mind thinking, and your body moving!

The faster your metabolism, the more calories you burn. The more you burn, the easier it is to release weight. And get this—you can make your metabolism work harder 24 hours a day.

To some degree, metabolism is determined by gender and genetics, but there's still plenty of room to improve. You have a huge amount of control over your metabolic rate. You can't affect how many calories it takes to keep your heart beating, but you can burn an extra 500 to 600 calories a day by exercising and eating clean.

These tips are simple but very effective for kicking your metabolism into overdrive, and have done the trick for many of my clients!

1. Eat (a good) breakfast. If you don't, your body goes into starvation mode, so your metabolism slows to a crawl to conserve energy. And the heartier your first meal is the better. In one study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, volunteers who got 22 to 55 percent of their total calories at breakfast gained only 1.7 pounds on average over four years. Those who ate zero to 11 percent of their calories in the morning gained nearly three pounds. In another study published in the same journal, volunteers who reported regularly skipping breakfast had 4.5 times the risk of obesity as those who took the time to eat.

Eat food that is **slow to digest and leaves you feeling fuller longer**. Try a mix of lean protein with complex carbohydrates and healthy fats.

For instance: an omelet made from one egg and two egg whites and a half cup of mixed peppers and onions, plus a half cup of cooked steel-cut oats mixed with a quarter cup of frozen berries and a teaspoon of omega-3-loaded fish oil.

2. An apple a day is still good advice. Apples are full of fiber and antioxidants which help keep digestion humming along and make you stronger. The type of fiber – pectin – found in apples actually helps lower LDL (bad) cholesterol in your liver and the flavonoids (a cousin to antioxidants) can prevent inflammation and overproduction of fat in your liver cells.

3. Pick protein for lunch. Consuming protein at every meal helps build and maintain lean muscle mass. Muscle burns more calories than fat does, even at rest. Aim for about 30 grams of protein—the equivalent of about one cup of low-fat cottage cheese or a four-ounce boneless chicken breast—at each meal.

4. Drink green tea. The tea contains a plant compound called ECGC, which promotes fat burning. In one study, people who consumed the equivalent of three to five cups a day for 12 weeks decreased their body weight by 4.6 percent. For maximum effect, let your tea steep for three minutes and drink it while it's still hot.

5. Get more iron. Women lose iron during their period every month. That can throw a wrench into your metabolic machine, because iron helps carry oxygen to your muscles. If your levels run low, muscles don't get enough O₂, your energy tanks, and your metabolism slows. Stock up on iron-fortified cereals, beans, and dark leafy greens like spinach, bok choy, and broccoli.

6. Go fish. Fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines are loaded with appetite satiating omega-3 fatty acids. These healthy fats help trigger the rapid transfer of "I'm full" signals to your brain, according to the National Institute of Health. Bonus: A 3.5-ounce serving of salmon nets you 90 percent of your recommended daily value of vitamin D, which will help preserve your precious metabolism-stoking muscle tissue.

7. Hit the rack early. When you sleep less than you should, you throw off the amounts of leptin and ghrelin—hormones that help regulate energy use and appetite—that your body produces. Researchers at Stanford University found that people who slept fewer than 7.5 hours per night experienced an increase in their body mass index. So make sure you get at least eight hours of rest.

SECTION 4: IN THE SPIRIT OF THINGS



MAKE TIME TO JUST DO IT!

"THERE IS NO MORE MISERABLE HUMAN BEING THAN ONE IN WHOM NOTHING IS HABITUAL BUT INDECISION." – WILLIAM JAMES

Projects that never get completed and constant barrage of more and more tasks to do can really take their toll on your self-care efforts. I'm a big fan of closure. That means that if you take on a new volunteer obligation, finish the work on an old one and close it down. Closure also means be real about your daily to-do list. Why torture yourself with a long list you can't realistically accomplish? Instead of 30 items, put 20 on there and finish/complete/bring to closure 15 of them. Now, that's a good day!

Part of what fuels our bottomless to-do list is the fact that we are "always on". Besides email, cell phones, and text messages, there is now Facebook, MySpace and Twitter generating more contact, more communication, and more action. "Always On" has its place and a huge positive side. But it can mean that your day swells up with even more things to do.

If you're challenged to be productive now, adding more can put you over the top, physically and emotionally. Be wary of piling more on to an already full plate. Remember, "Just because you can doesn't mean you should."

Time is the most valuable commodity you have. We all know there is no way to manage time. You can only manage yourself in relation to time.

This is relatively simple if you create a visual picture of your schedule and set aside specific time to get the important things done.

Block out chunks of time to work on tasks and projects and book as an appointment into your calendar. Make those appointments sacred and don't cancel unless it's an emergency.

I had a client who needed to spend more time developing a training manual for her new business. She also needed client time to pay the bills. She would designate Mondays as "business development day", but if clients asked for time on Mondays, she would book them instead.

Over time, she became anxious and frustrated that the manual was not coming together. I convinced her that setting aside project development time was as critical for her business as serving clients. Now she treats her Monday in-office day as sacrosanct, and if she does have to reallocate this time for something else – it's her conscious decision – not a reaction.

Consider your own personal style and energy cycles when scheduling your time map. What time is naturally best for you to perform a certain activity? Whenever possible, honor your feelings.

Beware of the time bandits like surfing the Internet, checking email constantly, taking phone calls, and other interruptions.



Do it Now or Note it Now

When deadlines, crises, unplanned meetings, and interruptions come at you, it's easy to get frustrated and overwhelmed. What should you do first? How to stay focused? What tasks need to be taken care of and which ones are just cluttering up your mind?

The Do It Now or Note It Now Tool provides a mental guideline to help you categorize tasks and make quick decisions.

Do It Now:

- If it is an emergency or crisis.
- If it finishes your present and important priority or project.
- If it can be done quickly and will not interrupt or distract from your present schedule or work.

Note it Now and Schedule for Later

- If it interrupts an important task you need focus on.
- If it is a low level activity or busywork that can be delegated or delayed until another time.

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List one task or project you can give closure to right now. Break it down into smaller, more manageable steps if you need to and commit to just do it!

BECOME AN ENERGY ADDICT

"THE GOOD MIND CHOOSES WHAT IS POSITIVE, WHAT IS ADVANCING, WHAT EMBRACES THE AFFIRMATIVE." – RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Everybody knows somebody who seems to have more zip than the energizer bunny. We see it with our eyes, hear the enthusiasm in their voices and feel it when we're in their presence. I was blessed with an extraordinary amount of natural energy, but I strongly believe that energy can be acquired. We all possess the skills – the key is to become an energy addict.

Addiction is defined as *"compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance."* So if we want to increase the habit-forming effects of energy, we must focus on increasing our power supply, acquiring more energy to fuel and motivate us.

An energy addict will take the same amount of energy as a non-addict and do more, create more and accomplish more with it. That means they have more to share with others and are skilled at replacing their power supply naturally and organically.

Just remember – just because you weren't born "woman on fire" doesn't mean you can't live a life fully charged with healthy energy. The more you practice, the better you'll get at increasing your own personal power supply.

Take the Energy Quiz at the end of this lesson and find out where you could use more energy in your life. It's divided into 3 sections – Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Energy. Where do you need an energy boost?

Once you know where you are currently investing your energy, you can decide what changes you need to make. The key is to know what matters most to you and learn to invest a majority of your energy on those top goals!

If you're constantly giving your power away to others you will exhaust your own supply and burn out. Make time for restful sleep, exercise, healthy eating and just plain relaxing time for you!

You can do it! Remember – if you do what you CAN do, your Creator will help you do what you cannot do.

Will there be obstacles? Of course!

One way to get around obstacles is to create simple rituals around what matters most to you. For example, creating new products that will help you experience healthy, organized living is a huge priority for me. So I've created a routine, setting aside time in the evening to write and research.

It was tough at first, especially with my tendency to become distracted. But I baby stepped my way into the routine and I'm much happier with my productivity.

Routines and rituals increase your mental, physical and spiritual energy!

I've included 9 energy addictions here – 3 each for your body, mind, and spirit - but there are many more! Some we've talked about in earlier chapters.

Brainstorm your own addictions. By adding some simple but powerful strategies into your life you will see your energy increase exponentially. TAKE BABY STEPS!

Physical Addictions

1. **Love your body.** Would you say that a healthy body is priceless? Is your self-care in line with that belief? Many people don't value their health until AFTER they've become sick or their health is threatened in some way. Can you think of how you'll enjoy anything – your family, job, money, if you're not healthy? Put yourself and your health first – it's the most important investment you'll ever make!
2. **Take a break.** We all need a break now and then just to survive and thrive. Our constantly on, 24/7, keep going till you drop culture serves only to push our bodies and minds to the absolute max. When you keep putting off taking time for you, you only continue to decrease your energy as the demands on you keep growing. Take short energy breaks throughout the day. This addiction has helped me move away from my Type A "gotta get it done" mentality which was totally wringing me out. Just 5 to 10 minutes can help you find some calm in the midst of your chaos. Studies show that people who take short breaks during their day have a greater number of total accomplishments during the day and exhibit less stress and fatigue. Stand up and stretch at your desk, go outside for a short walk, eat a healthy snack or just close your eyes and focus on yoga breathing (breathing in and out of your nose) for 5 minutes.

Mental Addictions:

- 1. Stop waiting.** I'm not talking about the waiting for the bus or the doctor kind of waiting. I'm talking about being a life waiter – always waiting or preparing for something to happen instead of enjoying where you are right now. I spent a lot of time in my youth waiting. I was waiting for my next vacation, my first home, then a bigger home, a better job, on and on. Always thinking about tomorrow and not enjoying today. When you stop being a life waiter you will immediately create more energy in your life. Be present in the here and now. Remember – if not now, when?
- 2. Make energy a habit.** Aristotle said it well, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” Our words, choices, thoughts and actions are to a large extent – habits. Thinking positive, energizing thoughts can become a habit just like focusing on negative attitudes and beliefs. Yes, I know it's not easy. Replacing any habit takes patience, time and effort. No question. On a piece of paper make 2 columns – Positive and Negative. Under positive write down the things that energize your life, even if you're not doing them right now. Under negative write down the drainers – the things you want to eliminate from your life. Tape it to your bathroom mirror or carry a copy with you. It will help you make better choices. YOU are the energy that fills your life!
- 3. Don't rush – cruise.** I'll admit it, I'm a rusher. I rush even when I don't have to, it just comes naturally. I don't have a slow mode, but I'm learning that cruise control is a great thing. Rushing doesn't guarantee you get things done any better or quicker. In fact, research shows rushing actually leads to more mistakes and elevated stress levels. It's a major energy drain. Begin to put your life on cruise control and you'll find you have more energy for every leg of your journey. You eliminate the chaos, stress, and panic and make room to accomplish more short term and long term.

Spiritual Addictions

- 1. Love where you are.** Loving who you are, what you do and where you are means you love your life and nothing could be a more powerful energy conductor! I spent more years of my life than I care to admit not loving anything about my life and all I can say is those were years wasted. I regret that I didn't learn how to appreciate the day, the minute and the experience until I was well into my 40's. Don't make that mistake. Bring a joy for your situation right into the present moment and know that in a second it can all be taken away. Enjoy yourself – no matter where you are or what you're doing. You'll feel energized from the inside out.
- 2. Learn the lesson.** Do you have situations or themes that keep recurring in your life? Perhaps these are issues with money, control, trust, or self-esteem that play over and over again. My brother had a saying, "Until you learn the lesson, you'll have to continue to retake the test." If you don't address those themes, they continue to drain your energy, cause stress and create unhappiness. When we see a problem as a learning experience (Confucius says – "Consider the uses of adversity") we immediately replace a huge amount of negative energy with positive energy. You stop wasting your energy resources ruminating on the problem and create a solution. Identify your life lessons by observing the recurring theme. Do you continually have problems relating to other people? Do you have issues with control? When you focus on learning to deal with the issue, you'll spend less energy solving the problem and create a power source you can use for what matters most to you.
- 3. Become a receiver.** Energy is meant to flow. You give energy and receive it from other sources. If you physically or mentally block energy reception you stop this flow. This happens because of fear, distrust, and an inability to be open. It takes a lot more energy to keep positive energy out than it does to let it in. Sometimes we feel like we have to hoard our energy – but the key to becoming an energy addict is to understand the flow. Energy is increased and multiplied when you give it to others and when you allow others to give it to you. And the more you give, the more you receive. Treat every interaction as an exchange of energy. Don't doubt! Your life will open up to a world of possibility and you will see unlimited potential and incredible energy.

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Take the energy quiz:

Physical Energy:

I wish I had more energy during the day.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I hit the snooze button several times in the morning.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I get less than 8 hours of sleep a night.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I skip breakfast.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I need at least one cup of coffee to function every day.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

My energy level crashes in the afternoon.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I don't exercise at least 3 times per week.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Mental Energy:

I feel nervous or anxious much of the time.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I am stressed.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I feel there is not enough time in the day.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Other people's actions really affect me.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I feel out of control when it comes to money and my finances.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

When I finish this big project at work I'll have more time to pursue the things I care about.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Spiritual Energy:

I feel disengaged from people around me.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I don't have time to pray.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I am afraid to pursue my dreams.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I want to understand my purpose in life.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

I am controlling and have trouble letting go.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Recurring problems and struggles keep coming up in my life.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

If you answered “always” or “sometimes” to at least 3 questions in each category, it’s time to cultivate your inner energy addict!

DON'T FREEZE – FOCUS!

"ONE WORTHWHILE TASK CARRIED TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION IS WORTH HALF A HUNDRED HALF-FINISHED TASKS." MALCOLM FORBES

Focus: **Follow One Course Until Successful.**

Getting focused is largely about what you choose not to do, rather than what you choose to do. It's a matter of setting aside other work or projects to concentrate on a priority, a kind of temporary clearing the deck of distractions so you can reach a goal. Getting focused is how we get things done. Sometimes the sheer volume of what we have to do makes us freeze right in our tracks.

Why multitasking doesn't work: A study by The Journal of Experimental Psychology study showed that it takes the brain 4 times longer to recognize and process each task you're working on when you switch back and forth among tasks. Trying to manage 2 or more mental tasks at one time significantly reduces the brain power available to concentrate on either one.

Your work takes longer because of time lost switching gears. Your productivity lowers and your stress increases. You freeze.

Symptoms of Multitasking trauma:

- ✓ Gaps in attentiveness.
- ✓ Inability to concentrate.
- ✓ Short term memory deficiency.
- ✓ You are less effective, your work takes longer to do.
- ✓ Your level of completion goes down.

So . . . FOCUS ON COMPLETION!

- The quality of your work will go way up.
- The sense of accomplishment will greatly energize you.
- You'll greatly relieve stress (which contributes to weight gain from increased levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.)

If you have trouble concentrating, begin with a minimum focus time that is comfortable for you to maintain and slowly increase it incrementally. Work with peak energy cycles whenever possible.

If you have to do priority work during times of stress or low energy, identify healthy ways to boost your energy:

- ⇔ Get up, move around, stretch
- ⇔ Go for a brisk walk
- ⇔ Eat a healthy snack
- ⇔ Drink lots of water
- ⇔ Take a few moments and meditate – clear your mind.

Perfectionism and procrastination also cause FREEZING conditions. These strategies are designed to help you move from Freeze to Focused:

The Swiss Cheese Technique:

Poke holes in a really big project or task. Break it down into smaller more manageable 30-60 minute “chunks” and assign a priority order to them. Chip away a little at a time.

Use the side door.

If you are having trouble getting motivated to begin a task or project, try approaching it by starting at the middle or at the end.

For example: If you're writing a report and you're stuck on the opening paragraph, work on the body of the report first. This technique will relax you and make it easier to continue.

Focus on the payoff.

Take your mind off how you don't want to do the task and focus on the benefits of finishing.

Set a time limit on difficult tasks.

Don't allow too much time or too little for a task. Set timeframes appropriate to the task at hand. Remember, tasks often take longer to complete than we think.

Work with your energy cycles.

Do the things you tend to procrastinate on during your **peak energy** cycles. Set aside at least 30 minutes to plow through - it will be a load off your mind.

Delegate or Delete.

Delegate small tasks you tend to obsess over. Can someone else do it easier, faster or better? Decide if what you're doing is really necessary. Can this task be eliminated entirely?

Remember that imperfectly on time is better than perfectly late.

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Choose one of the Freeze to Focused strategies above and use it to work through a project or task that currently has you stuck. Write out the process here and how you worked through it. Did it make it any easier to go from Freeze to Focus?

ADDRESS YOUR STRESS

"WHATEVER IS AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIFE WILL BE THE SOURCE OF OUR SECURITY, GUIDANCE, WISDOM, AND POWER." - STEPHEN COVEY

For most of us women, stress is a constant companion. In a survey on stress conducted by the National Women's Health Resource Center, nearly 93% of the 681 people surveyed described the level of stress in their daily life as moderate or higher.

Stress makes you eat poorly, decreases your motivation to exercise and cause you to gain weight. An American Psychological Association study revealed that 43% of the individuals polled succumbed to overeating or eating unhealthy foods in order to manage stress.

The stress that sabotages your self-care is toxic stress. This isn't the everyday kind – the daily commute, the computer glitch, the kids get sick, a crisis at work. That kind of stress is - for the most part – expected – and we're able to manage it.



Toxic stress leaves you constantly overwhelmed and drained. It erodes your immune system and wreaks havoc with your hormones, which can ramp up your appetite and pile on the weight in your abdominal area which makes you more vulnerable to heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

But there's hope for the stressed - while roughly 50% of your stress response lies in your DNA (which means how you respond to stress is built into your genes) - the other half is influenced by your environment.

Women in their 40's and beyond have one of the highest levels of stress found in our culture today. This is not surprising, given the multiple roles they carry, the expectations of our culture and the speed of our lifestyle.

You can't change your genes but you can make choices that have a positive impact on how you respond to stress.

Six simple stress busters:

1. Wake up to relaxing or upbeat music instead of a traditional alarm. An alarm signifies danger to the brain, thereby stimulating an adrenaline rush right when you wake up which can elevate stress hormones.
2. Take 1,000 milligrams of Vitamin C to lower blood pressure and cortisol.
3. Reach for comfort foods – avocados, walnuts, tuna, or salmon. These are loaded with B vitamins and fatty acids which protect the heart and ease your mood.
4. When you're feeling overwhelmed or overloaded with priorities, tasks, and commitments take a moment and ask yourself, "Is this activity goal-achieving or tension-relieving?" (Or as I like to put it, is this enhancing or advancing me?) Busy work tends to add to stress, while taking baby steps toward a bigger goal can relieve it. You get a feeling of accomplishment from climbing each little stair toward success.
5. Eat tomatoes. Lycopene (found in tomatoes) makes a 50 year old effectively 2 years younger according to Dr. Michael Roizen in [Cooking the RealAge Way](#).
6. Alleviate chronic pain or negative mood by listening to your favorite music. A study in the Journal of Advanced Nursing found music enhanced the effects of analgesic pain medication, promoted feelings of power and decreased pain, depression and disability.

The 5 Adjustments That Will Dramatically Increase the Quality of Your Life:

1. Control stress
2. Control your blood pressure
3. Don't smoke
4. Exercise at least 30 minutes a day
5. Eat clean, healthy, non-processed foods

More stress busters. . .

1. **Take your vitamins.** B vitamins and magnesium are two of the most important nutrients for stress relief. Magnesium helps our muscles relax and B vitamins help regulate brain chemistry. Good sources of magnesium are pumpkin seeds and nuts. For B vitamins look to whole grains and vegetables.

2. **Breathe.** Increase the flow of oxygen through your body and you'll relax more easily. Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 2, and exhale for 8. for maximum benefit, repeat this exercise 3 to 5 times to reduce stress anytime.

3. **Accentuate the positive.** It sounds trite but it's true - when your schedule is crammed from morning till night it's easy to get spastic about not having enough time to get things done. Instead, focus on creating a small window of time for yourself - to work out, relax and regroup. You'll shift your mood and your responsibilities won't seem as burdensome. Take a 20 minute walk - it will do a lot for your sanity!

4. **Write it down.** Do a brain dump and get it out of your head. Releasing your stress on paper may help you determine your key life stressors. In one study, when people wrote in journal about a stressful event 3 days in a row for about 20 minutes per session, their immune systems were functioning better and their stress levels were lower than those who wrote about random thoughts.

5. **Stretch yourself.** Cardio and strength training workouts definitely reduce stress, but don't underestimate the benefits of simple stretching. Even practicing one yoga pose a day can reduce your stress levels and improve your body's flexibility.

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Write in each box what you do to support yourself in that area. Where are the holes that can elevate your stress level? Chances are you feel stressed where you have no support. Where do you need to ask for help?

Mind	Body
Spirit	Emotions

LIVING WITH MARGIN

"THE BAD NEWS IS TIME FLIES. THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU'RE THE PILOT." - MICHAEL ALTHSULER

I meet many people who truly believe that busyness is a sign of success. They take pride in being busy and will push themselves to exhaustion.

Consider these statistics. People now sleep two and a half fewer hours each night than people did a hundred years ago. The average office worker has 36 hours of work piled up on his or her desk. It takes us three hours a week just to sort through it. We spend eight months of our lives opening junk mail, two years of our lives playing phone tag with people, five years waiting for people who are late to meetings and appointments. We're chronically rushed, chronically late, chronically exhausted and stretched to the limit.

A key component to extreme self-care is restoring margin. What is margin? Margin is breathing room. It's the necessary space between vitality and exhaustion. Margin is a little reserve that you're not using up. You're not stretched to the limit.

Margin is the space between your load and your limit.

What happens to us when we sacrifice margin?

You experience stress. You aren't made to live with 24-hour a day stress. You weren't designed to live in a perpetual state of stress.

You feel joyless. When you lose your margin, you lose your joy. Sometimes we're running so fast, that we don't take time to experience the joys of life. Sometimes we're so serious about life we don't take time to feel the joy.

Your relationships suffer. I've noticed that the first thing to go when I'm in a rush is my time for relationships. Few things kill relationships faster than margin less living.

Your productivity suffers. The harder we work, sometimes the less we get done. Proverbs 21:5 says, "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty." We actually accomplish more when we focus on getting the right things done instead of doing more things.

When you decide to live with margin, you have more peace in your life. You have time to enjoy what you're passionate about. Your health improves. Your relationships will improve. You'll have unhurried time to spend the way you want. You'll be able to fulfill your unique purpose – and live joyfully as God intended.

Living with margin means to leave room on either side of an appointment or event for unexpected time stealers or interruptions. You're not rushing from point to point without any break in between. Plan your time realistically. Hunting for misplaced car keys or getting stuck in traffic can rearrange your entire day's schedule.

Add ten minutes to a half hour between appointments if possible. The margin will help cover unplanned delays and if you don't use it - you've got extra time for yourself! Hallelujah! Give yourself room to breathe.

Practice keeping healthy margin in your life. Start by cutting out anything that's not in line with your top priorities. (Go back to the Priority Pyramid if you need to!)

A few tips to get you started:

- Organize your desk at work and at home so you don't waste time and energy looking for things to accomplish projects.
- Use a calendar or planner – either paper or electronic for appointments and schedules. Don't try to keep it all in your head!
- Get rid of junk mail daily – don't let paper piles bury you in needless clutter.
- Email yourself the most important things you need to do and then let them go until the following day.
- Limit the amount of time you spend with people who are negative or who drain your energy.

Other ways to learn to live with margin. . .

Want what you have. Examine what motivates you. We cram our spaces and schedules with more and more yet we still aren't content. Just clearing the decks isn't enough. You have to be clear on what your values are and what you truly want. More and more doesn't bring happiness. Contentment does.

Pay attention to your limitations. The second key to living with margin is to pay attention to your limitations. We tend to overestimate what we can do and underestimate the amount of time it takes to do it. We all have limits. One of the best things that we can do is to begin to recognize our limits and to live within them.

Take time to recharge. Take a day off a week. Practice the 3R's : Rest-Relax-Renew. You need to give your body, mind, and spirit time to revive. Stop filling every second of your life with activity. Don't hide behind the excuse of overload. Commit to make room on a daily basis for the things that matter most.

And above all, do something you love. Do something out of the ordinary. Take a chance. Live with passion!

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Choose to be a good steward of your time and build in a healthy margin of totally unscheduled time to fuel your creativity and energy – and de-stress! Write down 3 ways you can begin to build margin into your life – by either eliminating or delegating tasks or projects, ways to organize your time, choosing an activity or pastime you've wanted to do that you enjoy – and do it.

A MIND LIKE WATER

"THERE IS NO DEFEAT EXCEPT FROM WITHIN." – KEN HUBBARD

What happens when you toss a stone into a completely calm pool of water?

The water is displaced exactly relevant to the size of the object and the force with which it is thrown – no more and no less. The water does not over react or under react. You don't start a tidal wave if you throw a small pebble into a calm lake. It simply reacts appropriately to the situation, then it returns to calm.

The mind like water means that our ability to be productive is directly in proportion to our ability to relax. Huh?

The better we're able to react appropriately to situations and return to a state of calm, the more we'll be able to get done. **And the less stress we'll manifest.**

I still struggle with this one, but I've included it purposely at the end of this course because I very much believe it to be true. It is a little easier to understand now that I'm older (I could never have embraced this idea in my 20's or 30's!)

I believed your ability to produce would be proportional to your ability to work hard but it turns out the opposite is true.

Athletes call this state being "in the zone", but David Allen, productivity expert and author of [Getting Things Done](#) uses the martial arts phrase: "mind like water."

This is a state of mental focus where you're completely relaxed, in control, aware of your environment and 100% focused on the task at hand.

You're not taxing yourself or straining in any way. You're relaxed but at the same time very efficient.

We stumble into the mind like water zone from time to time – (wow – I got so much done today and the time just flew!) but how can we purposely get ourselves into that highly productive state when we need to?

Allen says the solution is to deal with "**open loops**" – or anything "you feel even the smallest amount of responsibility to change, finish, handle, or do something about."

You know how when you're trying to focus on something and all sorts of little things keep on popping into your head distracting you from the task at hand?

Those are your open loops. They're all the little balls you've got up in the air. But you don't need to actually DO the task in order to close the loop. You just need to find a way to get it out of your head so it can't distract you.

Keep nothing on your mind. This is where I struggle mightily, but when it works I find an enormous improvement in my peace of mind and my ability to return my mind to a calm state.

The point is that you don't store your to-do list in your head. The mind tends to think that the newest information is the most important, and this isn't always true.

For example: You're reading a book or writing and thoughts keep popping into your head about stuff you need to do.

It's like constant whispering in your ear – "Don't forget to pick up the dry cleaning tomorrow. Did you pay the light bill yet? Where did you put that grocery list? What are you going to tell your boss about the new marketing plan?"

It's no wonder we feel so stressed, uneasy, restless, and forgetful. Then we tend to over-react to situations.

A simple list will create stillness and calm.

- A calendar--to house your to-do items that have a specific date and time
- Next Actions--basically a to-do list without specific dates and times
- Someday/Maybe--stuff you'd like to do someday eventually
- Waiting For--things that need input from other people before you proceed

Most people give too much attention or too little to things than they deserve, simply because they over or under react. Cultivating a mind like water can radically decrease your stress levels and increase your energy.

THE BIG IDEA: ME!

This is your Big I.D.E.A. Mantra – print it out and post it where you can see it every day!

I am the most important priority on my list. If I don't organize my life around my self-care I cease to grow and deliver the unique gift that I was born to deliver.

Defining my priorities helps me stop reacting to life and start taking control of what gets my time and attention. I honor what "juices" me and in return I receive an abundance of energy and motivation to achieve those goals and become that brilliant diamond I know myself to be.

Eliminating energy drains motivates and inspires me. Whether it's a disorganized office, a houseful of clutter or relationships that don't serve me, I'm committed to plugging those drains – permanently!

Act as If. I stop fueling myself through stress and adrenaline and slow down so I can utilize healthier forms of energy – like exercise, clean eating and fun! I know I won't and can't do everything perfectly, but I am a commitment to progress – not perfection and I take baby steps every day and *Act as If* I possess energy, creativity and motivation in abundance – and I will.

Take baby steps every day and act as if you already possess energy, motivation, confidence, and health in abundance - then watch it manifest in your personal life and your business!

Lastly, I believe that one of the most important components to your self-care success is living with integrity.

Living with integrity means honoring the standards we set for ourselves. When we go against our own rules, our spirit bends under the weight and life starts to break down.

Plans fall through, we attract people who aren't good for us, and doors keep closing no matter how hard we work. Make no mistake; they are signals that our integrity is out of alignment.

The easiest way to live with integrity is to notice where you're not honoring your personal standards and do something right away. For example, if you're committed to only working with clients you enjoy, you'll have to turn down the client who pushes your buttons – even if they offer to pay twice the fee!

Or if you've decided to be honest confront issues in your interactions with people, regardless of how uncomfortable it is, you'll have to do it even when you'd rather just not return the phone call!

When you align your actions with your personal standards, you give yourself a spiritual cleansing and more direct access to the divine within you.

Integrity is the foundation of your life on fire – and the key to stepping into the flow of physical, emotional and spiritual abundance.

Thank you for spending this time with me – for yourself.

To delivering your message with energy and passion!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large, stylized 'R' and 'B'.

Robin Stephens

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BONUS SECTION: RELEASING YOUR INNER FITCHICK!**7 Best Foods for Women**

1. Tomatoes: Observational studies suggest lycopene-rich foods like tomatoes may play a role in warding off breast and cervical cancers. Since no clinical trials have tested the hypothesis, it's not proof positive. But consider tomatoes for heart health. After following nearly 40,000 women, Boston researchers conclude lycopene or other phytochemicals eaten as oil-based tomato products may protect against cardiovascular disease.

Tuna with Basil Butter and Tomato Sauce

Yield: 4 servings (serving size: 1 tuna steak, 3/4 cup sauce, and about 1 tablespoon basil butter)

Ingredients**BASIL BUTTER:**

- 3/4 cup fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- garlic cloves, minced

SAUCE:

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 cups grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 3 tablespoons capers
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

TUNA:

- 4 (6-ounce) tuna steaks (about 1 inch thick)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- Cooking spray
- 4 basil leaves (optional)

Preparation

Prepare grill or broiler.

To prepare basil butter, combine first 5 ingredients in a food processor; process until smooth, scraping sides as needed. Set aside.

To prepare sauce, heat oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion and 2 garlic cloves; sauté 3 minutes. Add tomatoes; sauté 2 minutes. Stir in wine, capers, vinegar, and sugar; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in parsley. Set aside.

To prepare tuna, sprinkle tuna with 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper. Place tuna on grill rack or broiler pan coated with cooking spray. Cook 5 minutes on each side or until desired degree of doneness. Serve with sauce and basil butter. Garnish with basil leaves, if desired.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 323 (28% from fat)

Fat: 10.2g (sat 4.4g, mono 3.7g, poly 1.1g)

Protein: 41.8g

Carbohydrate: 10.9g

Fiber: 2.4g

Cholesterol: 92mg

Sodium: 770mg

Calcium: 72mg

2. Flaxseed: A "hot" ingredient in foods targeted to women, scientists are finding out three potentially beneficial compounds in flax: plant based omega 3 fats, fiber, and disease-fighting compounds called lignans. A Mayo Clinic study finds 40 grams of crushed flaxseed can cut down on hot flashes, and several reports suggest flax can lower "bad" or LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. The brown or gold seeds may even play a role in fighting breast cancer.

The right dose: 1-2 tablespoons of ground flaxseed per day since whole seeds aren't readily digested.

Ground flaxseed is a novel addition to this dense and sweet breakfast bread. You can freeze individual slices on a baking sheet, then transfer to a zip-top plastic bag to keep in the freezer for up to two months. On hurried mornings, grab a slice, and defrost by microwaving at HIGH for 30 seconds to one minute.

Zucchini-Pecan Flaxseed Bread

Yield: 1 loaf, 18 servings (serving size: 1 slice)

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- cup whole wheat flour
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup ground flaxseed
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- tablespoon baking powder
- teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- cups shredded zucchini (about 2 medium zucchini)
- cup vanilla low-fat yogurt
- 1/2 cup egg substitute
- tablespoons canola oil
- teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted
- Cooking spray
- tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°.

Lightly spoon flours into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine flours, granulated sugar, and next 7 ingredients (through nutmeg) in a large bowl, stirring well with a whisk.

Spread zucchini onto several layers of heavy-duty paper towels; cover with additional paper towels. Press down firmly to remove excess liquid.

Combine yogurt, egg substitute, oil, and vanilla in a medium bowl, stirring well with a whisk. Stir in zucchini.

Add zucchini mixture and 1/4 cup pecans to flour mixture, stirring until well combined. Pour batter into a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan coated with cooking spray. Sprinkle batter with 3 tablespoons pecans.

Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes on a wire rack. Remove bread from pan; place on wire rack.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 181 (30% from fat)

Fat: 6.1g (sat 0.6g, mono 2.9g, poly 2.2g)

Protein: 4.5g

Carbohydrate: 28.5g

Fiber: 2.6g

Cholesterol: 1mg

Sodium: 223mg

Calcium: 90mg

3. Kale: An underappreciated leafy green, kale is chock-full of a lot of good things for health in general, and some for women in particular. Antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin protect the eye. Add to that a day's worth of vitamin C and small amounts of calcium. But tag its womanly superstar status to vitamin K, a potent bone builder. Researchers find that women who eat diets rich in vitamin K are at lower risk of hip fracture. Seems the body requires vitamin K to activate bone proteins needed to ward off osteoporosis, the crippling bone disease that strikes women four times more often than men.

The right dose: At 36 calories per cup cooked, the sky's the limit.

Quick Kale with Bacon and Onions

One serving of this hearty side offers more than your day's need of vitamin K, which helps promote strong bones.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: about 3/4 cup and 1 lemon wedge)

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- cup chopped onion
- 10 cup chopped kale, divided
- 1/2 cup fat-free, less-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- bacon slices, cooked and crumbled
- 6 lemon wedges

Preparation

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add onion to pan; sauté 6 minutes or until onion is tender and begins to brown. Add 5 cups kale, 1/4 cup broth, salt, and peppers to pan. Cover, reduce heat, and cook 4 minutes. Add remaining 5 cups kale and remaining 1/4 cup broth to pan. Cover and cook 16 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle with bacon. Serve with lemon wedges.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 75 (36% from fat)

Fat: 3g (sat 0.6g, mono 1.5g, poly 0.5g)

Protein: 3.8g

Carbohydrate: 10.2g

Fiber: 2.1g

Cholesterol: 2mg

Sodium: 213mg

Calcium: 110mg

4. Salmon: While the omega 3 fats in salmon do everyone a lot of good, women get a few more benefits. In your forties and beyond? Keep in mind that heart disease is still the number one killer of women. And once estrogen levels begin to plummet, eating fatty fish can help keep the ticker healthy.

The right dose: Two servings (about 4 ounces) of salmon, or other fatty fish, per week.

Salmon with Bourbon & Orange

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup bourbon
- 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
- 1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 (6-ounce) salmon fillets (about 1 inch thick)
- Cooking spray

Preparation

Combine first 8 ingredients in a large zip-top plastic bag, and add salmon to bag. Seal and marinate in refrigerator 1 1/2 hours, turning bag occasionally.

Prepare grill or broiler.

Remove salmon from bag, reserving marinade. Place salmon on a grill rack or broiler pan coated with cooking spray. Cook 6 minutes on each side or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork, basting frequently with reserved marinade.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 365 (35% from fat)

Fat: 14.1g (sat 2.5g, mono 6.8g, poly 3.1g)

Protein: 36g

Carbohydrate: 18g

Fiber: 0.3g

Cholesterol: 111mg

Sodium: 575mg

Calcium: 34mg

5. Cranberry Juice: Sometimes natural cures really do work because when it comes to treating women's urinary tract infections, cranberry juice is a recommended strategy. Not because it's acidic or has a lot of vitamin C. Instead, antioxidants called proanthocyanins prevent bacteria from adhering to the walls of the bladder where they can multiply and cause, or intensify an infection. New studies are testing concentrated cranberry extracts and finding they can also help fight UTI's. No word on when these could be available, so stick to berries or juice for now.

The right dose: Varies. But drink unsweetened 100% cranberry juice (60 calories per cup) to avoid excess sugar.

Sparkling Cranberry Tea Cocktail

This is a fine make-ahead recipe for an open house. Combine the ingredients through step one and chill; stir in the ginger ale just before serving. Serve in goblets, highball glasses, or any pretty clear glasses to show off the pretty red hue.

Yield: 12 servings (serving size: 1 cup)

Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 family-sized tea bags
- 2 1/2 cups no-sugar-added cranberry juice
- cup vodka
- 1/4 cup Grand Marnier (orange-flavored liqueur)
- 4 cups ginger ale, chilled
- Orange rind strips (optional)

Preparation

Combine 4 cups water and sugar in a large saucepan; bring to a boil. Cook until sugar dissolves, stirring occasionally. Pour over tea bags. Cover and let stand 5 minutes; discard tea bags. Cool. Stir in juice, vodka, and Grand Marnier; chill.

Gently stir in ginger ale. Serve over ice; garnish with rind, if desired.

6. Greek Yogurt: Thick and creamy, Greek yogurt offers double the protein of most yogurts and far less sugar. The lower carb levels (7 grams versus 25 grams in fruited yogurt) help keep blood sugar on an even keel. But protein may be the real advantage since many women have no clue, or rarely think about, how much protein they eat. Studies suggest that eating higher levels of protein (30 percent of calories) helps women with weight loss, muscle maintenance, and promotes healthier aging. The Institute of Medicine suggests 0.8 grams per kg body weight or 68 grams for a 150-pound woman.

The right dose: Any amount. At a skinny 90 calories per six ounces and zero fat, it's a perfect portable snack.

Slow Roasted Grape and Yogurt Parfaits

The roasting process softens the grapes slightly but heightens their flavor.

Yield: 4 servings (serving size: 1 parfait)

Ingredients

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups seedless black grapes
- 2 cups seedless red grapes
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups plain fat-free Greek-style yogurt, divided
- 1/4 cup walnut halves, toasted and coarsely chopped, divided
- 8 teaspoons honey, divided
- Thinly sliced fresh mint (optional)

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 200°. Coat a jelly-roll pan with cooking spray.

2. Rinse grapes; drain well, leaving slightly moist. Combine grapes and sugar in a large bowl; toss to coat. Arrange grapes on prepared jelly-roll pan. Bake at 200° for 3 hours or until grapes soften but still hold their shape. Remove from oven; cool completely.

3. Spoon 1/4 cup yogurt into the bottom of each of 4 parfait glasses. Top each serving with about 1/3 cup grapes, 1 1/2 teaspoons walnuts, and 1 teaspoon honey. Repeat layers with remaining ingredients; garnish with sliced mint, if desired.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 298

Fat: 5g (sat 0.5g, mono 0.7g, poly 3.5g)

Protein: 12.2g

Carbohydrate: 55.5g

Fiber: 2g

Cholesterol: 0.0mg

Sodium: 46mg

Calcium: 100mg

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8. **Walnuts:** Noshing on a handful of walnuts may fight both breast cancer and osteoporosis. In one new study, just two ounces of walnuts per day helped delay development of breast cancer and slow tumor growth in mice. Speculation is antioxidants called phytosterols, already known cancer fighters, could be the culprit. Or protective benefits might come from plant based omega 3 fats (walnuts are the only nut to harbor these fats).

The right dose: Since nuts are calorie dense, one ounce (20 halves/185 calories) is a good place to start.

This smoothie is rich in antioxidants and fiber from berries, potassium from peaches, omega-3 fatty acids from walnuts, vitamin C from orange juice, and soy isoflavones from tofu. Use calcium-fortified orange juice for added nutrition.

Blackberry-Peach Smoothie with Walnuts

Yield: 3 servings (serving size: 1 cup smoothie and 2 teaspoons walnuts)

Ingredients

- 2 cups frozen sliced peaches
- cup blackberries
- cup orange juice
- 3/4 cup chopped soft silken tofu (about 4 ounces)
- 1/4 cup honey
- tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- tablespoons chopped walnuts

Preparation

Place peaches and next 5 ingredients (through lemon juice) in a blender; process until smooth. Top with walnuts.

Nutritional Information

Calories: 237 (18% from fat)

Fat: 4.7g (sat 0.5g, mono 0.7g, poly 3.1g)

Protein: 4.4g

Carbohydrate: 47.1g

Fiber: 4.5g

Cholesterol: 0.0mg

Sodium: 7mg

Calcium: 43mg

10 Must Have Superfoods for FitChicks



Superfoods are foods that are packed with ingredients that will greatly improve your health in a number of ways. The following 10 are at the top of nutritionist's lists for helping boost your metabolism, weight release and antioxidant blast!

1. **Mixed Berries:** Blueberries and raspberries are packed with antioxidants and are very low in calories. Japanese scientists have discovered that these berries may contain a fat blasting alternative to capsaicin, a substance that dissolves fat. Blueberries have 84 calories per cup and raspberries have only 64 per cup.
2. **Green tea:** Drinking green tea will give you a fat burning boost. A recent study by Korean researchers found that green tea extract reduced fat tissue, which means you may also reap the same benefits from a supplement form. According to recent studies, green tea can also increase your energy and decrease cholesterol.
3. **Citrus:** Citrus foods are high in compounds called flavones. A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that women who consumed the most flavones had a significantly lower increase in fat over a 14 year period.
4. **Cinnamon:** To help reduce belly fat and lower blood sugars, add a little cinnamon to your daily diet. Research has found that cinnamon could reduce blood glucose concentrations after your meal, which helps keep your blood sugar stable.
5. **Dairy:** Low fat dairy foods are fat fighters. A study published in Nutrition and Metabolism revealed that participants in a high dairy consumption group – three servings per day – were actually able to consume more calories without any weight gain.
6. **Protein Shakes:** Getting in the extra protein will help keep your body in fat loss mode. Including protein shakes in your diet will also help your fat loss because it's an effective and easy way to ensure proper portion control.
7. **Soups:** Adding some soup to lunch is a fat loss secret. Backed by solid research it all comes down to a concept known as energy density. High energy dense foods (like

muffins) are loaded with calories packed into their servings, while low energy dense foods (like soup) contain lots of water and fiber, which keeps you satisfied longer.

8. **Nuts:** Research published in the Journal of Nutrition shows that people who eat nuts more often have reduced body fat. Nuts also help reduce your cholesterol levels.
9. **Red Pepper:** This spice will curb your appetite and reduce fat intake. The active ingredient in red peppers, capsaicin, can increase your metabolism while also enhancing your feeling of fullness. Eating about one tablespoon of chopped red or green chili pepper can boost your metabolism.
10. **Fish:** Cold water fish like salmon and tuna offer more fat burning power because of their healthy concentration of omega-3 fatty acids. Adding a dose of omega-3 at least twice a week will help you get lean faster.

5 Ways to Bring Passion & Purpose to Your Life Now

1. **Identify your core values.** When you're in synch with what you value and esteem, it creates a framework for making decisions that will empower you. Every time you think about doing something, stop and ask yourself if it fits in with your core values. For example, one of my "cv's" is living authentically. Remembering this helps me look for opportunities to fully express myself creatively and to avoid people, places, and things that don't support me.
2. **Establish a single top priority.** Nothing can be important if everything is important. Don't spread your time or energy too thin. Decide on a goal by asking yourself this question: In addition to my current day to day responsibilities, if I accomplish one big thing in the next 3 months – what should it be? Then work on it.
3. **Keep your core values and top priority visible.** It helps keep you focused and clear. Post it on your fridge, the bathroom mirror, or your computer screensaver – and refer to it often.
4. **Count your opportunity costs** and don't make snap decisions. Often it's the little things – the commitments you agree to out of guilt or pressure that end up making you overwhelmed and stressed out. Don't say "yes" without taking the time to reflect on the opportunity cost – it occurs when taking one course of action prevents you from accomplishing other tasks that are more in line with your values. An example: opting out as committee chair person for the third year in a row (opportunity), because it interferes with quality family time (cost). When your decision is in line with your core values, you eliminate the guilt. You're saying a resounding "yes" to what's really important to you.
5. **Continually reassess what to keep and what to get rid of.** My son and I played a game when he was young called it keep/dump. We'd go through his room and evaluate toys, clothing and belongings – I'd hold up an item and he'd tell me either "keep" or "dump". It was amazingly cathartic for both of us. Sometimes in life we have to assess what to keep on our plates and what we need to dispose of. Often tasks that feel urgent can actually be ignored or deleted from our "to do" lists. And sometimes during the completion of something really important we're struck by the urge to do something else, and we need to reevaluate our priorities. Whether it's "stuff", schedules, or priorities, your core values will be your guide when deciding what stays on the "keep" list.

Energy Tip: 5 Attitudes to Get What You Really Want

1. **Understand that feeling good** is your God given right. Successful people know they are entitled to live well and enjoy their lives – physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually.
2. **FEAR stands for False Evidence Appearing Real.** We all feel fear at sometime in our lives. Resist the urge to quit when fear attacks and do it anyway!
3. **Before you can change yourself** you must change your environment. Make sure your space reflects the lifestyle you really want.
4. **Commit to just do it.** No excuses. Remember the saying, “An excuse is a reason stuffed with a lie.” Real, lasting change takes work and discipline – backbone, not wishbone!
5. **The best motivation is your own happiness.** Decide you will be happy today - and commit to enjoying and living your best life right now.