

8 Weeks to a More Amazing You!

A Health and Wellness Guide

Anderson
Counseling
& Education



Welcome to
8 Weeks to a More Amazing You!

We all want to be healthy and feel more amazing, right?

The truth is, it can be confusing to know where to begin. When we feel overwhelmed it's easy to give up even before we've started.

The top 5 goals I hear most often from my clients are:

- feeling better
- losing weight
- having more energy
- Feeling less stressed or anxious
- Healthier relationships

If you felt better, was less stressed, had more energy and reached your ideal weight, you would probably feel more amazing, right?

I have put this series together to address all 4 of these issues with super simple tips you can implement right away.

Let's start with our first strategy:

Get enough sleep.

Have you ever considered that the amount of sleep you get can affect your health and your weight?

Let's face it, when we're tired we tend to make fewer healthy choices throughout the day, and we reach for the quick-fix energy boost we need, often in the form of sugar-filled options and processed snacks. When we're tired, we also tend to skip the workout we had planned for the day.

For many people this is an ongoing cycle that's tough to break. Adequate sleep sets the stage for everything else.

"When it comes to body weight, it may be that if you snooze, you lose. Lack of sleep seems to be related to an increase in hunger and appetite, and possibly to obesity. According to a 2004 study, people who sleep less than six hours a day were almost 30 percent more likely to become obese than those who slept seven to nine hours.

Recent research has focused on the link between sleep and the peptides that regulate appetite. "Ghrelin stimulates hunger and leptin signals satiety to the brain and suppresses appetite. Shortened sleep time is associated with decreases in leptin and elevations in ghrelin.

Not only does sleep loss appear to stimulate appetite. It also stimulates cravings for high-fat, high-carbohydrate foods. Ongoing studies are considering whether adequate sleep should be a standard part of weight loss programs" - WebMD

Sleep can also affect your immune function, aging process, memory, learning and metabolism. Yes, adequate sleep is a big deal!

To get more sleep, set a goal of what time you need to be in bed each night to get the 7-9 hours you need. Try it this week and see if you notice a difference with your energy level and your eating habits.

I'm committing to getting _____ hour of sleep each night this week.

Just can't get to sleep? Turn off your cell phone and television, clear your mind. Try some guided imagery courtesy of the University of Illinois:

[The Ocean](#)

[The Beach](#)

A More Amazing You

Strategy #2 - Cook More Meals at Home

When you cook more meals at home, not only do you tend to eat healthier, but you can also **save time, money and calories**.

If you cook a meal and make a double or triple batch, you'll have left overs for lunches or another dinner. By cooking once and eating two or three times, you are being extremely efficient with your time, money *and* calories.

It's much easier to eat healthy when you're the one selecting the ingredients and preparing the meals. I know it takes more time to plan and prepare yourself, but if you are looking to lose or maintain weight, feel better and save money, it's definitely worth the effort.

On the nights that I know we have other activities going on with the kids, the crockpot is a HUGE help!

What nights can you plan to cook at home this week?

Need dinner ideas? There are so many great websites for recipe ideas including:

- Deelish.com
- FoodOnTheTable.com
- eMeals.com (this is a paid service that sends you 5 recipes each week based on the dietary style you choose)

If life is just way too hectic, spend one day per week preparing meals as a family (family time and developing good habits!). You then freeze them and use as needed. This option is super convenient!

What one action step can you take this week to prepare more meals at home?

A More Amazing You

Strategy #3 - Don't Skip Meals

I see this quite often in my health coaching practice!

It's common for people to think that when they skip a meal, they are 'saving' calories. What happens though is it backfires! By mid afternoon or early evening, they're starving, and then they feel like they have no 'will power'. Our body needs fuel in the form of food to function, so when it's deprived, it screams out for what it needs – food! Willpower is no match and then they end up feeling guilty. Skipping meals sets you up for failure and feeling guilty.

Eat 3 meals a day and healthy snacks when needed. You'll notice you get through the day with more energy and when you plan your meals out during the day, you can make healthier choices. It's much easier to make unhealthy choices when you need to eat something *now* and you just grab the closest thing you can find.

Plan ahead and be sure to not skip meals and you're sure to notice a difference in how you feel and will usually end up eating fewer calories during the day. Carrying a nutritious smoothie may also be a great way to get the nutrients you need in a hurry as opposed to a morning coffee!

What can you do this week to be sure you don't skip meals?

A More Amazing You

Healthy Strategy #4 - Reduce Stress

I realize this is not always an easy thing to do. Most of us are juggling way too much and going through the day at warp speed, trying to get more and more accomplished. By having a high stress level, not only is it harmful to your health, it's harmful to your waistline as well.

When you are constantly under stress, hormone levels, like cortisol and insulin are elevated. The elevation of these 2 hormones can sabotage your weight loss efforts and actually cause weight *gain*.

'Feeling stressed can create a wide variety of physiological changes, such as impairing digestion, excretion of valuable nutrients, decreasing beneficial gut flora populations, decreasing your metabolism, and raising triglycerides, cholesterol, insulin, and cortisol levels.' – Mercola.com

So, while you may think you can “handle it” as far as your stress level goes, we aren't meant to be under constant stress and it takes its toll. If you are doing everything right as far as diet and exercise but you're under stress every day, you're not going to see or feel the results you want.

Progressive muscle relaxation is a great way to reduce stress because muscle tension is one of the more common responses to stress. This technique can help condition your body to relax tensed areas of the body when discomfort is experienced. Let's try it courtesy of the University of Illinois:

[Head to Toe](#)
[Toe to Head](#)

A More Amazing You

Strategy #5 - Slow down, chew more.

This one simple strategy can make a big difference.

Chewing your food adequately allows your body to absorb and assimilate more nutrients and improves digestion.

Because you're taking more time to chew, you'll also notice that you feel full sooner, which means you're much more likely to consume fewer calories while still feeling full. This can help with weight loss and/or weight maintenance.

The next time you eat, give it a try. Before you eat, take a deep breath or two and relax. Focus on the meal you are about to eat. Do your best to chew each bite 30 times and see how you do and how you feel.

After you do this for a while, you won't have to count anymore; you'll know by the texture of the food, which should be completely liquefied before you swallow. Your stomach doesn't have teeth, so the more you can break down the food in your mouth, the easier it will be for your body to digest it.

Give it a try at your next meal today.

A More Amazing You

Strategy #6 - Eat more 'real' food

What is real food? It's food that is unprocessed or minimally processed. If you're not sure, you can ask yourself if the food is something you would find in nature; 'whole foods'.

Real food comes packaged with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other nutrients our bodies need to thrive. These are the types of foods that give us energy instead of leaving us feeling hungry again a short time later.

They can also help with weight loss or maintenance as well as our overall health and feeling of wellbeing.

Some examples include:

Vegetables

Fruit

Nuts

Seeds

Legumes

Grains

Animal protein

Seafood

Most Americans don't get nearly enough vegetables in their diet, so maybe that's a good place to start.

What whole foods can you add to your diet this week?

A More Amazing You

Strategy #7 - Let go of things we don't need



Two Buddhist monks return to their monastery after the rains. They reach a swollen river and in front of them is an extremely beautiful lady in a delicate silk kimono, distressed because she is unable to cross the river by herself. So, the older monk scoops her up, carries her safely to the other side and the two monks continue on their way in silence. Five hours later, as the two monks reach their destination, the younger monk, literally fuming, bursts out, "How could you do it? You touched a woman; you know we're not allowed to do that!" The older monk replies, "I put her down 5 hours ago, but you are still carrying her with you."

- The things we hold onto, bear grudges or perhaps feel angry and hurt about cloud our mind and prevent us from being the best we can be.
- Letting go usually involves some form of forgiveness or acceptance – whether it's yourself, someone else, a situation or even an unknown third party. The irony is that whatever you're holding onto, it's probably hurting or bothering you much more than it does anyone else.
- Letting go doesn't mean we condone a situation or behavior, it's about lightening OUR load. Because when we let go of whatever is bothering us we set ourselves free and get to reclaim that energy for ourselves.
- You don't need to know HOW to let go, you just need to be WILLING. You can't change the past, but you can learn from it and change how you feel going forwards.
- And remember - whatever you find it hardest to let go of is probably what you need to let go of the most...

INSTRUCTIONS: While you may not wish to do anything about these right now, just listing what you need to let go of here will raise your level of awareness and you'll naturally begin to loosen your grip. So, simply list below what you're holding onto, what slows you down, what riles you up and anything that gets in the way of you being the best you can be...

What do I need to let go of?

How I benefit by 'holding on' *

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Just for a second, imagine letting go of everything on this list. How does it feel?

.....

What have I learned about myself from doing this exercise?

.....

* If you're struggling with identifying a benefit (there must be *something* or you wouldn't be holding on to it) ask yourself, "What do I gain by keeping hold of this?" Perhaps by holding on to resentments, anger, hurt you don't need to accept your part in the situation, or perhaps it stops you from feeling how hurt you really were, maybe you get to stay in 'the right' or avoid dealing with someone.

TIP: If you need to let go of something YOU'VE done, simply ask, "What do I need to do that will allow me to let this go?" Perhaps you need to make notes in your journal of what you've learned, perhaps you need to make some kind of amends, apologize or find a meaningful way to make it up to yourself or someone else. While we can't change the past, we can make amends and learn from it.

If you feel the need to pick up what you decided to let go of try some deep breathing exercises courtesy of the University of Illinois.

[Deep Breathing](#)

A More Amazing You



Strategy #8 – Prepare a vision for your life!

INSTRUCTIONS: Allow yourself 20 minutes of quiet time to consider these questions that help you create and shape your vision for your next 3 months. Write your answers in the PRESENT tense.

1. How do I want my life to be in 3 months time?

Get SPECIFIC and write down what you want the following to look like in 3 months time for:

i) Home and family

ii) Career, Work and Business Life

iii) Health and Well-being

iv) Finances

v) Community, Friendships

vi) Spiritual and Learning

vii) Write anything else that you perhaps haven't mentioned yet here

2. What if there were no obstacles?

3. Who do you need to BE to achieve this? I need to be someone who is

4. If there was one important CHANGE you could make over the next 3 months, what would it be?

5. My THEME for the next 3 months is:

Congratulations on finishing the 8 weeks to a More Amazing You!

What ONE thing were you able to implement? How are you feeling?

If you were able to implement positive changes, that's great! If not, don't beat yourself up about it. Decide on 1 thing you can work on this week.

Here's my take on things: I don't think it's realistic to aim for a 'perfect' diet, routine or stress free life. Since we are all unique beings, the diet that's perfect for you probably isn't perfect for your best friend not to mention our individual response to different stressors. So, truly, there is no one perfect plan for everyone.

I think you have to decide what works best for you and what makes you feel the best. Many of us are too busy to slow down long enough to tune into what makes us feel good, or bad, bloated, or tired, etc. When you take the time to notice and listen to your body, be observant (did you get a headache after lunch when you had a certain food?, did you feel drained after interacting with a certain person) and you may be surprised what you notice.

Your body gives you clues all the time about what *is* and *isn't* working well for you.

Change isn't easy and we are all creatures of habit but you are worth it!

Sometimes it can be helpful to have the assistance of a knowledgeable advisor to guide you through the process of reaching your goals. It's also helpful to have someone help keep you accountable on your journey and help you get back on track when needed.

As a Certified Health Education Specialist and Licensed Mental Health Therapist I address ALL areas of health and help people establish and maintain healthy changes or address what is holding them back!

I invite you to make an appointment with our office or visit our website to explore our mental health and health promotion programs.

Wishing you all the best,

Jerlinda Anderson, Ed.S, CHES
Therapist
www.andersonedcounsel.org