

5 Weeks to a Healthier You

Week 1 Create a Healthy Meal Plan

Planning your meals in advance helps to ensure you have a nutritious, well-balanced diet. You'll want to include foods from each of the food groups, minimize salt, sugar, and processed foods, and rely heavily on nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

You'll learn even more about healthy eating in the next lesson.

Week 2 Make Exercise a Habit

Exercise is fundamental to good physical and mental health and it's easier to make it a habit than you might think. The most important thing to remember is that you need to start small. Choose an exercise that you'd be willing to do even if you're tired or lacking in motivation. Then, write down when, where, and what you'll do. Research shows that when you set your exercise intention specifically, you're more likely to do it.

Week 3 Open Up to Friends

People who connect emotionally with friends and loved ones regularly lead longer, happier, and healthier lives. One 2010 study even found that people who have more substantive conversations than small talk have the highest levels of wellbeing. Over the next few weeks, try doing a fun activity or seeking support from your friends.

Week 4 **Make Yourself a Priority**

Life and work can get so busy that we can forget to take care of ourselves. Sometimes we don't even realize we've been neglectful until we're worn out and sick. Do you get enough sleep? Are you creating time for fun? When did you last do an activity that brings you peace or joy? Write down the things you need to do to take care of yourself. Then try doing at least one every day.

Week 5 **Tackle Stress Head On**

We all experience stress in our lives. But not all ways of coping with stress are equal. Negative coping mechanisms include drinking, smoking, emotional eating, and ignoring or avoiding stress. Positive ways to counteract stress include meditation, breathing, yoga, exercise, play, prayer, and positive self-talk. Learn to recognize signs that you're feeling stress and adopt practices that help you positively counteract it.

You'll learn about some specific stress management strategies a little later in this course.