



Your Personal Workbook

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Workbook Basics:

Savor Your Food

Introduction

Do you want to feel better about your body? Do you want to build a healthy lifestyle? Good. These are goals you CAN achieve! These are goals that are constructive and self-esteem building. Self-nurturing goals like these are behind the growing Self-Acceptance / Self-Care Movement that has been building for over two decades. Self-acceptance helps people take better care of themselves. People who feel better about their bodies are more likely to succeed at maintaining healthy lifestyle changes than people who are self-critical and feel bad about themselves.

Since you are reading this workbook, you are probably interested in healthy eating and fitness. You have probably worked toward these goals before. Perhaps in the past you ended up feeling like a failure when you did not follow through on your plans. Get ready for a new outlook on this old problem. With this fresh way of thinking, it is impossible to fail as you work toward your healthy lifestyle. Whatever you do (or don't do) when you look back on it, learn from it, and make a better plan, you are still on the path toward your goal. Throughout this workbook, I will use examples from the lives of my clients and from my life to demonstrate new ways to look at old problems.

Beginning Worksheet

You are already using your Online Workbook. That is good for you. I also suggest you build a hard copy of this workbook that you can have in your hands. Print the pages out and put them in a binder. Decorate the cover if you want. Print on colored paper if that feels right. Claim this notebook as a record of your journey to self-care and self-acceptance. I suggest this for several reasons. The most important reason is that these lessons will each be available for a few weeks. Then the new lessons will take the place of the old ones. It would be good for you to print out the lesson and keep it in your own notebook. That way you have an archive of your progress and experiences for your continued healthy living growth. Next, you may want to read the articles when you don't have access to your computer. And finally, I have chosen to offer the worksheets in print out form so that you can journal, draw, check list, or whatever, **AND KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR PROCESS.** It is very healing to look back over your experience as time goes by. So, keep your notebook. Appreciate it. Your notebook is like a symbol that your healthy living process and YOU are worth appreciating!

List of things I will get for my own notebook:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binder | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colored pens or markers | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine clippings to decorate cover | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

The time I will try first for focusing on my self-care and writing in my own notebook is:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Morning | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lunchtime | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evening | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedtime | |

Sometimes it helps me to set up a peaceful, comfortable place to sit where there is nice light and pleasant sounds.

If this is true for me, then I will:

- Find a comfortable place to sit _____
- Set up nice lighting _____
- Arrange to have music or sit by a window where I can hear the wind and birds or find other sounds that help me feel better. _____

Take your time. It may take a few days to find the right setup that is conducive to your focus on healthy living. These little things matter. I find many clients are anxious about "starting one more time". When you "set the stage" for your reading and writing in your notebook, you have already started the process. You may find the tasks of gathering your supplies, selecting a time, and arranging your space are enjoyable ways to start. Once you have started to focus on self-care, momentum will help you continue.

Article

If you have been on and off diets (any form of restricted eating) in your lifetime, that process has probably damaged you. Using the skills and awareness in your online workbook, you can improve your relationship with food. This workbook is about normalizing your relationship with food, not finding a better diet. In my local classes and on-line chats called "Healthy Living with Bliss™", many people want to lose weight. Some of these individuals are anorexic or bulimic, some are compulsive overeaters, some just want to get off of the dieting and weight gain merry-go-round. We all work together. We work on feeling better about ourselves, taking care of our bodies and our emotions.

My goal is to shift the focus away from weight and toward healthy living and self-care. I encourage you to do everything reasonable to build a healthy lifestyle with a balance of good nutrition, emotional well being, and regular moderate exercise. I encourage you to work toward all these goals **INDEPENDENT OF YOUR WEIGHT!**

When you have done everything you can do that is reasonable, then you have two choices: accept yourself and your body OR do something unreasonable. If good nutrition and regular moderate exercise result in your body remaining heavier than your fantasy weight (or some weight on one of the many arbitrary charts), what else should you do? Should you exercise excessively? Should you eat less than a balanced healthy amount of food? NO! Whether you are 98 pounds or 398 pounds, you should NOT exercise excessively or eat less than a balanced healthy diet. That would be pathological. Instead, you should live a healthy lifestyle, let your body find its own natural size, and appreciate yourself as you are.

Example

M&Ms

Lauren was not overweight (This is not her real name. I always change the names to preserve confidentiality.) She was an average size woman. We were working together in counseling to reduce her depression, increase her self-esteem, and improve her family relationships. She had trouble sleeping, felt lethargic... especially at home in the evenings, she was quick to anger, and she seemed to get sick all the time.

Of course we worked on many different aspects of her feelings, choices, reactions, motivations, etc. After a while, one issue surfaced that seemed as if it could have an effect on many of the other issues at hand. Solving this one issue provided profound and immediate results. When we solved this one issue, Lauren slept better, had

more energy in the evening, felt better about herself, and had more patience with her family in the evening. That is the story I want to tell you now. You may find it interesting. You may find yourself in the story. You may find new hope for coping with an old problem.

Lauren's days were very stressful. She was rushed in the morning. Getting herself and everyone else in the family out the door on time was a real challenge. There certainly was no time to sit down and have breakfast. Coffee to go, with cream and sugar, was all she needed to stave off hunger pangs. She drank lots of coffee all day long. At lunch, with everyone at work watching, she found it easy to eat a small reasonable lunch. She knew nobody approves of a glutton, so she ate a light lunch with all the other women at work. Then, she was back to coffee in the afternoon. She was busy from the moment her work day started, until it ended and she was scheduled to head home and cook dinner for the family. By the time Lauren sat down in her car at 5:00 p.m. she was frazzled, starving, and exhausted.

She remembered ten years ago when it began. On the way home from work one day, she decided to stop at the convenience store to get a snack for the kids. She was REALLY hungry, but she was going home to eat right away. There was no need to buy real food now. The kids, however, would enjoy a snack with TV tonight. She went in and bought a family size bag of M&Ms ... for the kids.

As she was driving home, she decided to have a few M&Ms. She set the bag in her lap, opened it, and popped a handful in her mouth. Her drive home was forty-five minutes long. As she pulled into her neighborhood, she was astonished to realize the family size bag of candy was empty. How did that happen? Oh, well, never mind. It will never happen again. But it did happen again. It happened every night for the last ten years. No matter how much will power Lauren mustered, no matter how much she hated herself for it, she kept doing it. She kept buying and eating a family size bag of candy after work every day. After talking to many nutritionists, hypnotists, diet counselors, and such, she could not seem to stop eating M&Ms. That is all she wanted, to stop this behavior. She wanted me to help her stop eating M&Ms. My suggestion appalled her. However, after ten years of feeling like a failure, she was willing to try anything.

What was my suggestion? Do not try to stop. If trying to stop has not worked for ten years, why should I recommend that you try the same ineffective solution again? This time, try something different to cope with your irresistible cravings for M&Ms. Taste them. Don't just shovel them into your mouth mindlessly because you don't want to notice what you are doing. Eat them one at a time, slowly. Let each one melt. Don't chew. When the candy is in your mouth, close your lips and exhale through your nose. (This drives the chocolate molecules to a sensory organ in the nose and increases sensation.) Notice how delicious the candy tastes. Now, this is the important part, when the next bite does not taste as delicious as the last bite, ask yourself a question: "Why eat it?" You may find that you simply do not need to eat anymore of that particular flavor or food because it is not as delicious anymore.

I got a hysterical phone call the next night. At first I could not even tell who it was. The woman on the line just kept yelling "Ten, ten, I only ate ten." Then I realized it was Lauren. She had tried the experience of savoring her M&Ms and really tasting them. On the eighth piece she tasted less flavor, but she could not believe it. On the ninth, it was really true. On the tenth M&M she was done. She was satisfied and she felt no more compulsion to eat more than ten. At the next stoplight she folded the bag and put it in her glove compartment. For the last several years she has been eating about ten M&Ms each night after work. (Oh, I must tell you that everything did not really turn out as story book nice as I have described so far. Lauren tried this exercise of savoring her M&Ms for the first time in March. She stored the bag of candy in her glove compartment. That is, until the first sunny

warm day of spring when the candy melted and she discovered how unpleasant chocolate covered papers and glasses really are. Now she keeps her M&Ms in her briefcase.)

Exercise

It is always so fun to watch the reactions of the people who have been dieting all their lives when I give this first "exercise" in my "Don't Weight for Healthy Eating™" classes and on-line groups. After years of thinking of food as "bad" and appetite as the enemy, this exercise is quite shocking. It is harder to do than you might think, but it is fun. Savor Your Food This is a tough exercise. At first it will seem simple. Usually it will be enjoyable. But it will still be tough. You will be surprised at your reaction when you try this. You may discover things about yourself and your feelings that you did not know. Your first eating exercise is:

**Whenever it seems reasonable,
Savor Your Food**

**Enjoy the aroma.
Appreciate how delicious it looks.
Really taste it.
Swirl it around all your taste buds.
Experience it!**

As you try this, you may find that you are more satisfied when you eat. You may be more satisfied with less food because you are really experiencing what you were eating. Most compulsive behaviors are about tuning something out. Often people eat to numb or distract themselves. This exercise is the opposite of compulsive eating. You are not tuning out. YOU ARE TUNING IN! This time, food is not an escape, it is a tool for self-discovery.

If it makes you more comfortable, you can also focus on noticing when the next bite of food does not taste as delicious as the last. At that point, when eating is not as enjoyable, you can ask yourself: "Why eat any more?" You may be surprised at your answer to this simple question. You may begin to tune-in to your emotional needs and understand yourself better if you answer this question honestly and often.

Be patient, this is not easy. You will not savor your food all the time. Sometimes you will just scarf down a lunch because you are hungry and need to get back to work. That is fine. That is normal eating too. Sometimes you will savor your food, tune-in to your emotions, and come up with a better way to meet your needs. That is fine too.

If this is your first time experiencing this exercise, just try it. You may have emotional reactions. You may have physical reactions. Would it be good for you to write on this? If you are not a writer, do you want to draw or paint or blotch paint to match your emotions? Do you want to move or dance or pound or scream? EXPRESS YOURSELF in any way that works for you.

If you have already focused on this, what do you want to do with it next? Here are some possibilities: 1.) Notice what helps you to be able to savor your food ... and DO IT! 2.) Notice what effect savoring your food has on your healthy eating ... and write about it, or express yourself in some way. On the Workbook Page are some spaces in which you may choose to write about your savoring experience. (If you choose to draw, paint, scribble, etc., just include that expression in your notebook too.)

Weekly Worksheet

Savor Your Food Write down whatever you want about savoring your food. Some people just give themselves a star on days when they remembered to savor, even once. Some people make journal entries about their emotional reaction to savoring. What would be good for you to notice? Write it down! If you need more room, grab some 3 holed paper and add those pages to "Your Own Book". I start the week on Wednesday because we have our Healthy Living Chats on Tuesday. I am finding that many people log on for the Chat, focus on the workbook, and then start their Healthy Living week on Wednesday. Please feel free to start your own individual week on any day that works for you and your life!

Wednesday (reactions to 'savor')

Thursday (reactions to 'savor')

Friday (reactions to 'savor')

Saturday (reactions to 'savor')

Sunday (reactions to 'savor')

Monday (reactions to 'savor')

Tuesday (reactions to 'savor')

Workbook Basics:

What's Next After Savor?

Introduction

Process, Not A Program

Most of the time, when people think of "eating plans", they think of a program that defines what to eat, portion size, when to eat, and other requirements of the program. By definition, a program has requirements and parameters that are set by some expert. Those who follow a program are supposed to learn the rules of the program and incorporate those rules into daily life. On any given day, you are either "on the program", or "off the program". You are either doing what the expert has told you to do, or you are not. When following a program, you always have a measuring stick available to tell how you are doing. The problem is, this measuring stick is usually used to criticize yourself and damage your self-esteem.

How can you make use of all the wonderful information available on healthy living and not feel like you are participating in another "program". Change the WAY you look at the experts. When you participate in a self-help group, take a fitness class, talk to a therapist, read a book on eating / nutrition, watch a talk show, hear a news story, or see an infomercial, remember one fact: They may be experts in their fields, but there is only one real expert in the room on the subject of you. That expert is YOU!

Teachers, instructors, counselors are consultants that you hire in order to get ideas and information. Books, talk shows, and seminars are places you look for information. You are in charge of trying out the new things that you have learned and deciding if they work for you. Every exercise, whether it is physical, emotional, or intellectual, is just an opportunity to experiment and see what effect it has on you. Tune in to yourself. How does it feel? Does it seem useful? Does it cause a problem? You decide. You are the expert on you. Nobody else in the entire world knows what it is like to live in your body or to be in your world. It is important to have good advisors and consultants. But in the end, you need to make choices for yourself.

I do not offer a 'program' for healthy eating and fun fitness. Instead, I offer a set of choices, tools, exercises, and insights. I propose or recommend new ways of looking at things and different actions to take. Each person will try these options in a different order and for a different length of time. Each person will select what works for them and what does not. No two people will choose the same path. This is your process for individual change. Your process will be unique. You have a very qualified expert to help you make the best choices ... that expert is you.

Keep an open mind for what you may choose to focus on each week. It is valuable to write down your goals. Not because you have made a vow to achieve any specific goal, but because you will not always do as you had intended. THIS IS NOT FAILURE. When you do not achieve a planned goal, you have an opportunity to better understand who you are and what you need.

I encourage you to select some action to take that will effect your feelings, your fitness, and your healthy eating. Please only choose one small doable action or focus in each area. (If you try to do too many things, you will drop the ball.) When you write down your intentions, you will have the benefit of hindsight at the end of the week. Did you do as you intended? What helped? What got in the way? How can you set yourself up to achieve your goals next week? You are in the middle of succeeding at your healthy lifestyle choices. Keep the process going!

Beginning Worksheet

Today's date _____

As you get started on this weeks workbook lesson, it will be helpful to focus internally. What is going on INSIDE of you. Before you continue onto the rest of this week's workbook lesson, you may want to tune in and reflect on your past week. Here are some things you may want to write on IF you choose to write. If you don't choose to write, you may just want to think about these things. You can do whatever you choose. This is your life. This is your workbook. You choose.

Possible topics to write or think on...

1) Thoughts on how I am feeling NOW (after last week) as I approach this week's learning experience:

2) Actions, from last week that helped my healthy living:

3) Actions, from last week that I regret:

4) How could I have changed last week's goals to be more helpful? (I will try to remember these concepts as I set goals for this week):

5) Some thoughts on what I learned from last week:

Article

So, you have tried to savor your food. You have experienced tastes more, and you may have noticed your reactions or feelings more. You will continue to develop the skill of savoring your food from now on. But, savoring is just the doorway into a world of self-discovery. Savoring leads us to the next step. Remember asking yourself,

"If this bite does not taste as good as the last, WHY EAT IT?" That is a good question! What do you need when you eat? Sometimes you just need food energy because you will not get to eat again for many hours. Sometimes there is an emotional reason to eat. You may need a reward, comfort, distraction, etc. There can be many emotional reasons to eat. You have two times when it is very useful to notice how you feel and what you need: BEFORE you eat, and AFTER you eat.

I encourage you to notice what you need BEFORE you eat. Too often we are in the habit of thinking of what kind of food we need. "Do I want something salty or sweet?" We are often accustomed to thinking in terms of "To eat or not to eat, that is the question!" No, that is not the question. When you focus on to eat or not to eat, you may be diverting yourself away from the real question. I am asking you to notice how you feel and if there are any other emotions going on. I am asking you to increase your awareness. This is not easy. You will not do this all the time. Actually, you will only be able to use this increased awareness occasionally. Occasionally is fine! If you start to notice how you feel once in a while, you will be much closer to understanding yourself and what you need.

Once you have begun to be aware of what you need, you can try other ways of meeting those needs. This sounds simple. It is not. You will go through a multi-step process to learn to meet your emotional needs without always using food. Right now, in the beginning, I am asking you to take note of your feeling and needs and write them down. You may choose to write down how you feel or what you need before you eat. There is another choice.

You may choose to tune into your needs and feelings AFTER you eat. Sometimes, with the pressure of the decision over with, you can reflect on how you felt and discover what you needed. When you are done eating, and you have gotten no relief from the feeling, you will be able to be more aware of that untended feeling. Or, if eating really effected you, you can get an idea of what kind of effect you were looking for.

Did you notice that I put no importance on whether you ate or not? The issue is not about eating. The issue is about building a life that meets your needs. If you turn to food as a primary way to meet your needs, you loose. It does not work. If you take action and DO something that effects the quality of your life, you win. You feel better and your life is a little better too.

Example

Emily

Emily found herself munching all the time. Her life was very hectic. She took care of the house, tended her husband who was ill, was matriarch of the family, and coped with her own disability. Now, it was time to prepare for the holidays. There was so much to do it was both overwhelming and stressful.

Munching helped. It really did help Emily feel better momentarily. When she ate sweets, she got comfort and pleasure. Her stress, however, seemed to keep building. Now she had the worry of weight gain to add to her other stressors. Her injured leg really seemed to get worse if her weight increased.

What could she do to cope with stress and feel better? Emily decided to start preparing for the holidays earlier than ever this year. That gave her less time pressure. She did a little each day. That gave her a feeling of effectiveness. She could see the progress. One of the most stressful experiences we can have is to feel powerless. Emily felt empowered when she accomplished her task each day.

When she needed relief from stress, she would find one small task to do, and then really appreciate herself when

it was done. This helped her to feel better than munching had. This was a stress relieving strategy she could use often. The question was not whether to munch or not. The question was how to feel better and fix her life. She started by identifying her feeling of stress.

Exercise

What do you NEED when you eat?

Tune in to what you need before, during, or after you eat. What do you need when you eat? Are you eating to satisfy hunger? To numb upset? To comfort? To reward? To chill out? Notice. Think about it. What is going on in your life? Is it related to your eating? Write down what you need ... Write down what ever you want to write ... Or ... don't write ... You may choose to just think, or paint (You don't need to be an artist. Color blobs and texture are great), or move, or express yourself in any way you want.

I start the worksheet on Wednesday because we have our online chat on Tuesday evening. You can start using your worksheet on any day that works in your life and your schedule.

Weekly Worksheet

Taking Note of What I need

Today's date _____

After you print this worksheet out, you can use it throughout your week. Remember to use whatever works for you to express what you discover about what you NEED when you eat. If you need a different writing or painting surface, use it. If this format works for you, use it. You deserve to understand yourself better. It is an important step to improving your life (not just your healthy eating).

Wednesday (Needs that I have discovered)

Thursday (Needs that I have discovered)

Friday (Needs that I have discovered)

Saturday (Needs that I have discovered)

Sunday (Needs that I have discovered)

Monday (Needs that I have discovered)

Tuesday (Needs that I have discovered)

Workbook Basics:

Meet Your Needs

Introduction

Remember as you savored your food, when the next bite is not as delicious as the last, you asked yourself "Why eat it?" Often you discovered that there was some emotional need that you were meeting with food. Next, you tried to notice WHAT you needed when you ate. Often the emotional needs are things like: comfort, distraction, reward, frustration, anger, etc. Once you have started to tune in to these needs, what can you do about them? At the moment that desperately need comfort, you are not likely to have a list of ways to comfort yourself at your fingertips. When you are angry or frustrated, it is difficult to think of ways to cope with these feelings... you are just FEELING the emotions... or you may be stuffing down your emotions because you don't want to feel them.

This week you will get some tools to help you meet your needs. These tools will come from you. They are waiting to be discovered right now. All you need to do is ask yourself the right questions and give yourself a place to write down your answers so you can use these answers when you need them. The tools you will be building are called "Lists for Life".

Before you start building your Lists for Life, it will be valuable for you to take a moment and reflect on HOW you feel now, WHAT happened with your self-care in the last week, and other important awarenesses.

Beginning Worksheet

Today's date _____

As you get started on this weeks workbook lesson, it will be helpful to focus internally. What is going on INSIDE of you. Before you continue onto the rest of this week's workbook lesson, you may want to tune in and reflect on your past week. Here are some things you may want to write on IF you choose to write. If you don't choose to write, you may just want to think about these things. You can do whatever you choose. This is your life. This is your workbook. You choose.

Possible topics to write or think on...

1.) Thoughts on how I am feeling NOW (after last week) as I approach this week's learning experience:

2.) Actions, from last week that helped my healthy living:

3.) *Actions, from last week that I regret:*

4.) *How could I have changed last week's goals to be more helpful? (I will try to remember these concepts as I set goals for this week):*

5.) *Some thoughts on what I learned from last week:*

Article

Food for Thought

If you have been on and off diets (any form of restricted eating) in your lifetime, you have probably been damaged by that process. Dieting is a gateway behavior to compulsive overeating and compulsive under eating. If you have dieted, your relationship with food is probably distorted. You can improve your relationship with food. Here are some lessons I learned as I recovered from bulimia and compulsive over eating.

Whatever my body size and shape, I am entitled to take care of myself! My body deserves to be fed nutritious foods. My muscles and joints deserve the benefits of regular movement. My basic human needs deserve to be met. When I made small changes in my life with a goal of taking care of myself, those changes were more likely to be permanent. Those small changes added up to a comfortable healthy lifestyle that met my needs and was self sustaining.

When I made changes with a goal of weight loss, those changes were temporary. The very words, 'on the program' and 'off the program', implied that there was some 'expert' telling me what to do or how to eat. There is nobody except me who can figure out what I should do and how I should eat in order to meet my unique set of needs.

The fact is that food does meet our physical and emotional needs. That is normal for all human beings. Food is supposed to be one way to meet our physical and emotional needs. There is only a problem when we use food as the primary way to meet our needs. The problem is not the food. The problem is that we spend too much time and energy eating (or not eating) instead of improving our lives.

I kept asking myself two questions, "What do I need now?" , and "What is the best way for me to meet that need?" I had to find out, through personal experimentation, what was right for me. No book, no program, no 'expert', could tell me. I had to listen to myself and learn what I needed. I wanted to improve my relationship

with food, not to loose weight, but because food was not meeting my needs. I used my relationship with food as a tool to learn more about myself.

In order to understand what needs I was trying to meet with food, I decided to keep track of how I was feeling. (I had to avoid any behaviors that were similar to dieting behaviors. I would not write down what I ate.) Instead, I would write down **what I needed when I ate**. I found it most helpful to think and write down the need before I choose to eat. (After I ate, I often could not remember how I felt or what I thought before.)

Here are some of the needs I discovered:

- Fuel: I often ate because I was hungry and my stomach was 'growling'.
- Entertainment: Sometimes food just tasted good and I wanted the pleasure of eating.
- Accomplishment: I could not face any other task, so fixing a nice meal met my need to accomplish something.
- Comfort: From mother's milk to chocolate cake, food has been and should be one possible source of comfort. It is just not the only source!
- Distraction: When I had an unpleasant feeling or thought, eating sweets would numb me.

This was educational, but it was only part of my question. I wanted to know WHAT my needs were, and I wanted to find better ways to meet those needs, without using food. I discovered many unmet needs that were hidden within my relationship to food.

Once I was more aware of my unmet needs, I got creative and found better ways to satisfy my needs. I used problem solving to build a better lifestyle. I chose to improve my relationship with food because I knew I deserved more satisfaction in my life. It had nothing to do with my weight. Don't do anything to lose weight. **Do everything to take care of yourself**. Don't watch what you eat. **Watch what you need**. Then, do everything you can to meet your needs more effectively!

Example

As you go through your life, keep your mind open for things that you can do that would help you meet your needs. Be patient with yourself. Over time ideas will come to you. When you think of something, write it down! You will think of things that take a moment to do, some that take a few minutes or a half hour. Some of your ideas will take an hour or an afternoon. That is fine. Make lists of ways to meet your needs and group these activities by how much time they take. Then when you only have a moment, you will be able to look at the list for activities that take only a moment. When you have an hour, enjoy selecting an activity that takes an hour. Let's look at the need for 'decompression' that often hits when you hit the end of your work day.

Here are some ideas for decompressing that my clients have shared with me:

Things that take just a few minutes:

- Remove all the elastic from your body. In the summer, powder to cool down. In the winter, lotion your skin to refresh. Then dress in cozy stay at home clothes.
- Since dehydration makes people feel tired, get a drink of water or non-caffeine tea (iced or hot).
- Tell family or roommates that you need a few minutes ALONE, and mean what you say.
- Pinch flowers in your garden.
- Pet your cat.

Things that take about a half hour:

- Move through time and space, for your own pleasure, at your own pace.
- Take a gentle walk, in comfy shoes, just around your block or your yard. Breathe. Swing your arms. Feel the tension fall away like dust falls to the ground.
- Read a your favorite self-esteem boosting magazine like *Radiance*, *BBW*, or *Mode*.
- Eat the salad or fruit (that you prepared for yourself last night) while you cook tonight's dinner.

You probably would **not** be able to think of all these things at the moment you needed to decompress. However, you could look at a paper where all these ideas are **ALREADY WRITTEN DOWN** and **CHOOSE** which activity you will try today.

**All you need to do is start to make your lists.
Keep your mind and heart open.
Notice what meets your needs.
Notice how things affect you.**

When you discover what your needs are, you can make a list for each need. Notice how things effect you in your daily life. Notice what really meets your needs. As you find an activity that helps you calm down, decompress, feel comfort, vent anger, cheer up, or whatever other needs you have, add that activity to your lists. You do not have to hold all these ideas in your head. You have them at your fingertips whenever you need them. When you use these "Lists for Live" you will meet your needs more effectively than eating ever could. You will feel more relaxed because you have so many constructive options from which to choose.

Exercise

Lists for Life

When you start to tune in to how you feel and what you need when you eat, you will discover many types of needs. I have already mentioned some of the most common needs that people often discover: comfort, reward, distraction, coping with anger, decompressing at the end of the day, coping with stress, etc. Once you have come to understand **WHAT** you need, how do begin to meet those needs without always using food? What can you do?

Once again, you may find it useful to write. Writing is helpful because it is a way of making our thoughts and feelings tangible. Writing helps to take away the stress of trying to remember things. You don't have to review the list in your head, it is written down. You can relax and refer to your writing when you need to remember. For example, think of a time when you had to buy a gift for someone and found yourself wandering around the department store looking for what to buy. Even if it is someone you know very well, under the pressure of having to think of a gift right on the spot, it can be difficult to come up with anything appropriate. Often you end up just buying something, anything, that gets the job done. Even if it is not quite the right gift for this person you might just pick it up to get the job done.

Now, imagine that you had been keeping a list. As you went through your daily life, whenever you saw something that would be the right gift for a friend or family member, you just added that gift idea to your list. You would gradually develop a list that you could refer to whenever you needed to buy a gift for someone. The gifts you gave your friends and family would be just the right gift and you would have reduced the stress of wandering aimlessly in the department store.

You can use this same principal in your life to meet your own needs. Let's look at the moment when you got home from work. As you tuned in to your feelings, you noticed that you really need to decompress from your workday. In the past, you have decompressed by eating. This worked. You wound down and calmed down. However, you often ate foods that have little or no nutrition. You end up overstuffed or groggy or just taking away your appetite for a nutritious dinner. **This is a problem.** This decompression munching is not really helping your life or your health. What else could you do? At the moment when you walked in the door, you probably would not be able to think of any other choices. After all, you needed to decompress, not think. This was one of those times when you could use a suggestion. Where could you get a suggestion for decompression activities that will really work for you? You get it from yourself! Make your own "Lists for Life" ...

When I need **COMFORT**, I could try these options ...

<p>that take only a few minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take about fifteen minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____
<p>that take about half an hour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take an hour or more</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____

When I need relief from **Boredom**, I could try options ...

<p>that take only a few minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____	<p>that take about fifteen minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____
<p>that take about half an hour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____	<p>that take an hour or more</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____

When I need **ANESTHESIA**, I could try these options ...

<p>that take only a few minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take about fifteen minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____
<p>that take about half an hour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take an hour or more</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____

When I need to **CALM**, I could try these options ...

<p>that take about fifteen minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____	<p>that take only a few minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____
<p>that take about half an hour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____	<p>that take an hour or more</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8. _____9. _____10. _____11. _____12. _____

When I need _____, I could try these options ...

(Note: Print as many of these pages as needed for all the needs you discover)

<p>that take only a few minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take about fifteen minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____
<p>that take about half an hour</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____ 	<p>that take an hour or more</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____ 11. _____ 12. _____

Weekly Lessons:

Gettin' Movin'

Introduction

This week we will take an unconventional perspective as we look at becoming more active. I will encourage you to find motivation to exercise **INDEPENDENT OF YOUR WEIGHT**. By choosing exercise that is enjoyable and feels good you can find motivation to exercise that is constructive (not critical). In this week's article we will look at your motivation for exercise. In the examples, I will share the true stories of three clients as a way to demonstrate positive motivation for fitness. The exercise I recommend is very unique. It will be good for your body and for your emotions.

Throw away your preconceive notions about fitness. We will be talking about appreciating your body, using your muscles, enjoying your flexibility, and discovering the joy in movement. I guarantee that **EVERYBODY** of every size will be able to enjoy out exercise this week.

Beginning Worksheet

Today's date _____

As you get started on this weeks workbook lesson, it will be helpful to focus internally. What is going on **INSIDE** of you. Before you continue onto the rest of this week's workbook lesson, you may want to tune in and reflect on your past week. Here are some things you may want to write on **IF** you choose to write. If you don't choose to write, you may just want to think about these things. You can do whatever you choose. This is your life. This is your workbook. You choose.

Possible topics to write or think on...

1.) Thoughts on how I am feeling NOW (after last week) as I approach this week's learning experience:

2.) Actions, from last week that helped my healthy living:

3.) Actions, from last week that I regret:

4.) *How could I have changed last week's goals to be more helpful?
(I will try to remember these concepts as I set goals for this week):*

5.) *Some thoughts on what I learned from last week:*

Article

"What's in it for me?"

"What good will exercise do for me? I will never be skinny anyway." Oh, no, another casualty of the lie! All the advertising shows athletic thin people in the health clubs. The lean and perky fitness instructors look nothing like the average person. The fitness industry tells us that the main reason to exercise is to loose weight. The lie is that you have to be thin to be fit and healthy.

The truth is that when people have a healthy eating style and exercise regularly, some will be small, some will be medium, and some will be large. But, since the truth does not sell health club memberships to a fat phobic society, they keep telling us the lie. It is not true that only thin people can be fit. Whatever your size, you can increase your fitness and improve the functioning of your body.

How can exercise make such a difference in the quality of life? Let me tell you some facts about regular exercise. Think about your joints. You know that most of the joints of the body have cartilage. Did you know that your cartilage does not have any blood circulating in it? Your cartilage relies on a substance called synovial fluid to provide nutrients and wash away waste products. The only thing that causes your synovial fluid to circulate in your joints is movement! That is why we feel stiff when we sit around too much. That is why we have healthier joints when we move.

Now, think about your heart. Yeah, yeah, we all know exercise is good for your heart. But, why? Because your heart beats slower when you art fit. What is so good about a slower heart rate? Blood only circulates through the heart muscle between heartbeats. When your heart rate is slower, you have more time between beats. Your heart has more nutrients available and has more waste products washed away. When you are fit, you have improved your own body's ability to strive for optimal heart health.

Finally, think about your life. So often life is filled with things over which we have no control. Sometimes it feels like we are being run over by a truck. Taking action to improve our lives helps us to feel empowered. Feeling like we can have an effect prevents us from being victims. Moving and using our own bodies is one small action we can do.

When you add enjoyable safe activity to your daily life, you may be small, medium, or large. You definitely will be healthier and feel better. Many scientific studies have proved that fitness helps people to stay younger, heal

faster, and be more able to meet life's challenges.

**If you like yourself the way you are, you deserve the benefits of fitness.
If you do not like yourself the way you are,
you might want to get to know and love yourself through movement.**

Example

Wait a minute. If weight loss is not the reason to exercise, what is? The reason to exercise is to feel better and be healthier! To demonstrate this point, I would like to tell you the true stories of three clients. Out of respect for their privacy, I will use fictitious names.

Betty came into my office at the mental health center downtown. She was an intelligent professional woman who was suffering from a mild depression. She had delayed seeking help because she was afraid of being put on antidepressant medication. We discussed other alternatives. I asked her if she would be interested in trying a naturally occurring substance provided by her own body, endorphins.

Betty decided to start an antidepressant exercise program. She added a daily walk to her life. This was not easy. She had to do a lot of problem solving to fit a walk into every day. Each time she walked briskly for at least twenty minutes, her body would release endorphins. Since endorphins are the body's own natural mood elevators, she felt better. As her depression lifted she was able to make other improvements in her life. But it all started by adding enjoyable movement into each day!

Kathleen did not come to see me. Kathleen did not go anywhere. She was a beautiful super sized woman who found walking difficult. Life was difficult. Mostly, she stayed in bed watching TV and reading. Kathleen's friend called to ask about a custom made exercise video for her. I went right into my bedroom, climbed into bed, and started designing a fitness program to be done in bed. Sitting up against the headboard with a cushion at my back, I demonstrated and video taped exercises for the neck, shoulders, arms, back, abdominal wall, quadriceps, calf muscles, and feet. Then I showed a full body stretch out ... in bed.

Yes, Kathleen could do this work. Her TV was right there. Her own personal trainer was available anytime she wanted. Soon I had to design a workout to be done in a chair. 'Sit and Be Fit' was what Kathleen called it. The next workout using a walker was her favorite. I am planning a free standing workout now. I can here the smile in Kathleen's voice as we have our weekly counseling sessions. She has changed her outlook. She now feels empowered to effect her life!

That brings me to the last client I wanted to mention. As I was walking down the driveway to my studio, I saw a woman walking ahead of me. I have a long driveway, so I could not see her very well. She had on her short winter jacket with the hood pulled up. The bounce in her step and the youthful curves to her round figure gave me the impression she was in her twenties or thirties. Who could this hooded woman be?

Just then Doris turned around. Doris? Oh, yes. She was scheduled for a personal training session in a half-hour. Doris had been coming to my classes for five years. She had been exercising all of her life. Doris was seventy-six years old! As her bright eyes peered out of her wrinkled face, she told me, "As long as I keep moving, I keep young!"

Exercise

A Simple Exercise: Hand and Foot Massage

One of the best reasons to exercise is to FEEL better. I like to start people off with an exercise that everyone can do. Even if you have great physical limitations, even if your life is so busy that you cannot imagine finding time to exercise, YOU CAN DO THIS EXERCISE! This is both an emotional AND a physical exercise. It will affect your flexibility, circulation, self-acceptance, and self-care.

I did not think of this myself. A very clever client thought of this in one of our counseling sessions. I have, however, used it ever since. I use it myself. I recommend it to my other clients. You can use this whenever you need to relax, unwind, feel tended, feel nurtured, be appreciated, be acknowledged, center yourself, tune in to your physical self, and more. What could accomplish so many things?

**An experience ...
An experience in pleasure ...
An experience you give yourself ...
Your hand massage.**

I know. This sounds silly. It is not. It is significant. When your right hand massages and tends your left hand, you are experiencing a physical representation of this entire process of self-care. You are not waiting around for someone else to do it. You are not distracting yourself from the pain of needing it. You are not being angry at your unmet needs. You are taking care of you. Every time you take care of you and tend yourself, you heal from the times in your life when you did not receive the care you needed. Every time you take care of you, the world becomes a safer place in which to live. You are building your that YOU will take care of yourself and get your needs met. Take a moment. Take your left hand in your right. Give your left hand a wonderful massage. (Yes, you will give your right hand the same pampering next.)

Choices, choices, you have so many choices. Do you want a quick few second massage sitting right there at your desk? Will you simply squeeze and press wherever it feels good on the palm, on the fingers, at the tips? You don't even need hand lotion for this kind of massage. When one hand is done, roll your shoulders, sit up tall, lay your hands on a pillow on your lap or just on your desk, and do the other hand. Breathe. Be.

Or, do you want to sit down, when tasks are set aside for a while, and pamper yourself? This is a time when you might take a little longer and use hand cream or lotion. When your hands are slippery, you will find all sorts of motions that feel good. Rubbing in little circles, sliding your fingers or knuckles across the palm, pulling as you slip down the finger to a little press on the finger pad. Ahhh ... you deserve this. And you deserve twice as much relaxation and enjoyment because you have an entire other hand to go. Change sides and let the other hand feel tended.

There is more than just relaxation going on here. When one hand is being massaged and relaxing, the other hand is getting a gentle, rhythmic, vigorous, workout. The muscles, tendons, and ligaments in your working hand are all being used as you squeeze, press, and kneed the left hand. This is great exercise. My clients with arthritis and carpal tunnel have found that their symptoms actually reduce when they use this massage technique a few times a day!

Oh, but there is more. A healing art called reflexology has been used for centuries. According to reflexology, there are points and regions on the hands and feet that correspond to areas of the body and organs. My clients report that they find themselves pressing on or massaging specific areas of their hand or foot, just naturally, with not specific intent. Often, when we look at a reflexology chart, we see that the specific spot in the hand or foot that they were drawn to press or massage is precisely the spot that corresponds to a body area or organ where they have had illness or problems. This is not scientific evidence. This is simply an interesting anecdotal report. However, since I find no negative side effects to gentle hand massage, I think it is interesting to entertain the possibility of other positive benefits.

I mention the hand massage first because most people who have two hands can do this exercise. (I have clients with only one hand who accomplish similar results pressing their one hand on and against a wooden or plastic ball or rounded surface.) The next type of massage may require some creativity for some people to implement. Let's explore the foot massage. First, I will comment on massage for those who can reach their feet. I recommend that you sit in bed with support for your back.

Sometimes it is best with a pillow tucked under your butt so that you can lean forward more comfortably. Many people find it easier to move one foot within reach while the other foot hangs off the side of the bed. Some people are comfortable with both feet within reach. One position is NOT better than the other. The best position is the one that works for you and is comfortable (especially on your back). So, there you are, sitting, back supported, and comfortable. Now you can enjoy your foot massage. You will find that you can press and squeeze harder on the foot than on the hand. You may want to use your knuckles to get the right pressure on your foot while still being gentle on your fingers. Since your feet are used to carrying your weight, it may feel good to actually pound gently on your heels. Your toes however are more delicate. You may like to pull gently and press on the pads, just like on the fingers.

What if you cannot reach your feet? What if you are quite far from them indeed? Here is where another clever client has helped us all out. (There probably are fancy tools in specialty health catalogues for this purpose, but I find this client's idea works great.) Get a wooden spoon. You can choose a short or long handled spoon, depending on how far you need it to reach. The weight, smooth texture, and shape of a simple wooden spoon makes the perfect tool for tapping, pressing, and massaging your feet if you cannot reach. You can use the rounded tip of the spoon to press with specific pressure in one spot. You can softly tap your arch with the flattened round bottom of the spoon. When firmer pounding would feel good on your heel, you can use the edge of the spoon. Once you have gently relaxed and stimulated your feet with tapping, pressing, and gentle pounding, you can use the same spoon to apply cream to your feet. Put a dab of cream on the back of the spoon and apply with gentle circles. The side of the spoon will slip, sometimes with a giggle, between your toes. Enjoy. You and your feet deserve it.

Oh, but there is more. While you are giving yourself a nice foot massage in whatever fashion works for you and your body, you are also doing something else very important. You are stretching your low back, upper back, hamstrings, and inner thighs. Since you are massaging both feet, you are getting an even symmetrical stretch on both sides of your body. Feel it. Breathe into the stretch as you reach for your foot. Easy, easy, only stretch as much as is comfortable.

What is happening to your upper back, shoulders, arms, and hands while you are giving yourself a foot massage? They are all working and using the muscles of your upper body. Make sure that you alternate hands and use your right and left hands when you work on your feet. This will help you to work the muscles on both sides of your

upper body. You can increase the strength and stamina of your shoulders, arms, and hands just by enjoying more frequent foot massages. It is kind of nice how everything is connected.

Weekly Worksheet

Today's date _____

This week's goals (or goals)

Now you are gathering many choices as to HOW to meet your needs. You have many things to try out. It is time to focus in on what you want to DO this week. Would it be good for you to choose a goal in all three areas of feelings, food, and fitness? Would it be better for you to focus on one or two areas. Think about it. I do not have a recommendation. YOU are the expert on you. What would work best for you?

*This week, in the areas of **Feelings, Thoughts, or Attitudes**, I will focus on:*

*This week, in the areas of **Food, Eating, or Nutrition**, I will focus on:*

*This week, in the areas of **Fitness, Activity, or Movement**, I will focus on:*

Weekly Lessons:

Motivation That Works!

Introduction

This week, as on many weeks, we will start out with an internal focus and review of how you FEEL about the week that just passed. We will continue to look at your motivation for doing what you do... more particularly ... finding your motivation for doing the tasks in life that you need to accomplish. Our usual habit of pushing harder or using more will power to try to accomplish tasks is exhausting and really does not work. Here you will find another way to look at the tasks in your life and a way to enjoy getting them done. When I talk about exercise, again I will be giving you an emotional and physical exercise that will affect many aspects of your life. I hope you enjoy this new exercise. Finally, you will get a worksheet for you to practice using some of these concepts in your own life.

This is your life. Experience it. Make it work for you.

Beginning Worksheet

Today's date _____

As you get started on this weeks workbook lesson, it will be helpful to focus internally. What is going on INSIDE of you. Before you continue onto the rest of this week's workbook lesson, you may want to tune in and reflect on your past week. Here are some things you may want to write on IF you choose to write. If you don't choose to write, you may just want to think about these things. You can do whatever you choose. This is your life. This is your workbook. You choose.

Possible topics to write or think on...

1.) *Thoughts on how I am feeling NOW (after last week) as I approach this week's learning experience:*

2.) *Actions, from last week that helped my healthy living:*

3.) *Actions, from last week that I regret:*

4.) *How could I have changed last week's goals to be more helpful? (I will try to remember these concepts as I set goals for this week):*

5.) *Some thoughts on what I learned from last week:*

Article

YOU CAN'T PUSH A ROPE

I would like you to picture a rope lying on the floor in front of you. If you wanted the rope to move, you could push it by one end. But you wouldn't do that. The rope would just bunch up in a tangled pile from that end. If you wanted to move the rope, you would PULL it. With very little effort you could move the entire rope with a single tug. When you think of motivating yourself to do anything, I want you to remember one thing: You can't PUSH a rope. You gotta PULL it!

Whatever is on your list of self-improvement, you will find more effective motivation when you PULL yourself towards your goals by noticing how good it feels when you accomplish your goal. When you eat something healthy, notice your sustained energy in the hours that follow. When you exercise, pay attention to the joy of moving your body. When you choose not to spend money, appreciate your reduced stress from lower credit card bills. Pull yourself toward your goals by increasing your awareness of what feels good about your new choices. This focuses on the benefit, not the task.

Too often we try to motivate ourselves with negative motivation. I hear people say: "When you get disgusted enough you will do something about it." This kind of thinking only encourages self-loathing. It eats away at your self-esteem. When you feel bad about yourself, you are least likely to have motivation to take care of yourself. Sometimes we try to motivate ourselves by thinking: "I should do this" or "I just need will power to do this". When you try to push yourself to do things with 'should' or 'will power', it is like pushing a rope. Pushing is exhausting. It focuses on the effort instead of on the benefit.

What do you want to motivate yourself to do? Do you want to feel better about your body? Do you want to eat healthier? Do you want to include regular exercise in your daily life? Do you want better relationships with your friends and family? Do you want to manage your time or money better? Do you want to stop procrastinating?

What would PULL you toward your goals? Think about how good it will feel to take an action. Think of the relief you get when you complete a task. Think about the pleasure you will get from your accomplishment. Getting more of that good feeling IS a great motivation. When seeking motivation, focus on the enjoyment or benefit from accomplishing the steps that lead toward your goal. You will not be pushing with will power. You will be pulling yourself toward your goals with pleasure!

Example

Donna

Donna had trouble with messes and procrastination. The dishes used to pile up in the sink, the taxes were done late every year, it was difficult to force herself to get to exercise class. In other words, she was a normal human being. Each day would begin with a question: "What do I have to do today?" You can hear the drudgery in this question even as you read it. It does not feel good. Where is the pleasure and the enjoyment? Donna needed a new question. She opened her mind to the possibilities as she said: "I wonder what new question I will think of." A new question did surface. This new question changed her life. Instead of asking what she had to do, she asked herself, "What do I want to give myself today?" Donna gave herself the pleasure of eating breakfast in a clean kitchen with flowers on the counter instead of dishes. She enjoyed the relief she would feel when the taxes were done. She focused on her friends, the music, and the joy of movement when she was participating in her exercise class. The question, "What do I want to give myself today?" made it easier to accomplish the tasks of life because she is focused on and motivated by the pleasures of life.

Exercise

"I'm weight training!" and "I'm doing aerobics!"

You talk to yourself all the time. Everybody does. When you pay attention to the way you talk to yourself, you can avoid negative self-talk. Most of us were taught to criticize ourselves in order to find motivation to change. The problem is that it does not work. Self-criticism destroys your self-esteem and reduces your motivation for self-care. Stop trying to badger yourself into exercising. Instead of pushing yourself to exercise with criticism, you can learn to PULL yourself toward more movement by appreciating your body.

Listen to the way you talk to yourself as you go through your daily life. When you get up out of a chair and find yourself straining, you might find that you criticize yourself like this: "Gees, how did I get so big. I can hardly lift myself up. What a slug I have become. Etc." If you hear thoughts like this in your head, welcome to the human race. Self-criticism is normal. It is just not helpful. Thoughts like this will drain away your self-esteem and your motivation to take care of yourself. These thoughts hurt.

The next time you find yourself struggling to get out of a chair, I want you to remember something. When you lift your body weight and it is difficult, you are exercising your muscles very strenuously. You are weight training. Some people buy special equipment in order to work their muscles. You have your weight training equipment available all the time. Yes, this is a challenge. It is also an opportunity. Next time you push hard to lift your body weight, don't criticize yourself, instead APPRECIATE YOURSELF. Say to yourself: "I am doing weight training!" When you appreciate your efforts and take pride in the work you do, your self-esteem benefits. You boost your motivation to take care of yourself. These appreciative thoughts help.

Now, think about walking up a flight of stairs, up a hill, or even through the mall. Do you get out of breath? Do you get out of breath walking around the mall? It is so natural to criticize yourself at times like this. Frustration wells up when you want to get from here to there and your breathing will not let you. At times like this, it can feel like you are trapped by your body, like your body will not let you live your life. It is easy to feel bad about your body, your low stamina, yourself. Can't you just feel your energy and hope draining away?

There is another way of looking at the situation. First, I need to give you a definition. "Aerobic Exercise: Any exercise or rhythmic movement that causes the participant to breathe rapidly." Think for a moment about this definition. It does not say that you must be wearing spandex or standing in a health club fitness class in order to do aerobics. It says that anytime you breathe rapidly you are doing aerobics. Yes, whenever you find yourself

breathing heavily on the staircase, on a hill, or in the mall, you are doing aerobics. This is a good thing. There is no reason to criticize yourself just because you do your aerobics more often than other people do. You can choose to appreciate yourself for using your muscles so well that you are participating in your aerobic training. And, the more often you let your body experience your aerobic training, the more fit you will become.

Gradually, your body will be able to move farther and faster. Yeah, you may breathe heavily when you move around. Good for you! Change the way you think about your body. Tell yourself: "I'm doing aerobics!" Appreciate your efforts. You will feel better. Feeling better keeps you moving.

Weekly Worksheet

Changing "To Do" into "To Give"

Your "To Do List" is an example of pushing. Start out noticing your usual list of things to do.

Example Tasks:

1. Go grocery shopping
2. Workout in the morning
3. Return phone calls

Now, translate these tasks into your list of things to GIVE yourself. You will need to think of the BENEFIT you get when the task is accomplished. Pretty soon, you will begin to think of the benefit from doing the task almost like a reflex. It will be easier to PULL yourself toward doing the tasks.

Your "To Give List" will PULL you toward your accomplishments

Example GIFTS:

1. Give myself foods I like to enjoy at home & for lunch
2. Give myself the boost of energy & confidence
3. Give myself the relief I feel when I finished the phone calls

You get the idea. You are learning to think about tasks in a new way...

Instead of focusing on the task, you are leaning to focus on the reward or PLEASURE from having the task done! You are PULLING yourself toward your goals instead of pushing. Big Difference!

My GIFTS to myself ...

You can practice this concept as it fits into your own life. Change "things to do" in your life into "things to GIVE yourself"!

"To Do"

"To GIVE myself"

The GIFT of healthy eating

Yes, this works with the tasks in your life. And taking care of yourself is one of the tasks in your life. Think about building your healthy eating style. Are there ways you could PULL yourself toward improved nutrition? You might focus on ENJOYING a nice lunch, instead of focusing on the task of packing your lunch. Think of GIVING yourself the tasty dinner you deserve, instead of concentrating on the task of cooking. The only difference is how you think about things. It can make all the difference in the world.

What gifts would you like to give yourself when it comes to your healthy eating style?

Weekly Lessons:

Have I Eaten Enough?

Introduction

When you get the mid-afternoon munchies...

When you feel like an evening snack...

Ask yourself:

Have I eaten enough today?

Of course, I mean have you eaten enough fruits and vegetables. I suggest that you respond to hunger or cravings (or even just the munchies) by asking this question. Have you eaten enough today? Think briefly about the fruits and vegetables you enjoyed today. Most people find that they have not eaten the '5 a day' minimum that is recommended. If that is true for you, eat some! Enjoy salads in summer, vegetable soup in winter, a big juicy apple. What a great gift to give your body.

There is no need to carry a list of 'off limits' foods in your head. There are no 'off limits' foods. There is just your body's need for good hearty nutritious foods. When you eat enough fruits and vegetables, you simply will not have as much appetite left to satisfy.

*Have you eaten enough today?
Well then, eat some fruits and vegetables.
Your body will appreciate it!*

After years and years of being told that you are overweight because you eat too much, did you ever think somebody would tell you to eat more? Well, it is happening today. I am telling you that to build your healthy eating style, you may need to eat more. During this process, we will focus on what you should eat, instead of what you should not eat. There is NO RESTRICTED eating in this process. You are encouraged to eat foods that are good for your health, not to avoid any particular foods. You are encouraged to be more aware of when you are satisfied, not to limit portions.

*It takes every minute
of every hour
of every day
to NOT eat something.*

*It takes just a moment
to eat something healthy.*

When you focus on selecting and eating all the wonderful tasty foods that are good for you, your time and energy will be spent eating healthy and enjoying your food. Many people 'get the munchies in the evening. If you are one of those people, ask yourself: "Have I eaten enough today?" "Did I eat enough fruit and veggies?" "Did I eat when I was hungry?" "How was my nutrition?" If you realize that you didn't eat enough veggies, you could have a salad or bowl of vegetable soup. If you notice that you were low on protein today, you could have a high protein snack. If you realize that you were hungry and had nothing to eat, you could plan a way to avoid that situation in the future.

The recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables per day is FIVE. I call these foods the "live foods". Few people get enough live foods in the course of the day. If you want to eat healthier, eat more fruits and vegetables. This sounds like a simple goal to achieve. This is not a simple goal. This goal, like so many lifestyle goals, is much more complicated than it seems at first glance. Be prepared to go through a process of trying things that sometimes work, and sometimes don't. If you planned on eating more fruits and veggies, but somehow it just didn't work out. Welcome to the human race! Be patient with yourself. Consider it a mystery. Work on solving the mystery, taking one step at a time.

Ask yourself questions like these:

- Do I have access to fruits and veggies? You may need to change the way you shop and store your produce. This could involve reworking your entire schedule to include a different shopping pattern. You may need to learn new ways of ordering food at restaurants or come up with better ways of packing your lunch.
- Do I have enjoyment-based motivation to eat your fruits and veggies? You may not be able to motivate yourself just because "it is good for you", but you can motivate yourself with foods that taste and look appetizing. Find delicious ways to enjoy these healthy foods, then you will eat them because you enjoy them. Keep a beautiful fruit bowl on your table or desk, then you will eat fruit because it looks so tasty.
- Are there any problems with eating fruits and veggies that I need to solve? Some people have digestive problems, mouth or tooth pain, gas, etc. That does not mean you need to give up on getting your healthy "live food". Get creative. Try fruits and veggies that are new to you. Experiment with food combinations and time of day that you eat. If you have gas, try Beano(tm) (a natural food enzyme that you eat with your food that helps digestion and reduce gas).

This type of problem solving is part of the process of 'back up, don't beat up'. You will plan to eat better foods. Sometimes you will. Those are times to notice what helped you to take care of yourself. Sometimes you will not eat as you had planned. Those are the times to back up and think about what got in the way. Writing may be a useful tool as you think through these problems. It can help you respect how complicated the process of change is. Writing can help you appreciate the effort that you put into eating healthier. It is worth the effort to include more fruits and veggies in your day. If you feel like you really want to make a difference in the way you eat, pay attention to what you DO (rather than what you want to avoid). Think about what foods you want to INCREASE. Don't think about limiting or eliminating foods.

When you get the munchies, ask yourself: "Have I eaten enough today?" The munchies are not the problem. The fact that you may need better nutrition and more fruits and vegetables is one of the problems. This can be a rather enjoyable problem to solve. Get some tasty and nutritious food and enjoy it. Whether you are eating for fuel or for entertainment, savor your food. When the next bite is not as delicious as the last, ask yourself: "Why eat it?" You can answer that question and do whatever you choose.

Beginning Worksheet

Today's date _____

As you get started on this weeks workbook lesson, it will be helpful to focus internally. What is going on INSIDE of you. Before you continue onto the rest of this week's workbook lesson, you may want to tune in and reflect on your past week. Here are some things you may want to write on IF you choose to write. If you don't choose to write, you may just want to think about these things. You can do whatever you choose. This is your life. This is your workbook. You choose.

Possible topics to write or think on...

1.) Thoughts on how I am feeling NOW (after last week) as I approach this week's learning experience:

2.) Actions, from last week that helped my healthy living:

3.) Actions, from last week that I regret:

4.) How could I have changed last week's goals to be more helpful?

(I will try to remember these concepts as I set goals for this week):

5.) Some thoughts on what I learned from last week:

Article

First, Eat Something Healthy

You're hungry,
or you have the 'munchies',
or you just want 'something',
or you have a craving.

You want to eat. You have paid attention to what you need emotionally. When it seemed like you needed comfort, you already did comfort yourself in nonfood ways. When you needed relief from boredom, you did something interesting. When you needed to tune-out, you actually did tune in to the issue at hand, even if it was just a little bit. And, even after paying attention to your emotional needs:

You're still hungry,
or you still have the 'munchies',
or you still just want 'something',
or you still have a craving.
You still want to eat.
Now, what do you do?

If tuning in to your emotional needs did not give you the information necessary to take care of yourself, maybe you can get more information if you take away the question of 'to eat or not to eat' all together. Next, try something with which you are more familiar. Eat. Whenever you are actually stomach-growling hungry (even if your mind tells you that you should not be hungry), EAT. Only, I suggest that you eat something healthy. I recommend that you **HAVE A HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE AVAILABLE TO YOU AT ALL TIMES**. If you were taking care of a little one for the day, you would always have healthy snacks stuffed in your bag, just in case the little one got hungry. Give yourself the same care.

When you are not actually stomach-growling hungry, but you really want something anyway; it is all right to EAT. Just eat something healthy first. Think about your day, ask yourself: "Have I eaten enough fruits and veggies?" "Have I eaten enough protein?" "Have I had enough water?" Think about the nutritious foods you still need today, and give yourself the food your body needs.

After you have eaten something healthy, give your body and mind some time to react. (It takes twenty minutes for food you have eaten to affect the glucose levels in your blood so that your brain gets the chemical signal that you are full.) Then, when a little time has gone by, you will notice that your craving is gone or your craving is still tugging at you.

If your craving is gone after eating something healthy,
move on with your day or your evening.
If your craving is still tugging at you, **EAT WHATEVER YOU WANT**.

Yes, that is what I said, eat whatever you want. There is only one catch. It is very important that you **REALLY ENJOY WHAT YOU EAT**. Savor every bite. Especially since you are eating to satisfy a craving, this is the time to savor your food and **NOTICE WHEN YOU ARE SATISFIED**. When you are satisfied, why eat anymore? This is a comfortable time to stop eating. There is no wrestling match with your will power, no restriction. You just ate some healthy foods and some 'entertainment' food. That's fine.

Example

I want you to imagine this scenario:

1. You had a craving and you tuned in to your emotional needs. When you discovered "What was going on here?", you addressed your emotional need. Sometimes, at that point, the craving went away. You would be done coping with your craving. But sometimes the craving persists. Fine. Cope with it instead of fighting it.
2. You continued to crave and you ate something healthy first. Sometimes, eating the healthy food ends the craving. You are done. Sometimes the craving persists. Fine. Cope with it instead of fighting it.
3. You still crave and you ate what you craved. This time, instead of eating guiltily in the closet, slipping the food past your awareness and your taste buds, this time you tasted and savored every bite. You were present and aware. You can do what you CHOOSE, instead of what you are compelled to do.
4. You enjoyed what you ate, and stopped when you were satisfied. No big deal. It is just some food. You enjoyed it. And you are comfortably full without overeating. No will power required.

Can you imagine it? How would you feel? Isn't this much better than an uncontrolled guilt filled 'binge'? Would you end up eating more healthy foods and less entertainment foods when you cope with cravings this way? Would you feel less guilt? Can you see that there is NO DEPRIVATION in this way of coping with cravings?

There is no restriction imposed. When you cope with cravings by meeting your emotional needs and then eating something healthy first, you are tuning in to what you need. You are taking care of yourself instead of forcing yourself to use willpower and stay 'on a program'. Because you are internally motivated and you are not on a program, you cannot go 'off the program'. If you try to cope with cravings this new way, and you don't do as you intended ... that's all right. You are in the middle of learning this new way of coping. There will be another craving. You will get another chance to practice this new way of coping with your next craving.

Cravings can be scary. Especially if you have felt wildly out of control with your eating in the past. Practice this new way of coping. Let some time pass. Gradually, you will be less scared. When your next craving hits you, take a breath, tune in, and take care of yourself. You deserve it.

Exercise

I am going to suggest a simple exercise.
Notice and appreciate when you eat more fruits and vegetables.
That's it.
That's all.

With this one simple exercise you will naturally begin to do the problem solving necessary to include more fruits and veggies in your life. Appreciating when you eat more fruits and veggies will make you WANT to eat more. Then you will begin to change your shopping so you can buy more. You will get a nice lunch bag so you can carry healthy foods to lunch. You will find healthy options at the restaurants you visit. When you notice and appreciate your healthy eating, you will do it more often!

As you eat enough of the live healthy foods, you probably will have fewer cravings. (When you do get cravings, try eating something healthy first.) Many cravings are caused by nutritional deficiencies. By eating more nutritious foods, you will remove the biological urge behind cravings. Many cravings are caused by psychological reactions to dieting. When you eat something healthy first, but **DON'T IMPOSE RESTRICTED EATING**, then you are less likely to trigger a reaction to dieting.

This exercise can be tricky. You might accidentally turn it into a food diary. Don't. That could make you feel like you are on a diet and dieting causes binges. No, don't write down everything you eat. Instead, just note on your weekly worksheet when you ate fruits or veggies. Give yourself a star. Buy some fun stickers and give yourself a sticker anytime you eat fruits and veggies. **APPRECIATE** every time you are successful in nourishing your beautiful body! That is your simple exercise. It is very powerful. With this one simple exercise, you can improve your nutrition without triggering old hurtful dieting reactions.

Weekly Worksheet

Have you eaten enough today?

Today's Date: _____

Do you like stickers? Then get some fruit and vegetable stickers. On any day that you eat more fruits and vegetables than you used to eat, give yourself a sticker. You can give yourself a red star for a fruit and a green star for vegetables. Just draw stars if you want. Note your success!

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>

Weekly Lesson:

To Weigh or Not to Weigh

Introduction

So, here you are, trying to focus on healthy eating and fitness. You may be having a tough time imagining healthy living without a focus on weight loss. You may believe that weight loss as a primary goal is unhelpful for you. In either case, you still have to answer a question. Are you going to weigh yourself?

This is actually a very complicated topic. There are lots of emotions and reactions involved. There are conscious and unconscious factors. And the biological and physiological aspects to body weight are so intricate that science has yet to figure them out. How can we answer the question of whether it is constructive or destructive to weigh yourself?

Let's apply some logic to this complicated question. I believe the logic will shine a light on the truth of your experiences. Anyone who has ever participated in a weight loss program will be able to follow the logic in this lesson. At the end of the lesson you should be closer to making your personal choice ... to weigh or not to weigh ... that is the question...

Beginning Worksheet

Think of a time when you were working toward weight loss. Remember a time when you had really stuck to your program - even when it was VERY difficult to do so. Now, imagine you got on the scale and you do not lose any weight. Or imagine that you gained a pound after all that effort. What would your emotional reaction be?

How do you think this experience would affect your attempts at healthy eating?

Do you remember a time when you "cheated" and you still lost weight? Did you feel like you "got away with it"? What kind of effect did that have on your healthy eating?

Tune in and think realistically about your own personal reaction to weighing yourself. This will be very useful information as you look at the question: "To Weigh or Not to Weigh?"

Article

Think about a time when you were trying to lose weight. You may think about today, yesterday, or a decade ago. Remember getting on the scale (at a group meeting, a doctor's office, or in your own home). Logically, there are three possible outcomes on the scale: 1. You lose weight 2. You gain weight 3. Your weight stays the same. Of course, how you react to the scale depends very much on the way you feel about your eating before the weigh-in.

Logically, there are three possibilities to describe your eating while trying to lose weight:

1. You stuck to your eating plans
2. You blew your eating plans
3. Sometimes you stuck to your eating plans and sometime you did not.

Let's look at the likely reactions to weighing yourself, depending on how hard you worked on your eating plans.

Possibility #1. You stuck to your eating plans.

First, we will look at the most frequent experience in the beginning of weight loss plans. After doing just as you planned for the week, you hopped up on the scale, and you lost weight. For the first week it probably was not that hard to do. You were psyched. You probably paid a lot of money for this plan. Even if you did not spend a penny, at the very least you had invested emotionally in this plan to lose weight. Now, after the first week, the scale told you that your weight was down. Good. All your efforts were worth it. You would stick to your eating plan. (But ... sometimes ... when the scale gave you good news ... didn't you just have to celebrate and eat something 'illegal'? Oh, yeah, that will be talked about in possibility #2 and #3. Let's get back to possibility #1, sticking to your eating plans)

Later on, however, the story changed. It became more and more difficult to have the will power to stick to your eating plan. You did stick to it though. And, after all that effort, you needed a reward. You worked too hard and you needed to see results on that scale. How would you feel if you saw that you had lost two pounds? Good. You probably would feel satisfied that your efforts were worth it. However, you and I both know that the human body does not react to caloric deprivation with sustained weight loss every week. The body adapts to the lower caloric input and eventually weight loss plateaus. **It always does.** Every time. How would you feel when the scale told you that, after being so 'good' and watching what you ate all week, you had lost only a half-pound, or stayed the same? What if, after all that effort, you had actually gained weight? It happens. It actually happens quite often.

If you did not get the results you wanted, what do you think weighing yourself would do to your motivation? Would you redouble your efforts, eating less and exercising more until the scale gave you the results you wanted? Many people do exactly that. (This is not the most common reaction. But for the few who do take this path, this is often the beginning of an eating disorder.) Or, would you react like most people do after working hard and getting no results? Most people lose their motivation and quickly or gradually stop working on losing weight. Unfortunately, since most people inexorably link healthy eating and exercise to weight loss plans, most people also give up on their healthy lifestyle when they give up on weight loss.

Possibility #2. You blew your eating plans.

Next, we will look at another frequent scene as an approach is made to the scales. How many times have you been waiting in a line to be weighed and wondering if you 'got away with it'? What if the scale 'catches' you and reports that you did not lose any weight or even that you gained weight. How would that make you feel? Would this focus on the external measurement on the scale help you to tune into your inner self and figure out WHY you blew your eating plans? Would it help you understand yourself, your needs, or your life any better? Or, would

this reprimand simply encourage you to 'work harder'? However, if you worked harder, you would really need a reward when you got to the scale next time. What if, after working really hard all week, you gain weight when next you were weighed? (Oh, yeah, that is possibility #1. Let's get back to possibility #2.) So, in the next scenario, imagine that you ate in unhealthy ways and still lost weight, what would your reaction be to that? Would this positive report make you feel like it was fine to eat unhealthy? There were no negative consequences. After all, you did not gain weight. Could it be that this focus on your weight might take your focus OFF your nutrition?

Possibility #3. Sometimes you stuck to your eating plans and sometime you did not.

If you lost weight under these conditions, how would you feel? Would you feel like you 'got away with it'? Perhaps you do not need to pay attention to your eating that much. Maybe next week you will 'cheat' a little more and see if you get away with it. (Oh, yeah, that is possibility #2.) What if you stay the same or gain weight under these conditions? Would you need to get back on track and follow your food plan even more intently? Then, after all that effort, you would probably really need a reward from the scale when you get on it next time. (Oh, yeah, that is possibility #1.)

This is starting to sound so circular. Actually, most dieters report feeling trapped in exactly these destructive circular patterns or cycles. At times, when a dieter is temporarily in the 'high' end of the cycle, things feel great. Temporarily. As the cycle continues, there is much pain, self-esteem bashing, feelings of failure, reduced awareness of the self, and the person becomes more and more distant from constructive motivations for healthy living. For the person who is working on an eating plan, there are negative psychological reactions lurking at every weigh-in. I have been working with people who want to lose weight since I was 19 years old, when I was the youngest "Diet Workshop" instructor in the nation. In twenty-five years of hearing people's reactions to getting on the scale, I have NEVER known of anyone who had a positive reaction to the experience. Perhaps, there are better ways to measure the success of our efforts toward healthy living.

Example

There are better weighs to measure success!

Doris had been on and off of diets for decades. When she lost weight, she felt like a success, regardless of the nutrition in her eating recently. Losing weight was what mattered. If she gained weight, no matter HOW HEALTHY she had been eating, she felt like a failure.

As she did more reading, she realized that MANY things affect her weight. Water retention, reactions to medication, hormonal changes, and so many things would cause her weight to go up or down. Gradually she realized that her eating was only one factor in her daily weight.

She also realized that she was driving herself crazy hoping on the scale all the time. WHY was she doing that? Hummm? That is a good question. Doris discovered that she was looking to the scale for a measure of success. Was there some other way to measure success that was not so emotionally draining? Was there another way that would not make her feel so out of control and hopeless?

Yes, Doris decided to write down everything she ate. Then she would know if she was successful at healthy eating. Well ... that did not work. She began to feel like she was back on the same old program that had not worked the last seven times she had tried it. There must be a better way. So Doris decided to encourage herself. She would give herself a green star every time she ate a nice amount of vegetables in a day. She gave herself a red star when she ate more fruits. This was cool. She really enjoyed seeing all the stars on her calendar. She realized

she was choosing fruits and veggies more often because of this system for appreciating her success. This worked for Doris.

Exercise

A key to choosing the right way to measure your success is to figure out how much appreciation you need and how much time you want to put into it. Answer these simple questions to help decide what is right for you:

1.) Do you want to commit time to this process of measuring your success? Will it help you to feel more involved and feel like you are making progress if you spend a little more time recording your successes or writing in a journal?

2.) Are you so busy and stressed that you literally only have a second or two to appreciate your efforts? Would it be better for you to take a moment in the morning to think about yesterday and note your successes? Or would it feel better to take a moment at night and appreciate the successes of that day?

Look at your reactions to the above questions. Pay attention to how you feel and how you react. One week you may just do what Doris did and give yourself stars once a day. Another week you may want to journal extensively noting several of your healthy eating choices and movement successes. You **MUST** have a way to appreciate your successes, or else it will feel like you don't have any. You choose **HOW** to appreciate your success, and you keep choosing different ways as your life changes. Everybody deserves appreciation, especially you. This awareness of your **ACTIONS** of healthy living will motivate you to continue!

Weekly Worksheet

Week at a Glance

Do you want to record your successes in a moments time? Good. Then just give yourself stars on this week at a glance worksheet. You can choose your focus. Do you want to increase your fruits and veggies? You could use red and green stars or that. Do you want to focus on drinking more water? A blue star works well for water. What about movement or exercise? Do you want to give yourself a gold star for the days that you get moving?

Some of my clients have enjoyed getting all sorts of stickers that they personally enjoy. There are zillions of choices. If this will make things more fun for you, then go get your stickers. Sometimes the investment in the stickers will help you to use this system of measuring your success.

Now, here is the good part. Make sure to look back over the weeks. When you need a feeling of success, just flip through the pages and pages that represent so many healthy living choices. Seeing all those stars or stickers will really help you feel great!

Today's Date: _____

<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>

My Success Journal

Do you want to invest more time and energy into recording your successes. Try a success journal. Each morning you think of yesterday and note your successes at self-care. Or each evening you take a few minutes to write on the self-care ACTION of today. You tune in and find out which time of day is best for you. Experiment. Try morning and then try evening. Do some problem solving to get one time of day to work out for you.

When you have your success journal started, go back and read parts of it. NOTICE all the wonderful self-care things you do. The act of appreciating your self-care will help keep you motivated to continue. Everybody needs praise. Praise yourself. It will keep you going in the right direction.

More Ways to Track Your Success

I recommend that every one fills out this Questionnaire about once a month or so. It will help you notice the improvements in health and function of your body. THAT is a real measure of your success.

1) *How far can you walk comfortably at this time? At what pace can you walk?*

2) *If you climb stairs, how is your breathing when you climb one flight of stairs? How about two?*

3) *What is the intensity and duration of exercise that you are comfortable with now?*

4) *How is your nutrition? Are you eating more fruits and vegetables?*

5) Are you choosing heart healthy fats when you eat fats?

6) Are you drinking the water your body needs?

7) Are you experiencing more self-appreciation and less body loathing?

8) What is your resting heart rate? One morning upon awakening, before you even get up, just lay there and take your pulse. That is your resting heart rate.

9) How are your cholesterol and blood pressure?

10) If you have a medical condition like diabetes, glaucoma, arthritis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, or one of the many other conditions that improve with fitness, notice the current status of your condition. Is there any improvement since last month?

Your thoughts, feelings, and reactions:
