

10 TRANSFORMATIONAL HABITS



HABIT #1 – START WITH WATER

I found this habit easy to implement into my daily routine. Every morning without fail, before coffee or food, I drink a large glass of water. It gets everything working right and feeling right.

Water in the morning fires up your metabolism, hydrates you, helps your body flush out toxins, gives your brain fuel, and will make you feel better. If you do this for 60 days in a row you will move from discipline, which is hard, to being a habit, which is easy.

Bonus: Infused Water & Power Oatmeal



HABIT #2 – BRING YOUR OWN SNACKS

Cathi and I learned that bringing healthy whole food snacks to work made a positive impact on how we felt during the day. When you are not at home and you are not prepared, you will eat whatever you find...donuts, pastries, muffins, chocolate bars, soda. The Health Project doesn't target perfection, but using this habit eliminates junk and adds goodness at key times during the day. Fruits, vegetables and nuts gives you enough options. Say no to processed or refined "food like" snacks and say goodbye to sugar highs and lows. My "go to" snacks are apples, carrots with hummus, or mixed nuts. What has worked for you?

Bonus: Cocoa Energy Balls



HABIT #3 – BE ACTIVE DAILY (AEROBIC)

Every morning, after my large glass of water (habit #1) I make my coffee. As soon as I take my first sip of java, at that very moment, I decide how I am going to be active that same day. I do this every day.

Your body was designed to move! Our culture, and often our lifestyle choices, keep us inactive and in a steady state of decline. Incorporate your activity into things you already do. Walk on your lunch break, park 10 minutes away from your office and walk it in, during a commercial break on TV, see how many times you can walk up and down your stairs and never take the elevator. You get the idea. Start with 20 minutes a day as a discipline (which is hard), until it becomes a habit (which is easy), and then evaluate.

Consult a physician before starting any nutrition or exercise program.

HABIT #4 - EAT ONE GIANT SALAD EVERY DAY

This usually happens for us at lunch. If you make this a daily habit you ensure you get most of the micronutrients your body is craving. Also, stop adding prepared dressings. Instead add nothing or use oil (we use olive) and balsamic vinegar. Here is my typical salad: a quinoa or barley base, spinach, carrots, peppers, cucumber, pea pods, broccoli sprouts, cherry tomatoes, avocado, sunflower and pumpkin seeds. I eat this every day and I love it! If my schedule is unpredictable, and a "lesser" salad option is all I can have, I engage habit #2 and have vegetables and hummus for my snack.

Pro tip: To save time, at the beginning of the week, we cook a large quantity of the grain and chop a huge amount of all the "hard vegetables", add the seeds and keep them in the fridge. When it's time to make the salad, I can put this bad boy together in 3 minutes!

HABIT #5 - TAKE TIME FOR DAILY REFLECTION

This is beneficial to your overall health just like exercise or good nutrition. This creates a routine or ritual of thinking about the most important things in our lives like faith, family and friendships. It can also be helpful in lowering stress and anxiety each day which has many positive physical effects. You need a quiet place and can start with as little as 5 minutes a day. Reflection time allows your brain and your feelings to align to priorities in your life. It is so easy to lose perspective and focus.

I usually do this in the morning in my favourite chair. It can also be a good way to end your day. Here are a few ideas: just relax and breathe deeply for five minutes; write out 3 things you are thankful for; write out something that was great about your day; meditate on your attitude, actions or behaviours that you want to improve; read spiritual writings (I read a Psalm from the bible each morning).

HABIT #6 - AVOID SODA AND LIMIT FRUIT JUICE

I gave up Coke several years ago. I thought it couldn't be done BUT not only was it possible, it was easy. I no longer see it as something "missing" from my life. It packs a staggering 10-12 teaspoons of sugar per 355ml can. It is so sweet in fact, that they need to add chemicals to help you get it down. It can lead to obesity and Type 2 Diabetes. Google "what happens after I drink cola".

But why limit fruit juice (including 100% real)? Although pure juice would seem healthy at first glance, the ingestion of so much sugar (even though it is from fruit), causes a sugar high, followed by a sugar crash. The sugar high triggers the release of insulin into our blood stream and stores those calories as fat. One step towards eliminating juice is to dilute 100% juice (1/4 juice: 3/4 water). However, my strategy is if I want orange juice I eat an orange, if I want apple juice I eat an apple, and so on. The added micronutrients, antioxidants and fibre from real fruit win the day, every day of the year.

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HABIT #7 - DON'T BRING IT HOME

If you don't buy cookies, ice cream, chocolate bars and Doritos, you won't eat them. I am not against having an "unhealthy" snack from time to time, but moderation is a word that our culture has ignored or forgotten.

In our home, if we need a treat, we will reach for one square of 85% dark chocolate or our homemade cocoa energy balls. Our goal isn't perfection but rather a common sense approach that is sustainable.

I am not opposed to all treats (except for soda...see habit #6) but it is a proven fact that if it is in your cupboard or in your freezer, you will consume more and you won't be able to keep track. Even more dangerous to your health is having it visible on the counter. Save treats for an outing. The general rule is if you don't buy it you won't eat it. If you are reasonably healthy, indulging in unhealthy foods occasionally, is not going to harm you.

HABIT #8 - GIVE YOUR GUT A BREAK

Develop a pattern where you allow 10-12 hours between your last bite of food at night until your first bite of food in the morning. If you are eating nutritiously, you will have no difficulty doing this. Often we eat just because we are bored. This is a habit you can break. Start with 10 hours and work your way up 12 or even 14 hours. Some refer to this as intermittent fasting.

HABIT #9 - DETHRONE MEAT AS KING

Most of us have grown up with the idea that you haven't had a meal unless it included meat, and it is typically the key feature. Cathi and I have moved meat to the smallest feature of the meal and often we don't include it at all. When we choose meat, we typically avoid red meat, and always stick to lean meat or wild caught fish. It is also very rare that we will eat processed meat. None of the above needs to be eliminated entirely, although I would encourage creativity around trying to go a few days a week without any animal food products. There is life after meat.

I am asked often about how I get my protein if I am not eating very much meat. If you eat a wide array of vegetables, you will have adequate protein. For me, getting enough protein is vital, as I train hard for my running races. Protein is the key to recovery. I have found that the less meat I eat and the more vegetable protein I get, the quicker I recover. Other sources of protein are nuts, seed, chick peas, a myriad of other legumes along with raw hemp hearts.

Bonus: Vegan Lentil Chili

HABIT #10 - DAILY WEIGHT BEARING ACTIVITY & STRETCHING (STRENGTH)

This is different than habit #3, which is getting our heart rate elevated and in general, moving more. This habit becomes increasingly important as we age. Our bones strengthen as we challenge them. We are not looking to develop bigger muscles but rather keep them strong and limber. There are many good examples online but would suggest that we incorporate 10 minutes of weights and 10 minutes of stretching every day.

Examples of weights: These can all be done with just your own body weight. Air squats, lunges, push ups, plank, one legged routines for balance, calf raises, shoulder press (dumbbell, heavy book or any object would be fine), arm curls (use your water bottle).

Examples of stretching: deep breathing, walking, any form of yoga, legs swings. Be gentle and get your blood flowing.

I have found the most efficient way to get this done is to use them as a break from desk work. You can do this at the office or at home. Don't worry about what people think if they see you doing this. Start a "health" revolution!

OTHER HEALTHY TIPS:

- Eliminate refined flour and refined sugar
- Replace bread made with flour for organic sprouted grain bread
- Replace sandwiches with salads
- Replace milk with nut milk (easy to make your own almond milk)
- Replace cereal with oatmeal or home-made granola
- Use natural nut butter
- Buy local from the farmers market
- Start adding organic products



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