

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright pink long-sleeved athletic top and grey leggings, is captured in a dynamic stretching pose on a lush green lawn. She is leaning forward with her hands on her knees, looking directly at the camera with a warm smile. The background is a soft-focus park setting with green trees and a blurred figure in the distance.

Your Health

Eating Clean

Eating clean is a great way to hit the “refresh” button on your eating habits and take an active interest in what you feed your body. Clean eating is about trying to make the best and healthiest choices from each food group — and cutting back on refined grains and added salts and sugars.

Eating clean is not about dieting but nutrition. There is no need to count calories or give up entire food groups. Here are just a few strategies to help you eat clean:

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PYRAMID

The food pyramid was a graphic developed by the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services to help educate people on the basic food groups, the nutrients provided by these groups, and how to make the best eating choices.

The pyramid has since been joined by the Healthy Eating Plate, which indicates how much space on your plate a certain food group should hold. Both of these guidelines will help you make better eating choices.

SHOP THE OUTER RING OF THE GROCERY STORE

The freshest and best-for-you foods are generally located around the perimeter of the store (the bakery, produce, dairy cases, butcher and deli). This also will help you cut back on processed foods, which are loaded with preservatives and are generally higher in salt and sugar, which is not good for the heart.

Don't avoid the middle completely, however. You may need to visit specific aisles for other nutritious items such as peanut butter, cereals and dried fruits.

GO ORGANIC

According to the Organic Consumers Association, organic crops are “grown without chemical pesticides or fertilizers and organic livestock are raised without antibiotics, growth hormones or other drugs.”

Basically, organic food has not been genetically modified in any way. This means a healthier impact on your body.

PACK SNACKS

When we bring food with us, we not only control what we eat but how much we eat.

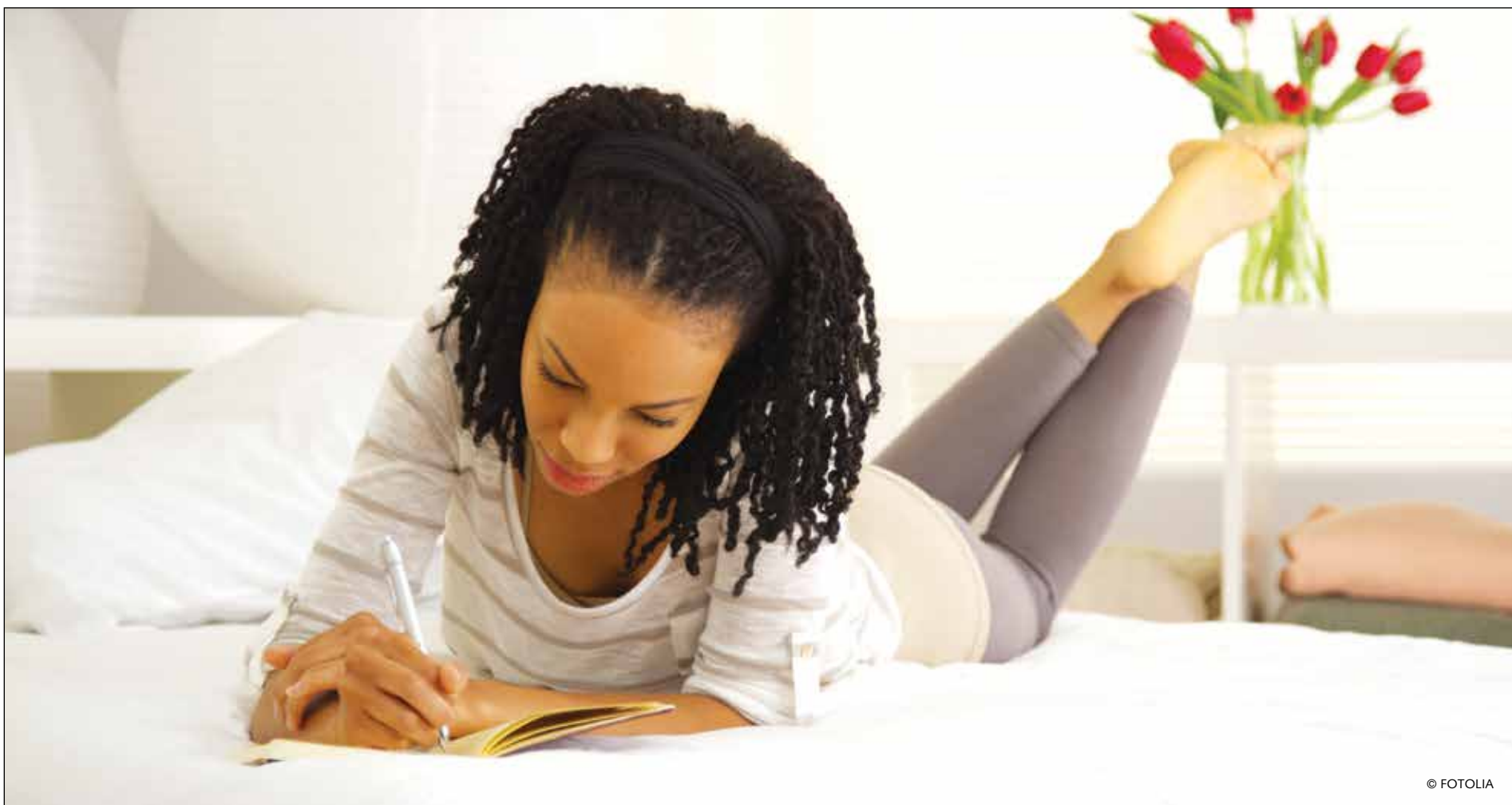
You will reach a point of hunger at which buying the loaded nachos for \$15 will seem like the best idea that ever was — filling your body with unnecessary preservatives and salt, not to mention wasting money that could have been spent elsewhere.

ADDRESS EMOTIONAL EATING ISSUES

Emotional eating involves consuming, abstaining or purging to fill an emotional need. It's a healthy behavior and should be addressed immediately.

If you or someone you know suffers from an eating disorder, please find help. You are not alone. Call the National Eating Disorders Association's toll-free, confidential helpline at 800-931-2237.





Don't Worry, Be Happy

If you want to feel better and improve your health, start focusing on the things that make you happy and ridding your life of negative energy. Harvard researchers compiled data from more than 200 studies and found a connection between happiness, optimism and life satisfaction with a lowered risk of cardiovascular disease.

Lower blood pressure and healthy body weight also were associated with a higher level of life satisfaction in this report. Here are just a few tips to living a happier life.

JOURNAL UNHAPPY THOUGHTS

When you feel yourself thinking negatively or feeling sad, write it down. Sometimes, feeling better about a situation

is just about feeling like you have something to say and saying it.

The important thing is to not let negative feelings fester. Plus, there is nothing like a newly sharpened pencil and colorful journal.

BREATHE

Meditating quiets the mind, and it is as simple as clearing your mind and focusing on

your breathing. If you feel uncomfortable meditating on your own, there are many great smartphone applications that take you through guided meditations.

Breathing deeply slows the heart rate and stabilizes blood pressure, which are both key in lowering your stress level.

LAUGHTER MORE

Surround yourself with peo-

ple who make you happy and purge negative people from your life. Toxic relationships will eventually affect your physical and mental health.

Laughing decreases stress hormones by triggering the release of endorphins — the “feel-good” chemicals. It also has been known to increase immune cells, improving your resistance to disease, according to the Mayo Clinic.

LEARN TO LOVE YOU

Resist comparing yourself to others. It inherently forces us to unnecessarily judge ourselves, and what we are doing (or not doing). This nasty little habit can lead to a lack of self-esteem.

Instead, acknowledge your own accomplishments and celebrate your achievements. Forgive yourself for mistakes you've made in the past.

Sleep Tight for Your Health



Studies show that poor sleep habits and chronic lack of sleep can have serious health implications, including weight gain, increased risk of type 2 diabetes, elevated blood pressure and depression.

This is to say nothing of how lack of sleep impacts your performance, memory and reflexes. Adopting healthy sleep habits — or sleep hygiene — can make a big difference in your quality of life.

If you are having difficulty either falling or staying asleep, consider re-evaluating any of the following healthy sleep habits. Remember, talk to a medical professional if your sleep problems persist.

KEEP A CONSISTENT SCHEDULE

Bedtimes are not just for kids. It is important to set a bedtime for yourself that is early enough to get at least seven hours of sleep. It is just as important to get up at the same time every day — even on weekends.

By staying consistent, you are setting your internal clock and will eventually start to wake around the same time without an alarm.

As important as consistency is, however, don't force it. If you lay in bed for 20 minutes with all devices off and no other distractions, you may be better off getting up. It is important that your brain associates your bed with sleep.

ADOPT A BEDTIME RITUAL

A great way to indicate to your body that it's time for sleep is to create a relaxing pre-bedtime routine. This

doesn't mean you need to take a bath with lavender bath salts every night (although that sounds amazing).

Choose a time when all screens get turned off. Perhaps read a book and put on pajamas you really enjoy. Establishing a pre-bedtime ritual also will help you stick to your bedtime.

EXERCISE DAILY

According to a study published by Mental Health and Physical Activity, 35 to 40 percent of the population has problems falling or staying asleep. The same study found that 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week improved people's sleep quality by 65 percent.

Physical activity is not only good for physical exertion but to release negative mental energy that becomes trapped — keeping us awake through stress.

EVALUATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Keeping the room at a comfortable, cool temperature improves sleep. Your bedroom should be quiet and relaxing. If there are things in the room that disrupt the quiet (such as a television) consider removing them.

Clutter also is a discreet lurker. Pick up everything off your floors, and make sure laundry is put away. You will be surprised how much a clean space can improve your sleep.



Heart Health

It's time to face the facts about your heart. Your heart is a muscle about the size of your fist that sends oxygen-rich blood throughout your body.

Like every other aspect of your body, your age can cause changes in your heart. As you get older, your heart cannot beat as fast as it once did during times of stress or physical activity, which is why we feel more tired more quickly.

SIGNS OF HEART DISEASE

According to the National Institute on Aging, and the American Heart Association, the signs and symptoms of heart disease or heart failure are as follows:

- Shortness of breath when active or at rest;
- Chest pain during physical activity that gets better when you rest;
- Chronic coughing;
- Feeling fatigue or light-headed;
- Nausea or lack of appetite;
- Confusion or impaired thinking;
- High heart rate;
- Cold sweats;
- Headaches; and
- Swelling in the ankles, feet, stomach or neck.

Early heart disease may not show any systems, however, or symptoms may not be severe enough for you to take notice. This is why regular physicals with your doctor are essential.

HEART DISEASE PREVENTION

There are a number of things you can do to prevent heart disease and keep your heart healthy.

- Stay active;
- Maintain a healthy weight;
- Practice a heart-healthy diet; and
- Don't smoke. (If you currently smoke, quit. It is never too late to benefit from quitting smoking.)

Staying Hydrated

According to Medical Daily, approximately 75 percent of the American population are functioning in a chronic state of dehydration.

Perhaps this is not surprising, given all the alternative beverages choices marketed to us from every direction, but we should be concerned.

Dehydration has deeply harmful side effects in so many aspects of our lives. The human body is made up of more than 60 percent water, and we lose water everyday through natural processes, such as urine, perspiration and breathing.

Yet stopping to take a sip of water is one of the most overlooked self-care tasks we can perform for ourselves daily. Water is essential for our bodies to function. It is needed to remove waste as well as carry nutrients and oxygen throughout our body.

In general, you should follow the 8x8 rule — eight, 8-ounce glasses of water per day. To make it easier, we have gathered several tips to help you make a more concerted effort to consume more water:

BRING WATER WITH YOU

Bring a water bottle everywhere you go. It saves time and money. Bottles with liquid



measurements indicated on the side make it easier to track your water intake, which is not only helpful but helps motivate those who are goal-oriented.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Lifestyle tracking has exploded in popularity in recent years, from tracking your steps, calories, sleep, and exercise to meditation and

household chores. Water consumption is no different.

Apps like Water Your Body allow you not only to track your consumption but keep track of your intake history. You can view the dates and time of every glass you've taken to help you understand your consumption patterns, and you also can create customized reminders to take a sip.

ADD FLAVORING

Water can be boring. Some people even complain about feeling nauseous drinking water. Make your water exciting! Lace your water with your favorite flavor.

Try and stay away from the flavoring agents you can purchase in stores, and opt for more natural additives, such as sliced cucumbers, watermelon chunks or mint.

TRY SPARKLING

Understand what it is about water that turns you off. For example, for many soda drinkers, what they're really after is the carbonation — and the flavoring and sugars are just along for the ride.

If you are an avid soda drinker, try sparkling water. When drinking your water with bubbles, you might find you reach for soda much less often.

Make Time for Exercise

You should perform some type of exercise each day. Research shows that daily movement and activity produces tremendous benefits to our health, including lowering our risk of all sorts of diseases, higher bone density and weight loss.

In short, being active has the opportunity to greatly improve life span as well as life quality.

PICK AN ACTIVITY YOU ENJOY

If you don't enjoy running, you will never climb out of bed every morning and hit the pavement. That's OK. Not everyone has to be a runner.

Picking an activity you genuinely like will make you want to do it. For so many of us, exercise has become a chore — one more thing to carve out time for, and completed on auto-pilot or not at all.

By participating in something that brings you joy, you will be fueling yourself physically and mentally.

HAVE A BUDDY

Exercising with someone can not only be motivational but helps make it fun. You can even pick a family activity, such as playing whiffle ball in the backyard with your kids.

Studies show that when we are active with even one other person, we are more likely to participate in that activity more often and for longer periods of time.

MOVE MORE

While practicing a specific activity or exercise routine is great, you also should try to



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re-train your brain into a “move more” mentality.

This is not just, “taking the stairs instead of the elevator” stuff. How many times do you circle a parking lot, hoping to find a spot just a little bit closer to the entrance? In a society that prioritizes time, we

are guilty of wasting it in the name of moving less.

FOCUS ON THE HABIT

Building the habit of exercising every day is just as important, if not more important, than the results you achieve. If you develop a

ritual or routine around your exercise, you are significantly more likely to make it habit.

Remember, this does not have to take a lot of time, and can be as simple as telling yourself you will go to the gym. Take the pressure off of getting on any sort of

machine while you're there, Just tell yourself you have to go. Setting expectations that are unachievable is a folly to which we all fall victim. Keeping goals and expectations small will help you establish a routine and build a habit.

Living With Anxiety

Forty million people in the United States alone are currently living with anxiety, yet, it is one of the most misunderstood disorders — and trivialized, in part due to the casualness with which the term is thrown out to describe something.

Let's all raise awareness by staying informed. Here are few facts and figures on living with anxiety.

- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.
- According to Daniel and Jason Freeman, authors of “The Stressed Sex: Uncovering the Truth about Men, Women and Mental Health,” rates of psychological disorders are 20 to 40 percent higher in women than in men.
- Anxiety disorders are treated — not cured.
- There are many types of anxiety disorders, including: general anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and separation anxiety disorder.
- Of all of these, general anxiety disorder is the most common, affecting 5 percent of Americans at some point in their lives.
- Even though anxiety disorders are highly treatable, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, only one-third of those suffering receive treatment.
- The ADA also asserts that anxiety disorders affect one in eight children. Left untreated, these children are shown to perform poorly in school and miss out on important social experiences.
- Sufferers of anxiety are known to suffer physically as well, including feeling shortness of breath, shaking, nausea, headaches, rapid heartbeats and dizzy spells.
- Proven effective treatments include medication, but also many other forms management, such as therapy, learning coping strategies and alternative methods such as yoga and acupuncture.

If someone you love is suffering, help them seek treatment. While erasing all worries is unrealistic, being in a constant state of anxiety doesn't have to be the norm.

