



# Spring into Wellness!

by GAIL CARROLL

**D**id you know that March celebrates nutrition month and April is Cancer Awareness month? Both are designed to create awareness and prevent disease. What better time than spring to begin new regimes to re-boost our energy and contribute to our well-being.

Dr. Bernie Seigel, author of *Love, Medicine and Miracles* talks about disease as a state of dis-ease. He notes that when we live in a constant state of stress, anxiety and worry and when our self-talk is focused negatively we invite this state of dis-ease. And while dis-ease exists externally from our stressors initially, if it is not resolved and continues for lengthy periods of time (years), it can eventually become a disease i.e. cancer, heart disease, diabetes...you get the picture.

So, how does one deal with this state of dis-ease? Focus on prevention of course! Let's take the holistic approach and look at the whole of you: body, mind and spirit.

## NUTRITION

It is so important to get all of your vitamins and to eat healthy. When we are stressed or our lives are super busy we tend to do things that are easiest for us, not necessarily the best for us, e.g., in a hurry – go through a drive through. Here are a few tips to keep it more on the healthy side:

- Take a good multi-vitamin daily to boost the vitamins you are receiving through your nutrition.
- Always eat breakfast – even a bowl of whole grain cereal or a whole grain cereal bar, a piece of fruit and a glass of milk will give you a start.
- Eating from *Canada's Food Guide* does not have to be cumbersome. At meals choose a piece of protein – meat, chicken or fish the size of your fist, a starch (potato, rice or pasta) and then fill the remainder of your plate with vegetables.
- If eating out, choose lean cut meats or chicken or fish that is grilled or baked not fried. Stay away from heavy sauces and dressings opting for lighter vinaigrettes or sauce on the side so that you can control the amount.
- To satisfy a sweet tooth, cut up an apple, sprinkle with walnuts (packed full of omega 3 oil) and drizzle a little maple syrup over the mix.

## EXERCISE

Remember those New Year's resolutions? Most gyms and fitness centers see a surge of activity in January and by mid to late February this activity drops significantly. How are you doing with yours? Try to set fitness goals that are achievable for you. Just because your co-worker or friend goes to the gym several times a week does not mean it is the right or best option for you. If you choose activities that you like and start with reasonable time and duration you will be more likely to stick with it.

- If you don't currently have a fitness plan you can begin to exercise and develop movement consciousness through little things, i.e. take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park as far from an entrance as possible to get a little extra walk.
- Take a stroll with a friend on a lunch hour.
- Dance to your favorite music at home.
- Take a stretch break at work.
- Try walking on an indoor track during the winter.
- Choose an activity you like, i.e. swimming, walking, dancing – it does not have to be organized or it can be – choose what's right for you.
- Book a walk or your favorite activity in your day planner. When things are scheduled you will have a better opportunity to stick with it.

## SLEEP

We all require varying degrees of sleep. Did you know that not getting enough sleep can affect your weight, your immune system and your ability to fight viruses as well as your ability to concentrate and your mood? It is recommended that we get between 6-8 hours of sleep per night and when our stress levels are high we aim for as much as nine hours per night.

- Keep your bedroom at a cool, comfortable temperature for you.
- Try not to use technology like computers, tablets and other blue light technology at least one hour before bed as the blue light can interfere with your body's natural circadian rhythm and disrupt sleep.
- Develop a bedtime ritual to wind down and get ready for sleep, i.e. a warm decaffeinated drink, relaxing music, or a good book.

- Eat a healthy snack before bed, i.e. cheese and whole grain crackers, an apple and peanut butter, a banana and yogurt. This helps your blood sugar stay constant through the night and you are less likely to wake up hungry.

### MIND YOUR MIND

Taking care of your mind is as important as taking care of your body. Our minds are fabulous and can help us to stay positive and are a great asset to help us succeed. But your mind can also trick you and possibly sabotage you. Sometimes we think that happiness is out of our control because something else is interfering with it. Here are a few things to ponder:

- Are you waiting to discover the secret of success to be happy? If you are you might be waiting a long time! This is one of the ways our brain can trick us. Being happy is different for each of us because it involves setting and achieving goals. Sometimes we scatter ourselves and do too much multi-tasking which can veer us from our desired path.
- Do you avoid things you do not like or find scary? Another mind trick! Sometimes, in fact, many times it is great for us to step outside our comfort zones and do things that make us a little uncomfortable...baby steps...with each little success we become more comfortable and we begin to be less afraid.
- Do you think that only “lucky” people have their dreams come true?, i.e. I could never do that because... Write your dreams in a journal and explore ways of achieving them. People have done amazing things to make their dreams come true. Think you don't have the money or the time...exploring ways to achieve them might surprise you. What are you waiting for? Talk to whoever or whatever organizations, places, people you need to make things happen. The only person standing in your way is you!
- If I won the lotto then I could...come on now... you know you have thought this at least once in your life! Another wonderful mind trick that leads us to believe that if we just had the right house, the right job, lived in the perfect climate or any other myriad of things we would have the perfect life. All of these dreams may create a temporary happiness until the next thing comes along...what you do here is set yourself up for an unending ream of things that you have to fulfill just to be happy.
- Set realistic and achievable goals and celebrate your successes no matter how big or small. This will encourage you to continue.
- Enjoy being in the moment and don't fragment yourself by thinking about so many things while you are trying to enjoy or accomplish one thing.
- Find some quiet time in your day to meditate or

enjoy an uplifting meditational reading. This will recharge your batteries in many ways. For ideas take a look at the book *One Minute for Myself* by Spencer Johnson.

- Become more aware of your thoughts...if they tend to be more on the negative side try reframing the thoughts to be more positive and/or encouraging. Be your own cheering section.
- Develop a “can do” attitude. Then do!
- Ask for help when you need it. Sometimes just an extra set of hands or an outside opinion can help.
- Believe in yourself and your abilities. Place inspiring posters, plaques and things around you to boost your confidence. Take a look at [www.simpletruths.com](http://www.simpletruths.com).

### NURTURE YOUR SPIRITUALITY

Stephen Covey says, “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.” How right he is! The universe is a powerful being and it is so important to believe in something greater than ourselves. Nurturing your spirituality to bring the presence of peace, love and joy in your daily life is as important as setting goals and breathing. The best way to do this is through self-care. What Stephen Covey is essentially telling us is that we are already spiritual beings, so when we set our intention for achieving our goals and dreams we nurture this every day through our thoughts and actions. As spiritual beings one of the best ways to nurture ourselves and our life journey is to take care of ourselves in all ways.

- Do a self-care inventory. What things, activities bring peace, calmness and joy into your life? Make a list to choose from when your spirit needs a boost.
- Starting and/or ending your day with an inspirational reading can be a beautiful way to bring peace and tranquility into your life.
- Yoga in its various forms can nurture our souls.
- Go for a massage or a hot stone massage – nurtures your body, mind and spirit.
- Listen to your favorite/most beautiful music.
- Lastly, remember that list and choose things that speak to you and your soul. Remember you are a special, wonderful soul and human. Celebrate your life each and every day!

**T**ake time this spring to celebrate you and your life. Spring into wellness by making prevention and taking care of you a priority. Go ahead...I dare you!

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