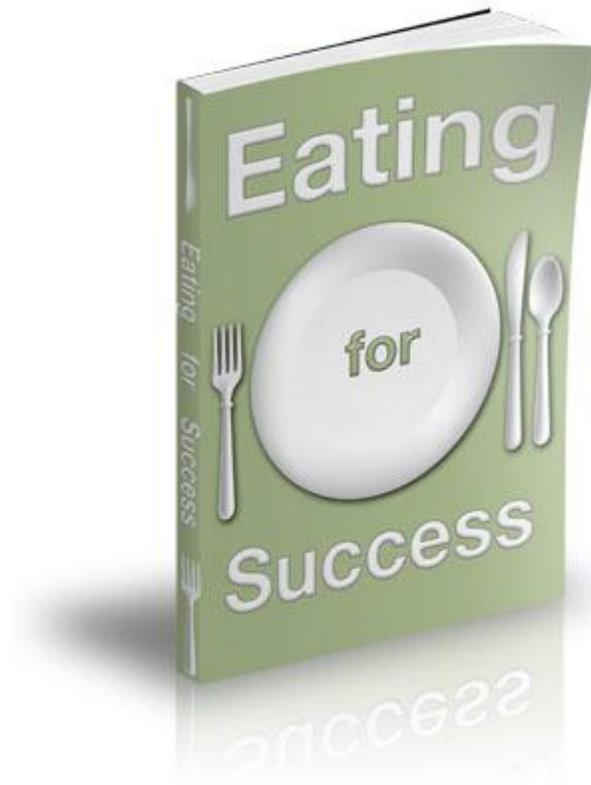


Raising Children Who Succeed!

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Eating to Succeed

The next time you try to work out just why you can't think straight and get everything you need to get done completed, consider blaming your food.

It's a scary concept- that our thoughts and ability to succeed can be so affected by what we eat, but for millions of people around the globe it's a day to day war their body and mind pit against each other.

Even on very simple terms, we need the fuel from food to survive. While fasting can be used by some to clear the mind during certain events, as a general rule, our brain needs feeding. And it needs the right kind of feeding to do well.

We get plenty of health and nutritional advice all the time. In fact in many ways it's thrown at us from every direction. Even the fast food giants now tell you exactly what's in their products.

However it appears that the more we know about nutrition, the more we studiously avoid the facts. In less than ten years, nearly three quarters of the western world is on the path to being classified as overweight (or worse, obese or morbidly obese.) The numbers of people looking to pharmaceutical relief for depression and addictions is growing and our energy levels are collectively at an all time low.

It might feel like we know a lot about food, but are we using that knowledge? And how can we be sure that what we are putting into our bodies is health, strength and energy?

For most of us, the sorts of foods we eat now are very different to the foods we grew up on. There weren't constant ads on TV on how to lose ten pounds in ten weeks. Takeaways were a real treat

and no one did home deliveries. Mothers tended to be at home, where they cooked often plain but also pretty nutritious food (meat and two veg anyone?) There was probably home baking too, but it was made with natural ingredients and didn't have things like corn syrup and fancy chemicals to keep it fresher for longer.

Supermarkets were not open twenty four hours a day. We had to walk down to the corner shop to get bread, and that is all we got, because everything else was so expensive. There were less impulse buys on junk food. Fathers tended the home veg garden, and there were sometimes fruit trees too.

It wasn't all food utopia. We ate lollies. Rather a lot of them sometimes. Pocket money seemed to go a long way. But it wasn't an every day thing. It was more of a once a week as soon as I got paid treat.

Fruit was more expensive. If it wasn't straight from our own tree, it was metered out. We didn't have huge portions of meat, and the fill up food was generally a cheese sandwich.

But we weren't obsessed about food either. Those were less stressful times in more ways than one. These days on top of worries about finances, jobs, family issues and stress, we worry about food.

The old adage we are what we eat has never been truer than when talking about our ability to focus and work. With our heavy use of computers, cell phones, and televisions we don't move so much. We spend our days behind the wheel, behind the desk and then behind a cushion when snuggled up on the couch. Not only are we expending less energy, but we're filling our bodies up with so much more food and treats because we feel we deserve it.

Choice has become one of our very worst enemies. The average family needs about one hundred and forty different products from

the supermarket over a monthly period. However finding the right 140 products when you're faced with over ten thousand choices (the amount in an average sized supermarket) is fraught with stress.

Most of us have a fair understanding of nutrition and what is good and bad for us. The problem is there are just too many things to choose from. Even if we want to, how on earth have we got the time to read every label, and make so many right choices? Sometimes it's just easier to order in pizza.

Of course after we do, we'll just swallow back some Vitamin C, and some St Johns Wort for our efforts. Not only has the food choices we need to make grown hugely, but all the supplements and vitamins we need to take to stay healthy has grown too. Everything is meant to be essential, and important for our well being.

Of course there is a time and a place for these things. Just like there is a time and a place for pizza, chocolate and ice-cream. The issue isn't what we are eating so much as it is how and why we are eating.

We need food. It refuels us, gives us the energy we need, works with our bodies to keep us alive. We use any nutrients we eat to create new cells, growth our hair, and repair our bodies. If all we give our bodies is junk, is it any wonder that we're not feeling the love?

The best sort of diet we should have is not so much about making sure you eat an apple a day, and never touch another chocolate bar again. It's about basing your diet around three things: balance, quality, and output.

The Three Part Perfect Diet

So to create a diet that works for your body and more importantly for your brain, you need to look at three areas. Balance, Quality and Output.

Balance

This is one of the trickier parts of the equation because everyone has a slightly different way to keep the balance. You need to have the right types of food at the right time of day. For the vast majority, that means we need to turn our eating plans upside down. Our biggest meal of the day needs to become breakfast, with our smallest meal becoming lunch.

Many of us are consuming too much sugar, salt and alcohol (Let's not mention caffeine JUST yet.) We often don't eat enough fruit and vegetables for our daily fibre intake and don't get enough high quality protein.

We need to find the right balance for our own bodies. In one household there maybe on person who needs a high protein diet, another who needs a high (good) carb diet and another who needs a true mix. We all have different needs. While we all need to reduce the junk aspect, we need to find our own tweaks to a general diet to find the one that fits best for us.

Supplements in today's diet can really help. A good multivitamin, particularly if you are in a stressful period of your life can really help with any part of your diet you may be missing.

How do you know if you are eating the right diet? You have plenty of energy and vitality. If that doesn't describe you, your intake is probably out of balance.



Quality

It used to be that much of our food was picked directly off trees, came straight from the vegetable garden or direct from the farm to our door. Of course for some of us that was several generations ago, depending on age and where we grew up, but that is the sort of food our bodies are still used to eating. Homegrown, natural foods are what makes our bodies work best. Now of course the easiest foods to find are processed foods, that often have a lot of taste for our tongues, making us want to eat more, but are low on important nutrients and minerals.

There are many nutrients we need that are not present in our diets. Missing out on these can prevent our bodies from working to their optimum rate, and cause our brains to slow or feel muddled.

We need protein to feed our muscle, to repair cells and organs and to form antibodies that fight off ill health. Even though they have received a bad rap, carbohydrates are also important, to give us energy and fibre to aid digestion. If we choose good carbohydrates, they'll be low in sugar and in fat, and have a lot of important nutrients.

Many people, particularly women are so worried about fat in their diet that they try and cut it out completely. In fact we need good fat to keep our body working. Essential fats, particularly those with omega threes and omega sixs have been proven to help with thought processes and sharpness of thought. Good fats also help us absorb some vitamins we need such as A, D, K and E.

If we were to sit and work out the most important nutrient our body needs, it would have to be water. Water helps us to not feel so hungry. It helps us digest the food we do eat, and gives us great skin.

Energy

The best way to know whether you have got your energy input right is to look at your weight. If it falls into a healthy weight range, you are probably eating the right amount of food to maintain your correct energy levels. If you are overweight, or have too much body fat, you can increase your energy and make your body work better by losing the excess fat.

Our bodies store fat as an efficient storage tank that is there for lean times. Often our bodies don't really want to give up the fat stores as our bodies think it needs them once they have got them. To get rid of it we need to eat less calories (or kilojoules depending on your preferred method of counting.) A calorie is around four kilojoules. If you have ten excess kilograms of fat, you will need to dispose of 80,000 calories or 320 000 kilojoules to drop it off. Most people need around two to two and a half thousand calories a day, so as you can see, it takes a fair amount of both time and effort to drop our intake enough to lose that eighty thousand.

The best way to get your body to get rid of its extra fat stores is to look at portion sizes, the type of food you are eating and track how many calories are popping into your mouth. While exercise is important, people often over estimate how much they are actually burning off, and will overeat to compensate.



Is Your Mood Getting You Down?

If you are struggling to feel on top of things as you have an ongoing low mood, it can be very difficult to eat for health and happiness. All you are going to want to do is reach for a sugar fix, some endorphin loving chocolate or some comfort fries.

Fatigue can cause us also to eat foods that our bodies don't love- no matter how much our brain and stomach tells us we really need it. Until we're eating a good range of healthy food, we can't really trust our brains and bodies to tell us what to eat. They have this huge cocktail of chemicals running around playing havoc with our cravings.

If you do suffer from depression, are chronically tired or think you are prone to SAD (Seasonal Affect Disorder, where you feel more depressed in winter) there are several things you can do.

It is more common for woman to struggle with the effects of these, though that may also be because men are less likely to report any incidence of depression.

If you are always tired, then you are more likely to eat instant foods that do little for your body. If you have large amounts of stress in your life, it can make you feel tired. Tiredness can lead to weight gain which in turn makes you more depressed once more.

In the winter months we can be even more susceptible to it. We need daylight, and more accurately sunlight to keep our vitamin D levels at a good level, and help us with our levels of hormones melatonin, and serotonin which help us feel good. When you don't have enough of these in your body you'll tend to feel down, tired, grump, and irritable. Because we don't have enough serotonin we start to crave carbohydrates and buttery, creamy foods. It's hard to drum up a craving for salads and fruit when our brains are wreaking havoc with our bodies during these phases.

However we need energy to get through life. Even if spending the day sleeping in bed may feel like bliss to you right now, it's not going to turn your life around in any shape or form. We need to eat just as we need to breathe.

We all have the same amount of hours in our day. To get the jobs that need doing done, we need to find more energy to do them. Managing your energy will help you to become fitter, more energetic, feel good about yourself, look better and possibly (if you need it to) lose weight.

Finding more energy

So if you want more energy you need to fix the foods you eat. However there are a few other factors in the energy hunt we need to look at.

1. Sort out your thoughts.

If your day is just a mesh of unhappy thoughts, piles of stress, anger and worry, you are not letting your body and mind focus on other things. Start the day right with some positive thinking. Before you get up every morning, be thankful for up to ten things in your life right now. This is your list, so make it things you are really thankful for, not things you feel you **SHOULD** be thankful for (so a new laptop might just come before a partner!) Do the same thing at night before bed so you've started and ended the day with thankfulness.

2. Get breathing

Many of us don't breathe deeply enough. Oxygen is the most important nutrient our body needs. If you aren't breathing, well you aren't alive. If you can learn how to deep breathe, you'll be able to reduce your body's response to stress and can cure all manner of ills from insomnia, to headaches and sore backs. That

tightness across your chest will be positively affected too. It also can lower high blood pressure, and gives your body a bigger shot of endorphins that make you feel good.

Instead of taking rapid, shallow breathe, spend time everyday focusing on your breath, taking in a long, slow breath, holding it for a moment, then expelling the air slowly.

3. Rest

Ok, we've mentioned too much sleep isn't great, but too little can play havoc with your insides too. Get a routine in place and put a bedtime in place. This isn't about hitting the sheets as soon as it gets dark and having no life, but getting in bed around two hours before midnight is a good estimate. Our bodies often sleep better before midnight. Getting up most mornings around the same time helps too. Give yourself one morning off a week if you love sleeping in, but for the most part, our bodies thrive on routine.

4. Hydrate.

So we all know we are meant to drink two litres of water a day, but are you? If you feel like you are retaining water, or bloating, you often try to drink less to stop the bloat. In fact, the more water you drink, the more it flushes out your system. Nothing makes you tireder than not drinking enough. Next time you go to reach for that coffee to pep you up, try a glass or two of water instead.

Many people think they are hungry when actually they are thirsty. We need at least two litres a day, more during summer and during activity. Our bodies will get the water anyway it can, so if you aren't putting good water through your body, your body will tell you to eat so it can get water that way.

Water not only keeps everything moving, but it carries all that oxygen we are breathing to our cells, along with the nutrients from the food we eat.

If you are a big caffeine drinker, try to cut it down to a more manageable level. Coffee doesn't count in your water intake- in fact if you are drinking a lot of it; you need to counteract it with more water as caffeine has a diuretic effect on the body. It is also a stimulant and can affect you body's natural cycle.

5. Reduce your fat stores

Our body stores the excess energy we consume as fat. It does this because it is so efficient. But carrying too much fat actually slows us down and reduces our energy levels. Dif you are carrying too much fat however the last thing you need is a diet. Diets often promise fast results, but set us on a further path of constant exhaustion. If you need to decrease your fat stores, change your energy intake slowly and incrementally, and look at a long term, rather than a short term solution.

6. Fuel Up

Food is our body's petrol. We need to use it at the right time of day to see the most benefit. Start your day as you mean to go on. That old line your mother used to throw out as you rush out the door in the morning is true. Breakfast IS the most important meal of the day. Starting the day with a couple of pieces of bread smeared with jam, or a bowl of sugar masquerading as cereal isn't the best way to begin the day if you want energy. (Neither is throwing back a coffee and hoping to catch something later.) Instead go for the old fashioned breakfasts of oatmeal/porridge with some stewed fruit, a poached egg (or two) on toast – but make the toast a wholegrain type, or a smoothie made with fresh fruit and protein powder. If you struggle to get ready in the morning, consider preparing a

takeaway breakfast prepared the night before (such as a bread roll and a boiled egg) and an apple and you'll do just fine.

7. Remember to Eat

When you are busy, or stressed, or trying to lose weight or any combination of the three it is so easy to skip a meal or two. But this is the worst you can do if you want to keep on top of things. Skipping meals plays havoc with your blood sugar levels and it makes that bar of chocolate so much harder to resist when the mid-afternoon lag sets in. The best results come from the best planning. Plan an morning and afternoon snack you can use to pep you up between meals, without spiking your blood sugar levels. This could be a few nuts and an apple, or a few crackers with some hummus. Keep it natural, and not meal sized. This is all about snacks.

8. Keep Moving

The more we move, the more energy we have to move more. It feels weird, and certainly the first few times you start to move it doesn't feel that way. Try to get your heart rate going around twenty minutes a day with some good cardio. You don't need to stick to the same sort of exercise. It can be anything. Try walking, swimming, dancing, cycling. If you do it in the morning, you are likely to have more energy for the rest of the day. It generally takes around three weeks to see any noticeable change, so try to persevere for at least that long before you decide it's a waste of time. See it as a wee investment in you thinking clearer and happier. You can't be successful if all you feel is glum! Get out, take a walk, and enjoy yourself.

If after doing all of this you find you are still tired, obtain a hormone kit to test whether you are low in hormones that affect your sleep. Melatonin which is our sleep hormone can be

affected by stress and by our age. If you do have a deficiency, you can then take a supplement to augment it.

You Are One Big Hormone

Maybe you were a perfect teenager and your mother never said that to you, but it was probably in our teens we first became aware how much our hormones affected our thoughts, life, health and energy.

In fact it never really changes. We really are just a whirling cocktail of hormones that control our desire for food, sex, activity, and how we feel about ourselves. They look after our joints, and help us feel good. If you are a woman, your hormones also control your menstrual cycle. In all, our body has over a hundred different hormones running around, bossing our body about all manner of things. We need hormones to keep us moving, thinking, feeling and growing.

What we eat is important as it helps keep our hormones in balance. If you are eating foods that our body is designed to love, our hormones will generally stay in balance. If you eat mainly processed foods, your hormones can get completely out of whack and start telling your body all sorts of weird and wonderful things. The nutrients we eat are the chemicals we need to create the hormones our body needs.

Important hormones: Insulin

Many people have heard of insulin, and see it as something people with diabetes need. But all a diabetic s doing is supplementing their body with the insulin other bodies already make. It is one of the most important hormones our body makes. A good diet controls the amount of insulin our body makes. If we have too much insulin, we carry more fat, we become hungry all the time and we'll find it harder to shed that fat when we want to. It can also lead to sugar cravings, retention of fluid and high blood pressure.

If you have a problem keeping your insulin levels in check (constant sugar cravings is often a good sign that is so) then increasing your protein intake, and eating unprocessed carbohydrates may work best. You can also take supplements of L-Carnitine, Chromium and a good swag of B vitamins to help get rid of the cravings and lose the weight you need to shed.

Important Hormones: Thyroid

If you've been living the life of a stressed person, you may have affected your hormone levels. When we are stressed we tend to fill our body with stimulants such as coffee, alcohol and nicotine. Stress itself can cause our thyroid to freeze up. If you have been putting on weight, have dry skin, and have depression, and are feeling tired all the time, you may have a thyroid issue. You can have your thyroid levels measured with a blood test.

Important Hormones: Estrogen

This is a hormone women need and can easily become unbalanced if we are carrying excess weight. Our fat cells produce this hormone, so the more fat we have, the more estrogen we carry. You might be producing too much estrogen if you have a lot of fluid retention, frequent headaches, swollen breasts before menstruation and bad PMT. You may be more prone to putting on weight around the hips. Often you can get your hormone levels back into balance simply by eating more fibre, and cutting back on alcohol. Having more exercise and improving the way you cope with stress also helps.

Basically, if you are tired, lacking in energy, and having trouble sleeping then your lifestyle is in all likelihood at fault. So take a look at the fuel you are putting into your body and see if you can improve it. Are you eating mainly unprocessed foods, good quality protein and good fats? Are you taking a good quality multi vitamin?

Get Your Brain Working Better

So now we know what happens if you don't eat the right kinds of foods and how it affects our minds. So what does our brain need to keep our thoughts clear and planning our successful futures?

There are some sorts of foods that have been found to be great for brains. They are as follows:

Protein

Protein fuels the brain like nothing else. It helps your body build and fix the insides, and helps to keep you focused. It also stops you feeling hungry so it means you have more time to focus on your work.

The best sort of protein to eat is lean protein. To build your brain power eat the following:

Fish, eggs, nuts (walnuts have particular powers), seeds, beans and pulses, tofu and other soy, and dairy products.

Carbohydrates

Now before you jump up and down with glee planning a donut run, these aren't your processed carbs. You need complex carbohydrates that have plenty of fibre, are low in sugar and have plenty of antioxidants. Go for vegetables that are strongly coloured. In fact try to eat a rainbow of vegetables every day, from red capsicum to orange carrots to green spinach.

Berries, citrus fruits, stone fruit, broccoli and any of the brassica family (this includes cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and more), spinach, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes.

Fats

You need fat to create all important hormones to help you focus. A diet too low in fat can not process the rest of the food you eat. However the fats you eat need to be high in omega threes and sixes, and have a lot of other beneficial vitamins and nutrients in them.

To eat fats that give your brain the kick it needs, focus on nuts and nut butters (you can make your own), avocados and olive or avocado oils. You need less than you think you do- but once you begin to eat all the other foods, your body will start to self moderate and correct.

Can I Have my Coffee?

Ok caffeine junkies, admit it, you don't know how you're going to get that coffee habit in check. It started with one coffee and now you're running on a caffeine high. Many people do feel more focused after having caffeine and it can feel like it helps you think faster and better. However many studies have shown that it actually prevents you from focusing on complicated things that need you to string a whole range of ideas together. Like with any drug, our brains begins to build up resistance and the coffee trick isn't going to work anymore.

If you need to wake yourself up, try to drink a glass of cold water first. If you try to take coffee out of your diet, cut down slowly rather than go cold turkey unless you have time for a three day migraine that will leave you feeling pretty wiped out, grumpy and basically horrendous to live or work with.

Antioxidants

SO why do we need antioxidants? Foods high in antioxidants help our brains to work better. They help reduce the impact of free

radicals on our brain and body. A free radical is made naturally when a cell converts oxygen into energy.

We actually need free radicals in our bodies. They help our body to get rid of dangerous toxins and keep our bodies clear and clean. But if there are too many free radicals, it can damage how our body works and results in tissue damage and cells dying. To combat this, eating foods that are high in Vitamins E and C are recommended (such as avocados, oranges, citrus fruits and nuts.)

We Need Magnesium

Our brain stays safe from toxins that affect the brain specifically with magnesium. TO make sure your brain has the protection it needs, eat lots of nuts, seeds, leafy green vegetables (dark salad leaves and spinach is great) and any unprocessed whole grains such as whole rolled oats, and whole wheat.

Stress Less with Vitamin B

Vitamin B is one of the feel good vitamins. We need to have good levels of Vitamin B, particularly B6 and B12 to help keep our memories sharp and our mood good. It helps create serotonin and the other two feel good hormones dopamine and epinephrine. Protein is a good source of B12, in particular chicken, fish, veal, beef and pork. If you are a vegetarian it may be advisable to take a Vitamin B supplement.

Unwind With Water

We've mentioned before how important water is. Our brain is made up of around eighty percent water, so it's important to keep it well hydrated. Our ability to concentrate is often easily positively impacted just by a few glasses of water. This is plain water- not water with carbonation, sugar, caffeine, or milk added to it.

Stress hormones increases when we are dehydrated. As you'll have noticed about your own bodies, the more stressed you are the less you can work. So drink water and re focus.

If you want a perk me up drink any mate tea is good, as is green tea. Green tea is caffeinated so still watch your intake. Herbal teas can make the water intake feel a little more interesting.

Focus Foods

Next time you're working against the clock and you know you need to get it done but that stomach is hungry, try packing away some nuts, a little tin of tuna or chomp down on a chicken leg. If you start to feel sleeping, and you've lost your appetitive it might be you are not hungry because you are not eating and your body is shutting down.

Eat fish, nuts and fruit to retain your focus and refresh your thinking. It's like a reboot of your system.

Think Small and Regular

Instead of piling all your food into one meal, look at five to six meals a day, with smallish portions. What our bodies can't use right away it stores. SO if you eat one big meal, it's likely that a large part of it is going to find a new home on your hips, or more likely around your stomach. Small meals prevent that mid afternoon junk food run too.

To succeed we need our brains working in ship shape order. Of course it is important to note here that it's not stress that makes our brains shut down. In fact stress is good for us- in small doses. It helps us become more mentally alert and our body and brain are fine tuned at solving stressful situations.

However when those fleeting moments of stress become every day, long , drawn out problems, we begin to become physically affected

in a negative way with weight gain, depression, and excess weight and/or mood related disorders and diseases.

It's not even the big things that can get us there. It might just be regular mornings of losing the keys, getting caught in traffic, having an argument with your boss and knowing you really shouldn't have eaten that whole packet of wine gums for morning tea. That type of stress makes our body's crave pasta, white bread, and highly processed carbs as these foods help create serotonin which makes us feel good.

Give your brain the best chance of success by eating foods it was designed to love. It might feel a bit odd at first. Take slow, small steps and make small changes. Over time you'll find you can think more clearly and have the energy you need to be a world changer- or at the very least, get that project completed to schedule.

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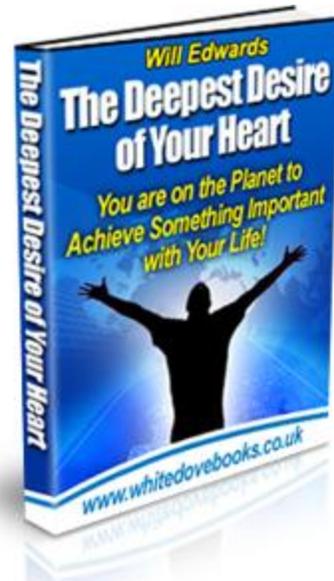
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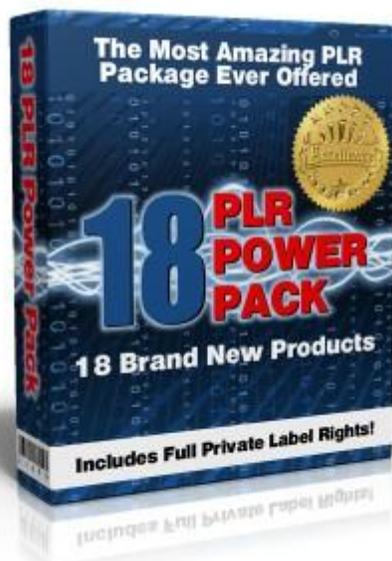
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Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

The INSPIRATION newsletter was started in 2005 as a way of providing helpful information including tips, articles and free inspirational eBooks to our visitors.

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