

SIMPLE REMINDERS, TIPS AND TECHNIQUES TO MAKE THIS YEAR YOUR BEST YET

By Jane Thomas

HEALTHY HABIT #1

Hacks to Eat Better

Keep it simple. You don't need to be a genius to eat well. Avoid fad diets and create a healthy eating routine you can follow daily. At the grocery store shop the outside aisles where they position the healthy real foods and stay away from pre-packaged and processed options. Eat real food that's mostly plants with lots of color and variety. Balance every meal with high-quality proteins like lean meat, fish, tofu or beans and complex carbs like brown rice, potatoes, quinoa, and healthy fats like avocado, nuts, seeds and olive oil. Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables to meet your daily fiber needs while keeping calories in check.

Plan ahead. Success is always a result of preparation. On a weekly basis (I recommend Sunday) create a meal plan for the week ahead and be realistic with your time. Stop telling yourself you'll have time to pack a lunch on your way out the door in the morning. While you're cleaning up from dinner, put together your lunch for the next day. Whether it be leftovers from dinner or a mason jar salad, planning ahead makes it easy to walk out the door with a healthy lunch.

Use Pinterest with a purpose. Make a board of "Must-Make Meals" filled with weeknight go-tos so that when you're planning and prepping your meals you know right where to turn (or scroll to). Take it a step further and organize recipes by category like "chicken," "fish," "vegetarian," to get more variety in your diet. Some of the very best meals I've made in

the past five years are from recipes found on Pinterest.

Carry a water bottle. Because hydration is a vital part of being healthy, make it a priority to carry a water bottle around with you and refill it throughout the day. The Institute of Medicine recommends men that drink 120 ounces and women 90 ounces of fluid per day. Splurge on a Hydro Flask or Swell bottle that keeps liquids cold or hot all day long – it will make drinking your fluids so much more enjoyable!

Eat on a schedule. A person who eats 2,000 calories throughout the day will often have more energy and tend to lose more weight than the person who eats the same number of calories all at one meal. By skipping meals or ignoring our hunger cues, we force our bodies to run off of fumes.

Catch some ZZZs. Getting enough shut eye at night goes a long way to protecting your body. Because hormones are regulated while you sleep, people who get quality sleep on a daily basis tend to make better food choices and have slimmer waistlines. See habit number 2 if you have trouble getting enough sleep!

CHICKEN & APPLE KALE SALAD

By Naomi Robinson of bakersroyale.com

While the chef behind this recipe is best known for her decadent desserts, this salad recipe combines all the right ingredients for a nutritious, fun to eat and interesting salad.

INGREDIENTS:

Dressing

- juice of one lemon
- juice of one orange
- ¼ cup champagne vinaigrette
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ cup fresh parsley
- 1-2 teaspoons honey

Salad

- 1½ cup shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1 bunch kale (chopped, without stems, to yield about 4 cups)
- 2 large honey crisp apples, julienned
- 1 cup cubed butternut squash
- 1 cup cooked red quinoa
- ½ cup roasted pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- pomegranate arils for topping



DIRECTIONS:

Vigorously whisk all ingredients until well blended, or alternately, place all ingredients in a blender and pulse until well blended.

In a large bowl add all ingredients except toppings and toss to coat. Sprinkle on toppings on and serve immediately



We are what we repeatedly do. Success is not an option but a habit.



HEALTHY HABIT #2

Get Your Zzzz's

Consistently getting less than five hours of sleep a night can double your risk of stroke, heart disease or heart attack. Medical research has found a link between lack of sleep, weight gain and diabetes. In our modern times of extensive use of mobile phones, tablets and computers, the exposure can hinder your brain from relaxing and winding down. Do you find it difficult to sleep at night? If you do, one effective tool is to come up with a bedtime routine. While none of these ideas are revolutionary, there is something to be said for coming up with your own bag of tricks you can utilize to fall asleep faster.

Power Down. At 9 pm turn off your personal technology - silence phones, charge tablets and shut down computers for the night. Even better - put all of your technology in a different room!

Change into PJ's. Indulge in a pair of super comfortable pajamas you can slip into nightly. Just changing into your "night clothes" can change your frame of mind and get you mentally prepared to catch some zzz's.



Have a non-alcoholic night cap. End your evening with a warm beverage, you can go simply with a glass of warmed water with lemon and honey or your favorite caffeine-free tea. There is something soothing about ending your evening with a warm, cozy drink...it really does work!

Scent is essential. There's a direct link between your olfactory zone and the brain. Use calming smells like chamomile, lavender and vetiver to train your brain to go to sleep. Use essential oils or light a candle about an hour before going to bed nightly and soon you will begin to associate bedtime with those scents.

Create a space you love. Ultimately your bedroom should be your sanctuary and create a sense of peace and calm that allows you to relax and unwind. Your bedroom shouldn't be filled with clutter, piles of clothing and empty glasses. If you have a problem keeping surfaces clean, utilize drawers and closets to store things out of sight. Be diligent about keeping your sleeping quarters clean, fresh and organized.

HEALTHY HABIT #3

Love Yourself

We all carry multiple roles in life. Some of us are lucky enough to be a spouse, parent, best friend, the boss, caretaker and the list goes on. However, at the end of the day it's impossible to be successful in any of those roles if you neglect the one person in your life who matters the most - yourself! Don't wait, make you a priority and you will see how taking care of your own needs allows you to be better at just about everything else!

Find self-care activities that make you happy. Self-care is the simple act of taking care of your mind, body and soul. This means you should avoid fads and trends that don't feel right. Just because your best friend journals or Pinterest populates your feed with scrap booking tips, doesn't mean it's for you. Self-care is different for everyone. Try reflecting on:

- What makes you feel relaxed and recharged?
- What makes you happy?
- What gets you excited?
- What will help you feel how you want to feel?
- Who do you love to be surrounded by?
- Where is your favorite place in your town?

From cooking to exercising to walking to reading to spending time in coffee shops with best friends, there are so many different types of self-care that you can experiment with. Once you implement self-care activities that you love and start to see the positive effect it has on you, it becomes so much easier to make it a priority.

Schedule it. If you had an appointment, you would schedule it, right? Well, same thing goes for your "me" time. Think of it as an appointment with yourself. Write it down in your planner (or whatever you use) and stick to it. It doesn't have to be long: even 15 minutes to yourself can be beneficial.

Wake up earlier. I don't know the exact time I became a full fledge morning person but it was after having kids and it definitely was a habit I created. Once I became a real "adult" and had to juggle kids, career, relationships, household duties, self-care and more, I learned that the morning was a gold mine for productivity. Now I wake up daily at 5 a.m. and those morning hours are the start of a great day.

Your time is precious. Evaluate the way you are spending your time throughout the day and see where you can make effective changes. Maybe you check your email too often or find yourself absorbed in social media longer than you would like. Try cutting out bad habits that are time wasters to create space for you to do things that make your day better. Also, if you find yourself repeatedly in situations you don't want to be, nights out when you'd rather be home, or on a volunteer board that you don't have time



for, just learn to say no. Honor what makes you happy and what doesn't, and know that it's ok to decline an invitation simply because you don't feel like doing it!

Focus on your health. "Your health is your wealth," this saying while a bit cheesy is absolutely true. You can have all the riches in the world but if you are too sick to enjoy them what's the point. If you take only one thing from this article I would implore you that it be this one. Be vigilant with your health. Schedule routine doctor's' appointments, and if you are dealing with one off problems like an unusual skin spot or chronic pain or debilitating headaches - find the right doctor or specialist and try to fix whatever issue ails you. Remember that we are now living longer ever and that as we age it gets harder to bounce back from health issues, so do your best to stay healthy longer. Evaluate your diet and your activity levels and do what you need to do to be the healthiest version of you.