

Master Your M.E.S.S.™ Starter Guide

Your First Steps to Better Health



Move, Eat, Sleep, and Stress Management Made Simple

Welcome to Your M.E.S.S.™ Starter Guide

Hi there! I'm Donna Medina, a board-certified Exercise Physiologist with over a decade of experience helping people like you feel stronger, healthier, and more in control of their well-being. I created this guide as a companion to my book, *Stronger At Any Age*, which explores how movement, nutrition, sleep, and stress management are essential for living a high-quality life through the aging process.

This guide offers practical tools and actionable steps to help you take control of your health. By focusing on these four key areas, you'll build the habits needed to feel energized, resilient, and ready to tackle the challenges of everyday life.

Together with *Stronger At Any Age*, this guide is your first step toward creating a healthier, more balanced lifestyle.

What You'll Gain

By the end of this guide, you'll have:

- A clear understanding of how to improve your daily habits
- Practical steps to support your physical and mental well-being
- A daily tracker to help you stay consistent and celebrate progress

Your Journey Starts Now

Change doesn't have to be complicated. Every small improvement in how you move, eat, sleep, or manage stress brings you closer to a healthier, more fulfilling life. This guide is here to help you get started, show you what's possible, and keep you moving forward—no matter where you're starting from.

Let's work together to create a life that's not just about aging, but about thriving. You've got this!

— Donna Medina

Author of *Stronger At Any Age*

Board-Certified Exercise Physiologist

What is M.E.S.S.™?

M.E.S.S.™ stands for Move, Eat, Sleep, and Stress Management—the four pillars that hold up your health and well-being. These aren't just boxes to check; they're the foundations of how your body thrives, especially as you age. Each pillar is deeply connected, and when you nurture them, you're giving your body the tools it needs to stay strong, energized, and resilient for the long haul.

Move: Keep Your Body in Motion, Keep Your Life in Motion

Movement is so much more than exercise, it's how you keep your body alive and kicking. Every time you move, you're engaging your muscles, bones, and even your brain. Strength training, walking, or just stretching triggers powerful changes in your body that:

- Build muscle to fight age-related weakness (sarcopenia).
- Strengthen bones to protect against fractures and osteoporosis.
- Keep your joints healthy and mobile so you can do the things you love.
- Improve your balance and coordination, reducing the risk of falls.

As we age, staying active isn't optional, it's your best defense against decline. Movement is your body's way of saying, *"I'm still here, and I'm ready to take on life."*

Eat: Fuel the Body You Want to Keep

Food isn't just about energy; it's about giving your body what it needs to repair, grow, and thrive. What you eat directly impacts:

- How quickly your muscles recover and rebuild.
- Your brain health and memory.
- Your energy levels and mood throughout the day.
- Your ability to fight off illness and inflammation.

Think of food as a toolkit. The more balanced and nutrient-rich your meals are, the better equipped your body is to handle whatever life throws your way. Eating well isn't about restriction—it's about giving yourself the fuel to feel amazing.

Sleep: Recharge to Stay Stronger Longer

Sleep is where the magic happens. It's when your body repairs cells, strengthens your immune system, and processes everything you've learned and experienced. But as we age, sleep can become elusive—and when sleep suffers, so does everything else. Poor sleep can lead to:

- Slower recovery from workouts and injuries.
- Foggy thinking and memory lapses.
- Increased stress levels and decreased resilience.

Prioritizing sleep is like hitting the reset button for your body and mind. It's not just rest—it's restoration.

Stress Management: Find Balance, Protect Your Health

Stress is a part of life, but if it's left unchecked, it can wreak havoc on your body. Chronic stress speeds up the aging process, affecting everything from your heart to your immune system. Learning how to manage stress effectively can:

- Lower inflammation and protect your muscles.
- Help your heart stay strong and your blood pressure stable.
- Improve your mental clarity and emotional resilience.

Simple tools like breathing exercises, mindful movement, or even taking a moment to pause can help you keep stress in its place—where it doesn't control you.

Your M.E.S.S.™ Assessment

Before you can master your *M.E.S.S.*™, it's important to understand where you're starting. This quick assessment will help you pinpoint your strengths and identify areas to focus on as you work through this guide. Be honest with yourself, this is about progress, not perfection!

For each question, score yourself:

- 0 = Not at all
 - 1 = Occasionally
 - 2 = Most of the time
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Move

1. Do you engage in intentional movement (e.g., walking, stretching, or exercise) at least 3 times a week?

Score: _____

2. Do you feel strong, mobile, and capable in your daily activities?

Score: _____

Eat

3. Do you eat meals that include a mix of protein, vegetables, healthy fats, and whole grains?

Score: _____

4. Do you stay hydrated throughout the day by drinking enough water?

Score: _____

Sleep

5. Do you sleep 7–8 hours most nights?

Score: _____

6. Do you wake up feeling refreshed and ready for the day?

Score: _____

Stress Management

7. Do you use strategies like mindfulness, deep breathing, or movement to handle stress?

Score: _____

8. Do you take time to rest, recharge, or focus on self-care during your week?

Score: _____

Ready For Your Results?

Add up your scores:

- **Move Total:** _____ / 4
 - **Eat Total:** _____ / 4
 - **Sleep Total:** _____ / 4
 - **Stress Management Total:** _____ / 4
 - **Overall Total:** _____ / 16
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What Your Score Means

12–16: You’re Thriving!

You’re doing great in managing your health. Keep fine-tuning your habits and celebrating your wins.

8–11: On the Right Path

You’re making progress but have room to grow. Focus on the pillar(s) where your scores are lower to make meaningful improvements.

0–7: Time for a Reset

You’re in the perfect place to start building stronger habits. This guide will give you the tools you need to begin creating a healthier, more balanced life.

Next Steps

- Identify your lowest-scoring pillar and start there.
- Set one small, actionable goal for improvement this week.
- Use the Daily M.E.S.S.™ Tracker to stay consistent and measure your progress.

This assessment is just the beginning of your journey to mastering your M.E.S.S.™. Let’s take the first step together!

Why M.E.S.S.™ Matters

Aging is inevitable, but how you age is up to you. When you prioritize movement, eat to nourish your body, sleep to recharge, and manage stress with intention, you're actively shaping your future. This isn't about chasing perfection—it's about progress.

You're not just working on your health today; you're building the foundation for tomorrow. Mastering your *M.E.S.S.*™ is how you take control of your well-being and create a life where you can keep doing what you love for years to come.

You've got this, and I'm here to guide you every step of the way. Let's make your health journey one that you can feel proud of—one step, one habit, one choice at a time.

Daily M.E.S.S.™ Tracker

How to Use Your M.E.S.S.™ Tracker

Your Daily *M.E.S.S.*™ Tracker is your accountability partner. Each day, take a moment to reflect and jot down one thing you did for each of the four pillars: Move, Eat, Sleep, and Stress Management. This isn't about being perfect—it's about building awareness and celebrating small wins.

Tips for Success:

- **Move:** Write down any physical activity, like a walk, workout, or even stretching.
- **Eat:** Note a healthy choice you made, like drinking more water or eating balanced meals.
- **Sleep:** Record how many hours you slept or what helped improve your sleep quality.
- **Stress Management:** List a stress-relief practice, such as deep breathing, journaling, or mindfulness.

Use this tracker to stay consistent and build habits that align with your goals. Over time, these small steps will add up to meaningful change.

Printable Tracker

Date	Move (What did you do for activity today?)	Eat (What healthy choices did you make?)	Sleep (How many hours? Any improvements?)	Stress Management (How did you handle stress?)
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Reflection:

At the end of the week, review your tracker:

- What worked well?
- What could you improve next week?
- Celebrate your wins and set one small goal for the next week!

Print this sheet and keep it somewhere visible as a daily reminder to prioritize your *M.E.S.S.™*. You're building habits that will make you stronger and healthier—one day at a time.

Quick Start Tips for Mastering Your M.E.S.S.™

Building healthier habits doesn't mean overhauling your life overnight. It's about small, intentional steps that make a difference. Here are fresh, actionable tips for each pillar to help you get started:

Move: Add Micro-Movements to Your Day

Think beyond workouts—movement is everywhere. Set a timer to stand up and do five squats or stretch every hour. Walk while taking phone calls, or use the first five minutes of your lunch break to do light stretches. These micro-movements keep your body active and energized throughout the day.

Eat: Build a “Power Plate” Once a Day

Instead of counting calories, focus on balance. Create one meal a day with a lean protein, a colorful vegetable, a healthy fat (like avocado or nuts), and a whole grain. This approach nourishes your body and takes the guesswork out of eating.

Sleep: Try a 5-Minute Body Scan Before Bed

Struggling to wind down? Lie in bed and focus on relaxing each part of your body, starting at your toes and working up to your head. This calming practice signals your brain to shift into rest mode and helps you fall asleep more peacefully.

Stress Management: Schedule a 5-Minute “Pause” Break

Set an alarm on your phone as a reminder to pause during the day. Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and think about one thing you're grateful for. It's not just about managing stress—it's about resetting your mindset and regaining focus.

Take the First Step

These tips are designed to be simple, but effective, so you can incorporate them right away. Choose one to try today and let it be the start of a stronger, healthier you. Remember, small changes lead to big results over time—you've got this!

Ready to Transform Your Health and Life?

You've started with the *M.E.S.S.™ Starter Guide*—an incredible first step! Now, I'm excited to share what's next. The full *M.E.S.S.™ Workbook* is more than just a resource—it's the gateway to a year-long journey toward better mental and physical fitness, designed specifically to help you thrive at any age.

What's Coming:

A Year of Support and Growth

This program isn't just about learning—it's about transforming. Over the course of the year, you'll:

- Master movement, nutrition, sleep, and stress management with personalized tools
- Build strength, improve energy, and create lasting habits tailored to your life

Expert Guidance at Every Step

- You'll have access to me, Donna Medina, a board-certified Exercise Physiologist, to answer your questions, troubleshoot challenges, and help you achieve your goals.
 - Regular Meetings to Keep You On Track
 - Throughout the year, we'll come together for live sessions to reflect on progress, overcome roadblocks, and dive deeper into what matters most to your health.
 - A Community Focused on Growth
 - You'll connect with like-minded individuals on the same journey, sharing insights, celebrating wins, and staying motivated together.
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Program Launch Details

The full *M.E.S.S.™ Workbook* will be available on December 18th, just in time to kickstart your 2025 health journey.

- Exclusive Kickoff Meeting: Join us on Saturday, January 4th to set goals and prepare for the year ahead. The Official Start Date: The journey begins on Monday, January 6th
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Stay Tuned and Connect with Me!

I'll be following up soon with an exclusive invitation to join this transformative program. In the meantime, I'd love to hear from you! If you have questions, want to share your progress, or simply need guidance as you work through your *M.E.S.S.™ Starter Guide*, let's chat.

Click the link below to connect with me directly:

[Chat with Donna Here](#)

This is more than a program—it's your opportunity to create a stronger, healthier, and more balanced life. I can't wait to take this journey with you!

— Donna Medina

Creator of *M.E.S.S.™* and *Stronger At Any Age*
Board-Certified Exercise Physiologist