

5 “GOOD” HABITS THAT BALANCE MY HEALTH

Written by: Julian Hayes

MON OCT 27, 2025, 9:30 A.M.

- 1) DAILY WALKS (WALKING MEDITATION)
- 2) FAST REGULARLY (OFTEN HAPPENS WITHOUT THOUGHT)
- 3) EAT SPICY FOODS REGULARLY (TIMING & PURPOSE)
- 4) GET SUNLIGHT AND GROUND INTO NATURE
- 5) REMOVE APPS FROM MY PHONE AND LIMIT BLUE LIGHT (TURN OFF FREQUENCIES DURING SLEEP)

PREFACE – Lately I have been running my comb through the long, flowy, wavy, spiraled stream of health and wellness. That is to say; sometimes the pathway to “good health” feels different. Balancing health may feel simple one day and more complex on another. Some days health and wellness are easily manageable and at other times it requires diligence, repetition, and elbow grease, (hard work) to “tame-the-mane.”

I feel challenged by the current state of health and wellness. I also find it humorous. As a technologically advanced society we appear to have all the resources and tools needed—to have ALL the answers. Yet, with all our modern advancements, and despite the average human life span steadily increasing throughout the decades, our collective human experience appears to be depleting.

Within our society—obesity, poor self image, and mental-emotional imbalance continue to be on the rise. While cancer and other forms of serious dis-ease often disrupt homeostasis, (balance within the body). People passing away in their fifties, forties, and thirties should not be natural—in my opinion. With that said, there seems to be a modern-day trend of early heart attacks, brain aneurisms, blood clots, and the like.

Not only are our physical bodies paying a hefty toll, but our minds and spirit bodies are taking the brunt of the beating. Yes, collectively as a people we are beating ourselves up. Think about the pressures that we place upon ourselves to look and act a certain

way. We do this to appear perfect or flawless for social media, to keep up with trends and appearances or to keep our true identity hidden from the world.

Quite often, we start to think about (good) health through its opposite, poor health. As an example, I did not realize just how much ease and health that I had until my body was faced with a state of dis-ease (imbalance). I did not feel like myself. I could only feel discomfort and/or pain, and that is where my focus would remain, until sufficient change was introduced.

The flip side to this, (opposite side of the spectrum) is presence of time and space. An awareness (intent and mindfulness) within the moment. That I AM in this beautiful vessel called a human body. That it has been crafted specifically for me, flawed and all, to carry out my duties. And, if I work with it accordingly, I may aspire, achieve, and attune this light, (this perspective shining through me), refining the flaws of my essence in the process.

In simple terms, if I appreciate and work with myself, I may find a state of balance (health & wellness). One where I think less about my health, and I become healthy. I liken this to the actions of a child, wild animal, or someone with a thorough routine. Each of these examples has surefire ways to find balance on more than one scale.

The child, not molded by modern footwear or thought form, has a dexterity both in mind and body that mirrors their youth and exuberance. Clearly the actions and expressions of children are a direct reflection of their feelings. They have not yet learned to hide or conceal how they feel. Even with limited experience a child knows how to flow with what they like and avoid what is not agreeable with them. As adults we can re-learn to check-in with how we feel.

Wild animals are another example of health and wellness. As quite literally everything they do is for intent-full purposes, survival purposes, to exist. Observation of the animal kingdom allows us to bare witness to this balance within the food chain. But in my opinion, it is also observable in more simple and subtle ways. The stretching, roaring and barking of wild dog, big cats, etc. show us that there is much balance occurring within these creatures. Even the large and powerful bear takes time to literally splash, swim and play in bodies of water—even small pools and puddles, especially on warm days.

The animals are balancing their nature—their spines—their paws—their fur—their overall well being. As humans we have noticed, adopted, and adapted many of these concepts—from sports teams' names and logos to the western named yoga pose (Downward Facing Dog).

One with a thorough routine lays the foundation for proper health one day at a time. This could be the former athlete that stays fit and active their entire life. Constantly finding time for challenge, rest, relaxation, and feeling the vibration of victory.

I know veterans who maintain meticulous levels of discipline within their daily routines despite no longer being active in the military. Healthy habits like making one's bed and cleaning one's bedroom, set the tone for a healthy and clean mind.

Many seniors find work past retirement, work until a later age, or find activities to keep them active and moving. Those daily word searches and puzzles or time spent gardening, volunteering, crafting handmade projects, giving lectures, etc. are a staple within a healthy day to day.

Many of us find challenge in our routines, but ultimately, the stability, diversity, and/or cyclical nature of our duties, (they are performed every day or so), fit well with our circadian rhythm (our bodies 24 hour internal clock).

As I reflect on my journey, I feel it is the obscure things I do that allow me to balance my health. On a daily basis I enjoy walks, I like to balance on beams or curbs, freestyle dance and spoken word (rap), laugh, giggle, and joke—with myself. I move because my mind says go, and my heart is ready to switch it's vibe. These are all examples of how I maintain my health, in ways that feel agreeable to me. When I am in these flow states, I understand and feel my nervous system more. I learn about myself at different degrees. I exist in multiple worlds. Simply put, I get back to living. When I attune to the needs and frequencies of my body and being, I achieve balance. Real balance. Real health.

As I reflect deeper on this topic, I feel a burning desire to aid others along their path. As evident in my journey, a real state of health and wellness, both mind, body, and spirit, are attainable. And more so, are predicated upon and awaiting the arrival of us at the command center, in the driver's seat, as player one.

I do not have a bunch of fancy remedies for health and wellness. At times I think the simplicity of what I offer may be overlooked. But focusing on that can lead to a state of

poor health, by not allowing things to go as they may. And so, here are five habits of mine that help me balance.

I do not claim these five habits are magical, secret or an exhaustive list of what may help your health and wellness. I will not claim these are the “best” five or that you should begin here. Because it is not about me convincing you of anything or getting you to do anything. Allow me to share my feelings and sentiments in this present moment from my unique perspective.

To be aware and present in this moment, may be all we ever need.

HEALTHY HABIT 1: Daily Walks (Walking Meditation)

Walking is a staple in human life. It is a part of our dualistic foundation. Falling forward to make progress, in a coordinated and economic, (efficient) fashion. An oxymoron or conundrum that simply works. Not only that, but there is the potential to improve this action over time and to become masterful in the art of walking.

Walking is the way most humans get around, even infants have their own unique way of crawling, rolling, and waddling to get to their destination. As do millions of other people who adapt to their physical body or environment to create movement. So for all intents and purposes, walking in this write up will refer to those who are capable and able in some capacity of doing so, as well as those who move by any other means, i.e. a wheelchair, by scooting, via their hands, etc. Picture your own unique situation, and use what information you may apply to your life—get creative if need be. Perspective is key.

Walking is our primary means of transportation, (yes even more than vehicles). Do you simply rest idle in the parking lot when you arrive at your destination? No, you need to physically move your body, a.k.a. your POV, (personally operated vehicle), to its destination. Moving our bodies is natural and like all living creatures on this planet, movement is mandatory. After all, stagnation begets atrophy (break down) and eventually begins the recycle and/or regeneration process.

Mitochondria, (our cell's powerhouse and/or engine), have an entire matrix unto themselves. A vast galaxy of occurrences, life, and high intelligence. All operating with precision at a microscopic level.

Trees move, steadfast as they may, yet plain in their physical change over time. From their leaves changing color during fall foliage, to their gigantic size, to their branches blowing in the wind.

The animal kingdom presents countless examples of movement (walking). From wild horses running, to kangaroos hopping, to pelicans flying—movement is key. In fact, inability to move in nature, almost surely means death or despair.

Some of you may be thinking that not everything in nature moves fast or moves much at all, and you would be correct. Some beings are designed to move fast and travel far distances. Other beings are not meant to travel far or fast but instead controlled, rhythmic, and patterned. Tortoises, (turtles), both land and sea, are a prime examples of an adaptable creature that is efficient at performing its tasks. In fact, they have one of the longest lifespans of any animal on the entire planet. The key is that their movement is mindful, and their intent fits their needs. The same may be said for other slow moving creatures, such as a sloth, fungi, or a praying mantis. Some move slow all the time, others carefully fluctuating between slow motion and hyper speed.

How about other beings that move in a different sense, like the chameleon, which camouflages its skin to blend into almost any environment. Squids and octopus have similar cloaking mechanisms. Some ants have a form of movement in which they forcibly close their mandibles (jaws), a movement so powerful that it shoots them backwards in a jettison (throw off/unload) manner. Think about that for a second, in an emergency situation, this particular creature has adapted to use its jaw muscles over its multiple legs as an escape route.

There are countless examples that I may give, but those provided are sufficient to get my point across. Which is that all movement is unique! We all move uniquely, we all have our own way of walking. Walking for some may be the highlight of your day, something that you have done for years, and do not need any reminders to do. Others may have no choice but to walk from point A to point B, and so you find yourself regularly walking to work, school, the grocery store, bus or train station, etc.

For some, walking is a reminder of limitations. It has proved to be difficult and strenuous. You may find it difficult to navigate through previous injuries, pain, inflammation, lack of mobility, connectivity, or strength. You may need the assistance

of others to get around, the help of a cane, walking stick, or perhaps you are getting around fine, but there is a pronounced limp or imbalance in your gait (walking cycle).

[All of these scenarios and others are okay. You are okay. Allow us to work with what we have and be grateful for what we have.]

Allow us a moment to breathe. Please take a few seconds to inhale fully through your diaphragm, (expand your belly on your breath in), pause for a moment, and then exhale fully, (releasing what you do not need). Take a moment after your exhale before you repeat again. Repeat this cycle a few more times if it feels good to you. Take your time as you string together your inhales and exhales.

My goal is to provide context and insight, to give the reader some food for thought and educational information. Not to pick fun, be overly scrupulous (picky), or mean. I am creating an open dialogue for us to begin discussing our health and wellness. In a manner that is proactive, loving, and thorough. We only get one human body, at least in this go-around, so make the most of this high technology, it is here to service the light within you.

We all have unique ways of getting around, there is no perfect, but we can all practice and improve how we walk. Children provide the ideal vision of human locomotion because their movements are still natural. As we age, unless we are mindful of our movement—a dancer, butler, or model as examples, then we probably are not focusing on mechanics and movement economy, (efficient movement), as much as we should.

The human body is bipedal, (the right arm moves with the left leg, and the left arm moves with the right leg during walking and running). Too often we negate this concept in movement. In fact, when faced with an injury on one side of the body, (knee, foot, toe, shoulder, etc.) it becomes almost impossible to move without any visible compensation. This is because of the ingenious design of the human body and its hardwiring—the brain, spinal cord, and connective tissues/neurons.

The moment the body has a dilemma it begins to make adaptations. Think for a moment when you stub a toe on a door jammer or rock, you instantly begin limping to take weight off the affected area. This phenomenon is brilliant and is one of the reasons why we as humans are ultimately great survivors. We adapt—from the most subtle of occurrences, like the hairs standing up on our necks when we are in anticipation mode,

to the quick reaction we have when we stumble to regain our footing and prevent falling to the ground.

The flip-side is that our body can get stuck in a negative feedback loop unless we present something different. A change, variance, a shift from stagnation (non intent filled idleness).

This is quite literally when dis-ease sets in. From chronic and life-threatening matters to simple aches, pains, and stiffness. They all arise from acute (temporary) states of inflammation. The issue becomes more pronounced over time through repetition and compounding. As an example, if I am experiencing pain when I walk, and avoid it all together, then my issue persists and will probably worsen over time. The muscles that I strengthen through walking will atrophy (shrink), and I lose out on all of the positive benefits of walking, such as calorie burn, endorphin release (feel good hormones), mindfulness (which we will touch on more in a moment), etc.

The result? If we do not move it, we lose it over time. So, what should we do if we are experiencing pain or having difficulties walking—we do what we may. Start off with short walks before increasing the distance. That way you can keep the environment safe. I highly recommend starting with your feet. A gentle foot massage, or rolling your feet out on a tennis ball, baseball, golf ball, lacrosse ball, etc.

Our feet typically make more contact with the ground than any other body part, so it only makes sense that we tend to them, and make sure they are equipped for our journey. This means occasional foot maintenance: soft tissue work as mentioned (massage), stretch the toes (gently pull them apart, splay them, and try to use your toe muscles). Move them like any other part of your body.

Also tend to the muscles/tissues that connect to the foot like the achilles tendon and calve muscles. These are found on the backside of your lower leg and they need some tender love and attention too!

I highly recommend walking barefoot in the grass, sand, dirt, or other natural surfaces. If this is new to you, start seated or stand barefoot. It is as effective as simple. Standing and moving without your shoes on will teach your feet to work collectively with the rest of your body. From experience, wearing shoes with lots of padding affects the sole's connection, (bottom of the foot's ability to sense the ground and environment).

To take things a step further, you can strengthen your walking muscles before your walk or in your spare time with the aid of glute bands, which help to activate the gluteals (hip muscles). Slant boards (angled boards) are great for stretching the calves and lower leg/foot. Massage guns and percussive devices, (vibration therapy), are great for warming up tissues and promoting blood flow.

Hip flexions can be performed from an upright seated position, where one tries to lift their leg (thigh) up and off the chair while keeping their torso upright. From there you can try to extend your knee, (straighten your leg), now activating the quadriceps and hip flexor muscles.

Balance drills increase core stability and activate the smaller stabilizer muscles of the body that allow us to find balance from left to right side—especially during gait (walking) or dynamic movement patterns.

To practice your balance place one or both hands on a wall, fence, rail, or any stable object. Lift one leg off the ground and simply balance. You can go for sets, time, or repetition. If the pattern becomes easy, then remove your hands from the wall or try with your eyes closed. You can also try a forward hinge from a single leg stance—flex (hinge) your upper body over your grounded leg while kicking your lifted leg behind you, this pattern is called a single leg hip hinge or warrior 3 in western yoga.

Yes, you can walk in a way that feels good for you, and if it does not feel good now, it can 100% be improved upon. Work with the space and resources that you have. If limited room or mobility does not allow you to walk, you can start with balance, core training, foot mobility, strength or flexibility.

Remember there is nothing wrong with going on a slow or short walk. Focus on your form—heel strikes first when your front foot makes contact with the ground, then roll/shift your weight forward through your mid foot, and ultimately forefront of the foot, (ball of the foot and toes), as you press off of your now rear foot to step forward again. Feel your glutes assist you into hip extension by driving your hips forward, and allow your upper body (side body, ribs, shoulders, head, and your arms) to work together. Feel your body, listen to your movement, find balance in the rhythm. It may be helpful to record yourself walking from a front and side view so you can see where your body may be imbalanced.

Allow us to progress into an important aspect of walking—mindfulness. Walking for me is a constant reminder of my why. Every day when I walk, and especially during my “walking meditations” I am present. Walking not only reduces my stress, stimulates my blood flow, keeps me healthy, and puts me in a state of joy, it also sets the stage for my higher learning, for me to know thyself, my me time.

Walking is natural and compatible with our being. It is what we do, it is how we move. We can be mindful whenever and however we move. Walking meditation—mindfulness, intent, introspection, observation, and breath, allow us to navigate deeper-inward, it becomes a supernatural experience. I highly recommend walking to manage stress, support caloric balance (weight), and for cross training, (complimentary forms of exercise).

Adding meditation to walks takes the practice and amplifies it. Eventually we may find that every time we walk it becomes a meditation; an invitation to look inward and be fully present. While I may be more aware than some, I still have moments where I catch myself wandering while walking and promptly return my awareness to the Earth beneath me, gracious and providing in bounty.

There are many different meditations, prayers, chants, hums, hymns, and imaginings that one may do while walking. What I suggest is to begin slow. Go for a walk when and where you are not in a rush. If the scene is beautiful, even better. Soak up the view, the sounds around you if you do not have headphones on/in, the sunlight, animals, breeze, etc. Take time in the moment to feel. Feel the Earth beneath you, what is she telling you? How may you communicate? Shift your focus to your breath, is it startled, short, or inconsistent? If so, that is okay, but can you also take a moment for a full cycle of breath (1 inhale + 1 exhale), and then another?

Allow your breath to be the catalyst to your gait cycle (walking). You may forget about your breath at times, which is okay, but with awareness return to the fullness and consistency of your breath, feel the intent of your movement. Perhaps, you work so that your steps are quiet and your feet do not drag on the ground, this is a great start. With practice it may feel like your feet are floating. You have already begun your walking meditation using your imagination.

You may also enjoy running, jogging, skating, biking, etc., these are all terrific forms of exercise and travel, they may also be forms of meditation; but walking meditation is unique unto itself. Its tempo is flowing and controlled, breaths may be synchronized

and/or attuned to a specific number of steps, perhaps a two step inhale, and three step exhale. This repetition creates an engine, a system that revs up our higher levels of consciousness and awareness. Separate your meditation walks from your regular day to day travel, (especially when you are in a rush). After time you may notice that you are taking your mindfulness walks with you everywhere you go.

In conclusion, I have put many hours and many many miles of practice into my daily walks. I find time for walking meditation every day that I am able. So much so that I can observe the difference in my walk and others. No one better than the other, but from an observational standpoint, there is an energy, a field, (wings) that help the practitioner who is ready to float or walk on air. This phenomenon has become less of something I do, as I have realized it is more so who I AM. Many possibilities and many expressions, from this viewpoint, in this moment. You may also think of this as the flow state.

Take your time with your walks, and work with yourself, be open and honest with yourself, love and guide yourself towards growth. Anything is possible, why not try a walk today. Not as something that you have to do, but something that you have the privilege to do, in any capacity. Even if it is a walk in your mind's eye.

Much love, and fleet of feet along your journey, as we fall forward one step at a time, to our ultimate destination. Coach Ju

For more on walking please check out my blog series titled Why Walk, available only on my website julylyonwellness.com under the blog tab. I also have a downloadable fitness & corrective exercise program titled, Fix Your Feet, in my online store.

HEALTHY HABIT 2: FASTING REGULARLY (OFTEN WITHOUT THOUGHT)

My second habit that stimulates my being, replenishes my cells, and increases my vitality is fasting, (go without food for a prolonged period).

Allow me to share my experience from today—it was a reminder why I usually avoid late night meals and why I fast and manage calorie intake throughout my day. I was in a deep sleep, when suddenly I woke up—system alert—my body needed to rid itself of waste byproducts; (I had to go #2). This was that sweet spot of sleep; I had one hour

until I had to get up. But my digestive tract was ready to move on to its next phase along the food chain conveyor belt. And after 15 to 20 minutes of uncomfortably trying to fall back asleep I decided to get up and start my day—which promptly began in the restroom.

To start one's day in the restroom is natural, our body goes through its break down, detox and waste processing during sleep. When we wake up our body continues to rid itself of unwanted waste byproducts and re-absorb what is useful.

So, what is the issue? As I discuss in my book, *Intro To Nutrition*—bowel movements should not create extreme discomfort or dismay. When the body undergoes severe diarrhea, bloating, constipation, cramping, etc., it is indicating dis-ease (imbalance). Balance needs to be reintroduced.

Overeating is common in the U.S. It is a cultural standard. (I go in-depth in my book, *Intro To Nutrition*). We live in a society that rewards gluttony and decadence over survival and balance. The result is that we eat far more than we should and we do this more times than not. The cliché symbols of a “big” full belly and loosening one’s belt after a large meal are outdated stereotypes. If you are very hungry or starving, it is reasonable to eat more than one’s body can handle. Picture the beginning scenes from the original Charlie & The Chocolate Factory movie. There was a family living in a single shack, who were impoverished and starving. It would not be a surprise for someone in this situation to overeat when the opportunity presents itself. For one’s “eyes to be bigger than their stomach.” Eating too much too quickly—not finishing one’s plate or portion.

Does this sound familiar? Well, if it does and you are not a child, impoverished or starving, then it may be time to learn the cues (feelings) of satiety (being content).

There is a chemical process that occurs in the body during feeding that facilitates communication between the gut and brain. There are two main hormones that share a dualistic role in appetite. Ghrelin is known as the “Hunger Hormone” its job is to stimulate appetite, (hunger). It does this by signaling to the brain that the stomach is empty and requires fuel. Ghrelin resides in the stomach primarily. On the opposite side of the equation, located in fat cells are Leptin, the “Satiety Hormone” which inhibits appetite; signaling to the brain that the body has adequate stores of energy and fat reserves, (content/full).

Both hormones are negatively impacted by over-feeding and careless feeding patterns. They work in a harmonious (balanced) and reciprocal (opposite) manner, along with the hypothalamus of the brain which works as a master control center—regulating appetite, mood, and overall energy homeostasis (balance).

If our energy reserves become imbalanced, such as with obesity, it can lead to impaired Leptin signaling. Meaning the body cannot recognize fullness, and so, overeating takes places constantly. This phenomenon is also a prerequisite to Type-2 Diabetes, an inability for the pancreas to properly release insulin, which regulates blood sugar absorption by the liver and muscle tissues.

The important thing to remember is that overeating is not based on how you look, it is more about what is occurring under the surface. If you are someone that often overeats it may be less psychological than you think and more of a chemical imbalance. Inability to regulate fullness is a reaction to what has been done to the body. In my opinion, we can reverse engineer these phenomena more times than not without medical intervention (surgery, medication). Always consult with a professional, but allow me to provide some insight to proactively tackle these issues head on.

Here are some cues to help you regain body sovereignty (ownership). First off, SLOW DOWN YOUR FEEDING. Do not eat so fast. When we eat quickly our body does not have enough time to process, and so we continue to eat; usually for 10 to 15 minutes past the point where fullness cues start. The result is that the body is hit with what feels like a semi trailer of fullness. If we are not careful, we quickly go from being hungry into the other extreme of being full. There is no due process, there is never a contentment phase. The sensation of feeling balanced is skipped over completely.

Again, if it takes roughly 10 to 15 minutes for our body to properly register that it is full, then eat slower and extend the length of your meals. As an example, if you have a large portion of food and you typically wolf it down (eat it like a starving animal) within 5, 10, 15 minutes, (this has been me—many times), then double your eating time to 10, 20, 30 minutes.

You may find that you are full or better yet (content) before you finish your entire portion, now you have leftovers. You may adjust your portion size from now on, affecting how much you spend on groceries and meals. More space on your plate means more room for variety, like plants that are the colors of a rainbow, new sides, soups, salads, teas, etc.

Take your time and enjoy your food. Slow down your pace. Do not rush your bites. Chew your food thoroughly, embrace the qualities of the entire meal and experience, (use your five senses). Cut your food into smaller pieces or take smaller bites, and try not to eat while distracted, (in front of the t.v., while on your phone, while driving, etc).

When you chew your food take a moment to embrace its flavor profile, texture, consistency, juiciness, snap, crackle, sizzle, pop! This connection places you in the moment and allows you to enjoy each bite of food. Remember, a meal is a full experience, why else would fancy restaurants charge so much for 5 to 7 courses. The presentation, style, and uniqueness of the food and drink are compliments to the ambiance—lighting, décor, music, etc.

The customers are looking for an immersive experience, and so, look no further than your five senses to bring that wholistic experience inward. Chewing one's food thoroughly goes hand and hand with enjoying each bite. The process ensures that your body is following its initial stages of digestion, starting by mechanically breaking down your food, aided with saliva and digestive enzymes priming in your stomach. When your body breaks down food properly it is able to utilize its nutrients. You will also feel more satiated and on the back end of things your bowel movements will become passive and manageable.

Eating while distracted is a major cause of overeating. For many of us we are on the go, in a rush or (multitasking). Sometimes we “have to do what we have to do.” We may have five minutes to eat our meal before work, as an example. Even when our schedules are condensed or busy, there are opportunities to slow down and be mindful during feeding. When you eat—focus on your nourishment, slow down and be in the moment. You can return to whatever else after you refill your energy reserves, (eat/drink).

Let us get familiar with timing of feeding, which ties directly into fasting. Timing of feeding is just as important as what is being consumed. When you wake up your body continues its detoxification process for a few hours. This means that there are ideal periods of the day to eat. Early afternoon as an example, is an ideal time to have more carbohydrates. During these hours, the body revs up, prime to take in nutrients and perform the bulk of the day's tasks. In the evening after the sun goes down the body converts serotonin (the daytime hormone) that is produced via sunlight and converts it into melatonin (the nighttime sleep hormone). This is when the body shifts into its nightly restorative duties.

When we eat late at night we change the body's recovery process. Late meals (9 p.m. or later) require A LOT of energy to break down. During sleep, this shift from primary duties like brain restoration, storing and organizing of recently acquired information, and memories—to digestion, is why many people wake up feeling foggy headed, forgetful, groggy, achy, full, stuffed, lethargic, moody, tired, sleepy, forgetful, etc.

Even if you do not change the foods you eat, is it possible to adjust the time and portion size? Can that late meal be a few hours earlier? Can those in-between meals and snacks be curbed or turned into a nutrient dense meal at a reasonable time? We can ask ourselves these questions today and start real change.

You can also reserve a healthy snack to aid your digestion and satisfy your palette. Some examples are fruit, 100% juiced fruits or vegetables, seaweed, chia pudding, dark chocolate, (coconut milk, yogurt or ice cream), açaí bowl, homemade granola, cornbread, cookies made with all natural ingredients, (whole grains or no grains like seeds/nuts), and natural sweeteners like maple syrup, agave, vanilla, cinnamon, cardamom, and honey.

Your meals do not have to be boring at all. With proper planning and information, you may find that your meals taste better the more mindful you are of the entire experience; from preparation to the ingredients that nourish you.

Fasting and timing of eating have taken on an entirely new light for me in recent years. Growing up, the norm that was taught at school was to eat three square meals a day, and do not miss breakfast, which was said to be the most important meal of the day. I stand to correct that misnomer, breakfast may be ideal for some, but it most certainly does not need to be a staple, (go to), for everyone. Allow us to look a bit more into the root words of breakfast, which are 1) break and 2) fast. Breakfast quite literally means to break-fast, to break one's fast. Fasting has become a popular, controversial, and misunderstood topic in recent years, yet we do it each day upon eating our first meal. So yes, you are already fasting! You just might not fast very long.

Some observances that I have made in the years since I stopped prioritizing breakfast are that my body usually does not like, want or need to eat early in my day. There are exceptions like the day after an extremely high caloric burn from a vigorous, run, hike, or lifting session where I may opt to have a meal earlier in my day BECAUSE I AM HUNGRY. But most of the time that is not the case and when I am truly listening to my body, I find that I typically require at least a few hours after waking before my body craves fuel (food).

This is in part to me training my body to resist overeating, as well as developing the skills to recenter my mind when it begins to drift, as eating is often something done out of boredom or convenience. An example would be snacking on chips. Nothing like a half bag of chips on a semi full stomach. “Might as well eat the rest of the bag” I would contemplate in my mind, because I did not have the discipline or coping skills. I would finish the entire (often large) bag of chips, even though my body had no need for the incoming calories.

It is easy to snack during the morning hours. Think about it, there are countless quick breakfast options available. Each claiming to be quick (often microwaveable), convenient (you can eat it right out of the packaging), and action packed (multiple foods at once like a cereal-bar), no milk needed.

Whether we are grabbing coffee from our favorite café/shop when we leave the house each day or grabbing a free bagel, muffin, or donut at work because (that is the breakfast available). Or whether you are getting the free (continental) breakfast at your hotel, school, or wherever you may be, there are countless options for breakfast foods and most of which do not have your nutritional needs in mind. Pay attention to mindless snacking when you begin your day, especially snacking when you are not hungry. More so, avoid snacking because there is an abundance of choices around you, and snacking because of the smells, sights, sounds, feels and tastes.

As an experiment, give your body a few hours after you wake up before you eat, and see how you feel. You have more than likely done this before without thinking. An emergency, when traveling or moving, during an event or celebration, etc. These are common situations when we may refrain from eating for prolonged periods of time without thought. When we are sick is another time we may not eat breakfast or perhaps for an entire day. In fact, what if the body was feeling sick because the digestive tract was being overworked daily?

Imagine if you will, a scenario in which a 20, 30, 40, 50, 60+ year old adult has never given their digestive tract a day off from work. From the time they were able to eat solid foods they had 3 meals a day, never missing breakfast, lunch and dinner. That is a long time to go without a day off for the digestive tract. And the crazy thing about it is—this system will continue to do its duties to the best of its abilities despite never having a day off. Can you say the same for yourself and doing your daily duties? Would you work

for someone who never gave you a day off? The stomach needs some time off, and so does the rest of the digestive tract (system).

Most days I do not eat anything until at least the afternoon. A modern name for fasting until the early afternoon, (often in the range of 2 p.m. to 12 p.m.), is intermittent fasting. This concept implies that each day upon waking up the practitioner will refrain from eating until at least 12 p.m., if not until 2 p.m. or even later in the afternoon/evening.

Studies have been conducted on the specific number of fasted hours it takes to see results, such as fat burn, cellular rejuvenation, using ketones (energy from fat as a main fuel source), etc. Some studies suggest that the body needs 48 hours + to reap the benefits of fasting, others suggest 24 hours, 16-to-18-hour range, or even as little as 12 hours.

From personal experience, my interpretation is this. Fasting truly is an incredible thing, it is healing for the mind, body, and spirit, but it can also become detrimental and break down the body without due caution and knowledge. Longer fasting is not meant for everybody and I absolutely would not recommend fasting for prolonged periods of time without the aid of a professional or an experienced practitioner. And even with those tools you still need to be very mindful at all times, especially as you get into longer and more frequent fasting.

12 to 16 hours of fasting (if sleep is counted) is certainly enough time for the body to begin building a real hunger up. If you went to bed at 10 p.m. and slept for 9 hours until 7 a.m., you would already have fasted for 14 hours if you wait until 12 p.m. to have your first meal of the day. That is not unbelievably difficult to do in my opinion. In fact, I would argue that many people fast more than they give themselves credit for.

I typically wait until the afternoon to eat; I often have two or less meals in an entire day. I still make sure I eat plenty, but the timing of when I eat, I take very seriously. When I eat too late at night I notice that I wake up sluggish, with more pronounced bags under my eyes, often more inflamed in joints, etc. All because my body did not get to perform its normal restorative duties under the heavy load of late night food. I also have a much clearer picture now of what works best for my body. This allows me to be more conscientious with my food selection and how to balance it with my tasks and demands for the day. Again, if I know that I have an enjoyable meal to look forward to later in the day, I will gladly pass up on a smaller often times illogical meal earlier in the day, that I am only eating because it is “breakfast time” or “lunch time.”

As an athlete, nutrition coach, and personal trainer, meal timing and selection has become one of my strong suits, and I utilize them to help me get the most out of my training.

Try starting your first meal an hour or two later each day as an experiment for a week to see what happens. Or pick one day in the week to start your first meal later and see how you feel. Were you sluggish and tired, did you have more energy than you expected, or did something unexpected happen? Teas such as green, black, chai, lemon-ginger, licorice, etc. are great to begin your day with, as they suppress hunger and stimulate digestion.

If you find that you are still very hungry in the a.m. try a healthy snack such as a fruit bowl with water based fruits like watermelon, cantaloupe, grapes, etc., as these fruits will assist your body in breaking down the fuel it has already taken in from yesterday's meals. Avoid complex carbohydrates and starches like buttermilk biscuits and fried hash browns early in the day, as well as complex proteins like greasy meats, if you are someone having digestion problems. If you find yourself needing more energy at the beginning of your day you can go for a healthy complex carbohydrate like whole grains (buckwheat, millet, etc). If you find that you are still very hungry then you can opt for a lean and healthy protein like wild caught salmon to curb your hunger.

As you become more knowledgeable with fasting you may find that under normal conditions you do not feel hungry until later in the evening. Perhaps, you will feel your best at one meal per day. The benefits to this is that your body has ample time to break down any other foods that it needs to, and is now willing and ready to take in new calories. Imagine how much you may enjoy a meal when you have been waiting for it all day. This is a great way to manage calories, as there are few if any calories coming in throughout the day other than the main meal in the evening.

Is this style for everybody, no. Does it need to be for every(body), no, certainly not. Variance, however, is good. And so, whether you are fasting each day or once a month, your body needs a break from breaking down foods. Be sure to honor that.

The main reason that I believe fasting works so well for me is because it is something I just do now. When I got off the three-square-meals-a-day food-pyramid-hamsterwheel, I often found myself fasting because it felt good. Sometimes it was what my circumstances provided me. The more often I did it, the more that I liked it. The more I did it, the more I learned. Which was also important so that I could maintain balance.

Where I stand now, I tend to do two types of fasting. One type of fasting I do almost every day, which is waiting until the afternoon hours at the least to have my first meal. The second type of fasting that I do is 24 hours or longer. Longer cleanses are meant to eliminate what is no longer needed physically, mentally and spiritually. It is not uncommon for me to go through an intense prolonged period of fasting. I have done over 72 hours of fasting on just water (maybe some salt) on more than one occasion. There are also multiple types of fasts for various reasons.

A fruit fast for example, is when you only eat fruits for the purpose of detoxifying the body. Drinking fruit juice is an even better way to do this, as it allows for more nutrient absorption, while keeping digestion easy on your gut! One can also use the aid of various teas, roots, herbs, etc. to intensify, provide satiation, energy, and the like. Again, if you are going to do more intense fasting please do your research first and start small/short and work from there. Do not let ego get in the way of true healing. Show love to yourself, you deserve it.

Longer periods of fasting for me, are often induced on their own. Meaning it can be an extreme situation that I experience that prompts the need for me to let go and spiritually cleanse. It could be related to my recent feeding patterns and how I am feeling, symptoms that are arising of sickness, season change, etc. The point being is that I now have a radar that goes off in my mind when I have reached an extreme, and heavy-duty action is needed to restore balance—fasting. To add further insight, I will often begin a fast on a busy or stressful day, and before I know it the Sun is starting to set. That often is when the lightbulb turns on for me and I realize that the day is almost over and I am *not even hungry*.

By then I usually feel homeostasis (balance) kicking in. A calmness flows over my body, I can literally feel a tingling setting in, and inflammation is absolutely obliterated in my body! I feel no joint aches, pains, swelling, cracks, pops when I fast for longer bouts of 48 to 24 hours +). I can feel my cells rejuvenating, I become my own super-being. All from allowing myself, (my cells), ample time to reset and find balance.

After these prolonged periods of fasting, I always find it much easier to get back into a healthy swing of things. I never want to eat unhealthy food after a fast because my body notices and lets me know through immediate discomfort, (bloating, inflammation, gas, etc). This helps me to develop a better relationship with myself, one with more respect, one that pays homage to my needs. Fasting allows me to be me—feel like myself and

be in the moment. It allows me to service myself before I need external services. It may be just what your body needs too.

In conclusion, fasting may be extremely helpful to you in the long run, but it is worth learning about and experimenting with in a healthy manner before pushing the limits. There are varying styles of fasting, some more strict than others, done for entirely different purposes. One may fast to lose weight while another may fast for spiritual clarity.

Know thyself, pay close attention to your needs, and remember that anything dealing with yourself, should be done in a loving manner.

You can work on longer periods of fasting by starting your first meal later in the day. There are many ways in which you may experiment and play around with fasting. Check in with yourself, and take mental or physical notes about your experience, that way you can begin to tailor your unique experience.

As you continue with your fasting you may find that you do not need to label it fasting, instead you are simply eating (fueling) yourself when you need to and honoring yourself when you do not need to. Fasting is a tool to allow oneself to go further inward, for self exploration, and physical, mental, and spiritual refinement. Fasting is also quite literally a break for the digestive system. Take your time, it is all you ever need.

HEALTHY HABIT 3: EAT SPICY FOODS REGULARLY (TIMING & PURPOSE)

My third “Healthy Habit” is that I eat spicy foods regularly. I do this with timing and purpose. Spice is nothing more than variance. One sliver in a large Wheel Of Fortune of flavors. Spicy foods will not be ideal for everyone’s palate, but whether you enjoy spice on level 10 or not you should find balance with it. The same can be said for sweet, salty, bitter, earthy, savory, and umami flavors—which often have unique health properties unto themselves.

Here are few things I have learned about spice. The first is that spice is **natural** and used all over the world. From spicy gumbo, chili, BBQ, and hot pepper sauce “hot

sauce" of the American South to chili fruit stands along roadsides in India, to chilitamarind candy and spicy drinks/cocktails consumed throughout Mexico and the Americas.

All-natural chili-tamarind candy for example, has as little as two ingredients in total. Real tamarind, real bits of chili, and sometimes lemon. Compare that to artificial spicy and sweet candy in the U.S. and you will find that their ingredient list far surpasses that of natural candy in total ingredients.

You will also find a plethora of fillers, artificial ingredients/colors, and preservatives. This eliminates all health benefits. Whereas real candy with real ingredients uses fruits that naturally aid digestion along with spice. Moreover, many fruits naturally have textures, smells, flavors, and shelf lives comparable to candy.

If you eat spicy food, particularly a snack food, and you cannot properly identify the source of the spice, it may be a good idea to find an alternative. As an example, many brands of chips such as Takis, will label their chips as being very spicy, or having some different variation of spice from the other flavor options. But when you flip the bag over and look at the ingredients you will note that there are exorbitant (excessive) amounts of filler ingredients and very little spice. The whole flavor is artificial along with the color of the chip. There are so many unique peppers of varying hue, shape, size and flavor; give them a try.

Peppers have different effects and levels of spice. Not all heat is the same. Picture a buffalo wing restaurant with a sliding scale of heat—from mild to (sign the waiver) atomic hot. The same goes for salsa, ramen, BBQ, and more. Sometimes making a dish hotter is a matter of adding more of a particular type of pepper or using its seeds. Other times the variance comes from completely different types of peppers or plants altogether.

Horseradish and ginger are two roots that are quite different than peppers. Each has exceptionally strong effects. Blisteringly spicy, especially at first, these two ingredients are used to enhance the flavor of many dishes and drinks, as well as to add a potent health boost! Kimchi (fermented cabbage) is another example of a unique and spicy treat. Highly potent, only a small dap is needed to compliment many Korean dishes.

The point is that spice is nuanced. It is not as reckless as one may think—although, yes, there are spicy wing competitions, friends who challenge friends to drink hot sauce,

spicy one chip challenges, and the like. The key is to find balance, and to use spice purposefully.

For some of you, you have enjoyed spicy foods your entire life. You might even be known as the person who always wants it “a little bit hotter.” I will get to you shortly.

This portion addresses those of you that do not like to eat spicy foods. If you are one of these people you may be thinking that this section is irrelevant, as many of you have sworn off hot foods completely. This topic may be a bit triggering, as a result of a bad experience or a unique situation like acid reflux or a sensitive stomach.

Together, let us break down why spicy foods may have an adverse effect on us, and if so, see if we can find any use for them. For the person with the sensitive gut, visualize the last time you ate spicy food that disagreed with you. Was there anything else about the experience that added to your discomfort? Was the spicy food eaten as a part of a larger dish or was the spice mixed in with many other ingredients? Did you have food in your stomach or did you eat the spicy food on an empty stomach? Another consideration to make is timing, when was the spicy food eaten and what was going on then.

As an example, it may not be best to eat a spicy meal late at night, as the gut will respond while you sleep. This may prompt a bad experience. Suddenly your meal from that “cultural” restaurant with authentic dishes gives you a bad taste, when instead you should be thanking their kitchen for getting your digestive tract to move through its stagnation.

For the person who does not like spicy foods, can you recall a time when you did like spice? Moreover, was there a time you ate spice and did not have a disagreeable experience?

As we continue to break down the nuances of spice, allow us to go deeper into consumption. The most obvious way to mitigate heat is with caution. Here are a few helpful requests that you can make to find balance when eating spicy food: request half spicy and half mild, ask for the heat on the side of the dish or in a separate container, (kimchi and pickled chilis are often served on the side in various Asian cuisines), request a cooling side or eat the sides that come with your dish, (celery and carrots that come with your wings), tamarind and coconut dip/chutney, fruit bowl, milk, coconut water, yogurt, nuts, juiced drink, etc.

The idea is to use a hybrid approach when consuming spice. You do not have to make yourself nauseas or uncomfortable. Again, pay attention to the type of spice. Habanero as an example, is very potent, one only needs a small amount of its black seeds to feel its mighty kick. Habanero also has brilliant smoky and woody undertones. So just a little of this spice can go a LONG way, both in flavor and health benefit. No need to make the dish overly spicy, instead add just a pinch and eat with caution, for a great digestive aid.

Hot sauce is another great example of a spice that may be easily monitored and controlled. If you do not like to drip and drizzle hot sauce all over your food then consider this; use hot sauce throughout an entire dish, so that the end result is not overly hot, but instead well balanced and flavorful.

Many popular dishes and sauces such as potato salad, macaroni and cheese, BBQ, sloppy joe, ketchup, spicy mustard, etc., are often made with multiple spices of varying heats. In fact, those unique blends of spices are often what make certain products so delicious. The key is balance. The recipes are designed to balance heat with the other flavors in the (Wheel Of Fortune Flavor Wheel).

If that pizza restaurant that you love, that uses just a few dabs of Tabasco in their unconventional recipe can add heat, and that pinch of cayenne can uplift those famous deviled eggs you enjoy, then perhaps you can give some heat a try too.

Remember, we are talking heat for health purposes. Here are three considerations to keep in mind as you start adding more heat to your palate.

- 1) Hot foods such as cayenne are great for capillary recruitment (opens more capillaries). The active ingredient in cayenne (Capsaicin) signals the body to warm cold extremities, lower blood pressure, and speed up recovery by recruiting more capillaries for removal of metabolic waste from tissues. Cayenne also signals the body to recruit more capillaries to deliver oxygenated blood and nutrients to tissues. This is particularly important for distal limbs (hands, feet, fingers, toes, arms, legs). If you are someone dealing with tingling and numbness in your fingers and toes, consider adding a pinch of cayenne to your food or better yet to your drink, so it is easily absorbed.

Helpful Hint: Lemon-ginger, cayenne, and maple syrup, agave or natural honey as sweeteners, are simple ingredients for a balanced tasting drink that adds a bit of heat, stimulating blood flow and the gut. Simply stir in a glass of water.

- 2) Hot/spicy foods play an extraordinary role in stimulating the digestive tract. It is not a coincidence that after you try Thai cuisine for the first time you hear your gut buzzing and bubbling. If you were fortunate enough to have your dish made customarily spicy with Thai chilis, then you probably felt your colon ridding itself of waste like never before.

From the meal itself, that had sour, tangy, sweet, spicy, and umami undertones, (complex, delicious, balanced flavor), to the way that you felt immediately after the meal, as well as the following day, you had a buzz. Your meal was hand crafted, made with love and authenticity, and the ingredients have been cultivated for years to match the unique climate, temperament, environment, and nutritional needs of the people in that region of Southeast Asia.

Spice is a part of their culture. The peppers grow naturally in abundance and for good reason. They help to strengthen the gut in an area where the water has an abundance of life in it, (microorganisms). The warm and humid climate also calls for natural ways to cool down, and believe it or not, eating spice when physically hot induces sweat, which naturally cools down the body.

A combination of sweat and Vitamin C, which many peppers pack in high amounts, is a surefire way to boost the immune system and prevent imbalance. As mentioned previously, there are a multiplicity of pepper options available. Some are sweet and fruity and may be used in different recipes and herbal remedies.

- 3) Spice is a flavor—get used to it! Get more familiar with it. Do not be afraid. We have gone through some of the health benefits of eating spicy foods, which for me, is enough to prompt their consumption. Their flavor and ability to enhance other ingredients is a bonus, and for sure—enough of a reason to make many heat lovers regularly consume.

Spice is found in buffalo wings, spaghetti, salmon patties, soup, salad, pizza, lentils, smoked meats, BBQ sauce, ramen, mashed potatoes, sushi, and more. Spice can also be found in hot cocoa, chocolate bars, ice cream, fruit-candy, lollipops, gum, and medicine.

The point is that spice can balance out many different flavors as well as enhance them. Whether it is the cinnamon in your toothpaste, that leaves your mouth feeling refreshed, or the ginger in your ginger ale that eases your tummy when it is upset. Spice always seems to be in the backdrop—not too far away from the main course.

With so much information available, one helpful tool is to look at cooking videos online, there are so many options available. This is one of the best ways to learn about spice, observing other cultures and chefs. Take your time and find your threshold of spice and the perfect blend of seasoning.

Before we wrap up our spicy talk...let me talk to you spice lovers out there. You might be feeling good about all the heat that you consume—and you should. Allow us to dive deeper into our gut, to ensure that the timing and frequency are in accordance with our body's needs.

For the person that regularly eats spicy food, my first question to you is, how do you feel? Are you experiencing any discomfort within the normal ebbs and flows of your digestive system? If so, that would be the first sign that you should examine your food/drink intake and balance accordingly. For example, if you regularly mix foods within meals and snack on many different foods/drinks throughout the day, spice may not be working well for you. It may actually be an irritant, as the Capsaicin (what makes peppers hot) may be reacting with many other agitators in your stomach.

This is where timing and placement matter. Avoid over cramming—packing different foods on top of one another before they have had time to digest. Heat can only do so much for the gut, and waste on top of waste exits but one way. Space out meals, and consume plants before eating steaks, heavy dairy, fried carbohydrates, and processed meats. These foods have fewer nutrients that can be extracted from them compared to more nutrient available foods and drinks like salmon, dandelion greens, avocado, orange juice, coconut water, and boiled eggs. They also take more time to break down, meaning they tend to build up in the colon, (poop builds up in your gut).

Lemon + cayenne + maple syrup is a simple remedy that boosts digestive properties, stimulates mood, and suppresses appetite. The simplicity is the main reason it works. The ingredients can be easily absorbed; IF the gut is open and accessible.

Helpful Hint: Lemon, Cayenne, and Maple Syrup in spring water is a great tonic when fasting. Herbs and roots work well with water, as do various leafs and essences steeped as teas. As mentioned, these plants can be used to satiate the body. Infused water and tea as examples, can suppress hunger. You can take it a step further and add a fat like coconut milk. Need energy? Add chia seeds or a natural sweetener to water. Promote good digestion with fennel tea, and increase cognition and energy with Lion's Mane and Cordyceps mushrooms respectively. If you need to hydrate your body, simply squeeze lime or lemon and a pinch of natural salt (sea salt, Himalayan salt, Celtic salt, not iodized) to spring or filtered water.

If you regularly consume spicy foods it will be helpful to taper off your late-night ingestion at or around 9 p.m. This syncs up with the ideal time all meals should be eaten, giving you optimal time to digest. Late night loaded potatoes with hot sauce or salsa, and late night hot wings and beer, are bound to have a prolonged irritation on the gut throughout the night

Lastly, if you regularly consume heat, look for healthier All Natural versions. There are countless blends of spice that are delicious—hot sauce, chili oil, chili paste, fermented chilis, fermented beans, chutneys, pickled spices and vinegar spreads, dried chilis, etc.

Be mindful that many of the spicy snacks you enjoy are mixed with chemicals, preservatives and fillers that make the products addictive. The hot Cheetos or Takis that you eat may not pass for (hot enough) at a real deal chili competition. They also would not pass for flavor. Do not be fooled by artificially induced flavor and heat. Real spice has deep and complex hues and undertones to its flavor. Different peppers have distinct and recognizable flavors, effects, and smells.

Dive into the world of spice; do so with caution, knowing that you are bound to get heat checked. When you do, take time to observe your experience, take notes. Play around with how you consume spice, learn and grow. Like sugar, it can be needed at times and at others it can be detrimental.

Novice heat goers tend to consume more spice than they realize. Spices are often blended into dishes for overall balance. Explore the world of spice whether you enjoy it or not, be open to more heat in your life. You can begin by finding a flavorful hot sauce that you can dab in your dish. Add spice to foods that promote digestive health, such as lentils, soup, ramen, Pho, broth, tomato sauce, and more. Buying whole peppers is even better. You can search your local Farmer's Market for whole peppers. Farmers tend to be knowledgeable and often have recipes, usages, and helpful insight about peppers and other forms of heat, how to preserve them, and get multiple uses out of them.

Wherever you are along your heat journey, explore something new, you may learn some cool information, that when applied helps you to find balance.

HEALTHY HABIT 4: GET SUNLIGHT AND GROUND INTO NATURE

I am sitting on the ground, typing this sentence. The sun is beaming into my forehead. The heat waves feel cleansing and comforting. It is clearly a warm Thursday, as we are already in the last week of November. As the heat fluctuates and the warmth coats my skin—I AM grateful to receive the Sun’s message. When autumn comes to an end, we pass the torch—the last flame off to Winter Solstice.

What is the Sun? It has been marveled in antiquity, (for a long time). There are countless depictions, stories, and explanations for its purpose. Questions arise such as, where did it originate, how old is it, how long will it be here, how far away is it, what is its position in our solar system compared to Earth? Is it heat that we feel from the Sun, plasma, or a chemical reaction within and around us?

Regardless the school of thought, spiritual practice, or scientific branch, it is clear the Sun has a very important purpose. And through observation we are aware of the Sun’s impact on nature—animals, insects, plants, fungi, water, etc.

We need the Sun, no matter how technologically advanced we become; we need the Sun. There are many reasons that we may have limited access to the outdoors, but we must find balance.

Work is why most people get far less sunlight than they need. If you work indoors, in a cubicle setting for example, you exchange hours of your time confined in an artificial setting. That is okay—but you need to find balance with it.

It is daylight savings in the U.S. and that means 4 p.m. sunsets for most Americans. If you start work at 8 A.M. or 9 A.M. and work for 8 or 9 hours—when your shift is complete there is a good chance that it is already dark outside. This can be a serious challenge and have an effect on your mood, energy, digestion and more.

Here are some suggestions to combat being indoors during the winter months. Go on a walk before or after your shift to stimulate your mind and body. Even if the sky is gray outside, the Sun is still shining, so be sure to pop outside for a quick break whenever you can. If you have a 15-minute break that you usually take in the break room, perhaps you can go outside for a brief stretch, walk, or meditation. These short sunlight snacks add up big.

On your day off—get outside. You can take care of more than one task at a time. Like reading in the sun, going on a walk with loved ones, or having lunch at the park instead of indoors. Once you build up your routine, you won’t want to miss getting outside for even a day. Especially as you notice how it naturally uplifts mood and eases pain.

In our modernized western society, we should strive to get at least two hours of direct sunlight every single day. That means going outside and receiving the Sun's rays as the first choice. If that is not possible you can also receive daylight from a window, glass ceiling, in your car, etc.

The idea is to be very direct and purposeful about getting sunlight. Please note that I am not referring to tanning oneself—although “Sunbathing” has many benefits. But that is going to be highly dependent on one’s threshold (each individual can tolerate the Sun differently) and epidermal melanin, (darker skin can absorb more of the Sun’s rays without damage).

One should also be very mindful of UV (Ultraviolet) rays from the Sun, which may cause damage to eyes and skin—even when it does not feel very hot outside. In other words, do not burn yourself or risk your health attempting to meet your Sun quota for the day. The Sun has many benefits, and the time of the day has a lot to do with this. As an example, UV rays are their strongest mid day, when the Sun is at its highest points of the day.

Sunlight is perspective, both in a literal and figurative sense. Each fragment of light continues “on and on”—on its own path. Never mixing or combining with other beams of light. Each frequency of light fulfills its own pathway (journey) and harmonizes with the whole (illumination). Picture a pie split into evenly cut slices. Even if the pie was made out of the same ingredients, each slice would be a little different—one may have more apple slices or blueberries than another, for example.

Since the Sun shines consistently, it is the Earth’s rotation that allows us to receive varying hues of the Sun throughout the day. What is sunrise at one point, becomes high noon, and eventually sunset.

Every degree of light has unique properties unto itself—as shown in astrology & astronomy. As an example, when looking at one’s birth chart, the time of day an individual was born, date and location—create a snapshot in time. A specific resonance or frequency that went off at the exact moment of birth. None more important than others, but all unique unto themselves.

With this understanding of “angles of light” we can utilize the time of day to get specific health benefits from the Sun. Yes, the same way that plants are able to receive information, instructions, and nutrition from the Sun—we are able to do the same.

Early-morning sunlight, especially during and immediately after the Sun rises, has B Vitamins within it—that can be absorbed through the skin. B Vitamins are critical for mood and brain function, especially for someone on a plant-based diet, because B Vitamins are commonly found in animal products.

I have noticed repeatedly that when I observe and absorb the Sun’s rise—I feel gratitude, calm, peace, motivation, cognitive and creative expression (my brain lights up), my microbiome communicates (my gut talks), and more. It appears that by greeting the day (being up and especially baring witness to the sunrise), that in return the Sun greets us (provides nutrition and information for success each day).

The sunset also has unique properties; during this time, the Sun passes the torch off to the evening sky. As the Sun sets there is a calming and reassuring energy that surfaces. Have you ever noticed that you can look directly at sunsets and it does not hurt your eyes? Can you picture in your mind’s eye what color the Sun appeared the last time you saw it set? Did it appear orange or red, did it look the same as it did mid day?

Again, angles of light are unique, and while the Sun does shine constantly, we on Earth, cycle around it. Consider (time of day), as you look for more balance with the Sun each day.

Helpful Hint: Varying perspectives of light create color—literally. Picture in your mind the beautiful pinks and purples that coat the sky during sunrises and sunsets, as well as the oranges, yellows and reds that phase in and out. Perhaps, this is one reason why sunrises and sunsets tend to have profound effects and create lasting memories.

Mid day Sun is often more intense than at the beginning and end of the day. This is a great time to be active and moving, and to get chores, tasks and to-dos done. If you live in a place that gets cold in the Fall and Winter months, mid-day may be the best time for you to get outside, as the Sun typically feels much warmer than it does during sunrise or sunset.

During warmer months there is much more liberty to get sunlight when you please. Still, I recommend getting sunlight during sunrise and sunset hours at least a few times

throughout the week. During the mid to late afternoon hours, the Sun really begins to crank.

At 3 p.m. (give or take 30 minutes) the Sun is typically at its most intense point of the day. And guess what? Your body knows this!

This is the time of day that your heart beats its most rigorous and is most adaptable for high performance. Knowing this, we can plan for an intense workout or an activity outdoors. To add, our bodies will benefit from movement during this time of day—even if we are indoors. That is how attuned our Circadian Rhythm is, (our body's internal clock).

Often when I soak up the Sun I enjoy connecting with nature as well. And since I am writing about honoring nature, I will use the term “filling two holes with one stone” instead of the phrase “killing two birds with one stone.” Pun intended—and equally functional—is getting sunlight and grounding, (hands, feet, or body touching the Earth without artificial materials and surfaces between your skin and the Earth).

To ground, place your bare feet on a natural surface, such as grass, dirt, sand, rocks, sediment, snow, flowers, tree roots, etc. Taking a nap on the grass is a great example of grounding, as is playing in the grass without shoes on. The beauty is that you do not have to be active—how about sitting on a blanket in the grass and eating lunch? Yes, that is grounding too!

For those of you in urban environments, you can ground through bare feet or socks, on concrete or cement, so long as it is on ground level. The biggest inhibitor to grounding is artificial surfaces, whether it be building materials or the rubber shoes on your feet. If you are located higher than the first floor, there is a good chance your body may be experiencing imbalance because of the distance from the ground. If this is the case for you, make an effort to get grounded for at least five minutes each day. That is all that is needed to begin seeing profound effects within the body.

The Earth has an electromagnetic field that is very similar to our own electromagnetic field. Complete with poles (North & South, our head, feet, and hands), nodes (grids, lay lines and our nervous system and neurons), conductors (Earth's core, our Heart, Brain, and Microbiome), and more.

Our likeness to the Earth, (the obvious fact that we are composed of the Earth's raw materials), is the reason for this. This means that fields like the Ionosphere, which is within our Earth's atmosphere, is the same as our own torsion field, auric field, (energy field).

When we ground our feet into the Earth's natural frequency of 528 HZ, immediately the

Earth begins to extract free radicals from our body. Free radicals are unpaired electrons (negatively charged ions) that move throughout our body looking to pair with neutrons (positively charged ions) for balance. When they cannot find balance, they begin to cause damage to the body by pairing with atoms that are already complete. This creates a state of oxidative stress within the body, leading to cellular breakdown and pronounced inflammation. This same inflammation can lead to various cancers, gout, issues with the gut, arthritis, etc.

If you are someone dealing with fatigue, forgetfulness, achy bones, muscles and joints, lack of mobility, etc.—begin to add grounding into your routine as a scientifically proven way to lower stress hormones, blood pressure, reduce inflammation, and to regulate your heart rate and nervous system.

To conclude, remember that the Sun has been observed from Earth long before there was a written account of its existence. The Earth has obviously been around at least as long as humans have walked it. We should not become so preoccupied with our modern lives that we forget that everything modern or technologically advanced comes from the Earth...literally. Even our high-tech gadgets and devices that constantly track, ping, entertain, and possibly dumb us down, could not function without mining the precious metals, crystals, and stones that power it up. Allow us to do the same.

The theme is deep-down-within. When in doubt, when flustered or thrown out of wack (balance), this is where we need to travel—inward. The Sun and grounding allow us to do just that. They allow us to detach from the artificial world, and to rediscover and heal within our unique perspective.

The more that we wrap our minds around the **fact** that we are designed to connect with nature and the Sun, the easier it becomes to find and remain in a state of balance.

We do not need to sit in the Sun for hours on end—on the hottest of days, to prove a point. Instead, use timing of day/year, your instincts, and doing something that you enjoy, (reading, walking, conversing), to provide your daily dosage of natural medicine.

The more regular that you get outside with purpose, the better you will feel, and the more balance you will find when indoors or in artificial settings. Start with 24 hours at a time and do your best to find balance with each day—from this point you can begin to stack days atop of one another. And just as the roosters roost each sunrise, you too will find balance with your Circadian Rhythm, (your bodies internal self regulating 24 hour clock).

Pop those shoes off—get outside and give today a go!

HEALTHY HABIT 5: REMOVE APPS FROM MY PHONE AND LIMIT BLUE LIGHT (TURN OFF FREQUENCIES DURING SLEEP)

How much control do you have over your apps and devices? How much control do they have over you? Healthy habit five examines our relationship with cell phones and other technological devices.

The previous four habits discussed aspects of nature that may be programmed into our routines—to build us up and help us grow. The final habit breaks the artificial programming that one may be unaware of—which may be heavily influencing your health.

Habit five is so important that it could have easily been number one—as you are more than likely reading this information on your phone, tablet, computer, or some other screened or projected device.

I am certainly not telling you to stop reading, what I am saying is this—before you mindlessly stare into your device—consider the glare—that is staring back at you. Blue lights, varying light, sound and vibrational frequencies, algorithms, and much more. In simple terms there are lots of energies being projected at you—while you project your senses, attention, and energy into your device.

When it comes to removing unnecessary apps from my phone, I try to be as logical as possible. For example, if there is an app that I may need in an emergency, such as a flashlight, calculator, or camera, then the app remains on my phone. Apps that I do not need, however, are treated very different.

Instagram and Facebook (Meta) are prime examples of apps that I do not keep on my cell phone and have not had on my cell phone for years. I use a different device that I do not take with me everywhere I go. I make sure that I do not have these apps downloaded on a device with a cellular signal—that way I can only use them and others when I have Wi-Fi. If I am outside, on a walk, working out, and meditating, I do not have access to these apps—and they do not have access to me.

If you have one device that is okay. Consider deleting the apps that you do not need to have on your phone. You can always download an app when you want to post or check notifications—and then delete afterwards. This ensures that you are only posting when you have something important to share. No quick and mindless posting, scrolling, liking and resharing.

A secondary option is to turn on screen limitations, which are programmed into most cell phones and mobile devices, as well as within apps themselves. Instagram, (a popular social media app), has settings that can be toggled on, that will notify you of your screen time—you can even set restrictions so that you cannot go over your pre-set screen time limit. iPad is a tablet that also has these features built into its programming, your screen time may be monitored and limited within settings.

Screen-time-limit settings are helpful, but they are a late reaction to a growing problem. Merely a Band-Aid to open heart surgery. Not only does it do little to fix the problem, but the problem took time to develop—the issue was fed, ignored, and fed some more—and the solution was given little attention until it became a gaping wound.

We are in an over-consumerism-epidemic—we are addicted to our devices and various forms of social media—we are addicted to living in pretend realities and not in the HERE and NOW.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the negative psychological and neurological effects that social media has on the brain, and in particular on (children, teens, and young adults). Not only is this information widely accessible, it was also known when many of the largest social media platforms were launched. There are a growing number of former founders, CEO's, programmers, and the like, who have come forward to speak in opposition to the same media and tech giants that they once fueled—especially as these conglomerates continue to grow and visibly blur the lines of algorithmic morality and ethics.

In simple terms, many tech giants or (technocrats) have become so vicious and lustful for power-over-your-attention, commerce, and consumerism, that they are willing to compromise and sabotage your mental-physical health and sovereignty.

The most egregious part is that studies were conducted before many of these apps were launched, that resulted in red flags. It was shown that these apps had an unnatural and addictive quality to them. In particular, the like, heart, share, comment, unlike, and repost features that are on almost every social media site. These “rewards” have been proven to release dopamine and other feel-good hormones—in very acute, (short) and dangerous ways.

In other words, **the fact** that we get so excited at a notification on our phone, is matched only by the deflating and depleting feeling that comes when likes slow down, and cease. This results in the jittery and addictive feeling to scroll aimlessly, post nothing of importance—as soon as possible, or to post something ridiculous and extreme for attention of strangers and potential sharing to the masses. One may also feel depressed, distant, and unimportant as a result of overconsumption of social media.

This is the exact opposite of what social media was said to give humanity when it first launched; in its adolescence it set off to connect and bridge together the people—masses—the world. Ultimately, these apps have pulled us further away from ourselves and from one another. We are less connected despite being in constant contact through our devices.

The next time you feel the need to open an app “just because” consider what prompted you. Is it boredom, habitual, is it a stress or creative reaction? Can you channel that energy with words, by speaking, writing, drawing, creating, exercising, dancing, etc.?

How about going for a walk, or practicing your balance, or getting some sunshine and grounding?

Once you can identify the bad habit, in this case being on one’s phone, video game, t.v., computer, monitor, projector, or tablet too much, then you can find a real solution. You can even replace your bad habit with a good habit.

A break from your device will allow you more time and space to be within your own mind. To remember who you are, and how you think, move, and operate—outside of the algorithm. It will allow you to tap back into your five senses, which will allow for greater awareness.

One’s focus is in many ways one’s entire reality. Therefore, I do not think it is far fetched to say that when we relinquish our focus to anything outside of ourselves, particularly something artificially incepted like social media and the internet—we literally lose ourselves.

Take control of the driver’s wheel—be mindful of your phone, do not let your phone mine you.

Some habits are easier to break than others. This is especially true of habits that we cannot see with the naked eyes. Blue light as previously mentioned is a major cause of poor sleep, inflammation, bags under the eyes, poor vision, digestive issues, aches, and

overall discomfort for many Americans. You may have heard of blue light, but have no idea what it is and the harm it causes on the human body.

To provide a metal image, picture yourself sitting indoors throughout the night—in a dark room. The only light shining through the darkness—is a bright inorganic blue hued light. It is coming from your phone, tablet, or t.v. And even though it was very bright when you first looked into the screen, it has since become tolerable. You continue to look at the screen until the Sun comes up outside. You open the blinds or walk outside and you instantly cover your eyes—the natural light is so bright outside that it takes you a while to adjust before you can stand the Sun.

Does this sound familiar? For many of us it does, and it is a sign that we need to find balance with our devices.

One of the biggest issues with blue light, the (white-ish-blue) light that shines from our screened devices is that it disrupts our Melatonin production. Melatonin is the nightly hormone that regulates our sleep and restorative duties. It is prompted through our Circadian Rhythm, (the body's internal self-regulating 24-hour clock).

When we look at blue light at night, our body gets tricked into thinking that it is daytime. As a result the body releases less melatonin than it would normally, and it often releases it at inconsistent times. This is a perfect recipe—for poor sleep.

Have you ever had a late night, that turned into a few late nights, that turned into a regular habit of late nights—looking at bright screens late into the night, and waking up well after sunrise? Well, your body may have adjusted to the artificial daylight (blue light) that it was taking in late at night.

Helpful Hint: Most cell phones and devices have settings that allow you to change the hue of your screen. There are different names for different brands, like Eye Comfort Shield on Android and Night Shift on Apple, check with your device for some type of night or dark mode when you are indoors, or when you do not need much visibility.

Toggling this setting will often change the screen color from white to black, which is helpful in darker settings, but it does not necessarily remove blue light. It is more important to change the hue of your screen. Please note that when you change the hue (color) of your screen, which limits blue light, your screen will have a golden tint to it. The more golden the screen color (like old computers, t.v.'s, and video games) the less blue light you will take in.

It may take a bit of time to get used to—especially if you enjoy all the vivid colors that your high definition screen gives you, but you can always adjust the settings for your needs. If you are outdoors when the Sun is out for example, you may need to turn your screen brightness up.

For those of you who work on a computer or laptop, there are blue-light-blocker-screens (thin, light, and portable), that you can lay overtop of your computer screen to reduce blue light. There are also blue light blocking glasses that can be worn, both prescription and nonprescription.

Here are some observances of mine when I limit my blue light intake: my eyes do not hurt when I look at the screen, my eyes and face muscles relax, (I do not squint or strain to make out the text or image), I do not get headaches from my devices, (unless I look at them for hours at a time), and my sleep has improved.

It is bad for our health to have screen time close to bed. Do your best to limit screen time at night and avoid looking at blue light screens at least one hour before you plan to fall asleep.

Once you have fallen asleep, however, there are other potential disrupters coming from our devices and technology. These are the waves upon waves flowing from our devices that allow them to connect and share information.

Have you ever noticed your phone heat up when more connections are enabled, (Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Cellular Data, Hot Spot, etc.)? Have you ever heard subtle hisses or faint sounds coming from your phone? Well, it is a computer after all, and that computer requires a power source(s) and multiple ways to transmit information.

Radiation can fluctuate from very dangerous and intense on the spectrum, like Gamma rays (The Incredible Hulk Story), to less intense but still strong X-rays (which show bones through the skin), to radio waves (harmless and slow oscillating waves that can transmit music).

Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and other forms of (non lethal) but (not healthy) frequency waves are used by cellular devices. In my opinion it is absolutely worth TURNING OFF these frequencies at night. One quick fix is to turn off your phone at night when you sleep. If that

is not an option then you can put your phone in Airplane Mode, which will turn off all frequencies used for communication.

If that is not possible and you need to keep your phone on for emergency situations then I suggest turning off mobile data (which gives you internet), you do not need that while you sleep—Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, NFC, Hot Spot, Screen Share, etc. All of these are just unnecessary frequencies that disrupt you during sleep.

Unplug your phone while you sleep as another precautionary measure. And move your phone at least 10 feet away from you while you sleep if possible. You can use a traditional alarm clock to wake you up, and keep your incoming call ringer up in the case of an emergency. Otherwise you are undisturbed by your phone throughout the night.

Also be sure to unplug your modem and router if you are not using them. Again, this eliminates unnecessary frequencies—which disrupt your body's natural frequencies. Remember, your body is electro-magnetic, your energy field is dependent on balance of positive and negative, alkaline and acidic, and more.

Do not take for granite the subtleties of your amazing machinery called a human body. It is in those subtleties that gives every(body) a unique light.

In our modern world there are many distractions that take our awareness away from here and now. Away from the subtle ebbs and flows of homeostasis, (balance within the body).

One more consideration for your health is to avoid looking at your phone when you first wake up—the longer, the better. Give yourself time when you first wake up to just BE. You can recall and write down your dreams as they are fresh in your mind. Be in the space of no judgement and no guilt when you first wake up—before you even remember who you are, where you are at, and what you were doing the night before.

Within this space, at the beginning of your day, you are pure. You are healthy and limitless. Utilize the time after awaking to build a sacred routine for yourself. One in which you show gratitude for the new day. Picture in your mind's eye what you want to accomplish and build. Feel with all your five senses' potential—your mission and what it feels like to accomplish it, before you ever attempt it.

Take in natural daylight before you turn on artificial lights and look at your devices. You have an opportunity to be grounded, focused and in alignment with your most desirable outcomes at the start of each day.

Your routine can be simple—you can start with mindful breathing and stretching. Perhaps you pray, chant, sing, or dance. Maybe there is a mantra that you repeat. A puzzle or word search that you work on, or you sip and reflect with tea or natural coffee. Whatever you do allow it to uplift and balance your mission and overall sense of self, (the way you picture yourself in your mind's eye).

There is room for trial and error—and trial again. Take your time—and be open to change, a familiar friend from the past, or something completely new.

So...what's the vibes like?

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (SEND OFF TO THE NOW)

The year as we know it is 2026. One can surely feel—whatever it is. Perhaps it is the excitability of the unknown or the assuredness of a familiar feeling—the unyielding of a new beginning or the twinkling of a closing chapter.

I like to picture this calendar year as being one to remember. One to embrace and honor. I see many opportunities available to ALL—opportunities that will be realized by those who garner them.

Stay alert to the breeze, what are the shifts telling you. What in the world is she working on. What are you working on? You. That is all. No more no less. As you are all the important—and deserve all your focus.

As well ALL continue to do the self work—we clearly see the change. 2026 is a selfless time to be selfish. We all need to put in the work—on ourselves. The results will allow us to grow collectively.

This year will present change, new ventures, rebranding, renewal, rebirth, growth, big shifts and more. This year will also present opportunities to refine one's vision, project a clear path and to set forth the tone moving forward.

Stay in the mindset of happiness. Continually picture your most desirable outcomes in your mind—until they materialize right in front of your eyes. Envision potential bumps in the road and correct your course until you are back on your proper path. Only you will know.

One way to ensure that you move progressively is to program the 5 Habits into your routine—in some capacity. They do not have to form a strict regimen, instead you can pick one habit to work on at a time, or you can work on a different habit each day. For example, Monday during the day I go on a walk, Monday night I limit my device time, and Tuesday I wake up early to watch the sunrise and stretch.

Observe what works best for you and what does not work well for you. I like to use the analogy of a “tool belt” which is another way of looking at your routine. Add to your tool belt what is useful to you and lighten your load by removing from your routine what is not working well for you.

Here is a quick review of the five habits and takeaways. The first is walking, which can be added into your routine or improved upon. If you rarely walk, adding it into your routine should yield great results, especially if you manage to walk on natural surfaces. Whether you walk regularly or not you can improve your walking form, condition your feet, and most importantly be present. Attune yourself to your steps—as if you are thanking the Earth with each step. At any one moment you have the power to check in with your breath and shift your entire reality.

Second is fasting, which I am noticing quite a few people are beginning the new fiscal year with. Remember, we fast each day upon eating our first meal, so you do not need to be extreme. A simple example is to have your first meal of the day two to three hours later than normal. Doing this at least once a week is a great way to give your digestive tract a break. You can also use this time to detox with fruit juice, tea, etc. Every day presents an opportunity to play around with this habit.

The third habit if you recall, is to incorporate spice into your diet. A subtle way to add spice is through liquids. How about a lemon-ginger tea at the beginning of your day, (maybe while you fast), or a lemon-cayenne pepper-maple syrup drink to curb hunger and stimulate your gut. Focus on heat for health first and foremost, and pay close attention to how you feel before, during and after consuming heat—especially if you are mixing other

foods together or consuming on an empty stomach. At the beginning of 2026 start at one on the heat index scale, and work your way up from there.

Habit four is to get sunlight and ground into nature. One should do this as regularly as possible, as it balances our being as humans. It is even more critical during the Winter months, especially if you live in a region whose climate is cold.

It is a great habit to observe the sunrise and sunset. This programs our body to release Serotonin (the daytime hormonal messenger) and Melatonin (the nighttime hormonal messenger) accordingly.

Again, the idea is to create an internal state of balance—to the best of our abilities. And in our technologically advanced society—one of high-speed vehicle transportation, high speed internet, and artificial intelligence, it is of the upmost importance to establish a connection with All-mighty-Intelligence. The program of the Sun, Earth, and our Cosmos—the same intelligence found deep within our mitochondria and DNA.

Habit five is all about freedom—breaking away from our devices. I highly recommend limiting your screen time. A simple means is to delete apps from your phone when you are not using them. You can always download them again.

Another helpful tool is to use screen-limits within your apps or on your device. This feature allows you to pre-set your screen time, which is useful for children and youth. Check to see if your phone, tablet, or computer has this feature in its settings. Many social media sights have these features as well.

As you proactively limit unnecessary frequencies it is also a good habit to turn off your phone during sleep. If that is not possible put it in airplane mode or turn off its various connections that you do not need while you sleep, (Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Hotspot, etc.). You can also turn off your modem and router, and when you wake in the morning—avoid all these connections for at least 10-20 minutes. Instead, greet the day with love and compassion for yourself, with natural daylight, and your own unique program.

Believe it or not—2026 is an ideal time for a rebirth—of thought, form, and action. The stage is set, all that is left is for you to step up and play your role. You do not have to carry more than your share, lead the herd, or do what everyone else is doing.

Just begin by remembering who you are and servicing your needs from there. As we all continue to refine and grow as individuals, I look forward to coming together, once again, in wholeness.

Peace. Love. Gratitude. Joy. Awareness. Mindfulness. 1

To support Coach Julian, you can leave comments and give feedback through e-mail at julian@julylyonwellness.com . You can also support by investing in a copy of, *Intro To Nutrition*, or Coach Julian's other various workings in the online store at www.julylyonwellness.com . Lastly, to make donations to Coach Julian you can do so with Zelle using the e-mail julianrb29@yahoo.com | Venmo Julian-Hayes-2 | CashApp \$heismanhayes | and PayPal @heismanhayes

If you enjoyed this article, please share the PDF download link with others. Thank you for your support!

COPYRIGHT © 2026 JULY LYON WELLNESS LLC - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

