

THE SIMPLE DIET

DIET I. A GOOD BEGINNING –the idea is to keep it simple.

We would like to make our plans very simple during the early stages of our weight loss journey. Too complicated diets are hard to follow for long periods of time, this is why we have so many types of diets; most of them are not realistic either because they are complicated, because we have to buy special products from the people who sell us the diet program, or because the methods such as counting calories “get old” and boring.

Simple does not mean easy, simple means that we just do it the way it is outlined and that’s it! I have heard the acronym “KISS” which stands for Keep It Simple Stupid. I do not know who came out with these words, offensive to some when they hear them; but, to me, they make sense. I know so much about food, nutrition, vitamins, etcetera that I have a somewhat close mind. Only when I “empty my cup of knowledge”, I make room to pour some new things in it. This is how humans learn; some people call this “open-mindedness”. What I mean is that we should not allow our prejudice to prevent us from trying this method. You could tell your brain that you will just try it just the way it is to prove me wrong. Yes, prove me wrong; if this does not work for you, perhaps, you will need a different type of program.

Overweight is a long term for most patients; therefore, losing weight is a long term process. This plan will work for most patients.

Individuals who have diabetes and take pills and/or insulin will have to discuss this plan with his diabetes medical doctor in order to adjust their medication dose to avoid too low blood sugar. Most overweight patients with diabetes who lose weight will generally require less diabetes medication in the long run.

Patients with high cholesterol will lower its levels when losing weight.

High blood pressure overweight patients will frequently find requiring less and sometimes no medication once they reach their ideal weight.

A SIMPLE MEAL SCHEDULE

7:00 AM: BREAKFAST EXAMPLE:

1. Small bowl of cereal/oatmeal or a bagel or plain toast with or without a small amount of jelly/jam. Do not use margarine or butter since these are fats, and fats are more difficult to digest.
2. Take one glass of non-fat milk, rice milk, soy milk or herbal tea without caffeine; chamomile tea, for example.
3. Other drinks like orange, cranberry, prune, guava juices may be healthy but also are also a source of calories. They can be used instead of milk but limit them to no more

than 6 ounces in the morning and **DO NOT TAKE THEM DURING THE REST OF THE DAY.** We want to avoid unnecessary calories.

10:30 AM: SNACK EXAMPLE: One fresh fruit: a small apple, banana, mango; a two-inch slice of papaya, honeydew or cantaloupe, or one-inch slice of watermelon. For patients who have indigestion, heartburn or ulcer problems fruits like pineapple, orange, peaches may upset their stomach because they are too acidic.

NOON -LUNCH:

1. Half a turkey, chicken, fish, ham sandwich –vegetarians can use three ounces of tofu, soy protein or other vegetarian protein.
2. A small salad.
3. A cup of steamed rice.
4. Avoid cheese, no fried food of any kind; also avoid sausage or similar cold cuts.

2:30 PM: SNACK EXAMPLE: Half a cup (four ounces) of raisins, prunes, nuts, dry mangos or nonfat cottage cheese.

5:00 PM: DINNER: Small piece of chicken, fish, lean ham, or lean meat (no ground beef), with steamed rice OR a cup of vegetables.

7:00 PM: Dessert: Four ounces of water-based jello. Only if you are really hungry and cannot take it anymore!

OTHER IMPORTANT PART OF THIS DIET

1. **TRY TO EAT DINNER BY 5:00 PM**
2. **NO CAFFEINE, BLACK TEA.** A small cup of GREEN TEA is OK in the morning but keep in mind that it also has around 30% of the caffeine amount found in a cup of coffee.
3. **NO ALCOHOL.** Every gram of alcohol has 7 calories. A gram of fat has 9 calories and a gram of carbohydrates has 4 calories, a gram of proteins also has 4 calories. Alcohol “numbs” the brain and prevents us from “being in charge of our health”. When people consume alcohol, they have a tendency to eat more. This is why many restaurants “work” the clients first by offering alcoholic beverages so they can consume more – more alcohol, and more food. Alcohol is a big business and a large source of income in the food business. We cannot make restaurants and liquor stores for making a living in this country that allows the sale of alcohol, they are not to blame; consequently, avoiding it is the responsibility of the person who wishes to improve his/her health. REMEMBER THAT A MAJOR PART OF OUR LONG TERM GOAL IS TO AVOID UNNECESSARY CALORIES, AND UNNECESSARY CHEMICALS.
4. **NO SMOKING.**
5. **NO FRIED OR GREASY FOODS. AVOID VEGETARIAN GREASE IN “VEGGY BURGERS”.**
6. **NO CHEESE OR PEANUT BUTTER.** Cheese is high cholesterol and fat beef tallow (cheese is equivalent to the gristle and fat we remove from a steak) with a very small portion of proteins; therefore, avoid it.
7. **NO GROUND BEEF/TURKEY.** Ground beef includes gristle and fat camouflaged with red color routinely used by markets to make it more appealing to your eyes. This is why ground beef is less expensive than other meats. Ground turkey also has a lot of gristle and turkey leftovers; therefore is frequently very greasy and difficult to digest. If you have these meats ground in front of you, make sure to select lean meat or the turkey

breast, make sure the butcher does not grind the gristle, fat, and turkey skin (also fatty) which are things you need to avoid!

8. **NOTHING TO EAT AFTER 5:00 PM.** Avoid “innocent” evening snacks such as on cookie, “a little popcorn”, “a small scoop of ice cream”, a pastry, etcetera. **AVOID UNNECESSARY CALORIES.**
9. **AVOID SOCIALIZING OVER MEALS.** When we socialize over meals, we have a tendency to overeat or eat the very foods we are trying to avoid!

* PATIENT’S WHO WORK GRAVEYARD SHIFTS SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO EAT 5 HOURS PRIOR TO GOING TO BED (**ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE HEARTBURN OR REFLUX SYPTOMS, OR IF YOU WISH TO LOSE WEIGHT**).

DIET II. SHORT TERM ISSUES –SUBSTITUTING MEAL ITEMS.

Now that we have started practicing the first step in our healthier habits program with DIET I, let us talk about the issues we will face at short term.

I. VARIETY OF MEAL ITEMS:

1. **MILK.** If you cannot tolerate milk, you can buy lactose-free milk (Lactaid, for example), or take tablets of Lactase with your milk.
2. **CHICKEN.** Some of my patients say, “I may grow feathers if I only eat chicken!” There are a lot of options for substitution. You can try 3 ounces of lean red meat, pork, fish, shrimp or scallops. Canned tuna and canned salmon, soy protein preparations are other options. Of course, this is not the amount of this type of food we are used to; nevertheless, remember that we are trying to get into a new way of living that will make our body healthy. **BEWARE OF VEGGIE BURGERS, AND OTHER GREASY VEGETARIAN PRODUCTS,** we are trying to avoid **UNNECESSARY CALORIES.** Pork is a good source of protein when it is lean, the leanest part is the pork loin –try to avoid pork chops and other parts that have visible fat.
3. **BREAD.** Substitute a regular slice of bread for a medium size corn tortilla, or half a cup of steamed rice. Nowadays bread comes in so many different sizes that it can be confusing; just remember that we refer to the regular loaf of bread. Regarding tortillas, corn are the best because they do not have much fat. **AVOID FLOUR TORTILLAS, THEY HAVE TOO MUCH FAT** and they are a **SOURCE OF UNNECESSARY CALORIES.**
4. **FRUIT.** Remember that the size we refer to is a size equivalent to a medium size banana, apple, peach, or orange; half a cup of grapes, two small plums, a two-inch slice of fruits like cantaloupe, honeydew; a one-inch slice of a watermelon, since it is a bigger fruit.
5. **VEGETABLES.** We can add to our lunch or dinner the equivalent of a cup (eight ounces) of fresh lettuce, cucumber, plus a medium sized tomato, or two small Roma tomatoes. You can substitute this with a similar portion of fresh (or cooked) cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, or carrots. Avoid potatoes and yams, which, although fat free, will increase the amount of calories we want to ingest -**SOURCE OF UNNECESSARY CALORIES. REMEMBER THAT WE ARE TRYING TO LEARN NOT TO EAT UNTIL WE FEEL FULL.**
6. **ITEMS WE USE FOR FLAVOR.** We can use with liberty items such as pepper, lemon, onions, celery, mint, basil, garlic, and other condiments. Salt can also be used but please use caution since it is linked with high blood pressure, worsening the fluid retention in heart, liver and other diseases..

7. VITAMINS in FOOD INGESTED. Most vitamins we need are in the vegetables and fruits that are included in our meals. It is true that when we cook vegetables and other food products, they lose some vitamin content; however, they have plenty of vitamins and even overcooking them will not cause vitamin deficiency if we eat a balanced diet.

II. BUYING FOODSTUFF WE WILL PREPARE AT HOME. It is a good idea to make a list of foods we will be preparing at home avoiding those which contain unnecessary calories, such as butter, margarine, cheese. Products like doughnuts, pastries, cakes should not be available because we are not that strong and we do not want to convert our home in a “slippery place”.

III. EATING IN RESTAURANTS. At this early stage of our change program we try to avoid “slippery” places. The same way we tell alcoholics to avoid bars in the early stage of their recovery, we should avoid restaurants as much as possible until “our muscles of eating healthier” get stronger. We are too vulnerable right now and we need some practice before we risk our health at the moment. Remember what has happened in the past, many of us felt we could go to a restaurant and order the meal with the little heart besides it indicating its healthy nature, and only succumb to the smell of the fresh bread and butter the waiter brought to our table.

IV. EATING WITH RELATIVES AND FRIENDS: For now let us postponed socializing over meals. Most times we end up eating too much of the food we are trying to avoid. We just need to be patient and wait a little until we get stronger. Our loves ones and our friends will understand –if they really respect our choices! However, remember that it is not their business to comply with our plan, it is our business to build healthy boundaries and the time is now!

V. VITAMIN CONSUMPTION:

1. VITAMIN B 6, B 12, and FOLIC ACID. There is a study published in the February 2009 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicines that suggests that the use of folic acid, vitamin B 6 (pyridoxine) and B 12 may decrease the incidence of adult onset macular degeneration in postmenopausal women.

2. VITAMIN D. Studies suggest that 600 IU of vitamin D may decrease osteoporosis in postmenopausal women.

3. VITAMIN E. There are studies that have failed to show benefit of Vitamin E in heart disease.

4. MULTIVITAMINS. Recent studies, including a large study in women by a reputable group of female scientists published in the Archives of Internal Medicine in February 2009 showed no benefit of use vitamins in decreasing heart disease and cancer. We live in a world where vitamins are a big business. The baby boomers, who hold the money in United States are getting older and want to stay young and energetic, and it is not surprising that most of the vitamin supplements and other articles of dubious benefit are targeted to us (I am a baby boomer, too). I am not against people making a living selling whatever they wish to sell; however, as a medical doctor specialized in eating problems, nutrition and digestive problems I need to guide my patients to **KEEP THINGS SIMPLE AND AVOID UNNECESSARY CHEMICALS.**

VI. OTHER PRODUCTS.

1. **PROBIOTICS, Yogurts, etc.** There is a multitude of so called “healthy” products, i.e. yogurts to “keep us regular” or improve your immune systems. These products use the word “regular” in a very deceiving manner implying that they are good for constipation. Companies hire “respectable” movie stars like Jamie Lee Curtis advertising a yogurt that will keep you “regular”. Many of my constipated patients had been using the product saying very surprised “The yogurt never worked; but, it was Jamie Lee Curtis who said it!” Please remember that movie stars are actors, they are employed to repeat a set words for a certain amount of money, they are not medical doctors or scientists sharing their expertise, they are simply earning an income by doing what they do best, act in a world of “make believe”.

DIET III. LONG TERM ISSUES –ACTIVATING OUR INNER POWER. Our Capacity to Change.

Perhaps, one of the most important aspects we have to do while we are trying to change habits or “traditions” is to activate our power to change. Yes, we have a “built-in” ability to change if we have to, the only thing we need is to convince our brain that this change is necessary.

Referring to an INNER POWER can be confusing to some of us at any given time. Perhaps it may even make us think that we do not have any business thinking about possessing our very own INNER POWER. Nevertheless, we were granted the power to care for ourselves by Nature or by a God, or however your faith decides it. I am sure that the God of my understanding wants me to follow healthier habits. As a medical doctor interested in the health of my patients, my intention is to arise some interest in working with something all human already have, this is the capacity to change. I treat people of many different beliefs and it is not my intention to use the word “spirit” in a religious manner. If “spirit” sounds spooky or discouraging; please, change it to “emotional growth” or another word that works for the reader. This also applies to anything I say in my lines, I ask readers to take what works for them and leave the rest. God, or Nature, knows that I am not as perfect as I would like to be.

The problem we face is not easy, if we wish to change for good; we will have to work on the problems that make people relapse or regained their weight, we have to have a well grounded systematic plan that will work when the rough gets going –because life is life and will present us with its usual life challenges that include economical, and family problems that can be very painful. If we are not prepared for them, then our plans are less likely to succeed. In medical psychology we call this change **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING**, or simply changing the way we see things so we can cope. It means learning to see the positive in every negative, walking on the shoes of those we judge, and so on. A Persian proverb says:

“I cried because I did not have shoes until I saw somebody without feet”

Our brain will present our major obstacle towards change. **Our brain has acknowledged every habit or “tradition”, including the way we eat, the type of food we consume, the schedule of our meals, the amount of food we eat, and our response to eating when we are bored, anxious or depressed, as breathing.** If we stopped breathing on our own, the brain will activate a survival mechanism that makes us collapse; the result is that as we collapse, we breathe again and do not die. Therefore, it would be impossible to kill ourselves by trying to quit breathing on our own. Similarly, if we try to change our habits, our brain will “freak out” believing it is going to die! Things may go well in our first days or weeks of losing weight by eating healthier, but then the brain starts “drawing” us back to our old habits gradually.

The manner our brain works is a very sophisticated and subtle one. It will not directly make us eat more. It will actually make us work more, worry more, skip meals, or make us isolate from our support system. Either of these will put us in a vulnerable position where it is hard to defend from our temptations. It can make us remember the flavor of meals we are being “deprived of” and make us feel “victims”.

The “**victim mode**” is a frequent and dangerous one because it gives us “a good reason” to relapse. The victim mode says “if you know what I have been through, you will understand why I went back to my old habits”

The way we counteract the victim mode is changing gears into the “**survival mode**” using a very quick and simple set of words:

The VICTIM mode says “WHY”, while the SURVIVAL mode says “THANKS”.

In a fraction of a second we can change our “pity pot” for container full of assets by simply switching from “WHY” to “THANKS”. The word THANKS allow us to see what we have, while “WHY” is making a long list of what we do not have. We may not have shoes; however, we have not lost our feet. This is **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING**, ...get it?

We use words because life is a game of words, words is the only thing we have to think, to write, to talk, to communicate in the internet, books, media, and so forth. I life is a game of words; we need to learn “HOW TO WIN”. Words can be a cancer if we use them to defeat ourselves with their definition. Let us use the word “good”, for example. The word good was invented for our convenience; it was used to indicate that a food was spoiled or not “good” and that we should avoid it so we would not get sick. Now, we use it to judge ourselves and wondering “Am I “good”? Or “Am I not “good”?”

Let us do this exercise, write down the word “good” in a piece of paper , and the word “bad” in another; then and flush them both in the toilet. Yes, just get rid of them and try not to use them for a day, a month, or never! Well, the word “never” is another word we should write and flush in the toilet, too! If we get rid of the word “good” for today, we will not be capable of using it to see if we have a “good” life, or a “bad” life. Do you get the idea?

Our INNER POWER is like a very private bicycle that can only be ridden by us. I cannot pedal anybody’s bike but mine; I cannot pedal not even my children’s bicycle, even though my brain says that I can. The only influence I have in others is my example. I remember that while I was taking a course about mind and body medicine under the direction of Doctor Herbert Benson, there came a section about meditation and exercise program. I was out of the room and Dr. Benson got close to me asking “why aren’t you in the room”. He is not a pushy guy, he was just curious. I remember replying, “I already have an idea how this works and what to tell my patients, I prefer to make some calls to take care of some business instead of wasting time”. He very gently said, “Rafael, if you do not practice this, you cannot pass it to your patients”. I remember this as if it was yesterday; I felt a chill running all through my back. It was the first time I realized that I had to learn to practice what I preached. As a young doctor I always said “do as I say, not as I do; I was not very teachable, I struggled with people telling me what to do. To some extent I still do but I have made a lot of progress, it is easier to listen to my patients, and listen to the people around me looking for potential mentors. One of these mentors told me:

“The only way I can change the world is changing me, I have the power to change the world right now. If I take a deep breath and relax right now, at this very moment the world has become a better world with one less crazy human on the loose!”

These words indicate that in order to change, we need to see the world in a different way; just like seeing it from a different window. That change starts with us. The human being learns “monkey see, monkey do”, and it is our job to lead. The moment we rely on the behavior or the circumstances of others so we can be happy, we are looking for trouble!

DIET IV. “A NEW WAY OF LIVING, FROM RIGIDITY TO FLEXIBILITY”

The words “A New Life” or “A New Way of Living” may sound ridiculous and outlandish. We may ask “What do you mean with a new life? We already have our life and we cannot change it, we cannot give up our meal schedule because it may offend and make uncomfortable the people we share our meals at home, at work, at restaurants when we entertain or we are entertained; we cannot upset those who lovingly prepare special meals for us, our spouse may think we do not care”, and the list of excuses can go on indefinitely.

I used to be very overweight when I was a teenager and I hated it. As I grew up I lost weight eating more fruits and smaller portions. I have stayed in my ideal weight for many years; nevertheless I enjoy eating and it is easy to gain weight for me. For this reason, keeping my weight down has been a difficult journey. For example, I had to learn to say no to my mother’s cooking. My mom loves me and her way of showing her affection was making a lot of food and keeping filling my plate until my stomach almost blew up every time I visited her. I eventually got the courage to tell her that would not eat certain foods and that I would serve myself in order to control the portions I ingested, in other words, I made myself responsible for my actions. Initially she was offended, but through the years, she learned to respect my choices, my boundaries. The same applied to my wife, she cooked good meals trying to please me; once in my thirties, I was gaining weight and I became concerned because remembering my teenage, I did not want to be overweight like that again. We were raised by parents who experienced the limitations of WWII and we were taught that “food was sacred”, and should not go to waste; we had a saying in my family “it is better to have upset stomach due to overeating than to throw away leftovers”. When I got home for dinner, I would tell my wife I was going to get my own portion. At the beginning she appeared bothered because there were more leftovers and it took some guts to throw away some food. Through time, we learned not to fix as much and as heavy. Sometimes my brain wants “more”, but I learned that it is better to avoid temptation than to fight temptation; if there are no leftovers, I will not eat them!

CHANGE ACTIVATES a GRIEVING PROCESS. Following healthier eating habits is very difficult because in addition to altering our diet we need to change our behavior toward other aspects of our life. Losing certain foods, avoiding socializing over meals, eating out in restaurants –especially in the beginning of our process, will activate a grieving situation that involves denial, anger, frustration and eventually a stage of acceptance. Change involves trusting, which is particularly difficult to “control freaks” like many of us. Change means getting rid of old ideas or survival skills we acquired through the years that were useful then, but no longer necessary today. It is like the clutter in a computer that needs to be cleaned every so often for the computer’s health. When we were two years old, we acquired survival skills that are no longer useful. For example, at age two we demanded to have “our lollipop now”; obviously, this behavior is no longer useful at age thirty!

The human being is in constant change because it needs to cope with ever changing internal and external environments. The body evolves as it ages; our metabolism is very complex involving carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, minerals, vitamins, enzymes, hormones,

neurochemicals, and many substances our science has not been able to discover to date. It becomes even more complex when we add the history of everyone of us. Each one of our brains has been “sculpted” in a different manner based on our chemistry, genes, and external environment as we have grown up in this planet. A child that has been raised in a hostile environment and physically abused may react defensibly when a parent tries to caress his/her face while somebody that has grown in a loving and nurturing setting may welcome this same gesture of love by this member of the family.

I. We also carry a multitude of **RIGID IDEAS** of “how life should be lived” and preach them to others without practicing them ourselves; for example, we preach eating healthy when we are overweight or have other unhealthy habits such as drinking or smoking in excess. Sometimes we consume so called “natural” supplements, “liver cleansers”, “colon cleansers”, and other unnecessary chemicals without changing –this is a way of rationalization, a very sophisticated denial mechanism that “justifies” our unhealthy behavior and prevents our progress. Rationalization is justifying our conduct by way of lying to ourselves. **So what is DIET IV?** Diet IV is a series of little things we can choose to do to change gradually, with very minimal “pain” or effort. It is a way to “train” our brain to be “open”; **a way to switch from “RIGIDITY” to “FLEXIBILITY”.**

II. RIGIDITY indicates CLOSEMINDEDNESS; an Eastern proverb says that as we get older, we have to behave like a tree green limb that bends (copes) with the wind; not like an old one which will brake easily. Rigidity means “I do it my way, and that is final!”, “I am too old to change”, “I will change when I get older”; “I am too young to change”. It also means expecting “them” to behave up to our expectations. Who are “them”? Them is “the system and its people”, this includes our children, spouse, parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, the slow person driving in front of us in the fast lane of the road while we head to work, our boss, the people we do business with, the stock market, the janitor, the secretary, the governor, the president, the past president, etcetera. When they do not fit within our list of things of what “they should do to be good”, we become afraid and our fear activates worry, anxiety, anger, despair, and the like. When we have these feelings, we usually turn to our “pacifiers” or compulsions.

III. PACIFIERS? Everybody has a different pacifier; some people use food (foodohol), while other use alcohol, workohol, worryhol, angerhol, preachohol (or itoldyousohol), passive-aggressivehol, self-pittyhol, self-loathinghol, etcetera. The reader may already be judging me because these words are not in the dictionary (and because it sounds that I am preaching!), but at least you are getting “the hang of it”! I am not free of these compulsions either; however today I am willing to become aware of what is the way of taking over my wellbeing, my happiness and peace of mind -which will take us to **FLEXIBILITY.**

IV. FLEXIBILITY means OPENMINDEDNESS. It means “If it cannot be my way, there may be another acceptable way of doing it; perhaps if I learn the way somebody else (example: my spouse, my children, my sibling, my neighbor, my mother-in-law) does it, it may even come up better and I will learn! And if it happens not to work out, I will also learn how not to do it!” This is actually the way I have learned from the people I am reluctant to learn out of fear of acknowledging that the “could be right” sometimes. All humans have something worth to learn from. The way we open ourselves to learn is not just by sharing our assets, which is what we have been taught in order to “succeed”; but to **SHARE OUR WEAKNESSES.** Unfortunately, sharing our weaknesses makes us “vulnerable” and this is a state we are not trained to be in. Vulnerable is a very scary state, because it opens a door to being “counseled” by people like us who cannot resist to “tell us the right way” of living our lives, and this can be an unpleasant experience, unless we invite them to share how they have manage similar situations. For example, when my middle son passed away a couple of years ago, it was very hard to listen to people who have not lost a love one to

tell me how to grieve; when I shared my story with another father who have lost a son, he told me his story. His son had died twenty four years ago, and the fact that he was still alive and thriving in life gave me hope.

For individuals who wish to change their eating habits, people who have lost weight and/or modified their eating habits in a long term basis are a good source to share their weaknesses in this territory because they have already solved this problem. Some people have lost a lot of weight in a very short period of time, most will gain it back and more; however, they good teachers by just following from a distance to see if they really **CHANGE** for good, or go back to their old habits –which, unfortunately is the usual outcome.

When CHANGE is hard because it means CHANGING an UNHEALTHY HABIT for A HEALTHY HABIT. The most common outcome is that we EXCHANGE an unhealthy habit such us overeating or eating the wrong foods for another unhealthy habit, such as over worrying, smoking, using sedatives, etcetera. **IT IS LIKE CHANGING FROM A DIRTY UNDEAR into ANOTHER SET OF DIRTY UNDERWEAR!**

Flexibility means adopting a forgiving attitude toward our mistakes and the ones of those around us, it means acknowledging that GOOD JUDGEMENT COMES FROM EXPERIENCE, but EXPERIEMCE COMES FROM BAD JUDGEMENT. It means, and I do not wish to sound religious, “WE MAKE THE PLANS AND LEAVE THE RESULTS UP TO GOD”.

Depression and anxiety are very common when our mind stays rigid. The thought that we “should not make mistakes”, and beating ourselves because when our plans to succeed turn into errors are signs of rigid thinking that lead to moments of unnecessary suffering for not allowing ourselves to be human, and also not allowing other human beings to be human –especially those around us. These feeling sometimes are dealt with compulsions such as using alcohol (including “innocent” beer and fine wines), overworking, and/or overeating. Yes, overeating is a “pacifier” that only lasts while we consume food. It is another manner of attempting to escape from our preoccupations through pleasure. The **Japanese proverb “PLEASURE SEEKERS HAVE NO LEISURE”** comes to mind. It means that as long as we do not learn to rest, to live quiet moments with ourselves just “being”, we will not have rest because pleasure is fleeting; once pleasure is over we have to del ourselves one more time!

Somebody said, “**To err is human, to forgive is divine**”. This saying reflects our human difficulty forgiving, not much forgiving others but forgiving ourselves for being anxious, overwhelmed, preoccupied –in other words, occupying our mind with what does not exist: **pre** is a prefix that means **before**.

A “NEW WAY OF LIFE” MEANS FINDING A HEALTHY SUBSTITUTE TO OVEREATING AS A REMEDY TO TIREDNESS, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY OR PREOCCUPATION, SOMETHING HEALTHY SUCH AS:

1. **EXERCISE.** We can exercise a short period of time as only three to five minutes before eating, or instead of eating if it is not time to eat.
2. **PRAY.** I am not a priest, a minister, a rabbi nor any religious leader/guru of any kind; I am simply a medical doctor that wishes to give options to my patients. Some of them have told me they have found relief praying for their God of their understanding will for

- them as a solution of their anxieties. I heard that one of the **most powerful prayers is “THANK YOU”** because it tells the brain that we have received everything we need.
3. **PRACTICE FORGIVENESS.** Dictionaries define the word FORGIVENESS as “quitting being angry about something”, it is a **nonreligious** word. This practice has been utilized by religious and nonreligious people since the very beginning of time. It is the same type of forgiveness we grant to babies when they spill their food and to puppies when they poop on the carpet! It is an unconditional act that frees us to go on with our life. There is a multitude of medical scientific studies that have proven the benefit of this practice; **it provides a freedom and a sense of wellbeing that it is impossible to describe unless it is practiced by the people who are entitled to retribution.** Initially, it is not the action of forgiving that will help us cope with dislike but the WILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE. We do not have to forgive anybody (including ourselves) right now; however, we can say that we are WILLING TO FORGIVE WHEN WE ARE READY. If this does not appeal to us at this moment, let us remember that we are starting (not trying, but starting already) a NEW WAY OF LIFE where we have to stay “flexible”.
 4. **FIND A HOBBY.** Having a hobby for many of us is a luxury or a waste of time. Perhaps we learned as we grew up that “time is money”. This way of thinking is rigid or close-minded and we already mentioned that we are looking to “open our mind”. Therefore, we try to “waste time on purpose” reading something about anything such as comic, history, geography or any type of books of our choice; sitting around for five minutes, playing ball, or “doing nothing” for only two minutes. As we continue to practice “wasting time”, we find other options that we used to consider as “worthless”.
 5. **MEDITATE.** Meditation is not something that only certain skilled people can do. Meditation is a simple act of sitting around and taking a deep breath. Our brain may say that this is “being stupid”, but that is OK if allowing ourselves to be “stupid” will clear our mind from “clutter”. Somebody told me that meditation is “silencing the mind”; another said it was sitting on the edge of the bed, a sofa in the living room, or a chair at work and feel receiving an imaginary beam of energy; another human told me that it is done taking a deep breath with our shoulders down. I guess the number of ways we meditate is as large as the number of humans who practice it. It seems that the common denominator is to find a manner to “retreat” from the nervous world we live for few minutes a day. I sometimes go to a restroom at the hospital and sit down saying “Thank you God”, or “Whatever you want God” because it removes me from “being in charge”, it is a way of giving the problems I cannot solve at any given moment to somebody bigger than me. Please note that I use the word God for convenience, but it can easily be Nature, Life, World, or any word we are comfortable with. An eighty five year old man friend of mine told me once that I can give all my problems even to a baboon; at least I will not have to carry them while I am resting!!
 6. **CHANGE OUR DEFINITION OF HAPPINESS.** As I was growing up, I defined happiness as excitement, as a state of peacefulness compared to the flat line of an EKG or a mix of both; this was unrealistic because a flat line means no life, while seeking pleasure is time consuming and deceiving because as I got pleasure, my disappointment once it was gone was like a hangover. Then I heard that happiness is not something I can demand, it comes quietly while I serve others. We serve others leading by example, if we change into a healthier way of living, we are actually plowing the road for those who wish to follow. Obviously we will not change the ones we choose, but many will change because of us –we will never know how many people we have impacted with our change, but we do not have to know. Our job is to care for ourselves. A mentor told me once that if I wanted my children and patients to eat healthy, I had to eat healthy!
 7. **MAKE TIME FOR OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.** Older people tell us that the most valuable aspect of our life is our loved ones. Therefore, it makes sense to MAKE TIME

to spend with them. For over thirty years of being involved in medicine, I have seen a lot of people dying. Dying people see the world different from us, they are given the gift of really “seeing” reality plain and simple –some of us call it “the bigger picture”, they have told me **how much time they lost chasing the unchaseable**, that “thing” that once it is reached will make them “happy forever”. We know there is no such thing; nevertheless, we keep doing, acquiring and discarding following a vicious cycle not having time for anything. At the end, we realize the senselessness of life the way we have been living it, and we “wake up”. Let us not wait till the end and make a conscious effort to wake up today and make some moments for those we care for. For those we love but do not care as much for us we can simply appreciate the opportunity to experience their existence without trying to change them, we basically let them live their lives acknowledging that they are as nervous and fearful -and frequently as needy from approval, as we are.

8. **TAKE A VACATION.** Vacation means vacate our minds from the “business” of regular living. It is healthy to remove ourselves from the routines involved in the places we live and work. For this reason is a good idea to take a week or even a couple of days off. It does not have to be a trip going out of town, it may be checking in a cheap hotel nearby and try something different –even if you have to bring your own lunch!
9. **OUR LIFE IS OUR MESSAGE. Make time for ourselves.** We are very busy people serving at work, home, church, benefit organizations, and so forth. As a consequence, it is easy to forget to serve our own body, mind and spirit. Sometimes I am so busy that I have to “hide” from others so I can rest, read and nourish myself adequately. Let us not feel guilty for doing something good for ourselves.
10. **DO NOT EXPECT INSTANT RESULTS.** Our mode of thinking has been “sculpted” for many years and it is almost as if it was engraved in stone and it will take some practice to change.
11. **DO NOT TAKE IT TOO SERIOUSLY:** Plan to make a lot mistakes. If you are genuinely trying to change and you “fail”, instead of giving yourself one star, give yourself two stars. Remember that you are starting a **NEW LIFE** where the **MAJOR GOAL** is **CUTTING YOURSELF SOME SLACK, and it starts today.**

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR JOURNEY, WHICH EVENTHOUGH IS FULL OF UNCERTAINTY, WILL ALLOW YOU TO LIVE BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS, TO SEE THAT THE BEST IS YET TO COME.

Recommended readings:

“THE WELLNESS BOOK”, by Herbert Benson, MD, this is a program of change designed by the Mind and Body Institute at Harvard Medical School.

Websites:

1. **www.gihealer.com This is my website and you will find some information on lifestyle modification, including this diet information.**
2. **www.nih.gov** (enter “dietary recommendations”, “herbs”, etc in the search engine window) **GET MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE BEFORE YOU BECOME VICTIM OF THE SO MANY BUSINESS THAT ARE TRYING TO SELL “SCIENTIFIC” or “NATURAL” PRODUCTS OF QUESTIONABLE or NO NUTRITIONAL VALUE.** They are most of the time a sad scam to make a profit of good willing people who are looking for a better healthier life. Sometimes these chemicals can be toxic in the long run