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A Swimming Coach's Approach to Permanent Lifestyle Change

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Abstract

Do you want the rest of your life to be the best of your life? Yes?

Imagine, how do you want your health and life to be?

Filled with vitality, energy, fun? Free of pain? Freedom of mobility? Yes?

But, where are you now?

Have you got health issues, concerns, difficulties perhaps?

What will it take for you to go from where you are now to where you want to be?

Do you have a plan? But, more importantly, do you have a plan that's proven to work?

Chances are you don't.

I have a proven plan for you. And, I'm living proof. 25 years ago, I was 55 pounds heavier, with high cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood sugar. I had issues, and the nurse practitioner told me I had issues, but I didn't care. I was depressed. Then, after my friend called me "chubby" one day while I was coaching my swimmers, I had to get mad at myself and take control of my health. I then decided to USE what I had learned from all those years of being a competitive swimmer and a coach. Applying what I had learned, I lost all the weight in about a year and completely changed my lifestyle. I have been healthy and fit ever since. But, more importantly, I have been teaching hundreds to do the same for themselves for over 24 years. I offer no short cuts or easy fixes. But, what I do offer WORKS if you work the process. It's no mystery and it's no secret.

I suggest that there are FOUR STEPS to creating a permanent lifestyle change:

- > Begin from within – rewire the subconscious and change mind-set, thinking and consciousness.
- > Learn a proven strategy – cannot continue to do the same

things expecting different results.

> A new system for support and accountability to sustain mind-set and behaviors.

> Create consistency and new habits through disciplined, committed actions and behaviors.

Get Clear on Your Intention. One's intention for making health-related changes significantly impacts the long-term outcome. A health and wellness based intention has a much higher likelihood of success. An intention related to physical appearance is less likely to take lasting hold. For instance, if your intention is to lose weight and look smokin' hot in a bikini for an upcoming beach vacation, the likelihood of lasting change is slim—ha, no pun intended. However, if your intention is to feel good physically, resolve a health concern, or enhance overall wellbeing, the chance of lasting change improves significantly. This year, ask yourself why you want to make this change and try to connect your intention to health and wellness.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race. Any fad diet or best-selling exercise program may get you short-term results but it rarely makes the cut for the long haul. However, taking small steps along a healthy path will make long-term habits feel manageable. Try not to set lofty expectations or make too many changes too fast. Change is evolving and we often need to integrate modifications in pieces. Introducing more vegetables and water to your diet might be the perfect place to start. I was recently talking to a friend who is treating her Hashimoto's with nutrition. She shared that the life she is living now would have felt drastic and extreme two years ago— in fact unimaginable. But because her dietary and lifestyle changes have been incremental, one building on the other, the evolution has felt natural and now she lives a completely different life.

Find Support. Many of my clients say, "I am so surprised how easy this is. I have tried to do this for years by myself and I couldn't do it." Having support and being held accountable can

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be a game changer. Health coaches are a great way to get individual support and accountability. Groups provide support by bringing together people who are motivated to make the same changes. Many health-related groups are conducted through social media—making support for virtually any lifestyle goal extremely accessible. Individual and group health programs work because they support, inspire, and bring an accountability factor in ways that we cannot sustain by ourselves.

Build Self-Awareness. Developing the ability to self-reflect and have curiosity about your experience is a key component in making healthy habits last. For change to be sustainable it is important to know your strengths and shortcomings, to be curious about why you do things, and to reflect on what other alternative behaviors are possible. I love watching my clients start their journey looking for answers from media, books, and me but then eventually begin asking themselves questions out of self-reflective curiosity. By observing themselves they learn how to trouble shoot problem behaviors and make changes at the root cause level.

Identify Your Individual Balance. A healthy balance for me is going to be different than a healthy balance for you. My husband can be much more black and white than me when it comes to health. He eats healthy food about 98-99% of the time. He just does it—and actually he finds it easier not to have to choose. I, on the other hand like to have choice and flexibility with my food choices. So, an 90/10 eating rule works better for me. 90% of the time I eat clean and healthy options, and for the other 10% I give myself leeway to eat a little more leniently. Some

people do better with an 80/20 rule. One key in this balance is to not feel deprived! Deprivation is not balance, and it usually results in the opposite extreme. Many individuals who struggle with sugar addiction find that a small amount of sugar sends them into relapse and so they do better by completely avoiding certain forms of sugar. Individuals with food allergies or sensitivities may find that the symptoms caused by their food triggers are not worth the ingestion at all. We each have our unique balance that keeps us on track and feeling our best long-term.

Structure Change. Plan ways to incorporate the changes into the structure of your routine. For example, meal planning and grocery lists create structure around nutritional changes. If your goal is exercise-related setting a reoccurring schedule is a structure that creates consistency. Planning your schedule so that it is predictable sets you up for success. Over time using structure makes the changes become second nature.

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