

What is REAL Healthy Living?

By Lisa Schilling RN

Losing weight and getting healthier can feel like a huge battle. In a way it is. You are fighting old thought patterns and habits that have become comfortable, much like a default setting that you can achieve without much thought or effort. REAL change comes from a strong desire, willingness to change and determination to do whatever it takes to achieve AND maintain your goals. Without one of these factors you will not achieve the results you envision. Many people want **Biggest Loser™** type results but don't want to put in the **Biggest Loser™** kind of effort. This is a process, a journey, and not just a means to an end. Taking each moment as it comes reduces dread and improves results.

One of the most valuable gifts you can give yourself is to enjoy your life *while* you are working toward your goals. Part of that comes from being **fully present** in each moment. The practice of 'mindfulness' is an underutilized tactic. This means you focus on the now and not past or future events. When you practice this regularly you become more at peace and better able to handle the ups and downs of daily life. Never wait until that 'special time in the future' to start feeling happy. **Decide** to make the most of each moment you have. Part of the experience comes from the trip. So **allow yourself** to have fun. "Laughter doeth good like a medicine". It is more than a proverb. It is a fundamental truth. Laughter releases pleasurable endorphins in the brain and boosts the immune system. How long has it been since you really laughed? I mean the kind that makes you tear up or double over. Most adults have forgotten to make laughter and humor part of each day. That should be a tangible goal for every person.

Studies show that happy, humorous people live longer and have less illness. So don't take *yourself* too seriously, even if the task at hand is serious. Accept yourself just as you are now, even though there are improvements to be made (there will always be things you want to improve). **Accepting where you are, on the way to where you are going,** is a vital part of renewed thinking. Start by doing what you can do, now. Give yourself permission to be where you are, and like you are **or** choose to do something about it! Those

are the only two choices to achieve peace, if you seek balance in mind, body and spirit. You must change as the seasons of your life change. Regularly evaluate your current situation and seek the *clarity* to make informed choices. Be able to laugh, smile and say 'oh well' when life hands you lemons. Being grumpy and sad always makes things worse. Be the kind of person you enjoy being around and strive to give people more than they require of you.

One of the most overlooked areas of health improvement is the building of meaningful interpersonal relationships. Today's society values productivity and 'personal' fulfillment. Lost is a sense of community and interconnectedness. There is great value in acknowledging people and asking them questions about themselves and their family. Then really listening and taking in what they tell you. By investing in others, you can take your mind off of you, and your own frustrations. This can be extremely restorative. You don't have to wait to be asked, look around and see where you can help, encourage and validate others. This shift in thinking will prove to set the tone for your healthier lifestyle.

Too often people become obsessed with the busyness of their own lives. They no longer make time to casually meet with others and build real relationship because they are too stressed or too 'busy'. Remember you create your schedule, if you do not have time to sit with a neighbor for thirty minutes, relax and have nice conversation, there is a problem. It is through the building of this network of strong relationships that people find support and genuine fulfillment. The acquisition of 'stuff' or running to multiple practices and appointments are makings of 'busyness'.

Be careful to examine what you allow to fill your time and see if those activities align with your 'personal goals' and 'what matter most' to you. If they do not, you need to prune them. **When life is ruled by the 'have tos' there can be little enjoyment or room for real change.** Total fitness, health, weight loss and sense of well-being come from a **change in thinking.** If you have never been able to stick to a 'diet' or make those REAL lifestyle changes it is time to decide to make it work this time **or** decide that you are OK with where you are now. Embrace your own accountability and responsibility! It is all about choice ... choices

only you can make. Consider that you will eventually harvest the bounty of whatever seeds you plant now. So plant wisely and use your time fruitfully to reap rewards in abundance.