

## **Living with Purpose**

By Lisa Schilling

What drives you? What motivates you to get out of bed in the morning? What keeps you going through the day? What do you look forward to doing? These are important questions. Everyone lives a “purpose-driven” life whether they realize it or not. However by looking at most lifestyles, the purpose would seem to be pleasure, self-indulgence, self-preservation or just working toward the point where nothing “has to” be done. Step back—look at your life. What is the purpose of each thing that *fills* your time? What do you get from them? What is the payoff? Understanding the reasons you “do the things you do” is an important part of making any permanent change. When you find real purpose in an activity, you will have energy for it! You will carve out time to do it.

When it comes to healthy behavior, do you manage well while in the routine at work, but during the evenings or weekends lose focus? Often this lack of purposeful direction can cause an uneasy feeling that leads to food consumption to reduce that unpleasant sensation. Increased unhealthy food consumption can also lead to a negative energy balance, and so the downward spiral begins. It may be that you have plenty of things you could do or even need to do but without the comfort of your routine or the deadline pushing you, you are unable to settle on the best use of your time.

Lack of a relevant purpose for your activity can lead to a form of boredom that causes emotional eating and depression. To combat this, you must find a meaning behind what you are doing to fill your time. If you fall victim to this scenario, developing a clear goal-purpose-outcome connection can result in the reduction of negative coping behaviors such as junk food consumption. So it goes with incorporating healthier behaviors. You must know your goal, have a clear purpose for doing it and greatly desire the outcome, to continue the behavior long-term. You

must develop a *passionate purpose* for your changes or you will not stick to them.

Set your goals and determine what you will get from their achievement. Goals must be realistic and achievable—short-term and long-term. You need to decide what you want to achieve through adopting a healthier lifestyle. This is very important and will determine your approach in achieving them. You can’t hit your target if you do not know what you are aiming at or why you are aiming at it.

Write down your goals and put them where you will see them. This measure gives them solidity and increases the likelihood they will be achieved. Determine how important it is for you to meet these goals. That goal could be to lose a number of pounds, lower cholesterol, improve health, or just to look and feel better. Whatever “it” is—must be worth enough for you to change your habits and lifestyle. If it is not, then cut yourself some slack and accept who and how you are now. Don’t feel guilt and condemnation over not doing those behaviors that you think you should be doing. Remember, don’t *should* on yourself! When your situation or mindset changes, then you can evaluate if the time is right for change. Until then—release the guilt.

It is important to choose changes that are realistic and only minimally painful. When you start with small manageable changes, you are more likely to stick with them and build on that success. It also creates an easier transition into a permanent lifestyle change. This allows you to enjoy the journey and appreciate the benefits of a healthier lifestyle. Think of life as a marathon, not a sprint. Most people start out fast and strong, but run out of steam in the end. You are in training for your life-marathon. That means starting slow and gradually increasing your tolerance. Now is the time. Discover your purpose and choose the best path to reach your goals, write it down, review it, and follow it to start living a healthier life now.