

Family Health Strategies

Overview

This program is designed to be a whole family, lifetime, approach to achieve, maintain and improve ideal weight, fitness and self esteem. The plan consists of six strategies that can be implemented either simultaneously or sequentially. The efficacy of the program will depend on the degree that the whole family can become involved. The program primarily aims to change the way we think, prepare, purchase and consume food. We try to break the psychological addictions we have developed in relation to food. The program is designed to be non-punitive, creating opportunities for estimable actions on a daily basis. A fit, healthy, family is a priceless treasure.

Tigershark Family Health Strategies

- 1. Do not count calories.**
- 2. Portion Control**
- 3. Location Control**
- 4. Eliminate Fast food, limit restaurant visits**
- 5. Education**
- 6. Reset home foods**

The Following pages provide support for each of these Strategies

Do Not Count Calories

Unlike most programs, counting calories is not necessary, or even desired. Trying to consume a specific, arbitrary amount of calories creates stress, opportunities for failure and may not even have the desired effect. Additionally, it is unlikely that all of the members of a specific family will have the same baseline caloric requirements. To further confound the process of counting calories effectively, caloric requirements will change during any weight gain or loss program.

Portion Control

This step is easy. Anyone in the family who can read can accomplish this. Before eating a snack, or when serving a meal, count out a portion to be consumed. If coming from packaged food, a serving size will be listed on the container. If consumed at the dinner table, the portion should be set out on the plate, keep the container with leftovers off the table. Put it in the refrigerator before eating. Don't eat snacks out of the bag. Put one serving in a bowl or on a plate, or paper towel, and put the bag away before eating. The key to this step is to decide on the portion before you eat, keep it separate from the original container, and put away any extra before eating. Successful implementation of this step creates an estimable act. Encourage each family member to participate. Positive reinforcement is an essential component for the success of the program. Controlling portions sets up a different mental dynamic. You will enjoy the food more, and apportion the meal so that it comes to a satisfying mental conclusion. You won't have to decide how much you are eating while you are eating. Overeating will be less likely. For individuals seeking to gain weight, this will give them clear attainable targets instead of admonitions to "eat more" Keep food out of sight as much as possible with the exception of targeted snacks such as fruit. Lack of visual cues will more effectively curb reflexive eating.

Location Control

Try to consume all food in a proper location. Try the dining room table, a breakfast nook, the deck, etc. Do not eat in front of the TV, while reading, while playing video games etc. This will help break food out of a dependency cycle.

None of the aforementioned activities are enhanced by eating. The more you can control where you eat, the more you can create a different relationship with food. If food is no longer tied to the TV, you probably won't eat as much food, or watch as much TV. Every time you make a choice to eat in a proper defined location, you will create an estimable act.

Eliminate Fast food, limit restaurant visits

Fast food restaurants are famous for convenience, fun, and deadly food. While many restaurants have added healthy alternatives to their staple menu items, there are too many temptations on the menu and the healthy choices are hard to separate from the others. If you are commuting to work, pack your lunch. This way you can control portion and location as well as avoiding outrageous amounts of fat and sugar. If office bound, don't order lunch delivered. If commuting athletes like to stop at McDonalds on the way back home, pack an appropriate snack for the ride home. As you become educated, you will be able to reintroduce fast food restaurants and other restaurants to your dining choices, picking menu items that fit with your knowledge and goals. For parents, driving by a fast food restaurant without stopping creates an estimable act.

Education

Learn about nutrition. Learn to cook healthier food that tastes good. Understand the role vitamins and nutrition plays in healthy active individuals. Learn about fast food and chain restaurants and how to make healthy positive choices in a hostile environment. One of the greatest obstacles to education about eating is the feeling of denial we have when we know we should be doing something but don't know where to start. As the program becomes a part of your life, it will be easy and fun to learn more about how all this works.

Re Set Home Foods

Eat the old food that is in the house, but replace it with healthier choices. With only healthy alternatives to choose from, temptation will be less accessible.

Notes

This is a family program. The likelihood of success will diminish greatly if there is not 100% participation.

One key element has not been discussed. Exercise. The assumption is made that any swim team member will get enough physical activity with 3 or 4 days per week participation. However, parents and younger or non team member children must also make provisions for adequate physical activity. Merely running around all day is not exercise. Ideally, adults should get at least 30 minutes of aerobic physical activity five times per week, children more.

Failure is not part of this program. There are no weight targets. You may weigh yourself as much or as little as you wish. You will not be able to follow the guidelines as consistently as you wish. This does not constitute failure.

Resumption of a healthy lifestyle is a success.

These strategies were prepared by Steve Leonardi with assistance from Mary Lou Kiel (PhD nutrition, Penn State faculty, former director of Duke's weight loss clinic). They have been designed specifically to assist families and swimmers associated with Mon Valley West Swim Team, but will apply equally to athletes and non athletes.

I can provide additional information or explanations as desired. Please do not hesitate to contact me:

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