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Integrative Medicine Perspective by Dr. Julie “Does That Really Work For Weight Loss?”

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Almost every patient who walks into my clinic has a question about a diet they saw on TV or heard about from a friend. I've heard the gamut from drinking spicy lemonade to eating just bagels to not eating at all followed by a day or two of eating whatever they wanted.

But, let's ask ourselves this...if we want to achieve weight loss that is sustainable and a diet seems too preposterous to even maintain for a week or two, does it seem like you'll be able to keep the weight off with that kind of a diet over the long haul? Probably not, right?

So, how do we effectively kick start weight loss, not be miserable while doing it, and keep the weight off long term, without feeling like we've lost all enjoyment out of our life and our food? Here's how with 2 easy tips...

1. Our bodies are like machines. We still have to feed it to keep the metabolism efficient to help us lose weight. So, make sure you are giving your body what it needs to make sure that your metabolism is running at 100%; instead of letting it become sluggish with a diet that is too low in calories or fluids. Keeping yourself hydrated with water and with a mostly plant protein-based diet is one of the most effective ways for weight loss.

2. Our bodies are made to move. Make sure you incorporate into your daily schedule at least 10-60 minutes for physical activity; whether it's walking or running or biking or weight training. Why am I saying 10 minutes to 60 minutes? The reason is because I don't want you to use the excuse that you don't have the time to exercise. Ten minutes is better than no minutes, correct? And if we are too rigid with ourselves as to what constitutes as true exercise, we'll never do it. Think back to when we were children. Did we ask ourselves whether we had a full 30 minutes available to play with our friends? And if not, then 10 minutes just wasn't worth running outside to hang out with friends?

As adults, we forget the joy of moving our body for fun. It doesn't have to be 30 minutes set aside with the name attached as “exercise time” or “time I have to hit the gym.” Just allow yourself whatever time you have to do something physical. Whether it's 5-10 minutes a few times per day to just walk around the block or to walk up and down the stairs at work with a colleague or to walk to your friend's desk a few floors down to chat...just keep your body moving and think of it as play time with your friends again...just like we did when we were kids. Now that I've laid out the general top two tips...let me go over more details on what to eat and how to incorporate movement into your day without causing more stress.

When it comes to drinking fluids, green tea and water is ideal for weight loss. Both help with making our metabolism more efficient. And if you don't like the way water tastes, you can drop some berries or cucumber slices or orange slices into the water to add flavor and vitamins. Green tea has been suggested to help our metabolism be more efficient, and it has the added potential health benefits for cancer and disease prevention.

Now, we come to the most pressing question of what to eat. My recommendation to my patients are always to eat a mostly plant protein-based diet for multiple reasons. This is a diet that can help with chronic disease management, disease prevention, weight loss, improvement in sleep and energy level, and healthy skin. An anti-inflammatory diet that is mostly plant-based with lean proteins (like fish, hormone-free chicken, legumes, soy, nuts) and whole intact grains eaten on appetizer size plates is a way to easily sum up this weight loss idea. Keeps the portion size appropriate and lets you lose weight without sacrificing health benefits.

Just keep your plate about 1/2 to 3/4 full of vegetables and the rest of the plate is filled with lean protein and whole intact grains. Keeping it simple like this will help you to maintain this type of diet long term without stressing yourself out. You can also incorporate more variety into your diet so that you don't become bored with the same foods.

Remember that weight loss, just like life, is not a sprint where you lose steam and focus by taking a speed you cannot maintain; but rather, it is a long distance trail that you want to run with the idea that you want to make it to the finish line, while still being able to enjoy the path and process in the interim.

Dr. Julie T. Chen, M.D. an integrative medicine physician who is board-certified in internal medicine and is also fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, CA, is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of websites as well as non-profit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, TV, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates many types of healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more about Dr. Julie, you can check out her website at www.makinghealthy.com.

