

Spring Cleaning for the Mind and Body

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Spring is around the corner, swimsuits are lurking in the stores and we are about to put away our sweaters and vests. Spring is also a time of new beginnings. Here are some ways to engage our mind and emotions in wellness and leap into spring.

Prioritizing Wellness:

What is the last important decision you made in your life? How much time did you spend considering it, planning for it and making it happen? Here's a truth about human beings: people do what they want to do. There are some limitations, of course, but for the most part, if something is important, we make it happen. In the same way, when an opportunity arises to lose weight, it is important to take action to make it happen. Making weight control a priority every day in the long-term reduces the number of episodic, intense efforts that so easily pile up in our emotional closets.

The Body, Mind, Spirit Connection:

Over time, we have gotten away from the original design of our bodies to hunt and gather food and to move to accomplish most tasks. Some bodies have had a harder time adjusting to this change than others and the result is that some people are biologically predisposed to being overweight. These are the bodies that gain weight unless effort is being put into maintaining it and that take more effort to lose weight. Therefore, obesity has risen as our society has industrialized.

Not fair, right? The good news is that this biology does not have to be destiny. Long term weight control is similar to an athlete training for a

chosen sport. The sport is important and so the athlete works toward goals and doesn't drift too far from the behaviors that accomplish those goals. Similarly, a long term weight controller must focus on behaviors that are helpful to weight control, such as self-monitoring, sticking to a nutrition plan that works, and moving.

A great way to stay accountable to exercise and easily record (and celebrate!) how much movement is accomplished in a day is to track steps with a pedometer and aim for at least 10,000 steps/day. Of course, intentional exercise/workouts can fill a lot of these steps, but so can common, but intentional movement, like walking/biking instead of driving and parking further away in parking lots.

The mind and spirit can also be utilized in weight loss by setting goals, monitoring behavior, and altering the way a weight controller thinks about food, exercise and setbacks.

Goals:

If you want to go on vacation and don't set a destination, where will you arrive? If you pick a destination, you can plan your trip: how you'll get there, for how long you'll stay and where you will stay. Similarly, goal setting consistently and regularly (at least 1/week) helps keep weight control on track.

Monitoring behavior and feelings: One of the most important behaviors to long term weight control is self-monitoring. This includes writing down food items and their nutritional value, how many steps were taken each day and journaling thoughts and feelings about the day.

Altering thinking:

If I say, "I just crave chocolate" what is my behavior likely to be after this statement? If I alter my language slightly, "I really enjoy eating chocolate and it's not helpful if my goal is to lose weight," I have a much better

chance to stay on track. Using rational language gives a weight controller more power over choices and resulting behavior.

Similarly, the way a weight controller thinks about set-backs is crucial to overall success. If someone trying to lose weight has made unhelpful choices and thinks, "I really blew it. I ate horrible food and didn't exercise. I'm so mad at myself," it is so easy to throw that hard day and all the days that have gone well before out the window! Alternately, after a challenging day, this person says, "Today wasn't ideal. I'm going to sit down and plan helpful food choices and before the day is over, I will move my body in some way," it is much more likely to stay on track and not do damage to emotional well-being.

Learning to look more objectively at choices and whether or not these are helpful to a goal will lead to long-term success. If a weight controller can learn to look at the process like an athlete or scientist, it makes information like weight and how much is eaten tools to accomplish the goal rather than scary, threatening things that are personalized and can then lead to destructive behavior. Prioritizing wellness in your life and working on this goal each day by utilizing your body, mind and spirit can lead you right into spring looking and feeling fabulous!