

Be Your Own Nutritional Guru



By Leanne Ely, CNC



One of the things that holds so many of us back is plain old-fashioned ignorance. Let's just call it for what it is, shall we?

Ignorance, as the dictionary defines it, is simply a lack of knowledge or information.

In this day and age, it's easy to get your hands on knowledge and information—we live with Professor Google after all!

However, not everything you read on the internet is accurate, true, and can even be out and out lies—and the science of nutrition is not immune to false stories, inaccurate reporting and even fake research.

So for a lot of us (me included sometimes!) it can all be a bit overwhelming with too much information coming at us at all angles. AND with so many “experts” claiming to be the only harbingers of truth, it is just too much.

That is why I wanted to write this.

Be Your Own Nutritional Guru

I wanted to give you the basic information you need (like what nutrition truly is), what we actually know in the nutrition world (it's less than you think!) and how to harness the true information, without the spin, research bought and paid for by special interest shareholders, and personal bias.

Just the facts, pure and simple.

And I want to offer you more than just head knowledge.

Because once you have the basics for nutrition down, it's time to travel inward. Becoming your own "personal nutritionist" is about understanding what works for you, what doesn't and what your nutritional needs (and appetite!) are all about.

That's the tougher part on one hand. It's also the easy part on the other hand.

Confused?

Don't be! This is the adventure and self-discovery you need to become your own nutritional guru.

This is what will not only give you the freedom to say no to the things you know you shouldn't be eating, BUT will also give you the understanding as to WHY.

You'll also gain wisdom to start eating the foods you want to be eating—and it will get easier, too.

Knowing our "whys" are the keys to unlocking the door to new understanding and creating the habits you want.

And that's precisely what this short course is all about—giving you the understanding and ability to make smart decisions every single day with every single meal so you can stop the regret, the self abasement and learn the freedom of knowing you're doing what is right for YOU.

So let's begin...

Hippocrates got it right so many years ago, "Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease."

If we are aware of those "natural forces" and we can harness them, and if we allow those natural forces to teach us, we can ultimately become the controller of everything that enters our bodies, whether it's food, drink or even stress!

To get there however, we need to trust those natural forces and that most likely requires retraining them.

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Derek Sivers, creator of CD Baby once said, "If all we needed was more information, then everyone would be a billionaire with perfect abs."

I say amen to that!

It's the truth—that's why the journey inside is so important. It all begins and ends with what you believe about yourself.

But if you don't know yourself, you can't know how to proceed and this is why there are people with heads full of knowledge who produce nothing in their lives—it's all stuck in their frontal cortexes.

So you've gotta get out of your head! Out of your head and into yourself—yes, a little bit of navel gazing is what we're going to be doing.

There are a few exercises and they are easy—just follow along and do them one at a time. They're not time consuming and will keep your eyes on the prize—being able to have control over what and how much you eat.

So let's break it all down, shall we?

Nutrition Basics—

First of all, you need to know and understand, when it comes to nutrition, it is a continually evolving science. Nothing is totally set in stone—we keep learning about nutrients through research and studies.

As you know, we find out things we were previously taught were bad for us, are actually good for us--think chocolate, butter and meat for example.

And while we're pretty straight about understanding the basic tenets of nutrition, there's always the chance that some research can come along and rock that boat, like the aforementioned chocolate, butter and meat examples.

I'm a nutritionist and great example of this. Years ago, I recommended low-fat everything, soy and counting calories. Today, 50 pounds plus lighter and fit, I have a whole different philosophy and who's to say it won't change again as the research keeps coming in?

But for now, we need to get down to the basics and that means a discussion on very basic nutrition.

In the nutrition world, there are macronutrients and micronutrients.

Macronutrients are the big things in your diet: protein, carbohydrates, fiber and fats.

Micronutrients are the little things: macro and trace minerals and vitamins that add up to big things.

Let's start with the macros—

Protein

Protein is the stuff that builds muscles, brains and is present in every single cell of the body.

Hair and nails are almost entirely made out of protein.

Protein creates new cells, helps your body repair from exercise or injury and is vital for growth for both children and pregnant women. Protein also plays a role in hormonal balance.

Your brain, your heart and your bones also benefit from adequate protein.

Protein is also one of the best ways to stave off an out of control appetite as it satiates better than anything else.

Sources for protein are varied, but the best complete sources come from animals—cows, chickens, fish and the like.

Other rich sources include nuts, lentils, black beans and eggs.

As always, the cleanest sources are always recommended: grass fed beef, pastured meats like pork and lamb, organic poultry and wild fish.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates create the fuel for your body's energy sources. Carbs are also important for brain function, intestinal health and waste removal.

Carbohydrates in the diet are controversial—there are camps that say we need none, others that say we need a lot.

The truth is your body will break down everything you eat (protein, carbohydrates, and fat) into some form of glucose. It just so happens that carbohydrates happen to be its preferred source.

However, too many carbohydrates equal too much sugar in the diet and we all know what that looks like—a big fat spare tire around your middle.

Good sources for carbohydrates are from nutrient rich vegetables and fruits.

Grains are chocked full of carbohydrates, but are problematic with the sugar overload they produce, the lectins and phytates in them that can cause intestinal distress and the concentrated calories which can all avalanche into a cycle of overeating.

Fats

Good fat is essential for brain function, hormone balance, and helping the body to absorb certain nutrients. Fat is also responsible for pretty hair and skin and helping you feel full.

During the decade or so of the fat free fad, America actually got fatter. Low-fat or non-fat “spreads” replaced butter. Avocados were shunned, nuts were off the menu and steaks were trimmed of all visible fat.

Non-fat dairy products popped up everywhere—replacing the sugar for fat. Fat free and low-fat cookies, breads and pretzels consumed us, but it only made us eat more.

The result of this fat banishment was that we were all hungry, we ate too many carbs and America’s waistline blossomed. We have yet to recover from this myth and some of us are still victims.

Good sources for good fat include grass fed meats, wild fish, grass fed butter and ghee, eggs (yolk included) avocados, and olive oil.

Fiber

We all know we need fiber and we all know we probably don’t get enough. The RDA recommendation for fiber is 25 grams a day and most of us are probably getting under 10 or even less.

Wellness experts recommend even more than 25 grams as fiber is responsible for gut health, helping with weight loss and guards us against certain types of cancer and even kidney stones.

Good sources of fiber include berries, artichokes, avocados, squash, Brussels sprouts and turnips. Nuts are also great sources. Black beans, lentils and other legumes and beans are good sources as well, but come with the lectin/phytate problems as mentioned above.

And like carbohydrates, most dietitians recommend whole grains to up the fiber quota, which I find so amusing. A slice of whole wheat bread contains (on average) 2 grams of fiber and 128 calories while a cup of raspberries contains 8 grams and only 64 calories.

So which is the fiber filled food? ☺

Water

Water is the free nutrient we don't talk about enough.

Our bodies are made of 70% water and each cell of our body and the majority of our blood, all contain water.

Without enough water, digestion would be painful and weak. Skin would be dull, kidney stones and bad breath more prevalent, headaches would abound and immune systems would be compromised.

We need to drink half our body weight in water everyday to keep everything running at an optimal rate—in ounces! So if you weigh 150 pounds, you drink 75 ounces of water. ☺

Water is absolutely critical for good nutrition. It's nature's free nutrient—drink up!

Getting Educated

So...now that you know your nutrients and what they do in your body, it's time to figure out how to find nutrition information you can trust.

Chances are good, at some point you'll read about some nutritional tidbit in an article and wonder if what the author is claiming is true or not.

Here are 5 things you need to do to verify claims:

- 1) Does the article in question cite the research?
- 2) Does the article in question give you a link to check it out for yourself?
- 3) If no to #2, can you google the cited research and find the study?
- 4) Is the study from a credible, respected source?
- 5) Who funded the research?

Now #5 is going to be the hardest part. However it's not impossible.

Most respected researchers thank the funder of their study. You can find that information at the end of the research paper in a short funding statement.

This is not all publications, but a lot of them.

I've also found the mystery funder of a research paper by googling "who funded the XYZ study". Sometimes the funder will pop up that way, but not always.

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The bottom line? If you see something that is too good to be true or feels wrong, listen to your gut and continue to do your research. Don't take any claims at face value without the backing up of honest to God, non-biased research.

Remember, research can be manipulated to say what the author of an article wants it to say—that's why reading the research paper that the article is based on is so important.

Know Thyself

All of this is helpful, but none of it is useful unless you're in touch with what's going on inside you.

I've heard from so many of you, asking how to get a grip on not slipping up so much. Asking me how to stop doing the very things you know you shouldn't be doing and yet, do anyway.

Remember that quote from the beginning?

"If all we needed was more information, then everyone would be a billionaire with perfect abs."

One thing I've learned on my own journey (and I've witnessed it in others who have been successful breaking bad habits, losing weight or overcoming something they wanted to overcome) is that it's the little things that matter the most.

Small things add up. Drinking that extra glass of water, saying no this time to dessert, getting up from the table instead of having an extra serving, parking further away from the store and adding some extra steps to your day.

These are all just little tiny things that we all brush off. Right?

It's true! We think, "yeah, yeah...whatever. Tell me something I don't know."

But do you do it? Do you consciously add little things in every day to make a difference?

If you put a glass under a dripping faucet, that glass is going to be full. It's those little drops. They add up.

GURU NUTRITION EXERCISE:

Stop right now and make a list of 10 little things you can do right now to bump up your nutrition and/or add some control to your eating.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Easy right? You may even have more! Start here though, with those 10. Once you master them, go ahead and add a few more. Tuck these little behaviors into your daily routine—they not only will help build momentum for doing the right thing, but they'll also help as you tackle the next thing—hunger.

So Let's Talk About Hunger

I remember growing up I was told to clean my plate because there were starving children in Africa.

I know a lot of us grew up that way—it was the way childrearing was done in those days.

We know today, that forcing someone to eat when they're not hungry can set him or her up for an eating disorder. Not always—obviously or we'd all be in trouble, but sometimes.

In any case, forcing someone to finish everything on their plate can be problematic because hunger perception is distorted.

Food becomes associated with guilt, not being good enough and needing to obey that impulse to clean up your plate—even at 50 years old! Why? Because that is how we were trained.

I still fight this. I have to tell myself I don't need to clean my plate. STILL.

So to stop this behavior, we need to get behind it, understand what's underneath it all and switch gears. Big Time.

GURU HUNGER EXERCISE #1:

Are you a plate cleaner? Why? Tell your story why you feel compelled to clean your plate.

Write it all out—when serving the food on your plate, do you have a discussion in your head on how much you're going to put on your plate?

Do you feel compelled to fill the plate?

Do you finish everything on your plate to the point of being stuffed, just because it's there?

What would happen if you didn't finish all the food?

Share this with our Facebook group!

Like I said earlier, distortion is the name of the game when it comes to hunger. Most of us don't remember the last time we truly felt hunger.

Most of us eat on cue instead of eating because we have actual hunger pains.

We eat to satisfy other needs rather than to fill a void in our tummies.

We eat out of boredom, frustration or cravings—all of which have nothing to do with the physical sensation and reality of being hungry.

This all needs to be addressed in the context of feeding one's body. In other words, getting the much-needed nutrition into your body has to be the first priority—that's why learning about nutrients and how they serve you is so important.

That's why understanding the science of nutrition is ever-evolving and you have to do real research if you hope to not get sucked into a fad diet.

That's why digging in and digging deep is imperative to becoming your own nutritional guru.

So back to hunger—are you really hungry or is it something else?

GURU HUNGER EXERCISE #2:

This next exercise may be tough, but it's important!

You need to find hunger. Real hunger, belly hunger, not head hunger.

Here's what you need to do: Get up in the morning and have breakfast as per usual. Then wait to eat lunch till you're hungry. Don't let the clock monitor your hunger, let your belly tell you!

DISCLAIMER: If you have any medical conditions that may preclude you from doing this exercise, don't do it! And, as with any diet or program, please check with your healthcare practitioner before embarking on this exercise.

You're going to find that "finding your hunger" may take longer than you thought! Write this all out—it's critical! Talk about the temptation to eat even though you hadn't found your hunger yet. Talk about the emotions that are attached to this—fearful? Sad? Worried?

Write. It. OUT!!

This is how you get in touch with what it is that's "eating" you. Connect THOSE dots and erase the things that no longer serve you.

How?

Writing it out, talking it out with your accountability buddy (what? You don't have one? Go to our Facebook group right now and get one, stat!) and staying with it.

Remember, it takes time.

It takes practice.

And it takes willingness to be vulnerable.

Stay the course! If it's really tough because of abuse or other such trauma, you may want to consider professional counseling.

There are some simple things you can do as you're sorting all of this hunger stuff out in your journal and with your accountability partner (you have one, right?)

Easy stuff, like putting your fork down between bites. Taking the time to chew thoroughly. Breathing and thinking about what you're doing. Being present at your meal and not being distracted with TV or rushing to get the meal over with. Take this time for some gratitude that you don't have to finish everything and you can save whatever you want to save for another time.

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Here's the thing: You have to attack hunger—both the real kind and head-trip kind. There are emotional attachments to both types of hunger. Before you can come to terms with either one, you need to process the information.

GURU HUNGER EXERCISE #3:

Now is the time to head to your journal and let it all out. Keep writing until you can write anymore.

NAME the emotions that come up with real hunger (and make sure you know what real hunger is!).

NAME the emotions that come up with head-trip hunger.

Confide in someone about this, ask for accountability and be willing to drop everything to do the same with your accountability partner (within limits of course!!). ☺

You are not going to become your own nutritional guru overnight—you need to discover, uncover and process. Then do it again; shampoo, rinse and repeat.

Like building muscles, these exercises need to be repeated. A LOT. You are creating new pathways in the brain, developing a new understanding of food, your relationship with it and how you choose it.

It is then that you are able to become your own nutritional guru.

You will choose your food well.

You won't be anxious about your next meal.

You'll stop obsessing about food.

You'll stop buying food you shouldn't be eating.

You'll stop hiding food or eating in the car.

You'll stop thinking, "it won't hurt, just this once..."

You won't be perfect, but you'll make informed decisions and make up for slips the next day.

You will be able to plan according to what YOU need, not what everyone else needs.

You will have a sense of KNOWING...and that knowing will become the guiding light and the way you approach food.

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Becoming your own nutritional guru is huge—it means you've moved on from food obsessed to food blessed.

And that is what this is all about!



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