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EAT CLEAN FOOD

We all eat. Unfortunately, the American diet has evolved to eating something we describe as S-A-D. The “Standard American Diet” is extremely sad. Good nutrition has been replaced by processed foods, fast foods, restaurant meals, and eating in the car.

The art of preparing a meal at home is largely lost among the younger generation, many of whom think that food comes already prepared in a takeout container. These types of meals are detrimental in so many ways. We need to “clean up our food” to eliminate as many chemicals, sugars, and bad fats as possible.

First, the meat (which is usually the foundation of these types of meals) is of larger quantity than most experts recommend. If choosing to consume meat, the recommended portion size is generally not more than three or four ounces per meal. If your serving is bigger than a deck of cards, take some off the plate and save it for a later meal.

The type of meat and how it was sourced are critically important. Most beef and pork are raised in what many see as horrific conditions in commercial CAFO facilities. These feedlots are called “concentrated animal feeding operations” in which the animals are confined, crowded, stressed, and sometimes up to their knees in their own waste. Many believe that this is a terrible way for an animal to live and is reflected in the nutritional content of the meat.

What you can do: When you are traveling, stop for lunch at roadside farmers markets or grocery stores instead of at a fast-food restaurant. If you choose animal protein, pick grass-fed, free-range, free of antibiotics and hormones, and wild-caught wherever possible. Consider going vegetarian one day per week. The negative environmental impact of beef and pork is much greater than that of chicken or eggs.

Next, we look at produce. Most produce is grown in commercial farms where the goal is not to provide nutrient density. Rather, the goal is to provide the farmer with the highest profit margin. This means that the food is grown to be pretty and to survive shipping, to garner the highest price. This means it is often picked under-ripe, having not yet achieved its optimal nutritional state. It later turns color on the way to its destination. Sometimes that color change is achieved

by spraying the produce with acetylene gas in a process called “induced ripening” to enhance the coloration. Sadly, this does nothing to enhance nutrient density.

The result of this modern produce farming is that, on average, the produce of today contains 30 to 60% of the same nutrition that our grandparents got from the same produce item. This means you might need to eat 2-3 (or more) of the same vegetable to get the nutrition that Grandma got in one serving!

Furthermore, many modern farmers must heavily spray their crops in order to get high yields. This means using pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and other chemicals to enhance plant growth and inhibit the insects and fungi that might damage their crops.

Unfortunately, these chemicals become an integral part of the food and cannot be washed off before we consume them, so we then ingest these chemicals. It is critical to our health to avoid the additives where possible, and the best way to do that is to choose organic produce in as much as your pocketbook can afford. Unfortunately, some of these chemicals are in our water supply and even in rainwater, so NO CROP in the world today is 100% free of chemicals but eating truly organic produce drastically reduces your exposure to these hormones and immune disrupting chemicals. The rules for organic farming are not as solid as we would like to see, so many things labeled “organic” are not truly organic. We will keep fighting for label transparency.

Solutions: If you can, buy local. Avoid produce grown in other countries and shipped at great expense to our environment to get to your grocery store. Shop farmer’s markets—and learn how to GROW your own.



DRINK CLEAN WATER

We have come to expect that our local municipalities and their water treatment facilities will provide us with clean water that will not make us sick. This is true to a certain extent. Certainly, third-world countries must worry about chemical run-off, pathogens, bacteria, viruses, fungi, and amoebas that contaminate their water and can make them sick. Our municipalities, thankfully, remove the microbial dangers from our water supply, making it absolutely safer than raw, untreated water. However, our municipalities' water filtration capacity simply cannot completely move all the industrial chemicals which are now found in water.

Americans consume more prescription drugs than any other country in the world. All those drugs are processed, metabolized, and eliminated through our urine and stool and end up in the sewer. Wastewater is then processed through the municipal water supply. As hard as they try to remove it, a fraction of these chemicals still remains in our tap water supply. Then, they dump fluoride into the water which was purchased as waste from other chemical companies. Fluoride is great for topical use in teeth, but the evidence that it helps when ingested orally is quite weak. This comes as a surprise to most people. Note that your liver and kidneys must trap and detoxify any of these remaining chemicals, and like a trash can that overflows when too much trash is put in it, our liver and kidneys can become overburdened. This toxicity is seen in an epidemic of GI cancers, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and chronic kidney disease.



What you can do: Filter your water before you drink or cook with it, as this is a fundamental strategy of great importance. Reverse osmosis water is the “cleanest” but also lacks minerals. ANY filter is better than no filter.

EXERCISE MOST DAYS OF THE WEEK

Exercise is a dirty word to much of our population. Replace the word “exercise,” with “movement and play” because any activity that gets your heart rate up into the target zone and sustains it there for 30 minutes is considered exercise. Therefore, do what you like! If you like to walk or hike or play basketball or dance, do those things. They qualify as exercise.



If you like to wash your car vigorously or vacuum your living room, as long as you can do it for 30 minutes and sustain your heart rate, it provides all the benefits of exercise that you would get from 30 minutes hardcore in the gym.

We also believe that you should change it up! Include three types of exercise in your weekly regimen. First, cardiovascular fitness is important. Second, weight training and stretching those muscles is important. Slow gentle bodyweight movements, as provided in yoga, Tai chi, qi gong, and stretching, are critically important to keep your muscles strong, supple, and healthy.

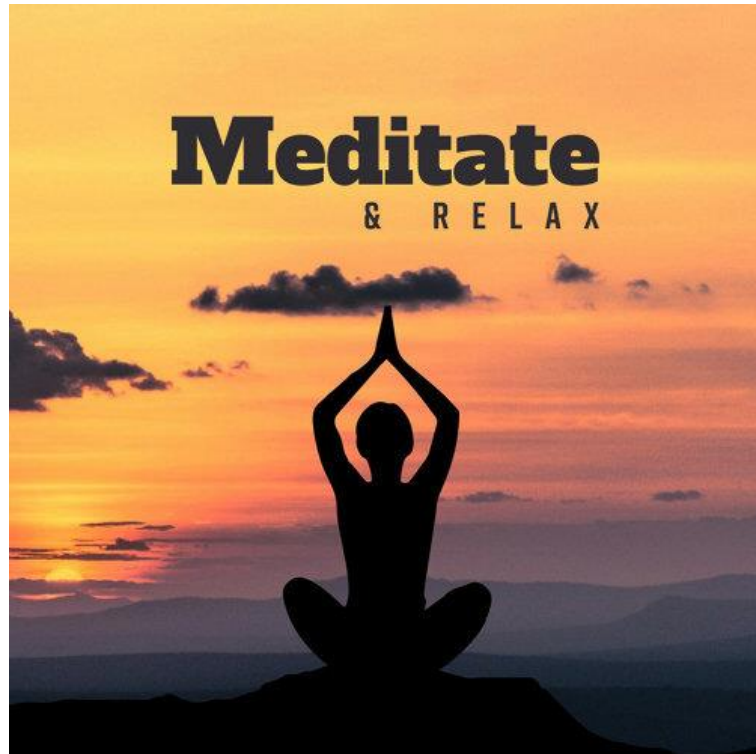
Finally, balance is of critical importance in every exercise regimen, especially as people age. A little-known fact is that that part of your brain which regulates balance also regulates memory and higher-order executive functioning. Therefore, as goes your balance...so goes your memory.

More importantly, as you rehabilitate your balance, you can rehabilitate and improve your memory! This is so important for seniors and is part of the reason why doctors commonly prescribe Tai chi and yoga for seniors because, besides stretching, it also provides balance training, which is also memory training.

PRAY & MEDITATE, SHOW GRATITUDE, & JOURNAL

We know that our brains are both transmitters and receivers. If you transmit an attitude of love and grace and gratitude, then the universe will provide those things back to you. If, however, you live in a brain that is anxious, irritable, cranky, and depressed, then these are the things that your brain will attract from others. By surrounding yourself with like-minded people who value peace, joy, and gratitude, you will achieve a higher level of peace, joy, and gratitude in your own life.

I believe that it is important that you write the things down that bring you joy and that you are grateful for because writing them makes them real. A gratitude journal is a fabulous way to remind yourself of the amazing things that you can be profoundly grateful for. If you recognize that having a roof over your head with running water and a toilet, food for today, food for tomorrow, and money you have not spent, puts you in the top 10% of the entire world, you have something to celebrate and be grateful for.



Meditation is one of the most powerful strategies for wellness that we have. Learning how to meditate is a lot like learning to train a puppy. It doesn't happen overnight. It takes a long time, and some people never become proficient at it, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try!

There are now thousands of apps and YouTube videos and recorded scripts of other people doing guided meditation. I believe all of us should spend at least five minutes, once or twice a day (and in many cases much more than this) in a state of meditation. It will reboot your nervous system

and make it easier for you to receive the blessings that the world wants to provide to you. We have seen patients cure auto-immune disease, depression, and panic attacks JUST by becoming expert meditators.

(If you are struggling with unresolved anxiety and depression, you may have a nutrient or neurotransmitter imbalance that a functional medicine practitioner can help you to identify, resolve or regulate.)

Breathwork is another important part of meditation. Learning to control your breathing has been shown scientifically to lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, improve attitude, improve memory, and brighten your mood. And it is free! One of the world's most well know holistic doctors, Dr. Andrew Weil, was asked once if he could describe his most important wellness strategy. He simply said, "Learning to breathe."

SPEND TIME IN NATURE

The Japanese have a word for spending time in nature called ‘shinrin-yoku’, which translates to “forest bathing”. The benefits of spending time outdoors are innumerable. Much scientific research tells us that spending time in nature, observing the trees and plants and sky, smelling the cleaner air, and touching the ground connects us with our origins.

The electro-static of living in a world of Wi-Fi and 5G and fluorescent lights really sends our electrical systems into a tailspin, and time in nature helps release that static and grounds us in many ways. I commonly prescribe hugging a tree, literally and figuratively, to my patients as part of a wellness strategy.



JOIN YOUR COMMUNITY

We have now learned from scientific evidence that loneliness is more dangerous to your health than is smoking! We know that time in a community with people whom you care about and who support each other is one of the most valuable health strategies.



The Blue Zones are places in the country where people routinely live to be older than 100. When we ask them what makes their lives so joyful, productive, and long, the number one answer is a sense of community. A Blue Zones project here in the United States has tried to recreate the strategies and teach patients ways to modify their life, to promote longevity.

The Blue Zone project creates groups of 12 people who are mandated to eat at least one meal per week together every single week for one year. It turns out that this strategy is so powerful that most people will continue this community gathering years and years after the project is completed. We know how important our friends and neighbors are to us, and the scientific evidence proves it.

EMPHASIZE DETOXIFICATION

This is something new for the 21st century. Our grandparents, and even our parents to a great degree, did not need to spend much time in detoxification because our world was not nearly as toxic in their day. The number of chemicals dumped into our environment is earth-shattering and choking, literally.

Most foreign chemicals are electrically charged in such a way that our body has learned that the best way to handle them is to hide them away from the bloodstream by depositing them in our fat. The more fat we carry, the more likely we are to be burdened with environmental toxicity. Furthermore, we know that many chronic diseases can be traced specifically to how many toxins are buried in the person's fat stores. Obesity does not guarantee diabetes. The toxins stored by the body are one of the worst metabolic triggers for the hormonal dysregulation that results in diabetes. Those with the highest body burden of environmental toxicants have the highest likelihood to become diabetic. This is just one example of hundreds of illnesses triggered by our environment.

We need to spend time daily on detoxification strategies to undo what our world is doing to us. These are pretty simple but need to be practiced EVERY DAY. They involve sweating, urinating, and pooping. We must poop every single day. I cannot underestimate the importance of this. If anyone has told you that pooping once a week is normal, they are wrong!



We must find the metabolic blocks or nutritional deficiencies which are preventing your bowels from working properly, from making bile to dissolve fat and eliminating it through your gastrointestinal tract. Toxins build up if you do not excrete them every day.

Another strategy for detoxification is utilizing your lymphatic system to drain the toxins. This means bouncing, such as jumping rope on a rebounder or getting a certified lymphatic massage on a regular basis.

There are other detox strategies, but this is a good start.

SLEEP

The value of sleep as a critical part of health and well-being cannot be under-estimated. Sleep is at least as essential to wellness as a healthy diet and regular exercise. Scientific research shows that deep, restorative sleep every night helps protect your physical and mental health and improves your quality of life. If you need help adopting a regular sleep/wake cycle, find a sleep educated dentist, physician, or certified health coach to help you. Meanwhile, avoid alcohol, big meals, and smoking at least 4 hours before bedtime. Exercise regularly, but finish at least four hours before bed, or it can interfere with the ability to fall asleep. Be careful not to nap during the day for too long or nap too late. Avoid looking at light from your TV, cell phone, or computer screen for 2 hours before bedtime, because the pineal gland in your brain can't tell the difference between artificial light and sunlight. It thinks any bright light means "It's time to wake up!"



KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Patients empowered with the why and how of their care plan are more empowered to make long-lasting and meaningful improvements in their therapeutic lifestyles. At a minimum, all adult patients should track their numbers and their targets for the following health indicators: Body Mass Index, Blood Pressure, Blood Cholesterol (including HDL, LDL, triglycerides, LDL particle size or numbers, and oxidized LDL,) Vitamin D, High-Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (hs-CRP), gum pocket depths (from the dentist), Fasting Blood Sugar, and Hemoglobin A1C (even if not diabetic.)



SEE YOUR DENTIST

Our understanding of the role that oral health plays in affecting the health of the rest of the body is expanding every day. We are learning so much about how our microbiome (friendly bacteria, viruses, and yeasts) controls our metabolism and regulates the immune system. The gut **BEGINS** in the mouth. Without a healthy gut, you cannot have a healthy mouth and **VICE VERSA**. We have learned that dental cavities are contagious, that periodontal disease can be cured, and that sleep habits are profoundly affected by the shape of the mouth and teeth. We know that the practice of pulling teeth for orthodonture stunted the growth of the jaw, leaving it too small for the tongue to fit without crowding the airway. Sophisticated CT scans can help determine if someone's airway is too small. Imbalanced oral bacteria can result in **MANY** illnesses including hardening of the arteries, heart attacks (yes, you read that right,) strokes, cancer, and even pregnancy loss. No fundamental wellness program is complete without a dentist and hygienist on the team.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Ellie Walaitis Campbell, DO

Dr. Ellie Walaitis Campbell is a native Chicagoan with a BS and MS from the University of Illinois, a DO degree from the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, and a Family Medicine residency from the Medical College of Georgia. Board-certified in Family Medicine for over 30 years, she also holds certification from the American Board of Integrative Medicine.



Before going into solo practice, Dr. Campbell practiced indigent healthcare in a Community Health Center, but since 2005 has championed a concierge-style integrative, holistic, functional medicine-based family practice.

Dr. Campbell has specialty interests—and lectures internationally on—innovative medical practice design and management, community partnerships, Functional Medicine, Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy, cardiovascular disease prevention, the oral-systemic connection, solutions to physician burnout, and Vitamin D.

She began hosting interdisciplinary meet-up groups in 2010 via her “Consortium of Integrative Care Practitioners of Atlanta.” In 2017, she launched “Revolution Practice,” a concierge medicine teaching platform whereby practitioners are taught the business of how to run a successful membership-style functional medicine practice like hers.

In her spare time, Dr. Campbell enjoys live theater, gardening, healthy cooking, hiking, travel, and playtime with her husband and three college-age daughters. Learn more about her and her practice at www.campbellfamilymedicine.com or www.RevolutionPractice.com.

RESOURCES:

We have staff at Campbell Family Medicine who are trained to assist you in all these areas. Go to our website at www.campbellfamilymedicine.com to learn more about becoming a patient so that you can achieve your optimal wellness.