**People Should Eat Healthier**

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We are on this planet for only a small blip of time. Why not make the most of it? Why not try to live the best life we possibly can while we are here? There are three ways we can improve our overall quality of life and that is to work on physical health, mental health, and dietary health. If one manages to improve on these three categories, they can really get a foothold on life itself and strive for improving on other areas of their lives.

Eating healthy is the easiest of the three. One solution is to stop eating out too much. According to The Barbecue Lab, the average American individually spends around $1,200 on annually on fast food alone. Each American household spends around 10% of their annual income on fast food alone. This is money that can be used for other things such as fruits, vegetables, ingredients, etc.

If money is tight and fast food is one of the only options, people can order a healthy item off of the menu. Plenty of fast food restaurants have items such as salads, fruit salads, grilled chicken, pastas, etc. That way, diners will not have to feel any guilt for the money they have spent. The more time families spend cooking homemade food and only buying healthy food items, not only will they save a lot of money, but they will feel like they will have gotten their money’s worth if they do spend money. Eating healthy also encourages other people in a social circle.

When people close to someone see that they are trying to improve their quality of life, two things may happen. Either they will feel encouraged because of them, or they will become jealous of them. If they feel encouraged from them, they may want to make a change to their habits as well. They can take notes off them and you can give them advice. This creates a healthy cycle and spreads positivity to other people.

A good diet improves overall quality of life because it prevents diseases, organ issues, and sicknesses. One’s immune system gets stronger for fighting off diseases. A good diet helps people get a foothold on the other areas such as physical and mental health because a good diet, while very minimal, still benefits both areas. However, a good diet is not enough to become the best person one can be. There are two other areas that you can improve on.

The majority of people in North America are out of shape. Our streets our flooded with fast food restaurants, and places to dine in. Our grocery stores are filled with sugary foods, salty foods, processed meat, etc. We do not even need to go out and buy things anymore. We can pay someone do get our food and groceries for us. There is so much entertainment and media out now that distract people from their goals. On top of this, obesity rates are very high.

With all of these obstacles in place, it is easy to stay complacent. However, sitting around and doing nothing for days has a bad effect on a person’s health, whether they eat good or not. One still needs to burn off fat. Getting a gym membership can do wonders for a person’s physical health. People can feel very intimidated walking into a gym for the first time, but they will feel good once they finish their workout.

One interesting phenomenon that is taking place is obesity rates seem to correlate with the level of education a person has. Obesity rates generally decline depending on how far people advance through education. According to the Center of Disease Control (2022), “Adults without a high school degree or equivalent had the highest self-reported obesity (38.8%), followed by adults with some college (34.1%) or high school graduates (34.0%), and then by college graduates (25.0%).” Although college does not always equate to a better quality of life, college does seem to have some sort of effect on people’s eating habits and mentality. However, there are always other alternatives for a healthier lifestyle.

One cannot argue that people with physical disabilities cannot exercise. Also, some people may not be able to afford gym memberships. While this may be true, there are other ways to exercise. As long as one is doing something besides sitting around all day, then that is fine. Lots of people become better versions of themselves without gym memberships. Gyms are just places that provide exercises that are more guided.

A gym member ship is not always needed to get exercise. Going on a walk or jog, working out in basement, riding bicycle, anything provide a good workout. There is yogam push-ups, sit-ups, lifting heavy water jugs, etc. People can use the world as their gym if they want to. Working out can become a new hobby for people. Many members of Gen Z have taken on working out, as fitness has gone viral on social media within the past few years.

One can argue that people do not need to discipline themselves to achieve peak physical health and that they should just do what makes them happy. However, it is not about being happy. It is about investing in themselves and prioritizing their health so they can live a life without physical issues and discomfort. One cannot be happy when suffering from multiple diseases and illnesses from bad habits.

Working out helps with discipline as well because working out teaches people to push themselves when they feel like giving up. One may feel discouraged after working out for weeks and seeing little to no results, but that is part of the process. When results come in, one will feel proud of the hard work that they put in and they will know that they did not give up. A good diet and a good workout is a great start. These two areas can also help with mental health as well.

America has been in a steaming mental health crisis for the past few years now. COVID has only made it a lot worse. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), “The impact of physical distancing, stay-at-home orders, job loss, isolation, and fear have resulted in a considerably greater number of people's experiencing symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder in the United States.” It is easy to let negative thoughts seep in during hard times. There are multiple ways to help with mental health.

Some of the most major forms of mental health issues are depression and anxiety. Depression and anxiety are extremely common and most people you interact with on a daily basis have encountered these issues at some point, due to traumatic experiences, overthinking, etc. One of the best forms of therapy for anxiety is called Exposure Therapy. Exposure therapy is basically putting yourself in uncomfortable situations until you get used to it. If you are an introvert and you are afraid of going to parties and dealing with crowds, then actually try to go to a party or social gathering occasionally. This will allow you to get used to this type of environment that you once saw as unsafe.

One can argue that some people cannot afford therapy due to insurance costs. While that may be true, there are different ways to receive therapy. There are support groups that are very cheap. The money that one may spend will most likely go to food, drinks, etc. Therapy groups can dramatically improve one’s mental health because they have a support system and they realize that they are not alone with whatever they are dealing with. They realize that everyone is going through something.

Exercise seems to help a lot with depression as well. Exercise takes your mind off of whatever you are depressed about. Researching the internet and finding videos and articles can help find healthy coping mechanisms to overcome emotional illnesses. Hobbies in general help emotional wellbeing. These are better alternatives if one cannot afford insurance.

Temptations are at an all-time high; Fast food restaurants on every corner; advertisements; etc. Even fitness heavy people have a cheat day where they eat unhealthy foods for a day. Not that it's a bad thing, but it's as if processed foods are just a rite of passage for every person. A lot of people are insecure and self-conscious about their bodies. A lot of people resort to medications, plastic surgeries, and strict diets to lose weight and change their bodies.

Everyone encounters struggles in life. Everyone can get stuck in a rut every once in a while. All that matters is how one handles these situations. Will they overcome their obstacles and rise above the ranks? Or will they sit and mellow with their misery and stay in the same spot?

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