**Day 19**

**Title: Balance Your Energy**

We’re all about balance here at Lume Wellness. Living a harmonious life starts by creating balance in different areas. Right now we’re focusing on food. Food can provide all kinds of enjoyment. Eating new foods can be exciting. And eating foods we’re familiar with can be comforting. But if you get down to basics, the reason we eat is because our bodies need energy. We measure this energy with a unit called the Calorie. A Calorie measures the amount of energy in food and the amount of energy that our bodies use.

[CALLOUT] Side note: When we talk about Calories (note the uppercase “C”) we’re using the common way of speaking in the United States. Other parts of the world use the word kilocalorie. This Calorie is equal to a kilocalorie. [/CALLOUT]

Our bodies need a certain amount of energy each day just to carry out our basic functions, like breathing and keeping our heart beating. This amount is called the Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR), and is different for each person, since it depends on age, sex, height, and weight. But most of us do more than rest all day long. Once we start moving around, we burn more Calories. This means we need more Calories than our BMR, so we modify the BMR by how much activity we get. The more active we are, the more Calories we need to maintain our current weight. Calculate your BMR here: [X]

**Tipping the scale**

If you eat the same number of Calories each day as you burn, you will most likely stay at the same weight. This is where the concept of energy balance comes in. If you want to change your weight, you’ll need to change the energy balance. But how far do you tip the scales? If you’re trying to lose weight, you need to eat fewer Calories than you do now. But how many fewer? Or, if you’re trying to gain weight, you need to eat more Calories than you do now. But how much is the right amount?

Start by looking at the number of pounds you want to lose or gain. A pound is roughly equal to 3,500 Calories. That means, in theory, to lose one pound, you’ll need to tip the scale by 3,500 Calories over a period of time. Or, to gain a pound, you’ll do the same, just in the opposite direction. We say “in theory,” because quality of Calories counts, too. Don’t forget to stick with the balanced diet fundamentals, and keep reaching for healthy foods.

Also notice we said a “period of time” here. Drastic changes to your diet aren’t healthy and most likely lead to failure. Instead, divide those Calories across several days or a week. If you eat 500 fewer Calories each day than you burn, over 1 week, you’ll lose 1 pound. If you eat 500 more Calories each day than you burn, over one week, you’ll gain 1 pound.

**Make your Calories count**

If you’re working toward losing weight, you don’t have a lot of Calories to spare. Make sure each Calorie brings along the nutrients that your body needs. Don’t waste Calories on things that fill you up for a minute, but leave you hungry later. Sugar-laden and overly processed foods fit into this category.

Also watch your fats. Gram for gram, fat has more Calories than protein or carbohydrates. See for yourself:

* 1 gram of fat: 9 Calories
* 1 gram of protein: 4 Calories
* 1 gram of carbohydrates: 4 Calories

Don’t forget to watch your liquid Calories, too. One gram of alcohol has 7 Calories. A glass of wine or a beer can easily add 120-150 Calories. While it may be enjoyable, that drink brings Calories and no nutritional value. Juices, sweet teas, and other sugary drinks are also full of Calories, so watch out for those, as well.

**Remember your balanced plate**

When trying to lose weight, remember that vegetables are low in Calories, so fill up half your plate with them. Protein provides long-lasting energy, so fill up one-fourth of your plate with a healthy, lean protein. Fill the remaining fourth of your plate with carbohydrates to provide energy and nutrients.

As you aim toward a specific Calorie goal, don’t worry if you don’t meet it on your first day. Or even the second. Also remember the theme of “balance.” Don’t try to go too high or too low. Remember your reason for making this lifelong change, and reward yourself as you get closer to your goals of a balanced diet and a target weight.

**Source:**

Ebbeling, C. B., Swain, J. F., Feldman, H. A., Wong, W. W., Hachey, D. L., Garcia-Lago, E., & Ludwig, D. S. (2012). Effects of dietary composition on energy expenditure during weight-loss maintenance. JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, 307(24), 2627–2634. <http://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2012.6607>