



# *A Healthy Start*

Ideas to Inspire Your Journey Forward

trading  
POUNDS



# New Mindset, Better Approach

**C**ongratulations on taking the first step towards a healthier, happier you. If you're anything like me, this probably isn't your first time around the weight loss rodeo. Before I found my success, I had tried everything from diet pills to frozen meals. They were all torture, and eventually, failures.

In 2010, I decided to try something radically different. I cleared out the junk and started eating more vegetables. I really focused my energies on making the best choices I could moment to moment. I had only one "rule" to follow: whatever I am craving, I will have and enjoy responsibly.

I didn't feel deprived or forbidden to eat the foods I loved. A far cry from the days of diets! Since I wasn't feeling punished, I was free to experience the process of slowly transitioning my old eating habits into new, stronger ones.

## Building a Stronger Relationship

My relationship with food was out of whack. I'd learned to use food as comfort when I was quite young, and I needed a new, better way of taking care of myself. Depriving and restricting is the quickest path to failure; it makes us dislike ourselves more than we may already. We feel hopeless and defeated when another diet fails us. But do we ever blame the diet? No! We blame ourselves.

My goal in creating the Trading Pounds Meal Plans is to help you build a new, loving relationship with food. I want to show you how to be kind to yourself by making eating well a priority and teach you how to build more nourishing food habits into your days.

Right now, I want you to pause for a moment to understand and accept the following truth: **Every bite you take every single day is your choice.**

You are the one in charge, even if sometimes it feels like the cookies are! We all have ups and downs in life. In conjunction with eating foods that nourish and heal your body, you will discover that there are many hidden layers within you that will trigger your need to find comfort from food. Pay attention! These are important clues to your lasting weight loss success.



# Where Do We Go From Here?

Lastly, I want to encourage you to move forward on this journey in stages. Please do not try to go from all to nothing overnight. It will be a shock to your system and is completely unsustainable. This is another factor that works against us when we try yet another new diet.

You don't have to rush. Each day that you can be proud of your choices (*even when you have that cookie after dinner*) is a victory. In the following sections, we'll discuss specific ideas to help you make the changes you want in life and find the success you are so desperately seeking. For now, please know that no one expects you to be perfect so you shouldn't expect it of yourself. After all, you are simply human . . . just like the rest of us.



# A New Foundation for Healthy Eating

The meal plans you'll be receiving each week are designed to teach you about making more nourishing choices for your body. You know an apple is "healthier" than a donut, but why does it seem to be so difficult to put eating one into practice?

My belief is that all the conflicting opinions, arguments and studies about what "healthy" means leaves us feeling like there is some perfect standard that must be achieved in order to feel like we are doing a "good enough" job. With that bar set to such impossible standards, why even bother? This is especially true if, like me, you already suffer from low self-worth. It's setting yourself up to feel even worse when you don't live up to the expectation around you.

I had to learn about making better—not perfect—choices on my journey to a healthier lifestyle. I threw out all the diets and rules in order to free my mind to be focused on what my body needed. To this day, people will attempt to push popular opinion on me, going on and on about what they "know" to be true in weight loss. The funny thing is, while I am losing, they are still wondering why it is such a struggle for them.



## Why It's Not as Easy as We Think It Should Be

If you just needed to know what to eat, this would be easy for everyone. The struggle comes in learning to live with food again, to not use it as reward and punishment based on your current emotional state. That's the hard part. It's going to take time, attention and practice to learn what needs to be done.

We are all different, but we share a common goal—losing the weight and gaining our life back. Here's how we are going to work together to accomplish this.

First, I need you to take 15 minutes and answer the following question. Be as thorough and complete as you can in your response. This will be your guiding beacon on the journey, the compass that keeps you headed in the right direction when all the “junk” starts coming into your mind.



## What does **HEALTHY** living mean to you?



To help you get started, here is what I wrote when I first began my journey.

Healthy living means choosing foods that are nourishing to my mind, body and soul. It means being true to who I am and what I need in every moment of the day. It means chasing my dreams, despite the fear, negativity or opinions of others. It means being kind to myself: resting when I am tired, eating when I am hungry, and asking for what I need. It means saying no when I mean it, and yes only when I want to. It means enjoying every minute of every day in every possible way.

In my definition of healthy living you will not find a single mention of counting calories, restricting foods or reaching a specific number on the scale. Our bodies are in control of how they use the food we eat and what our weight will be. If you've struggled with weight for some, there are other biological factors I can't even begin to understand or explain playing into what happens internally as you lose. I can only share with you what I've personally experienced, and I've learned enough over these past few years to know it will be different for you.

We're throwing out the "rules" and the diets. We're going to focus on the heart of this journey and where your success will be found: improving your relationship with food. The Trading Pounds meal plans focus on the **five key areas for keeping your body nourished**. They are:



## Minimizing Grains and Starches

These are "fast sugars" that give your body an instant boost of energy. Unfortunately, they also turn into stored fat quicker than you can count to one. The meal plans are designed to allow you to continue to enjoy bread and potatoes, but in a way that complements your overall food choices so that these carbohydrates are used up and never stored as fat.

## Increasing Vegetables

These are the nutrients of life. They are low in calories, take longer to digest, and keep your appetite satisfied. It's a win on all fronts.

Before you say that you don't like vegetables, I encourage you to try them when they are well-seasoned and prepared correctly (meaning not mushy!). If you still don't like them, you don't have to eat them. Just substitute something you do like in place of that which you don't. I can also tell you that as you transition your eating habits, your tastes will change as the over-sugared greasy junk foods leave your life. So be willing and open to trying things you may not have thought of before.

## Focusing on Protein

Protein is what's going to help us keep you satisfied and force your body to use its fat reserves for quick energy.

It takes your body time to break down protein and turn it into energy. In the meantime, it is fully satisfied and using up that stored fat for instant energy as you move about your day.

## Staying Smart about Sweets

As I've said many times before, sweets aren't the issue. Using them and other foods for emotional comfort is. There is nothing off limits about how you'll eat moving forward, but I do encourage you to be far more mindful of how often, with what and how much you indulge your sweet cravings. Here are a few simple recommendations that have helped me along the way:

- ✿ Eat the real, good stuff. Check the ingredients list, splurge on the best of the best.
- ✿ Enjoy every bite. Take your time eating it, really savoring the flavor of every last bite.
- ✿ Be mindful of servings. Don't overdo it because sweets have lots of calories.
- ✿ Try to slowly wean yourself off having something sweet every day. Depending on how much you indulge now, make smart choices accordingly. In the beginning of my journey, I had a small treat every evening after dinner. As time passed, it became more of a rare occasion.
- ✿ Don't keep it in the house. Until you get that relationship with food more in balance, it's best to bring treats home in single-portion sizes or go out and get them only when you want them. Bringing home a whole cake and thinking you'll have one small piece each night is setting yourself up for over-indulgence.
- ✿ Pay attention to your body. As you eat less sugary foods, your blood sugar will start to recalibrate. Over time, you'll notice that you start to feel a "high" when eating sweet treats. It's best to stop here and save the rest for later or throw it out if you have it at home without temptation.
- ✿ If you aren't enjoying what you are eating, don't. Food is meant to be pleasurable for you and your body. If you don't like the taste, or if it makes you feel bad, stop eating and toss it out.



## Hydrating Often

This last one is sort of a bonus that won't actually show up on your meal plans, but is every bit as important to nourishing your body. When trying to lose weight, drinking calories is a bad idea. Diet drinks are filled to the brim with artificial sweeteners and chemicals—also not nourishing to your body.

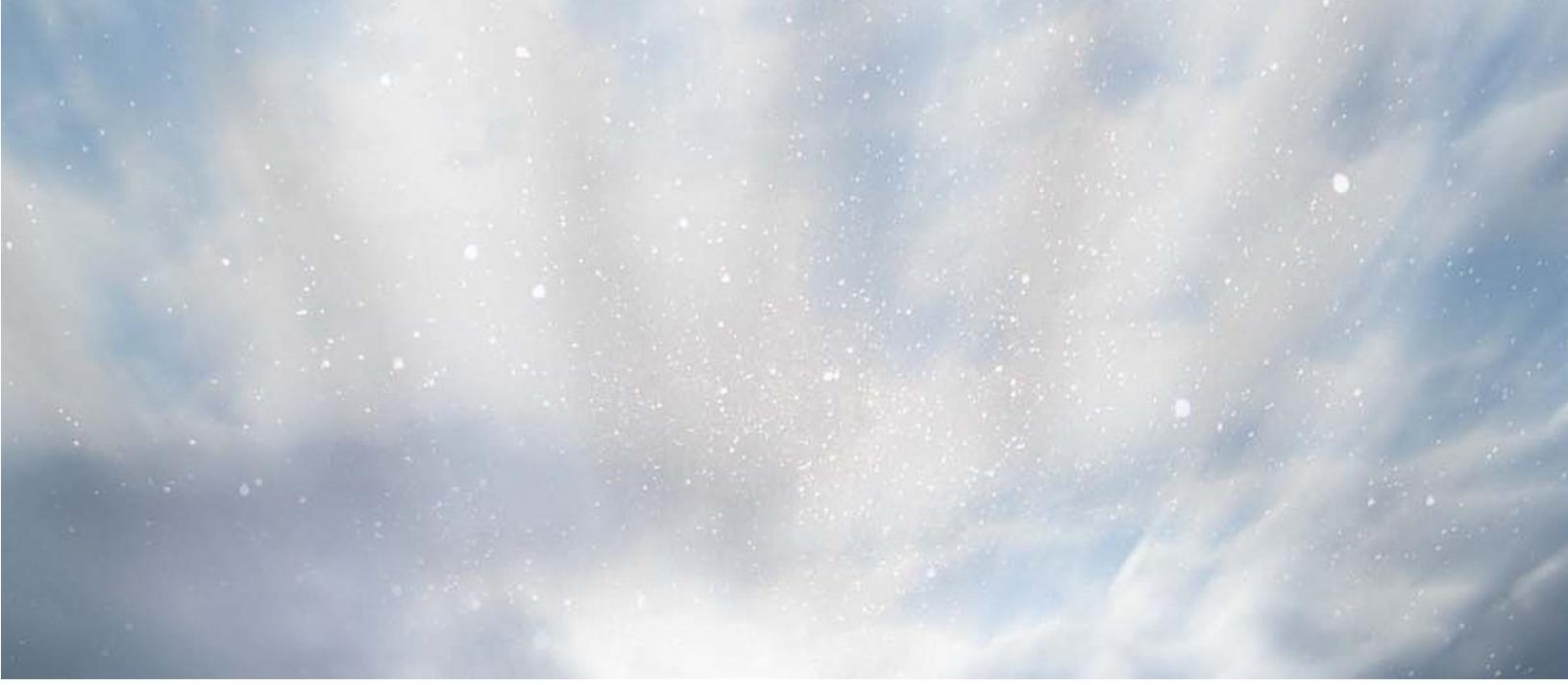
The best thing you can do for your body is give it lots and lots of water (*yes, you will go to the bathroom often in the beginning, but this settles itself after a while*). Here's the best way to understand why this is so important. Your body is made up of mostly water. It needs that water to survive and thrive. If you were lost in the desert, you would die from dehydration far sooner than starvation.

Now, the body can hold onto its water supply, which is stagnant --- like a pond --- filling up with pollutants and becoming very murky. Or that supply can be replenished often, pushing out the old and taking all the pollutants with it, like a stream. Which one of those would you rather be?

*Every time I drink a glass of water, I think of it as an act of kindness I am showing to my body. I am flushing out all that old fat, just washing those pounds I don't want away.*

How much should you drink? Opinions vary, but I try to drink about twelve 8-oz glasses a day. The heavier you are, the more dehydrated your body actually is. So if you weigh more, drink more. Your body will thank you for it.





# Tools For Your Comfort

Dieting is deeply engrained in our culture. I'm not about to pretend that you can just throw all of those old concepts and rules out of your head. But I am here to give you some tools that might help you eat well and live in peace with them.

You'll notice the recipes that are part of this meal plan call for whole-fat dairy and other foods as close to their natural state as possible. This is because nature already got it right. "Saving calories" by eating foods that cannot fully nourish your body isn't the way to create lasting weight loss. If it was, we'd all be thin.

If you have a medical need that requires you to monitor some aspect of your nutritional intake, you need to consult with your doctor about the right way to use these meal plans. That said here are some other "dieting" tools that you may feel the need to use.

## Keeping a Food Diary

Many health and nutrition “experts” recommend this as a way to regulate your food. I even used it in the beginning of my journey and offer a free download on Trading Pounds for others who want to utilize this tool for their overall health. The pros:

**It helps give you a fuller picture of what you are eating every day.** This means you are being more mindful of what you are eating and when. Some even ask that you log your mood when you ate, which helps you pinpoint the emotional component of your food choices.

**You can use it to see your progress.** You can look back and see how your choices have changed and evolved over time. This can give a real boost of confidence as you move forward on the journey.

The cons: **It's not sustainable.** The diary is a temporary tool for information gathering. You can't rely on it for the long-term because who wants to write down every single thing you eat every single day for the rest of your life? I sure don't. I've got far better things to do with my time

**You can lie.** You can just not write it down, even though you ate it. This defeats the purpose entirely.

**It can become a weapon**, one that you use to judge and punish yourself by. This can really take a toll on your confidence and self-worth, making it all the harder to stick with taking care of yourself.



## Tracking Your Calories

To lose weight, calories in have to be less than calories out. EVERYBODY pushes this mantra down your throat. “Oh, if you really want to lose weight, just eat less!” Like it’s that easy! I’ve learned in the past five years that it’s not the amount of calories that matters so much as the QUALITY of those calories.

A quick calorie calculator will show that a 5’6” 35-year-old woman with a sedentary lifestyle would need 2,750 calories per day to maintain her weight. If most of those calories came from carb-heavy

foods and sugar, which are likely being stored as fat when energy goes unused, she would likely be gaining weight year to year. If most of those calories came from vegetables, proteins and healthy fats, she would likely be losing weight year to year.

The point is that for this woman to go from consuming 2,750 calories worth of food per day to 1,200 calories, the shock to her system would be dramatic. She’d feel constant starvation. If those 1,200 calories were still coming from carb-heavy foods, she’d give up after a few days because she couldn’t take the torture anymore!

Calories matter, just not in the way we’ve been led to believe. These meal plans have been designed to focus on nourishing foods, which help you feel satisfied longer and are naturally lower in calories. Once your body is satisfied, and you are practicing eating mindfully, you will notice that you naturally begin to eat smaller portions because you feel full.

Paying attention to your body, and learning to recognize its cues, are vital to your long-term success. However, I recognize that some folks find it more helpful to monitor a number. I don’t believe that this is a sustainable behavior. Like I said before, who wants to track every single thing they eat every single day? This is why I personally practice (and share) a more sustainable approach. It is also the reason why you will not find calorie information listed on the meal plans you receive.

If you want to track your calories, there are many online tools to help you calculate the nutritional information for any recipe. [This one](#) comes highly recommended, though I do strongly suggest that you take the pressure off and just try enjoying your meals. I’m confident you’ll see results.



## Weighing Yourself

This is the tough part. We want that number to go down more than anything else in the world! However, it can also become our mental undoing when we think it should go faster, isn't down enough, or goes back up.



There are so many components that can contribute to what the scale reads, making it one of the LEAST accurate measurements of your forward progress. Just a few things that can alter it are gained muscle mass (***muscle weighs more than fat***), water retention (***salty foods and “that” time of the month are big contributors***), and even how much food is in your intestines still being processed (***everything moves at its own speed***).

I get it. Sometimes you just want the exhilaration from seeing that number go down. IF you feel the need to weigh yourself, **please follow these guidelines** in order to protect your sanity and your self-worth.

- ❖ Once a month at most.
- ❖ Same time, same day, same outfit (***naked is the most accurate***).
- ❖ Use the restroom before you weigh.
- ❖ First thing in the morning before you consume anything.

**I highly recommend using alternate forms of progress measurement.** You can either go by how your clothes are fitting (***a prime indicator of loss and gain***) or by taking body measurements once per month. Both of these are far more accurate measurements of your progress than the number on the scale.

**This process doesn't have to be so difficult or complicated.** I know that there are many folks pushing their ideas and tell you that their way is the only way. I'm here to tell you that there are many ways to lose weight; they just may not be the right way for you. Only you can know what works and what doesn't for your body. Make it simple—hold on to what does work, let go of what doesn't. What I have learned, and what you will see in every real success story of lasting weight loss out there, is that it comes down to eating the nourishing foods your body needs and doing your best each day. Keep it simple and you'll find what you are seeking.



# Tools For Your Lasting Success

The true success of my journey has come from my willingness to think long-term—what can I reasonably do every day for the rest of my life?

- ✿ I know I can eat at least three times a day. I know that I can cook good meals for myself (*which also helps save me money from eating out*).
- ✿ I know that I can make responsible choices and select foods that are nourishing to my body.
- ✿ I know that I can accept my efforts as “good enough,” even if I’m only doing this 80% of the time.

As you move forward on your own journey, I recommend using this as your own measure of sustainability so that the new habits you are creating and practicing are ones you can rely on for many days to come. If they aren’t, accept that you’ll use them in the short-term and make a plan for leaving them behind.

## Give Yourself Your Best Chance

There is no race to the finish line (***that's death***). We are all so caught up in the hurried pace of life, but seriously, why such a rush? I want to enjoy and make the most of this one precious life that I have been given. I want to be free, run wild and have as much fun as I possibly can while I am here.

I rushed my way to 411 pounds. I was left exhausted and wanting. Today, I appreciate the stillness and peacefulness that I have created by pushing out what I don't want in my life and bringing in more of what I do want. I challenge you to really begin thinking about who you want to be, what you want to do, and what you want to have in this one precious life of yours. This is all that matters.

## Take Time for Meals

Nourishing your body is one of the greatest acts of self-love. It takes commitment, preparation and the willingness to make it a priority above all else at least three times a day. Cooking is a therapeutic exercise. It is a demonstration of care for your body. We've lost the art of nourishment somewhere along the way, and cooking is the simple act of reviving it. When you take the time to

prepare your food, the reward is a delicious, nourishing feast that serves your long-term health.

You've worked hard to create this meal. Sit down and enjoy it. Make it an event. I get that we are all subject to busy lives, and some days there is more time than others, but YOU are more important than any other item on your to-do list. Turn off the television, put away the cell phone and enjoy the fruits of your labor. Converse with your family, take time with each other and with this fabulous meal. Think about the example that you are setting for your children, teaching them the value of self-care above all else. This is how we give our best self to the world, by loving that self fully and completely.

Enjoy every bite of what you eat. It's both pleasure and nourishment that we are seeking when we eat. Stop putting bland, tasteless and greasy food into your mouth. Demand a higher caliber. You don't have to be a gourmet chef to create a delicious meal. You just need the right ingredients and instructions. Simple can be stunningly delicious. That's what the Trading Pounds meal plans deliver for you.

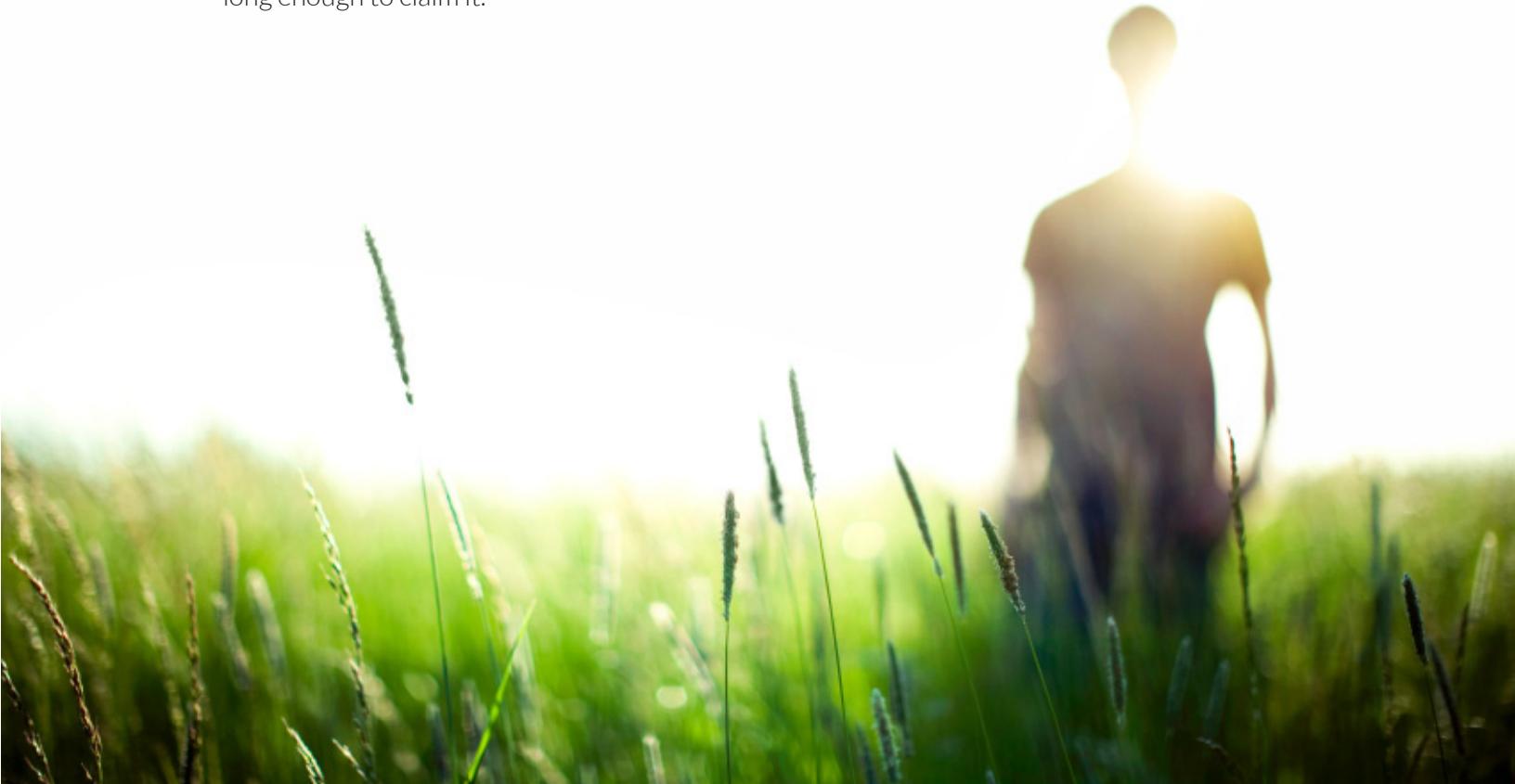


## Deal with Your Issues

Wherever you feel a struggle in life, show kindness and get the help you need. If you find it difficult to work, take care of your family, cook and clean the house . . . hire a maid to come in once a month to do a deep cleaning. Then you just have to keep up with the little weekly chores.

We can afford what we make a priority. If you are struggling with your skeletons, talk with a coach, counselor or therapist. Whatever you need, make it happen. The struggle can't end until you do something about the struggle. Believe it or not, everything in your life contributes to your waistline.

Whatever you are facing, you are going to be OK. You can make it through to the other side. I know it feels impossible sometimes, but wishing for things to change never changes anything. You don't have to wait until you lose weight to have the life you want. You can have it right here, right now. You deserve it! You don't have to earn it, you just have to put the fear aside long enough to claim it.



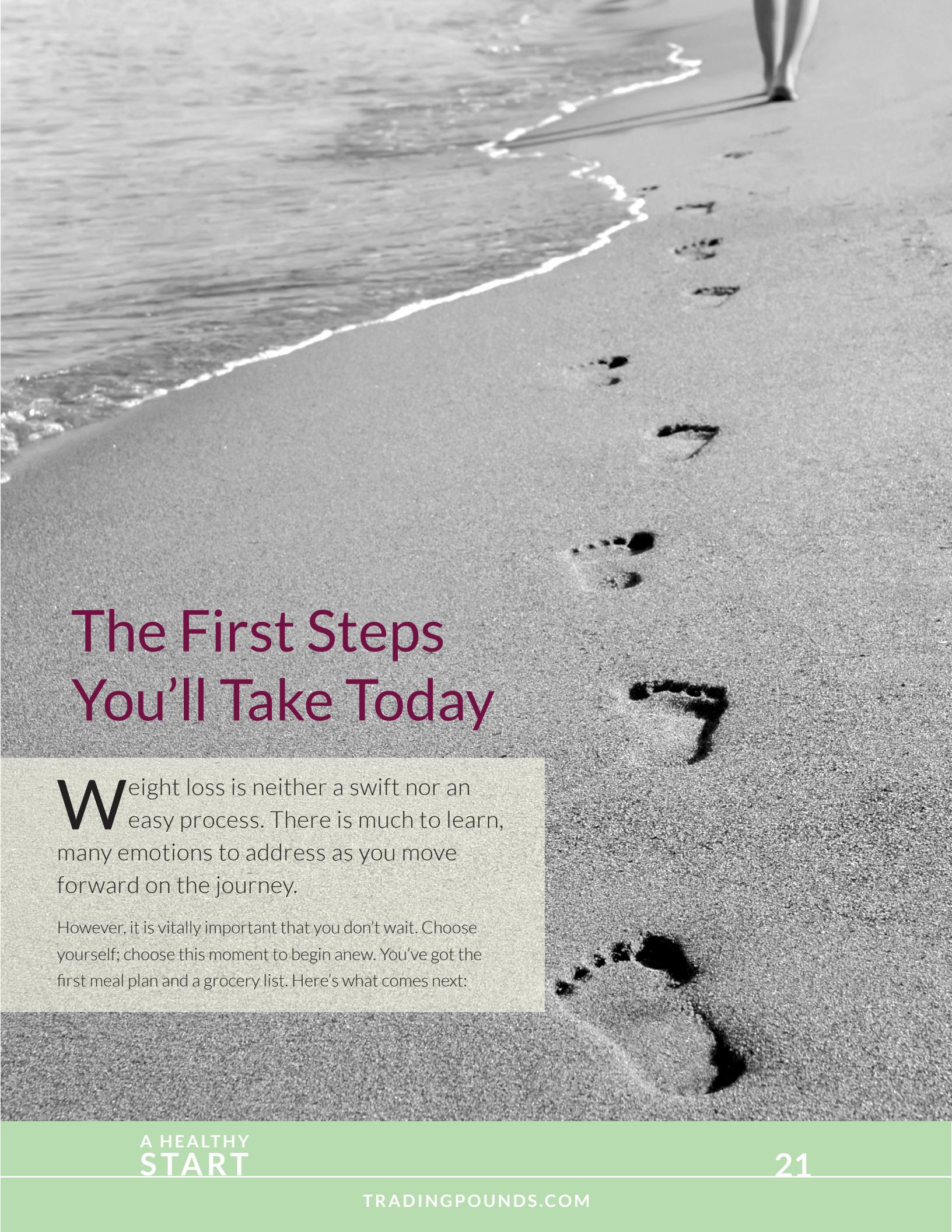
## Be Mindful in Each Moment



We spend so much energy living in the past and future that there is little left for our present. Focus on being here in the moment. Savor each experience, eat bite and be thankful that you are alive and able to enjoy it. You have been ignoring yourself for far too long, slow down and revel in all that is you. Know in your heart and in your mind that you are more than enough exactly as you are.

If you are like most of us, the weight struggle has caused you to disconnect from your body, to push away the feelings, emotions and understanding as you attempted to “numb” down with food. It’s time to come back to your body, mind and spirit. The negative emotions and thoughts are very real, but they do not control you. Given time, you can learn to deal with them and squash their effects. A good practice is to start speaking to yourself, caring for yourself, and comforting yourself the same way that you would your best friend.

Listen to your body, hear what it is telling you. Learn to recognize when it is thirsty, hungry and full. Give it all that it requires without hesitation. These are the building blocks of a healthier, happier you—ones that you were never taught as a child or have lost sight of over the years. Reclaim them and regain your best self.



# The First Steps You'll Take Today

Weight loss is neither a swift nor an easy process. There is much to learn, many emotions to address as you move forward on the journey.

However, it is vitally important that you don't wait. Choose yourself; choose this moment to begin anew. You've got the first meal plan and a grocery list. Here's what comes next:



## Clear out the junk food.

I t's not that you can't have it. As you know, I am a strong believer in addressing cravings as soon as is necessary. Otherwise, they grow and grow until they become bigger than life. That's when we find ourselves eating a gallon of ice cream instead of a 1/2 cup scoop.

The difference between indulging responsibly and having a gallon of ice cream at the house is that things don't go well with it around. It's far too easy to walk into the kitchen and "have a little more" because it's been a tough day at the office.

Right now, walk into that kitchen and throw out every single processed, snack, junk food or sweet treat hiding there. Even the ones marked "healthy"—those energy and meal replacement bars can't compete with real food when it comes to nourishing your body.

This is going to be tough, so it's important to remind yourself that you can still have any and everything you want. You are simply aligning your environment with your healthier lifestyle in order to fully care for yourself in every way. I know it also can be upsetting to think about the money you are throwing in the trash can. Why shouldn't you give it away or donate it? Well, if it isn't good for your body then why would it be good for someone else?

You are worth more than the \$75 or so dollars of junk food you just threw out. Remember that as you let it go. Know that this simple act is your bold statement that you are fully committed to taking better care of your body.

## Ready the arsenal.

You might be a bit panicked. After all, the cupboards and fridge are likely bare at this point. Remind yourself that we are about to bring in the good stuff. For now, we need to make sure you have what you need in that kitchen.

We'll start with an inventory of the essentials for simple cooking. I hate making things complicated. After all, I am a woman who runs two businesses and is helping her husband launch his own start-up. Busy is the only life I know. It is a must for me to keep things quick in the kitchen, and over the years I've learned what's vital and what's just fancy kitchen gadgets.

Following is a list of "must-haves" in your kitchen arsenal. These are the items that will make your cooking experience SO much easier. I've made recommendations for each based on what I've used and liked cooking with. We're all different though, so treat this list as my best suggestion but go with what works best for you and your life.

It's best to start by checking off what you have already. Then use yard sales, Craigslist, second-hand stores, birthday gifts and whatever you can find in the household budget to acquire the rest of what you need.

Open up the Kitchen Essentials List you've downloaded and get started figuring out what you need.

## Stock the pantry.

**N**ow that the kitchen is ready, let's move on to the pantry. These are the items I recommend having on-hand for two reasons. The first is that we will use many of them in the recipes included with your meal plans. The second is that these are the items that make it easy to "whip something up" at any time of the day.

Again, you don't have to go out and buy everything today. Print out the list and check off what you have. Then as items come up in recipes, add them to your grocery list. If you have everything you need for that week, add a few items from the list to your grocery shopping that week to stock up. Given time, you'll be fully stocked and ready to cook at a moment's notice. Open up the Pantry Essentials List you've downloaded and get started figuring out what you need for this week's meals.

# Start right now.

While your excitement and adrenaline are still high, it's time to start taking action. Don't wait another day to reclaim your health and your life as you embark on a journey towards sustainable weight loss. My goal is to help you succeed, and I know from personal experience that begins in your kitchen with the food you prepare and put on a plate.

There is no quick fix or magic secret that is going to make this any easier. It's going to take time and your commitment to taking care of yourself. It's a tough adjustment, but I promise it gets easier. You'll really start loving the process, especially when there is a healthy meal on the table to nourish your happy body.

The most important thing to remember is that you are not in this alone. The meal plans you receive are the same ones I use to feed my body and my family well. I'm not perfect at it. I still get upset, frustrated and emotional when it comes to my weight issue. But one day at a time, I am working through it. I try my best and know that I'll make mistakes along the way. It's OK.

These mistakes don't undo all the hard work I've put into this so far.

When you are struggling or feeling isolated along the way, please reach out. We only get stronger by relying on the understanding and support of others. There is nothing you can share with me that will shock me . . . I've done most of it myself. I am here for you and I want to see you succeed. It's why I do the work I do at Trading Pounds. So remember as you move forward on your own journey, a supportive friend who understands your struggle is never more than an email away.

stephanie@tradingpounds.com

All my very best to you on the journey ahead ~

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the beginning.