

# EATING HEALTHILY IS NOT HARD!

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About a week ago, I was at an event and bumped into an old acquaintance. As we were talking, I recognized another woman that I had just met at an earlier event. The conversation turned to food and she exclaimed: "Eating healthy is so hard!" I replied quickly: "It really isn't". But what I should have added was that it is a choice.

External and internal factors can hinder our choice but they do not prevent us from making one. We are bombarded daily by food ads from different media platforms, be it social media or TV. And with our busy lives, we wrestle with time management. So, some of us end up looking for the path of least resistance when it comes to food; namely, convenience. Fast-food eateries, food at the vending machines, processed food, and bad nutritional habits stemming from parents (no judgment, just a fact) form these external factors. What about the internal ones (I am excluding any medical conditions here)? For one, stress can result in one eating a bag of chips, for example. In addition, emotional triggers such as depression or the ones from unresolved traumas reel us into an unhealthy habit of reaching out for food as our coping mechanism.

However, we also have to consider the expression "elephant in the room": you. In talking with individuals, some say "I know what to do but I don't do it". Others will say "I know eating healthy is important but I don't know how to live a healthy lifestyle". These statements are the result of a mindset which can cloud the truth; we do know but choose otherwise. After all, is it really hard to eat healthily? Before we answer that question, let's pause and face our current reality: health insurance costs are skyrocketing, many chronic illnesses are linked to poor nutrition, and food manufacturers are creating flavors that hook us to what can taste like sugar or salt.

Many of us live in denial of our health status. As long as we don't have any symptoms, we believe we are "ok". Remember, some chronic illnesses don't surge out of the blue; some are the result of neglecting our health. When symptoms occur, some of us go to our doctor to be told (in some cases) that our diet needs to change. What do you do then? To answer the question of whether eating healthily is hard, we have to be honest with ourselves. Is it really hard to choose to cook real food instead of grabbing some processed food high in sugar and salt (if you don't know how to cook, learn. Your wallet will thank you). At least, by eating real food, we have control over the amount of sugar and salt and number of ingredients that are added. Is it really hard to limit the number of times we eat out (but if you do, order with your health in mind)? Is it really hard to plan meals for the week? You will soon create a habit and feel better. These are among some of the tips that can be implemented if we choose and commit to a healthy lifestyle.

As we approach the holiday season, it is a fact that most people will gain about 7-10 pounds before the end of the year. So, will you take a moment to reassess the value that you put on your health? Yes, change is difficult but not impossible. Even if you fail as you continue toward incorporating healthy choices, you will be creating healthy habits and not restrictions.