Your Nutrition Manual

A Guide to Sustainable Weight Management for Body and Mind

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Introduction

This is a general guide on nutrition for weight management and wellness. The disclaimer straight away is that it's general, to suit most but it may not suit everyone because we are all genetically different. You may have been struggling for a very long time with weight loss and it is possible that it's more than just the food and exercise, there could be an underlying medical issue there such as a hormone imbalance or nutrient deficiencies which your doctor will be able to shed some light on.

I also use a lot of my own experiences as examples, however while I hope you can relate, I respect that your experiences are different to mine so please keep that in mind while reading and take what you can from it.

If you're an athlete or training for competition then this is not for you.

If you want a full on long term approach to good nutrition habits for your health and happiness then read on.

Energy Balance

Lets start with the science. How weight loss and weight gain happens.
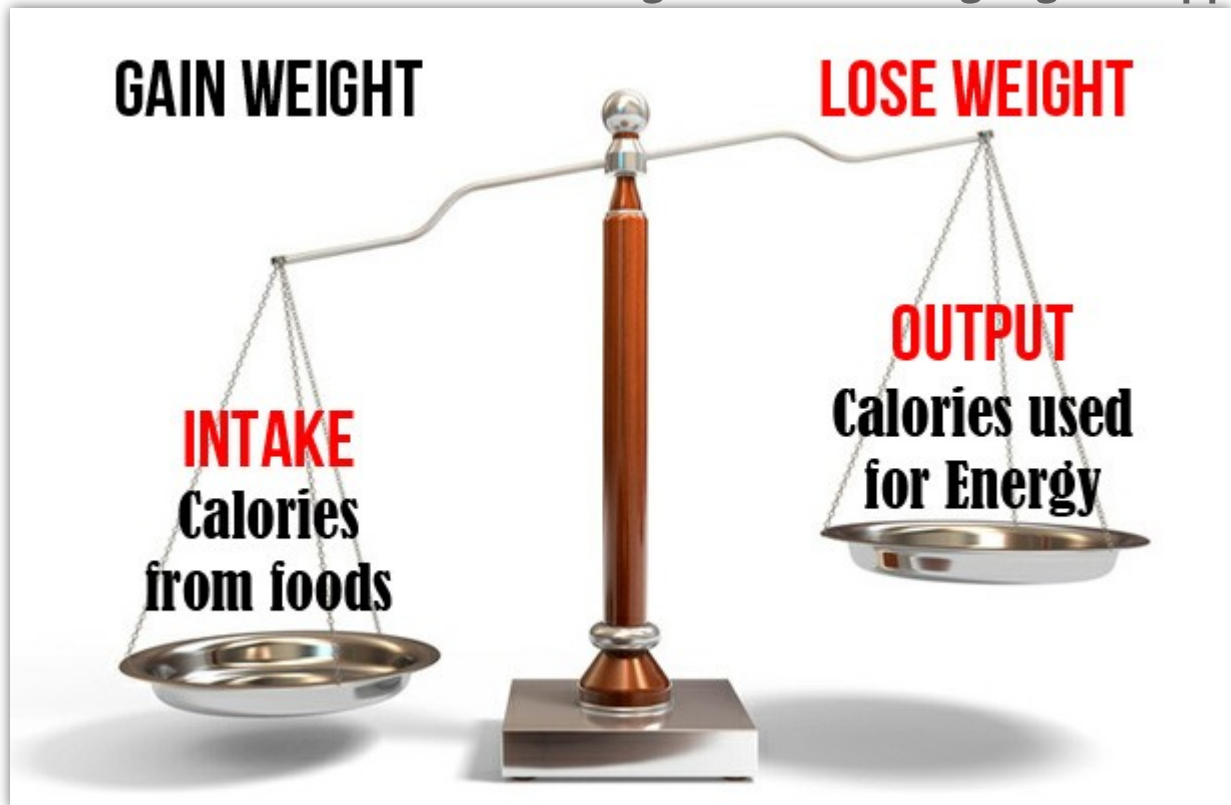
It's about energy balance. You gain weight by eating more and moving less and you lose weight by eating less and moving more. Scientifically it's simple, in the real world where we have jobs and kids and lives to maintain it's not so easy.

It's down to calorie intake and expenditure. Now while I explain this, bear with me because you won't actually need to do any excessive counting when putting it into practice. (Though I do cover calorie counting a little bit later)

To lose weight, if you're sedentary – moderately active you need to multiply your weight in pounds by 10, 11, or 12. Multiply by 12, 13, 14 or 15 if you're very active in work and exercise intensely everyday. That's the amount of calories you need everyday to bring down and manage your weight to an optimal level*

Energy Balance

By optimal level I mean a healthy weight range so you're neither under weight or over weight, it's "just right" for you.

I'm 142 lbs, times 10-12, I need to eat between 1400 and 1700 calories per day for weight loss and around 2000 calories per day for maintenance. This reading is reasonably accurate in relation to my Basal Metabolic Rate (the minimum number of calories needed per day in order to live)

If you drastically reduce calories, yes you will drastically lose weight. Short term. Then you will also throw your hormones out of whack and when you start eating more your body will pile the pounds back on. *It's the body's way of telling you to go F yourself for starving and putting it thorough such misery.* So please don't do that for your own sake and for your body.

If you have never exercised before and start training three to four times per week, you will lose weight in the first few months without changing a single thing in your diet. Exhibit A: <-

This is my first "transformation" picture after 2 months doing cardio twice or 3 times per week. Zero change to my diet and just a little reduction round the midriff. I was already starting to feel better within myself as I fell in love with the programme I was teaching and it really lifted my spirits. When your mind is clear, your stress levels drop thus your body relaxes and accepts weight loss.

Taking up exercise without changing your diet will naturally put you in a calorie deficit *until your body adapts to your routine.*

Energy Balance

Your body adapts because as you lose weight you will not need to consume as many calories as before. The lighter you are the less calories you need to survive. St Bernard's need a lot more food than a Jack Russel - it's just how it is!

You could lose weight with no exercise and just eating doughnuts all day *once you stay in a calorie deficit.*

Although eating doughnuts sounds like fun, just like the detox, aloe cleanse, cabbage soup diet and all the other diets it's not sustainable for longterm health and happiness.
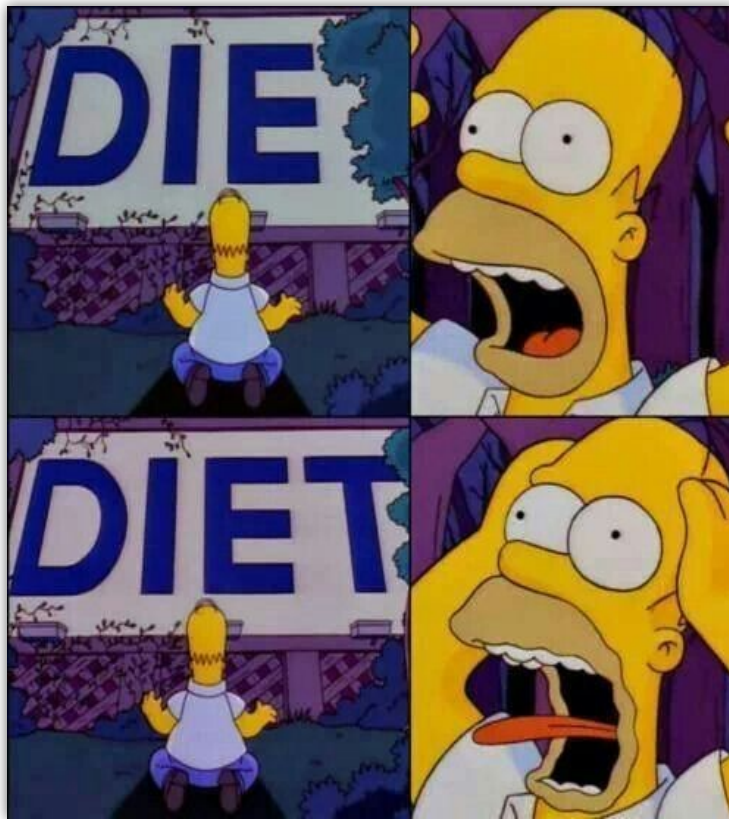
All diets work until you "come off" them.

So to put it simply. If you can't see yourself doing it permanently then *don't bother your arse in the first place!*

Now hang on a second, that does not mean you should immediately go out and stock up on doughnuts, and if you do I want one.

The key to weight management is establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship with food that does not conflict with your emotions or mental health.

This is particularly important to those who for years have battled with their weight, been on plan, been off plan, been to weigh in, skipped weigh in, went back with the tail between your legs, had "good weeks" or had "bad weeks". Whatever way you want to put it.

*There is literally no point adhering to a nutrition "plan", "diet" or "menu" if you do not have a 100% healthy relationship with your eating habits **80% of the time.***
Because what happens when your emotions get the better of you? You binge. Or starve. Or both.

In fact, if you find yourself in a bingy situation – go for it. Eat whatever "da f" you like and as much of it as you want. One rule though: **Eat Slowly.**

Seriously.
Eat whatever you want but at an _extremely slow pace._ (Extra formatting there for emphasis!)

You've heard it before but it's not an old wives tale or urban legend. When we eat slowly we aid digestion and notice much earlier that we're full. Scientifically our fullness cues start to kick in roughly 20 minutes after the first bite. It's a fact, so whatever you decide to put on the plate, slow down, relish the flavour and enjoy it.

Sometimes when I'm in a really bad mood I do not eat. I just don't, and the feeling gets worse and I put myself through the torture of hunger because I'd rather think about being hungry than think about the reason why I'm upset.

That doesn't happen often though, and when I decide to come out of my self pitying bubble I slap myself on the wrist because I've put too much hard work into what I do for me to self sabotage and run myself into the ground. My haters would love that and I would not give them the satisfaction haha!

But when I come out of that bubble what do I do?

Get back to normal.
Treat each meal as they come. Eat when hungry. Stop when full. I do not overcompensate the recent deprivation by binging on whatever comes to hand.

The same should be said that you should not starve yourself after a period of over indulging, or hit the gym hard in a bid to rid yourself of all those excess calories. *Never "punish" yourself for what you believe to be negative behaviour that does not support your goals.*

I also usually tell someone close that I was in a pissy humour and had feck all to eat. Because if you bottle that in, that's when it gets worse.

Food can often be used as a crutch or a coping mechanism when the stress of life gets too much, and it's very common to hear people reporting of a "bad week" and "going off the rails" and "start again Monday" (but how long to go between now and Monday?)

Furthermore, food is often used as a means to celebrate an achievement. i.e "I deserve a treat" - you're not a dog! Celebrate achievements with people you love and if there happens to be food involved, fine. But the focus should be on the experience of the event and not the content or quality of food.

Build Habits

So ask yourself the first question: *do you have a healthy relationship with your food/drink?* If you don't, then find out why and work on that.

You can throw a man who can't swim into a deep end of a pool and he can either drown or scramble back to safety, yet what did he learn about swimming? Practically nothing.

You can follow a diet plan to a T but what happens when curveballs are thrown in, you have to go a wedding with a set menu or go on holiday or go out for a family meal? What use is the diet when they rarely don't take everyday life events into account? You can't expect to lock yourself away from the world until you reach your desired outcome. It doesn't happen. But habits can be practiced no matter what's put in front of you... and a habit based mindset to nutrition is a proven guarantee to permanent success.

By simply looking at your behaviors and attitude towards food can build or maintain a healthy relationship with it. When you think about it, how fast do you eat? I know if you put McDonalds or any other fast food in front of me it's inhaled within two breaths for fear of it going cold... and that's why we say "it wouldn't fill a gap in your tooth".

It doesn't help that as children most of us were urged to "hurry up and eat your dinner, think of the starving children in Africa" (Note, don't rush children to eat quickly or they might end up in your situation and reading this dusty manual from the past)

Bite. Chew. Swallow. Breathe. Repeat.

It's very easy to take another forkful while you still have food in your mouth, so in order to slow down and appreciate the taste, texture and smell (to let the satiety hormone kick in) follow the method above.

Habits

A few more habits you could try out, and slowly introduce one meal at a time:

- Bite, Chew, Swallow, Breathe, Repeat

- Stop when you've had enough, regardless of what's left on the plate

- Time your eating to see how quickly you eat and target to slow down

- Get some lean protein into all or most meals

- Introduce a new recipe once per month

- Try a new fruit or vegetable once per week/ month

- Set a weekly habit based goal that does not focus on weight loss/ weight gain (e.g eat a healthy breakfast or park further away from the door or take the stairs)

  Bring a home made lunch to work, could be leftovers from dinner the evening before

- Every time you think negatively, counteract that with two positive thoughts

- Have a glass of water or small bowl of pure vegetable soup before each main meal

- Write down everyday one thing you did to improve your health and happiness

- On Mondays (or any day) choose to eat only minimally processed, whole foods and no highly processed foods

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  Try a variety of cooking methods – bake, boil, steam, stew etc.

What to Put on Your Plate

Look at which point in the week you struggle with most, anticipate it for next week and see what you can do to improve

All food in the appropriate amounts is good. We need it all!! Yes, even the carbs. We need a combination of carbohydrates, protein and fat for overall healthy function. We need less processed food and more "whole" foods to keep our health up and our weight down. We should not eliminate any foods, or food groups unless we are allergic to them. That includes bread and pizza and chips and ice cream.

Keep in mind that carbs and protein both carry the same weight in calories. So when you hear people say "lose weight by eating more protein" - they forgot to mention that you should reduce on the carbohydrate intake too to keep the balance. Including more protein and reducing "simple" carbohydrates (white grain & sugary foods) will keep you fuller for longer thus reducing the risk of excessive calorie intake.

And your top brand protein bar is not a "healthy" alternative to a bar of chocolate. There are less calories in a Cadbury's Crunchie than a Fulfill Protein Bar. Just saying.

If you're looking for a snack to bridge the gap between meals, sure have the protein bar if you've no other alternatives. But if you just want to satisfy your sweet tooth – eat the damned chocolate!
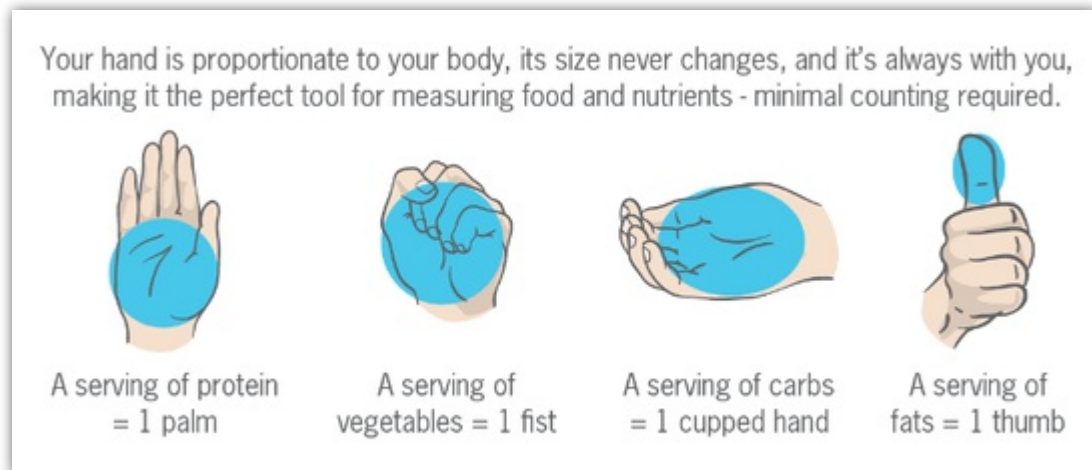
What to Put on Your Plate

The only foods that get a "free" pass are non starch vegetables (greens and colours) and fruit. They get a free pass because they are high in vitamins and minerals to make you feel well and they're low in calories so you can eat loads and loads without worrying about over eating. No one ever "got fat" from eating fruit. You cannot pile your plate high with steak or mince and call it a "free" meal, Or pack the spuds or pasta on the plate and call it "free". Or load 3-4 slices of bacon with 3-4 "free" sausages and a tin of beans with a side of quark with berries for after breakfast desert. (It sounds like I'm exaggerating but I've seen it with my own eyes on Instagram) I'm sorry but it does not work that way and if you're in that boat and wondering why you're not losing weight, it's because the "free" foods should not be "free" at all. Have your Cheerios topped with Marshmallows if you like but don't fool yourself into thinking it's a "healthy option" on your plan.

Remember, calorie intake versus calorie expenditure.

Know and respect your portion sizes.

Portion Guidelines

Your hand is proportionate to your body, its size never changes, and it's always with you, making it the perfect tool for measuring food and nutrients - minimal counting required.

A serving of protein = 1 palm

A serving of vegetables = 1 fist

A serving of carbs = 1 cupped hand

A serving of fats = 1 thumb

For Women: 1-2 hand portion servings of each balanced over 3-4 meals per day. The heavier you are the more servings you need but generally doesn't exceed 2 portions of each 3-4 times per day. *(Not selling anything but my nutrition clients get specific portion amounts according to their weight, age and activity level)*

For breakfast today I had a half tin of beans (125g approx) with two slices of buttered toast and a half glass of milk.

Tomorrow I may have 1 or 2 poached eggs on toast, it maybe two because I'll be very active in the evening.

My dinner on most days will be larger because I don't snack much and I have a lightish breakkie. And that works for me.

When I sit down to my dinner there usually does be a lot more spuds or starch on the plate than there should be. **So I start with making sure I eat the protein and veg, then finish with the starch until I'm full.** Sometimes I'm full when the plate is clear, sometimes there is food left on the plate. I listen to my body and respond in relation to how active I am that day.

After work, if I've been running round like a hooligan I'm usually starving so I'd again have maybe beans on toast or an egg with bread and spinach. I'd like to be more adventurous but ya know I'm terrible with prep and sure when I buy in different foods, a lot of it gets wasted because I don't get round to prepping it.
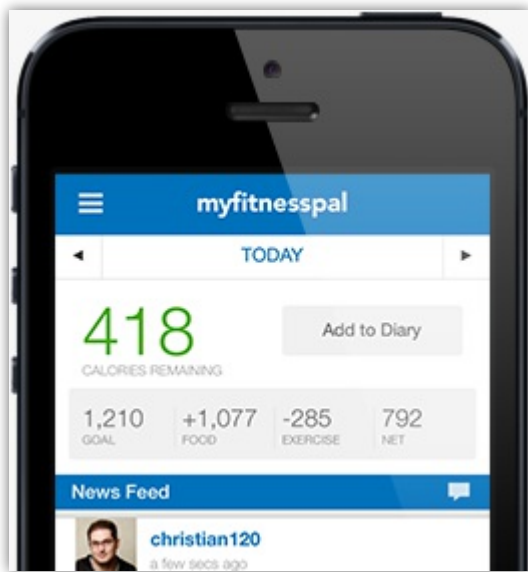
Since I eat roughly similar foods week in week out, I have a fair idea of the calorie content in the foods I eat because I used the free app **My Fitness Pal** for a couple of weeks to track my nutrition. I have it handy on my phone should a new food pop up on my menu but now that I know the numbers I do not use it at all.

I like to think on average I spend 300 calories on breakfast, 450 on lunch, 6-700 on dinner and around 300 again on supper/ snack before bed. Roughly. Again it can change day to day depending on how busy or active I am. And I usually eat out around once per week.

Calorie Counting & Why it's Flawed

Now before you freak out about counting calories, relax, there's a lot more to the science behind calories than you care to know but in a nutshell measuring calories on all foods is inaccurate anyway because they're tested/ burned by machines and we as humans are organic beings so it's currently impossible to tell if we burn calories the same way machines do. It's good to have a rough idea out of curiosity, but unless you are training for competition (which you're not) then by all means track for a week to get your estimates then just stick to your portions, eat slowly and stop when full.

While portions and habits may not be as accurate in an already flawed method, *it's definitely easier and more convenient than weighing and measuring and calculating your food.*

Just because preparing isn't my thing (due to my circumstances), doesn't mean that I do not endorse it. In fact, if you're changing your habits to allow for weight managemet it's a pretty good idea to have a *flexible* plan in place from week to week.

I don't mean to say that you should have no structure either. Even if you have one meal per day planned with your protein, veg, starch and fat you're flying. If you want to plan more then go ahead. But just make sure you're covering all the good stuff to keep you healthy and well. There's more to life than living out of Tupperware.

You do not need to batch cook if that's not your thing. Just make an extra serving with your regular meals or keep leftovers and freeze. I'm lazy but when in a blue moon I'm not lazy the fresh veg I get in does get washed, chopped or peeled on the same day then stored in the freezer so I can do a quick stir fry if I'm pushed for time. If you have **something** prepared when you're in after a long and tiring day, you have the choice whether to heat up what's in the freezer or order a guilt free take-away.

Embrace Small Changes

It's much better to have a choice than to be stuck against the wall with nowhere to go.

As you start to eat less processed food and more whole, home cooked foods your tastebuds will change and you will start to have a lower tolerance to foods high in refined sugar and salt. This happens quite quickly, in about 3 weeks to a month actually. Take it step by step, look at what you're already eating and see where you can swap out processed stuff for nutritious stuff.

Please find the food planner on the members section on the website for a full list and combos of different meal ideas.

Lastly, if you accept who you are and look after yourself both physically and mentally, then your body composition goals will happen naturally at a healthy speed that you will be able to maintain.

If you master eating slowly and stopping when you're full then everything else is a piece of cake (no pun intended)

Embrace Small Changes

I'm going to chat very briefly about what happened in these pictures. 2012 I was not physically active, depressed, stressed and did not look after myself. 2014 I was exercising 3 times per week which incorporated cardio and very light bodyweight movements (squats mainly). 2015 I gained a dress size after reducing exercise to only once per week, but I was still happy within myself and felt confident in that dress on that day. 2016 was the year I opened #NoFilter and my new shape took place after six months teaching both cardio and weights classes with my mindful approach to nutrition. I have never been "on a diet" and I've never been a "gym member". I don't train insane, eat clean or weigh anything. I don't obsess over the small things like jiggle – and as a result of accepting that my body does fluff out and slim down not as a result of yoyo dieting, but by just living life day to day, I feel more confident in my skin now than I ever did in my younger years dance training 6 days per week.

Please remember that your happiness should not be defined by the number on the scales or your dress size. Your "ideal weight" is one which you are healthy, have energy, does not stop you from doing everyday activities or socialising and it's one that you can sustain without damaging your mental health. As women our shapes change all the time because they are supposed to!! If you take care of yourself and learn to smile a bit more then "what will be will be". And it's so fecking liberating when you reach that point of acceptance.

Brief Summary & Additional Points

- Calories are a guideline, once you have an idea you can work on averages

- Get a portion of protein, starch, fat and veg into as many meals as possible

- Keep hydrated and watch out for empty calories in drinks

- Nuts are "healthy fat" but still fat and very easy to over indulge on (thumb size is your serving, not a handful)

- Eat well to feel well

- All calories count, just some fill you up in different quantities more than others

- Plan if it suits you, it's good to have a flexible routine in place

- If you have a healthy relationship with your food and drink 80% of the time then you're on the right path

- Life happens, so that's why we can and should be flexible with our choices

- Do not use food as a reward or exercise as punishment

- Do not count "calories burned" during exercise, rather monitor progress on strength or reps or speed.

- Your ideal weight is one that you're medically healthy, feel well within yourself and can maintain for the rest of your life.

- Change starts with the mind, not the mirror. Take care of the mind and the body will look after itself.

Be well & enjoy!

Sarah-Jane xx

Nutrition Manual

I hope you found the information provided useful and easy to understand. I often refer clients to this guide to refresh and reflect. Sometimes it's difficult going on your own steam so if you're struggling and need some help which involves daily accountability and me personally there cheering in your corner, you might find the 1-2-1 Nutrition Coaching Programme suitable for you.