

# Simplicity



## **Simple Health and Fitness**

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# Introduction

First things first. I am not a doctor or a fitness expert. But have found simple habits that help me to live healthier than I did a few years ago and that have helped me to lose 26 pounds and become a lot more fit and energetic.

In this concise module I will explore things like...

- Improving your energy levels and fitness levels.
- How to lose fat and get into shape.
- Making the exercise habit not something you just do as a New Year's resolution for a couple of weeks but a lifelong habit.

That's about it. I believe that health and fitness are areas that often become overcomplicated by lots and lots of information. And much of that information may be conflicting and so people get trapped in analysis paralysis.

The purpose of this module is to keep things simple and to get you to start taking action. You may not do things in the best way at first but that is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that you get started in some fashion. You will improve along the way.

The physical but also mental benefits of improving your health and fitness are many. Just by doing the things in this module I believe it will be possible for many to become more optimistic, less prone to worrying, more energetic and to find the extra energy that makes

it easier to shape new habits and rituals. Among other things. Getting into and being in good shape is one of the best and most important things you can do for yourself.

Key simplicity habits in this module and area of life are:

- Eating healthy and slowly.
- Getting enough sleep.
- Exercising in a way that fits you and your life.
- Having one big salad a day.
- Having one cheat day a week.

*"Do you remember the things you were worrying about a year ago? How did they work out? Didn't you waste a lot of fruitless energy on account of most of them? Didn't most of them turn out all right after all?"*  
**Dale Carnegie**

# 1. Simple Health

In this chapter you will learn about the three fundamentals of energy and energy drains.

## The Three Fundamentals of Energy

One of the most important things I have done to improve my energy is to work on what I call the three fundamentals of energy.

Those three things are food, exercise and sleep.

Sounds pretty simple right? Well, it may even sound too simple or obvious. But these things are also fundamental things people often mismanage.

We eat something quickly but perhaps not so healthy because we are in a hurry. We know we should exercise more often. But things get in the way and so a walk now and then or a random workout at the gym is usually what we wind up doing. We know we should probably get more sleep but somehow that thought slips away and so we spend quite a bit of time with being tired and drowsy.

## Sleep

Not getting enough sleep is probably one of the most overlooked problems that people have when it comes to their energy levels and ability to focus.

So ask yourself these questions:

How much sleep do you need to feel balanced and well? 8 hours? 6 hours? 9 hours?

And how much sleep do you get each night during a normal week?

If you aren't getting enough sleep then in my experience it cannot just lead to focus problems, attention problems and energy problems but also more negative thinking, overthinking and other things that won't help you.

So be kind to yourself. If you find that you aren't getting enough sleep then start to go to bed earlier and/or take a nap from time to time.

Three tips that help me to sleep better are:

- **No caffeine** of other stimulants after eight o'clock in the evening.
- **Keeping your bedroom as dark** as possible.
- **No work a few hours before sleep.** If I work too late it becomes very hard to wind down in time for sleep and I toss and turn for an hour or more before finally going to sleep.

Try these tips out and see if they help you to sleep better too.

## Food

There are thousands of books and blogs about eating healthier. But a few tips that have helped me are:

- **Switch to whole-grain products.** Eating whole-grain pasta and other such types of food keeps me alert and full longer. I am less likely to have to eat unnecessary snacks.
- **Eat more fruit and vegetables.** Replaces some of the calorie dense pasta or potatoes with more vegetables. Eat a banana instead of more bread. This will give you more vitamins and minerals and not make you as drowsy as you digest the food. And it makes you eat a little less calories each day so it's a simple way to help you lose or maintain your weight.
- **Switch from coffee to green tea or yerba maté.** I find that I get a more relaxed boost in energy from green tea or yerba maté tea compared to the coffee that just makes me jittery and makes it hard to think clearly. My personal preference for my work hours is now yerba maté. I drink one cup of that at breakfast and one cup at lunch. It helps to keep me calm, alert and focused at the task at hand. Really awesome stuff.

I'll mention a few more simple and helpful food tips in the upcoming chapter on how to lose weight. But for now, let's move on to...

## **Exercise**

I work out about two to three days a week right now. I start with free weights for about 30 minutes and directly after that I do a bodyweight workout for cardio that takes me about 20 minutes including cooling down.

This works well for me because it's pretty fun and I can do it from home which makes it easier to stay consistent each week. It's easy to go to the gym or go out walking or running in the summertime or when you feel rested.

But if you are feeling a bit tired at the end of the day and the rain is pouring it becomes harder to get going. So if you have that problem then consider working out from home in some way. You'll find more on forming the exercise habit in the next chapter.

## **Reducing or eliminating energy drains from your life**

Improving on the three fundamentals will raise your energy levels. But it is also important to be aware of current energy leaks in your life and reducing them or plugging them.

What do I mean by energy drains?

Well, it could be a habit of not getting enough sleep on Thursdays or eating a bit too much unhealthy food during the weekend. It could also be more emotional energy drains.

Such as problems that you are ignoring that need to be solved to move your life forward and to eliminate a source of stress and anxiety.



Or it could be people that just suck the energy right out of you and give you little value of any kind.

Or small things such as traffic noises, negative music or other forms of entertainment that suck the energy out of you in subtle ways.

Or perhaps you keep thinking about an old conflict in your mind with someone over and over but without getting closure. Perhaps you worry about something pretty small almost every day. Perhaps you are anxious about something that comes up over and over such as tests in school.

No matter how the drain looks like, you want to have as few of these as possible. And if you have worked through module #3 for example you have probably already plugged some of these energy drains.

But think about your own small or big ways of wasting energy each week or month that you haven't already plugged. When you feel drained at the end of day, ask yourself what happened and what you did and thought about that day that made you feel that way. And then ask yourself:

- What is the worst that could happen in this situation?
- Will this matter 5 years from now?
- Can I let this go and feel happier and less stressed that way?

Or think about how you can solve that old conflict or solve the problem you are thinking about. Then take action on that to stop the energy from seeping out of you.

You can find a section in the workbook to help you explore your energy drains and what you can do about them. You can also revisit chapters in module #3 to find more practical solutions to issues like worrying and having a hard time to let go of things.

*“Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness”*

Edward Stanley

## 2. Simple Fitness

In this chapter I will share a few things that will help you to establish a good workout habit.

### How to establish the workout habit the easy way

Five years ago I never worked out. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, today I do it about 2-3 times a week. This took me time and I stumbled around quite a bit with this habit.

Now, how can you establish a work out habit in an easier way than I did and learn from what I experienced? Well...

#### Find something you like and that fits you

I believe this may be one of the most important keys to establishing a consistent workout routine week after week. If you do not enjoy what you are doing and it does not fit you and your life then the likelihood of you quitting is very high.

I, for example, tried running and the stationary bike but I didn't enjoy those activities and so I became very inconsistent.

But I do like my bodyweight circuits. They are quick – I do one in maybe 13 minutes and then I cool down – and I can do them anywhere I am (usually in my living room). That they

take pretty much no time at all, that I enjoy doing them and that I can do them at any time and anywhere makes it easy for me to stay consistent with them.

## **Take it slow**

You do not have to start at full speed. That can become mentally and physically overwhelming and so you become reluctant to continue. Instead, make it easy on yourself.

The important thing is to get into the mental habit of exercising and eventually feeling drawn to doing it instead of having to do it on willpower. It is not about getting into top physical shape within a month or to lose 20 pounds very quickly.

If you want to run then start by walking and running perhaps just a little bit. Then, over the weeks, increase the amount of running you do and decrease the walking.

The important things are to get started and to continue doing it. Not how well or how intensely you do it at first.

## **Do it every day for 30 days**

As I explained in module 2: it takes about 30 days to install a new habit. However, going out running or lifting weights every day for 30 days can be unhealthy. But to do something physical for 30 days is good if you want to install an exercise habit.

So let's say you workout in some way for two days a week at first. Then don't spend the rest of the week on the couch. Put in a little effort on your non-workoutdays too to build

that mental habit and need for exercise. Take short walks, play a little bit of soccer with your kids, dance with someone or play a sports game on your Nintendo Wii or Xbox 360.

## **Attach it to a ritual**

Attach your habit to a ritual. Perhaps you can add it at the end of your morning ritual. Or at the start of an evening ritual that then calms down into reading before you go to sleep.

By attaching it to an existing ritual or creating a new ritual around it I find that it becomes easier to stay consistent as I mentally get used to it and comfortable with it quicker.

## **How can you make your success guaranteed?**

In module #2 I shared one of the most valuable things in this course – how you can figure out how to make your success inevitable.

Those tips and thoughts apply to every part of this course and you should keep them in mind and apply them to ensure that you stay consistent on your way towards what you want.

One such tip that works well for establishing better food habits and a workout habit is to get an accountability buddy.

Me and my girlfriend do for example keep each other accountable in a lighthearted way so that we don't cheat too much with what we eat and stay with our established workout habits. At this point we already have pretty good habits that we are drawn to doing, but a bit of accountability sure helps too.

If you are just getting started with working out then it is very helpful to find someone who wants to play badminton, go out running or on walks too. You can keep each other accountable and put a bit of positive social pressure on each other to for example show up for your weekly game or run in the woods.

So look around you and see who you can partner up with for some activity and/or to keep a bit of an eye on your food habits.

## **What to do if you feel like procrastinating with your new workout habit**

When you are establishing your new workout habit or eating habit for that matter you'll probably be pretty enthusiastic for a week or two.

Then you may start to doubt that you should stay on this path. You may have days when you really don't feel like it. What can you do then to make sure that you stay on track?

Here's what I do.

### **Just for today**

I tell myself: "Just for today I will do my workout!"

Or if I feel like cheating with a meal then I tell myself: "Just for today I will eat healthy".

Remember this little tip from the chapter on habits from module #2?

If I have a bad day and feel like not working out or I have a hard time getting started with it then it is often because I make it into this big thing in my head that I have to do week after week.

On such days I tell myself that the only thing I have to do is this workout today or eat healthy today. I don't have to do it ever again. This makes it feel a whole lot lighter and it feels like a little thing to just do for today.

Then, of course, as the next day arrives I'll probably feel more motivated again and do my workout or eat healthy as usual.

But this little mind-trick will help you to unload that big mental burden that you sometimes get when you are working on a new habit and are looking too much into the past or future.

This trick usually works for me. But it does not help me to have a 100% consistency and that is OK. I do not have to be perfect to get great results. I just have to be consistent for maybe 90-95% of the time. I find that very helpful to keep in mind to not become too hard on myself and create negative associations with exercise or eating healthy.

*"Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals."*  
Jim Rohn

## 3. How I Lost 26 Pounds

In the beginning of 2009 I lost 26 pounds over 4 months time.

In this chapter I will share what I learned during that time about losing weight. I'll share my simple habits that I stick to, the habits that not only helped me to lose the weight but also to maintain it two years later.

### I found a workout that worked for me

During these months I used Craig Ballantyne's Turbulence Training program. It was a good fit for me since it incorporated weight training that I was already a fan of and had established a consistent habit with.

And it introduced me to bodyweight circuits for cardio. I have already mentioned these circuits a few times but without an explanation of what they are. So here it is: they are quick workouts where you do pushups, jump up and down etc. and use just your body weight for about 6 different exercises in a row. Then you rest for just one minute. And then you do all of that two to five times more.

This is pretty intense and although it may look easy on paper it becomes hard very quickly as you do the exercises at full speed. After 13 minutes or so you should have worked up a good sweat and be breathing hard.

This was a good cardio fit for me since I love the simplicity of it and since it is quick, I can do it at home or anywhere and I do enjoy it (well, most of the time at least).



That was my workout during the weight loss and I still do weight training and body weight circuits.

Now, on to what I ate...

## **I switched from sugary soft drinks to water**

I drank and drink water to almost every meal. I also drink yerba mate tea every day and once in a while a beer or two.

There are a lot of calories in stuff like Pepsi, 7 Up and fruit juice. Cutting this from your diet can help you keep the calorie count down.

## **I switched one meal a day for a big salad**

This was one of the most important ingredients – perhaps even the most important one – that helped me to lose all that weight in 2009. By eating a big salad with lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes etc. and some source of protein such as tuna or chicken and without any dressing for lunch each day I created a calorie deficit that helped me lose that weight.

I found this to be a relatively simple adjustment to make in my diet since there is a lot variety in it, it is tasty and I only had to eat it for one of three daily meals.

I highly recommend trying this. But keep in mind that there aren't many calories in salad etc. so you will have to eat bigger servings than you are used to. But even if you, as I did, eat a big bowl of salad that keeps you full it will still create a calorie deficit.

## **I did not guesstimate calories**

This was the biggest mistake I made when I tried to lose weight in the past. I simply didn't know how many calories I put in my body each day or how many I used.

So during 2009 I realized that I had to monitor it in some way. So I used the free and very simple [Fitday.com](https://www.fitday.com) to monitor what I ate during the day.

You may eat some raw carrots for instance. Then you just choose that from their lists of food and how many/how much you ate today. The site will calculate how many calories that is and how much of various nutrients you have put into your body. Fitday also tells you roughly how many calories you use with your current lifestyle and the exercise you get.

This is essential. Because the three normal and most of the time actually pretty healthy meals I ate in the past consisted of the same amount of calories I used during the day. So little progress was made.

It's also important to monitor yourself so you don't eat too little food either. That isn't healthy at all. I tried to stick to a deficit of about 500 calories per day.

## Eat slowly

I like to eat slowly. A meal takes thirty minutes or sometimes an hour.

This is a helpful habit if you want to lose weight. Because it takes about [20 minutes for your brain to register that you are full](#). That's because the food has to reach the intestines before your body starts sending signals telling your brain that you feel full. By slowing down your eating your brain can stop you before you eat too much.

How to eat more slowly:

- **Eat before you get ridiculously hungry.** If you're really hungry it will be hard to eat slowly. The best way to avoid this is to not wait for too long but to eat when you feel just a little hungry. Or to have your meals at specified times during the day that you know from experience will be appropriate to avoid getting too hungry.
- **Put down your fork between the bites.** Put down your fork and then chew. Then pick up your fork again after you've swallowed, take another bite and repeat the process. I like this tip because it forces you to slow down.
- **Focus on the food and yourself. Not on what other people are doing.** It's easy to get drawn into someone else's pace while eating (just like when driving or running). Be conscious of keeping your own pace instead of just unconsciously eating as fast as everyone around the table might do. Being aware of this challenge can help you. Being present throughout your meal can also be useful to keep a good pace and fully enjoy the food.

## **Remove and replace what will get you in trouble**

Laziness and easy availability are two of the big reasons for developing kind of stupid and unnecessary habits. But you can use that to your advantage to change your snacking habits.

If you have a bad habit of eating too much sugar then don't have cookies and candy at home. I recommend having something to snack on though. I always keep some nuts and vegetables in my apartment. When I feel the craving for candy, but find none in my kitchen and don't feel like walking all the way to the supermarket then I eat a tomato instead.

Doing this will, over time, replace one habit with a healthier one and help you to lose weight.

## **Don't try to be perfect**

As I mentioned a couple of pages back: don't take this too seriously. Don't beat yourself up or get upset just because you had a pizza for lunch or one Snicker bar for an afternoon snack. If you take the process that will probably take months too seriously and create too much negative emotions around it then it will be so much harder. And so it feels "heavier" than it needs to and you'll be more likely to quit too early and go back to your old habits.

Like with anything else in life, if you just stick with the program 90-95 percent of the time then you will probably make pretty good progress. No need to try to be perfect or to make mountains of molehills. It won't help you or anyone else.

## **Use a cheat day**

Once a week during my weight loss I had a cheat day on Saturdays. During a cheat day you can indulge yourself and eat those things that you stay away from during the week. It may be chocolate, potato chips or pizza for instance.

There are two big benefits to doing things this way.

### **Your body will not lower your metabolism**

If you eat too little every day then your body will after a while think that you are starving and it will lower your metabolism. This means that you will stop burning fat or at least burn a lot less because your body is adapting to the amount you are feeding it.

But you can prevent your body from making this change by having one day a week when you eat more calories than you usually do. Then it keeps thinking that everything is OK and it does not lower your metabolism. And you can keep burning fat.

### **You need to release that inner mental pressure regularly**

The second benefit is that if you use a diet to lose weight and stay away from the things that you love but that are bad for you then the mental pressure will ramp up and that usually ends with you getting such serious cravings that you can't stop yourself from wolfing down a big pizza or a big bag of potato chips.

By having one cheat day a week you can enjoy all those things. And release that mental pressure in a more structured way where you maybe have a couple of pieces of chocolate or one chocolate bar instead of going crazy and eating three or four of them.

So I highly recommend that you have one cheat day a week – Saturday was and is still a good fit for me to help me maintain my weight – and eat all that stuff you love but are kind of unhealthy. Don't go crazy and eat pizza for breakfast, lunch and dinner though. Be a bit moderate with those tasty treats.