

4 Week Complete Health Challenge

Eat clean, become healthy, reduce stress

The Challenges

Category A - Diet

“Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food” Hippocrates

Category A (Diet) Challenge 1 - Lemon Water Detox in the morning (7x)

Every morning, before you consume anything else, you must drink an 8 oz glass containing the following ingredients. Lemon is quite commonly used in the blue zones across the world, and has been studied extensively in the past 50 years. The acids found in lemon allow us to process the vitamins and minerals in good food slower and more completely. The enzymes in lemon activate the liver, and allow our bodies to flush out toxins more completely. Most importantly, lemon has much more readily absorbed vitamin C than oranges. This is a great way to prevent or fight off sickness as well.



1. 8 oz of warm water
2. A squirt from half a lemon
3. A pinch of turmeric powder (optional) - turmeric is a spice commonly found in curry dishes from India. It is a known anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant. It has also performed quite well in studies related to the slowdown of arthritis, depression, alzheimers disease, and heart disease.
4. A pinch of cayenne pepper (optional) - this is another highly effective supplement with anti-inflammatory properties. It also boosts calorie burning potential. Stop if it gives you heartburn.
5. Local honey (optional) - one of the most effective ways to minimize seasonal allergies without using pharmaceuticals.
6. Half a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar (optional) - this stuff is so good for you, but it definitely is a taste I have not yet acquired. This is an antimicrobial, and also very effective at lowering blood sugar. Even though I can't stand the taste, I use it regularly when I feel an illness coming on.



Category A (Diet), Challenge 2 - Two Handfuls of Green Leafy Vegetables per Day (6x)



- * Spinach
- * Kale
- * Swiss Chard
- * Romaine Lettuce
- * Bok Choy
- * Mustard Greens
- * Collared Greens
- * ***Don't use iceberg lettuce (it has no nutritional value)***

The easiest way to execute such a challenge is through a green smoothie, which includes the following:

1. Handful of green veggies
2. Banana
3. Frozen fruit (berries, mango, cherries, etc.)
4. Any type of milk
5. Optional: protein powder, flax/chia, nut butter, dried figs/dates, oats, hemp hearts, pumpkin seeds, tofu, sunflower seeds, handful of nuts, canned beans, frozen broccoli.



If any of this stuff is gross for you, *just throw in some more frozen fruit or dried fruits (dates are the best).*

Throw them all in the blender, and enjoy. *It doesn't have to be green!*

The more “stuff” you throw in there, the better. It would be best if this *replaces* your normal breakfast.

The goal, however, is to start to create a habit in which one meal in your day is actually a big hearty salad that fills the whole plate. In this case, you can go for seconds. My two favorite salad recipes are below.

Remember with salads, these can easily go from “good for you,” to “bad for you” when you begin to add high salt, high sugar, high fat, heavily processed dressings. The best thing is to make your own dressings (I provided some recipes below).

Kale Salad with Quinoa, Cranberries and Toasted Almonds

Yield: 2 large salads, 4 side salads

Ingredients

- 1 1 bunch dinosaur or lacinato kale
- 2 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 3 ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- 4 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 5 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 6 For the dressing:
- 7 1 clove garlic, minced
- 8 1 small shallot, minced
- 9 Juice of 1 lemon
- 10 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 11 Salt
- 12 Fresh Ground Pepper

Instructions

- 1 Start by making your dressing. Combine all of the ingredients for the dressing in a small bowl and set aside while you prepare your kale. (This will soften the shallots and allow the flavors to mingle).
- 2 The first thing you need to do is remove the ribs from your kale. Don't panic, there is a very simple way to do this. Start by tearing away about an inch on each side of the kale's stalk to form "flaps." Now grab the bottom of the stalk with one hand and pull up with the other hand. The entire kale leaf should come right off. Magic!
- 3 Pile the kale leaves on top of each other and roll them up like a giant cigar. Thinly slice the kale, and then chop it finely. Place your chopped kale to a large mixing bowl.
- 4 Pour the dressing over the kale and use your hands to mix the salad (this is known as "massaging the kale" in fancy culinary speak), making sure that every leaf is well coated. Set aside for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the kale becomes very wilted.
- 5 While your kale is wilting, toast the almonds. Place the sliced almonds in a pan (with no oil!) and toast for 3-4 minutes until they are golden brown and fragrant.
- 6 Add the quinoa, along with half of the almonds and cranberries to your wilted kale and toss to combine.
- 7 Transfer your salad to a serving platter or plates, top with the remaining almonds and cranberries



Roasted Sweet Potato, Spinach, and Grain Salad

Recipe type: Lunch

Serves: 2

- 1 1 medium sweet potato
- 2 1/2 medium onion, sliced
- 3 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 5 1 cup cooked grain (brown rice, quinoa, millet, etc)
- 6 2-3 handfuls spinach
- 7 -----
- 8 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 9 1 tablespoons honey
- 10 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 11 1/4 cup cilantro, minced

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°. Peel sweet potato and cut in to 1/4" cubes. Toss with 1 tablespoons olive oil, onion, and smoked paprika. Roast until tender, 25-30 minutes.
- 2 Cook grain of choice- best done ahead of time or use left over grains. Let cool before using.
- 3 Whisk together lime juice, honey, cilantro, and olive oil. Toss cooled grains with desired amount of spinach and dressing. Top with roasted sweet potatoes.



Dressings

Any combination of the following:

- Lemon Juice
- Orange Juice
- Honey
- Dijon Mustard
- Any vinegar (balsamic and red wine taste great)
- Black pepper
- Olive Oil
- Blended dates/figs
- Any herbs/spices (cumin tastes and smells great)

I find Kale to be bitter when raw. One way to make kale more palatable is to “massage” in the dressing by squeezing the kale and the dressing together until the kale takes on a more ‘wilted’ texture.

Category A (Diet) Challenge 3 - No processed foods (6x)

First, let's define "processed." This can have a variety of meanings and can be the source of needless argument. For the purposes of this challenge, let's limit the definition of "processed" foods to:

- Anything containing preservatives beyond citric acid or a small amount of salt
- Anything containing artificial dyes, flavors, or colors
- Anything with off-the-chart sodium content
- Anything with more than 5 ingredients beyond *the actual item*

So, what is generally processed?

Stuff that is in bags, boxes, cans, etc. Anything that is at the "inner aisles of the grocery store." These are often referred to as "convenience foods"



What isn't processed?

- Produce!
- Frozen, *unflavored* fruits, veggies, and meats
- Stuff that requires some effort

Commonly asked questions:

- Plain rolled oats or steel cut oats? Not Processed!
- Chips and crackers? Processed.
- Bread? Mostly processed (but you *can* find some with less than 5 ingredients)
- Frozen chicken tenderloins? Not Processed!
- Bags of beans, lentils? Not Processed!
- Cans of beans, lentils? Check the label for tons of sodium.
- Spaghetti sauce? Check the label, but probably processed.
- Frozen Fruits/Veggies? Not Processed!

Black Beans

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)	
Servings Per Container about 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 0
Total Fat 0g % Daily Value*	
Saturated Fat 0g 0%	
Trans Fat 0g 0%	
Cholesterol 0mg 0%	
Sodium 85mg 4%	
Total Carbohydrate 22g 7%	
Dietary Fiber 5g 20%	
Sugars 1g	
Protein 6g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 4%	Iron 10%
<small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:</small>	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	
INGREDIENTS: ORGANIC PREPARED BLACK BEANS, WATER, SEA SALT.	

All good! Not processed



Category A (Diet) Challenge 4 - At least one fruit and one vegetable per meal per day (6x)

This can be accomplished most easily by having a vegetable *as part of your meal*, and then have a fruit *as part of your dessert*, but this is easier said than done. Rather than change your entire menu for the week, I would suggest that you prepare the following chart:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast Fruit							
Breakfast Veggie							
Lunch Fruit							
Lunch Veggie							
Dinner Fruit							
Dinner Veggie							

Now, before the week begins, sit down and start filling this stuff out. Green smoothies are obviously the easiest and most efficient ways to fill out this chart.

If you snack, it counts! Just enter it in the nearest meal.

Here is an easy way to get this done. The weekend before this week, go out and buy 4-5 of the following, based on your taste:

Food Requiring NO prep

- Oranges
- Apples
- Pears
- Banana
- Raw berries
- Baby carrots
- Grapes
- Peaches

Food Requiring MINIMAL prep

- Mango
- Pineapple
- Kiwi
- Cherries
- Frozen berries
- Frozen mango
- Frozen pineapple
- Cucumber
- Celery
- Peppers
- Pea Pods
- Edamame

Food requiring some chopping

- Cantaloupe
- Pomegranate
- Beets
- Sweet Potato

Now, just grab some tupperware or mason jars, put a tiny piece of paper towel at the bottom (to retain dryness and prolong the life of these fruits and veggies), and make a bunch of small containers with an approximate serving size in each one.



Category A (Diet) Challenge #5 - Plant Based Week (6x)

Very Simple Whole Food Plant-Based Ideas & Recipes

Simple tips about plant-based meal planning

1. I encourage you to try it and see how you feel. You may not give up meat forever, but after it, you may realize you could plan some dinners where there is no meat or dairy involved.
2. These recipes are easy and many can be made in the crockpot, however, they still take some planning. The key to keeping this challenge going for a whole week is to plan ahead. You must have food you can eat at all time. If you don't have food that you can eat in your weakest moments, you are sure to "cheat".
3. Before the week starts, plan a menu, grocery list, and have a designated "prep" day. This will ensure that you have a healthy week!
4. If you are eating out with friends and you did not choose the restaurant, make sure you check out the menu ahead of time and plan out your meal. If you can't find anything on the menu that will work, you can call ahead and ask. Most restaurants can and will accomodate special diets. Even steakhouses have baked potatoes and salads.
5. If you are eating out and you did choose the restaurant, please choose somewhere that is plant-friendly! Again, check out the menu ahead of time so you are not stuck when you get there.
6. If you are traveling, taking food with you is key! Don't get stuck in an airport with no healthy food.
7. If you have any questions about where to find anything, please e-mail me at nepunjabi@gmail.com or call at 734-417-2781. I welcome any questions!



BBQ Pulled Sweet Potato Sandwiches with Red Cabbage Slaw

1 tbsp coconut oil (or olive oil)
3 Large sweet potatoes (or 4 small ones)
Salt & Pepper to taste
1/2 cup of barbeque sauce (I used Annie's organic bbq sauce available at Heinen's)

1. Shred sweet potatoes with a grater or a food processor. I found the food processor much easier. Cook for 5-7 minutes or until the sweet potatoes are slightly browned.
2. Add the bbq sauce and salt & pepper to taste. Stir and cook for another 5 minutes.
3. Let it sit in the pan on low while you put together the slaw.

Simple Red Cabbage Slaw

2 cups shredded red cabbage
Dry mustard powder
White vinegar
Veganise (vegan mayonnaise available at Heinen's or probably other grocery stores, but I have not looked for it anywhere else)

1. Mix the dry mustard powder, white vinegar, and Veganise well.
2. In a mixing bowl add the red cabbage and the dressing you just created.
3. Top a piece of toast with the bbq sweet potato and the red cabbage slaw. Use two pieces for a heartier sandwich or eat without toast for a lower carb meal.

An Awesome & Easy Crockpot Lentil Soup

Ingredients:

1 onion
5 cloves of garlic
2 celery stalks
2 carrots
1 (28oz) can of diced tomatoes with juice
1 1/2 cups of brown or green lentils
8 cups of vegetable stock
Salt & Pepper to taste
2 tsp dried parsley



Throw all the ingredients in a crockpot and cook on low 6-8 hours. Soup can be pureed or eaten "chunky". This soup freezes well.

Crockpot Black Bean Soup

Ingredients

- 1 pound dry black beans
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2 jalapeños, seeds removed and finely chopped (adds flavor, but not spicyness)
- 1 cup salsa or diced tomatoes (I prefer salsa in this recipe)
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic, about 4 cloves
- 1 heaping tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper (decrease or omit for a milder soup)
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- Avocado and cilantro for topping, if desired

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, place beans. Fill with water about 1 inch over the beans. Let them soak overnight.
2. Drain and rinse the beans.
3. In the bowl of a slow cooker, place beans, broth, onion, pepper, jalapeños, salsa, garlic, chili powder, cumin, salt, pepper, cayenne, and paprika. Stir to combine.
4. Cook on high for 6 hours, until beans are completely cooked.
5. When the soup is done, you can either leave it as is, process or blend half the soup until smooth and return it to the pot, or process or blend all of the soup until smooth.
6. Serve warm; top with avocado and cilantro.

Note: You can also turn this into a “burrito” bowl by adding this soup, brown rice, salsa, and guacamole or avocado. This soup also freezes well.



Cauliflower Lentil Taco Salad (Adapted from foodbabe.com)

Ingredients

- 1 cup sprouted lentils or any lentils
- 1 head cauliflower, cored and broken into small bite size florets
- 1 tablespoons coconut oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ cup of your favorite tomato sauce or tomato puree
- 1 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- 1 large head of romaine
- 1 lime cut into wedges
- 1 avocado cut in slices

Instructions

1. For the taco filling: Rinse the lentils and drain well.
2. Combine the lentils and 3 cups water in a small saucepan.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until tender, about 30 minutes (or 5 mins if you are using sprouted).
4. Drain off excess water and set the lentils aside.
5. Pulse the cauliflower in a food processor or chop by hand with a knife until reduced to pieces the size of rice grains.
6. Heat the coconut oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
7. Add the onions and jalapenos and cook until the onion is translucent, 5 to 7 minutes.
8. Add the cauliflower, garlic, 2 teaspoons of the chili powder, 1 teaspoon of the cumin and cook for 4 minutes.
9. Stir in the tomato sauce and cook until the cauliflower is tender, another 3 minutes.
10. Add the cooked lentils to the cauliflower mixture. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons chili powder, 1 teaspoon cumin. Stir in the salt and pepper and cook for 3 minutes more to blend the flavors.
11. Combine with chopped cilantro and place mixture over romaine leaves
12. Top with fresh lime juice or avocado

Simple Pasta with Veggies

- 1 package of whole wheat pasta
- 1 glass jar of organic tomato sauce
- 1 package of mushrooms
- 1 head of broccoli
- 1 small onion
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 green pepper or one zucchini
- (If you are feeling adventurous) 1 package of chopped Tempeh

1. Bring the water to a boil and make pasta according to package instructions.
2. Chop up all the veggies. Heat the oil and add the onions first. After about 3 -5minutes when the onion have been slightly cooked add the rest of the veggies in a saute pan. Saute for about 7 minutes or until the broccoli is mildly cooked. I like my vegetables slightly al dente, but definitely cook them to your taste. Then, add the can of spaghetti sauce and cook for another 3-5 minutes until the sauce heats up.

Grocery List

At this point, you may be feeling overwhelmed. You want to get all this stuff from the grocery store, but you don't want to spend more than you have to. Use this guide:

Produce

Large amount of **spinach** (for your morning shake)

Large amount of "other" leafy green (for your daily salad) **Pick One**

- Spinach
- Arugula
- Romaine
- Kale
- Chard

Chopped Veggie (for your mason jar) **Pick One or Two**

- Cucumber
- Carrot
- Celery
- Peppers
- Beet
- Red Cabbage

Bananas (for a snack, and also for your morning shake)

Fruit (for your mason jar) **Pick One or Two**

- Cantaloupe or any melon
- Any berries
- Apple/Pear
- Orange
- Kiwi
- Pomegranate

Lemon (for your lemon water)

Aisle Food

- Oats
- Flax Seed
- Beans (canned or bagged)
- Lentils (canned or bagged)
- Rice and/or Quinoa
- Dried Cranberry (for your salad)
- Nuts and Nut Butter (nut butter is great in the morning shake)

Frozen/Refrigerated

- Frozen Fruit (for your morning shake)
- Milk (cow, almond, coconut, soy)

Supplement (especially during plant-based week)

- Vitamin B12
- Vitamin D

EAT CLEAN GROCERY LIST

rebel dietitian, dana mcdonald, RD, CNSC, LD rebelDIETITIAN.US

Leafy Greens	Fruit	Veggies	Beans + Legumes	Whole Grains	Nuts + Seeds	Dairy, Meat + Seafood	Other
spinach	apples	broccoli	edamame	* steel cut oats	almonds	yogurt	fresh herbs + spices
baby green + red chard	grapes	carrots	lentils	quinoa	walnuts	eggs	raw honey
sprouts	cantaloupe	sweet potatoes	pinto beans	teff	sunflower seeds	fresh dairy products	coconut palm sugar
red leaf	pears	cauliflower	kidney beans	* rye	pecans	wild game	maple sugar + syrup
wild arugula	oranges	cucumbers	lima beans	* barley	peanuts	chicken	whole stevia leaves
green romaine	blueberries + blackberries	asparagus	black beans	buckwheat	flaxseeds	turkey	green + black tea
red mustard	strawberries	bell peppers	garbanzo beans	brown + wild rice	chia seeds	grassfed beef	coffee
radicchio	bananas	brussel sprouts	peas	amaranth	sesame seeds	lamb	apple cider vinegar
kale	cherries	olives	navy beans	sorghum	cashews	tuna	unsweet coconut flakes
romaine	watermelon	artichokes	adzuki beans	* kamut	pumpkin seeds	salmon	unrefined, cold-pressed avocado oil
tat soi	tomato	cabbage	anasazi beans	* einkorn	pistachios	shrimp	unrefined, cold-pressed coconut oil
micro-greens	pineapple	celery	fava beans	* emmer	hemp	cod	cacao
sprouts	kiwi	mushrooms	great northern beans	* spelt	poppy seeds	sardines	unrefined, cold-pressed EVOO
tango	lemons + limes	spirulina	cranberry bean	* farina	DIY nut butters	scallops	succanat
cilantro	dehydrated fruit	sea veggies	turtle bean	* whole wheat	LOCAL + FRESH	EAT LESS MEAT	ORGANIC + NON-GMO

* = Grains with Gluten Choose Local, Fresh, Organic, Non-GMO, and Fair Trade Whenever Possible.

Category B - Physical Activity

“Strive for progress, not perfection” - unknown

Category B (Activity) Challenge 1 - 10,000 steps per day (7x)



First, how are you going to measure this?

For those of you who have a pedometer already, great! For those of you who don't, please wait before you rush out to buy a \$100+ pedometer. All though these are wonderful and fun tools, they need not be expensive.

Option 1: Your smart phone

Pedometer++ is a *free* app available for most smart phones. It is remarkably accurate, and measures vertical steps (stairs) as well. The main drawback is for those of you who do not have pockets or do not otherwise carry your phones on you all day.

Option 2: A cheap pedometer.

Just type in “pedometer” on Amazon.com, and you'll find pretty neat looking items for less than \$20.

Second, the big excuse. . . in Cleveland. . . in March -- that it is too cold outside.

The easiest and most effective way to combat the cold is to simply wear more clothes. A brisk pace will usually warm you up quite quickly, and there is quite a value in being outside when no one else is. This solution, however, does not help when it is icy and treacherous. When that happens, consider the following options:

Option 1: Indoor walking. *North Ridgeville Heart and Sole* has worked hard over the past year to make indoor light exercise options available *for free* for anyone interested. The listing of activities is on the next page. You could also walk at Great Northern Mall any day and time that the mall is open.

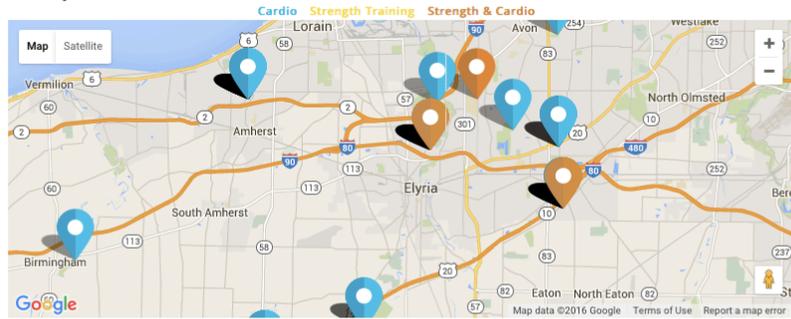


Option 2: Stationary stepping at home.

Simply put your favorite show on the TV, but instead of curling up under a blanket on the couch, step in place. Add in some high knees, some arm movements, or some light weights. Modify the speed of your steps and you'll be amazed at how many accumulate during a simple 30 minute television program.

- United We Sweat**
- Class Participant Sign in Sheets
 - Find a Location Near You
 - My ExplorerList
 - United We Sweat Admin
 - United We Sweat Partner Application
 - Who's Involved
 - United We Sweat Home

Icon Key:



Printer Friendly | Export Monthly Calendar

3/3 Garden Walk
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Schoepfle Garden - Birmingham
(440) 965-7237
More Details | Add to Calendar | Print
[ExplorerList](#) 0

3/22 Mercy Free Senior Exercise
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
St. John Lutheran Church - Elyria
More Details | Add to Calendar | Print
[ExplorerList](#) 0

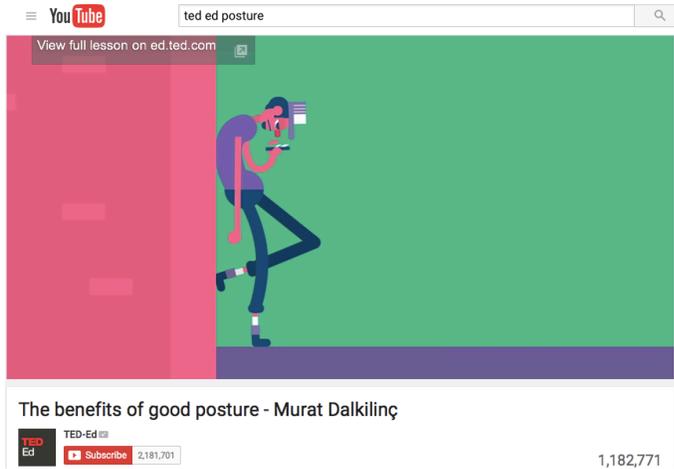
3/3 Fit Walks
5:30 PM - 6:15 PM

3/23 Indoor Winter Walking
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Category B (Activity) Challenge 2 - 60 seconds of plank, twice a day (7x)

Why plank?

The standard American *posture* has devolved in the past 20 years with the advent of technological breakthroughs that have certainly made our lives more organized and entertaining, but have also caused us to *hunch over* and *look down* all the time. Watch the following YouTube:



As a result of this, lower back pain has become an accepted epidemic, and it is beginning to affect people at a younger and younger age. Its cause: a hunched back, and a weak core.

Try to plank for more than 60 seconds without cheating (letting body droop, or sticking butt in the air). As you continue to plank, your time increase, and lower lower back pain might subside. It would be nice to see that your lower back has actually become more symptom free with age, rather than the reverse.

If you can't do it for 60 seconds, don't get discouraged, but *don't cheat* (sticking your butt in the air, or letting your hips sag close to the floor). Instead of cheating, keep a straight body, but put one or both knees on the floor; or, instead of putting your elbows on the floor, rest them against the wall (easiest), a table, or a chair.

If it is *too easy*, try to maintain a plank position with one foot lifted, or an elbow, or both!



Day 1: Number of seconds before giving up or cheating? _____

Day 7: Number of seconds before giving up or cheating? _____

X DO NOT ALLOW LOWER BACK TO DROOP



The two individuals above are *cheating*. Your butt and hips should be in-line with the rest of your body.

If a simple plank is *too easy*, try to lift an arm or a leg while keeping your body in a straight plank, like *this*



Category B (Activity) Challenge 3 - Sun Salutations 10 times in succession (7x)

This seems like a lot, but will only take 5-10 minutes.



There are *many, many* variations to this practice, some making it easier, and some more difficult. Type in “sun salutation” on YouTube to get a feel for the many ways that you can make this exercise right for your body and its ability.

Breathing

Part of the value of this exercise lies not in the movement of the body, but the coordination of breath with each changing posture. What I mean by this is that you would begin the movement of your arms up and over your head with *a deep inhale*. Then, as you bend forward, you should *exhale deeply*. etc., etc.

Category B (Activity) Challenge 4 - 60 Seconds of wall sitting (7x)

Just as plank exercises strengthen our posture muscles above the waist, wall sitting strengthens our posture muscles below the waist. This is especially important for people with body types in which the belly is large, but the hips and bottom are small. These body types, referred to as “apple shaped” tend to have increased incidence of lower back and hip problems early in life.

Wall sits are just like sitting in a chair against the wall, only *without a chair*.



90 Degrees from the floor to your ankles
90 Degree bend in the knees
90 Degree bend in the hips

If this is too easy, lift a foot for 15 seconds, then alternate to the other foot for 15 seconds. You could also put a weight on your lap.

Do not put your weight on your toes (this is bad for your knees). Instead, your weight should be primarily in your heel of your foot.

If this is too difficult, modify by sliding your bottom higher up the wall. Reducing the bend in your knees. It is important to remember, though, that the point of this challenge is *to get stronger over the course of the week*. So, if you start the week with only a minor bend in your knees, high up on the wall, try to gradually lower the position of your bottom, increasing the intensity, as the week progresses.



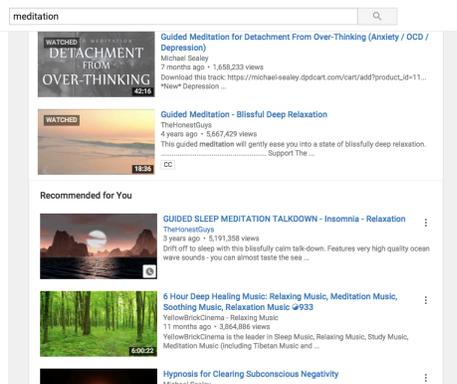
Challenge #1 - Daily meditation for 10 minutes (5x)

How do you meditate?

1. Sit down. Don't worry about being cross legged, having candles burning, etc. Just sit. Don't lie down as you might fall asleep. Put something behind your back (like a wall) so that you can stay comfortable. I would advise not to sit on your bed, as it is too cushy and your lower back might start to hurt.
2. Keep your back straight, face forward, and close your eyes.
3. Now take deep breaths. Listen to your breath in, and listen to it out. Exaggerate the sound of your breathing so that you can concentrate on it.
4. If stressful thoughts begin to emerge in your mind (what you have to get done, difficult people from the day, etc.), don't try to fight it, just gently remind yourself to focus on your breath instead.
5. If simply concentrating on your breath isn't working, and you are constantly reverting back to a busy jumbled mind, try:
 - a. Counting as you breath in and out
 - b. Focussing on the parts of your body (how does my right foot feel, how does my back feel, etc.)
 - c. Imagine that your mind is a box (like a TV), and your thoughts are just fluttering in and out of the box. Don't fight them when they come in, but don't hang on to them either. Just let them flutter away as you concentrate on your breath, counting, body position, etc.
 - d. Focus on the sounds around you. No matter how 'silent' your house might seem, there are sounds in there.

Need help? There is *a lot* of help out there!

Free download the app “Headspace” on your phone. Then, when you get comfortable, just play the pre-recorded 10 minute guided meditation. There are 10 different recordings available for free on this app.



If you don't feel like doing that, just type in “Guided Meditation” on YouTube, and choose from hundreds of really wonderful sounding recordings, including some entitled:

- Deep Relaxation
- Guided Meditation to Remove Subconscious Negativity
- Talkdown to better sleep
- Etc.



Challenge #2 - Watch one motivational video or listen to one motivational podcast (6x)

It is best to limit this challenge to no more than 20 minutes per day (unless you are retired, and happy to spend the extra time). Most of the motivational podcasts below are more than 20 minutes, so you can listen to part of one on the first day, and the rest of it the next day.

YouTube:

In the “search” box, type in:

Amy Cuddy
Shawn Achor
Dan Gilbert
Tony Robbins
Elizabeth Gilbert
Arthur Brooks
Rich Roll
Daniel Pink

or, if you don't have this handout with you, just type in:

Motivational video
Inspirational video
Happiness
etc.



Now, if you like the idea of killing two birds with one stone, and would rather listen to a podcast while you are doing another challenge (for example, while you are on your walk, while you are cooking dinner, etc.), here are some great podcasts:

Finding Mastery with Michael Gervais
The One you Feed
Rich Roll

I am not as familiar with a wide range of PodCasts as I am with youtube videos, but you might want to do a simple google search “most inspirational podcasts” to find some other good ones

Try to fight the temptation to watch YouTubes or Podcasts with topics specifically about diet, health, and fitness. The purpose of this exercise is to develop a more positive and hopeful mindset, so stick to topics specifically concerning this objective.

Challenge #3 - No screens the whole week (5x)

Let me repeat -- no TV, no Computer, no Phone, no Tablet

No Screens!

Before you embark upon this challenge, watch the YouTube below. It is entitled, “Can we Auto-Correct Humanity”

Of all the challenges outlined thus far, this one will inevitably test your honesty, as there are *many legitimate excuses in which screens cannot be avoided*. These include:

- Necessary screen time at work
- Using screens to look up great plant-based non-processed recipes
- Using screens to watch inspirational YouTube videos
- Using screens for exercise videos or tutorials on how to plank, wall-sit, sun salutation, etc.



The above is all very legitimate, and you are not breaking the rules when you use screens for the purposes of self-improvement. Here are the *many non-legitimate* uses of screens that are prohibited during this week:

- Checking facebook, reddit, snapchat, twitter, instagram, tumblr, etc.
- Checking e-mail *more than once a day*
- Checking your bank account
- Reading the news
- Checking your financial portfolio
- Texting friends and family (try calling them instead)
- Surfing pinterest
- Watching TV

Let's face it, you know when you are being productive with your screens, and when you are not. If you notice that you are feeling guilty, or using energy to justify your screen usage, it might be best to use those feelings as cues to put the screen away.

Challenge #4 - Journal (5x)

The best time to journal is immediately after meditation. This is when your mind is most clear, and your self-awareness is highest. It is sometimes difficult to journal appropriately before bed because of exhaustion.



Although the temptation may exist, try not to focus your journaling on all of the negatives in your life. Obviously, bad, unpredictable, and stressful things can happen during the day, but instead of using your journal as a written summary of the details of the negative occurrence, utilize the journal to proclaim your own strength/perseverance despite it.

When nothing negative happens during your day, take a moment to reflect upon any “wins” you may have had. These could include really simple stuff, like catching a green light right before it turned yellow, or getting the kids to help you take out the garbage.

When the day goes by, and it is terribly ordinary, with little positive and little negative, do your best not to simply summarize your mundane movements. Instead, force yourself to reflect upon something that you are grateful for. No matter how bad things might be going in your life, you are still tremendously fortunate -- to be alive, to live in the US, to be surrounded by conveniences and wealth that would be considered a fairy tale to so much of the world’s population. Sometimes it is good to remind yourself of this.

A few ideas:

What are you thankful for?

In what ways has your life improved?

What are you proud of?

How might you make a positive change either for yourself, your family, your world?

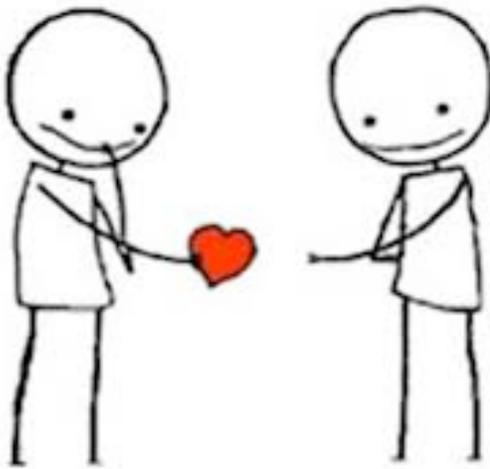
What adventure do you look forward to?

What **random act of kindness** did you do today, or plan on doing tomorrow?

What were your “wins” today?

How did you handle your “losses” today? How might you handle them better in the future?

Challenge #5 - Random Act of Kindness (4x)



It is not always easy to come up with one of these, and also find yourself in a position to do a random act without much preparation. For this reason, I am only challenging you to perform a random act *three times* for the whole week.

Here are a few ideas:

1. Write a handwritten note to someone. Make it sentimental and slightly outside of your comfort zone. There is a great YouTube that might help inspire you to do this.
2. Buy something for a stranger, like their coffee, or their overdue fee at the library
3. Gather up some food, clothing, or toys, and donate them
4. Call, e-mail, or message an old friend whom you have spoken to in a long time
5. Tell a family member, work colleague, or neighbor a genuine compliment (make them blush)
6. Find someone who knows a lot about a particular topic or skill set, and give them the opportunity to either help you or teach you. For example, if you know someone who takes pride in being a good cook, ask them to help you cook something; or, if you know someone who is great at woodworking, ask them to help you with a small DIY project.

