

Here Are Some Dangerous Lies Teenage Boys Believe

On Sept. 6, 1992, a moose hunter named Butch Killian came across an abandoned bus in the middle of the Alaskan wild. Inside the bus, he found the unfortunate remains of Christopher McCandless in a sleeping bag. He had starved to death.

McCandless' story was chronicled in Jon Krakauer's book, *Into the Wild*, and made even more famous by Sean Penn's 2007 movie by the same title. McCandless romanticized living off of the land in the Alaskan frontier with limited resources.

His death was the tragic result of being unprepared. Two months before, he had killed a moose; however, he was unable to preserve the meat. He had leaned on the expertise of hunters from South Dakota on preserving meat after a kill; however, meat in South Dakota is preserved differently than in Alaska. In Alaska, meat must be cut into thin strips while trying to preserve it in the field. The information he based his life on was wrong and it cost him.

Teenagers receive a lot of information to help guide their lives. Believing the wrong information or lies has a significant cost. We need to fill them with the truth so they can make choices that are life-giving. Here are four dangerous lies teenage boys believe:

1. "My value is based on my achievements." They believe they are only as good as their last game, grade, compliment or trophy. Those that buy into this lie live with an anxiety every day. Fear of failure and affirmation is the driving force. When failure arrives, it defines them. They constantly compare themselves to others and never feel good enough. The others all have the key to success that he does not have.

2. “Losing my virginity will make me a man.” This is looked at as a rite of passage. When their peers begin to experience sex, they feel as though they are left behind. It is as if their peers have become men and they are still a boy. Sadly, sex becomes viewed as a goal to be achieved, like getting a driver’s license or getting into college. [Tweet This] The true design, context and beauty of sex gets lost in a manhood conquest. This lie leaves battered and bruised hearts in its wake.

3. “I need to have it all together.” They believe they should have all of the answers and not have any struggles. Be strong at all times, conquer every challenge, and meet every requirement. When things get difficult, man up and take care of business. Anything less may define them as weak. This is an isolating and stress-filled road that I’ve seen many teenage boys walk. They feel pressure from teacher, coaches and parents. What happens more often is they work harder at upholding an image of strength and competency, rather than the actual thing. Maturity and growth end up being stunted because they are projecting a face.

4. “The value of a man is in his net worth.” Teenage boys don’t make a lot of money, but the teenage years are where this lie finds roots. The people our culture defines as “successful” or “doing well” are always people who make a lot of money. When they believe this lie, they will seek out vocations that earn a high wage, rather than where their talents and passions lead. They potentially miss doing things that fill them with enthusiasm that is truly rich.

Another fallout is their attitude toward the poor or even themselves when they earn a lower wage. Integrity gets thrown in the trash pretty quickly when a boy believes his personal worth is found in the size of his bank account.

Sound Off: Did you ever believe one of these lies?

Huddle up with your kids and ask, “How do you tell whether or not something is true?”

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5 Damaging Stereotypes About Men

Several years ago, I moved states. There are a lot things to get when you move. The thing I wanted to put off more than anything else was changing my license and tags. I remember wondering why I didn't want to go the DMV.

While growing up, I had always heard horror stories about it and remembered the way it was always portrayed in movies. There were never-ending lines, confusing procedures and miserable customer service.

However, in 20 years and two different states, I had never experienced those stereotypes. It was always efficient and friendly. Why was I still so apprehensive? I think the reason is that stereotypes have lasting power. Everything in my personal experience said I had nothing to fear, but the stereotype was winning the day. Unfortunately, the DMV reinforced the stereotype this time.

Two-thirds of my experiences with the DMV have been good, but stereotypes are damaging and tough to shake. They can create distrust and hurt feelings. [Tweet This] Here are 5 damaging

stereotypes about men:

1. "Men are just after sex." Most men do love sex, but most women do too. This stereotype paints the picture that men just want to take from women. Once we satisfy our selfish desires, we move on. This is obviously true for some men, but it is not the way a majority of men operate. More men see sex as a way to intimately know women, show affection and love them.

2. "Men are idiots." At some point, in commercials, TV shows and movies, the bungling idiot guy became the norm. There are some of these characters I find funny; however, when these idiot characters become the "go to," we have a problem. It becomes the perception of the public and undermines our societal contribution.

3. "When it comes to parenting, men need to be trained by women." This one goes along with the last one. Dads are consistently portrayed as uncomfortable and lost when it comes to parenting. We are even portrayed as just another kid for the mom to train. There is a lot to learn from women when it comes to parenting. However, there is just as much men bring to the table in raising children. It is a partnership, and we are to help make one another be better parents. Reducing the male contribution isn't good for anyone.

4. "Men are uncomfortable with intimacy and vulnerability." Plenty of women struggle with this too. Again, some men are uncomfortable with both but not the majority. Most men desire to be known at the deepest level. The list of people we are vulnerable with might be smaller than most women, but we are not deficient when it comes to intimacy. A stereotype like this throws things out of balance. Men either take on the stereotype because this is how men are "supposed to be" or they overcompensate and become blubbering criers.

5. "Men are aggressive, sports hungry and competitive." When men have shown physical aggression, particularly in violating

the law, it is easy to see. I believe there are just as many aggressive and competitive women as men. It may come out in different ways, but it's there. There are also many men who are none of these. Sweeping statements like this have a tendency to make those men feel like there is something wrong with them. That's the main problem with most stereotypes.

Sound Off: What other stereotypes about men have you experienced?

Huddle up with your kids and ask, "What are some stereotypes about kids that you find hurtful?"

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10 Ways Cayenne Pepper Can Improve Your Health

Winter weather got you down? Spice up your life with cayenne pepper.

Forget those foot warmers you see in the "impulse aisle" while waiting to check out at the mega discount store. Save money by simply sprinkling cayenne pepper into your socks. That will warm those tootsies in no time! Just make sure you don't have any open cuts or blisters on your feet, or you'll get too much heat.

Cayenne pepper is extremely hot to the touch. Pepper Spray is made with cayenne pepper and is an effective method to fend-

off attackers when sprayed in the assailant's eyes. The intense, burning sensation on the eyes is overwhelming, thus allowing the victim time to escape.

Cayenne peppers are 10 times hotter than Jalapeño peppers. In fact, the Scoville heat measurement scale, which rates the heat emitted from a spice, rates cayenne peppers at 40,000 units, compared to Jalapeño peppers, which rate a mere 4,000.

The ingredient that causes the fiery sensation is the wonderful capsaicin, which benefits us in a number of ways. Most of us use cayenne pepper dried, out of a bottle. But if you ever actually touch the pepper itself, wear gloves or you will burn your hands when you touch the inside of the pepper, particularly the seeds.

As it turns out, the heat in cayenne peppers is very good for us for both the prevention and treatment of many things that cause us health problems.

Here are 10 health benefits of cayenne pepper:

1. Lowers inflammation. Cayenne pepper inhibits "substance P," which is associated with inflammation, both the type that cannot be felt (such as the kind of inflammation that causes heart disease) and the kind that can be felt (such as the kind that causes arthritis).

2. Cardiovascular health. When we eat cayenne pepper, the amount of heat our body emits is increased. This increases circulation and blood flow to all major organs, which means oxygen and nutrients are delivered more efficiently.

3. Weight loss. Cayenne pepper boosts metabolism and suppresses appetite.

4. Lowers blood pressure. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke.

5. Improves liver function.

6. Helps regulate the digestive system.

7. Pain reliever. Used topically, cayenne can be used for back pain and cluster headaches.

8. Relieves ulcers. Cayenne Pepper Tea (steeping 1/4 tsp. in 1 cup water) relieves ulcers.

9. Immune system booster. Cayenne contains carotenoids, including beta carotene and high levels of vitamins A, B6, C, E, K and manganese.

10. Treats upper respiratory infections. Cayenne with lemon juice and honey is an effective syrup for sore throats.

There are many ways to add cayenne pepper to your diet. For example, add it to hot chocolate for a bit of kick. When combined with lemon juice, it is an exciting way to prepare vegetables. Obviously, cayenne can be added to Mexican dishes like tacos and enchiladas.

So spice up your life with cayenne pepper. Ingested or placed on the skin, it can improve your health in a variety of ways.

For the original article, visit .

My Spouse Cheated, Now What?

It's probably the worst fear within a relationship. What if my spouse meets someone else?

For ladies, the fear is that her husband will give his heart to another woman, pouring into her his feelings and attention and time. For men, it's more so the fear that your wife will meet someone else and have a physical relationship with them.

There are two stages of adultery and affairs, the first is emotional; the second is physical. Some affairs are found out and ended while still during the emotional stage; others have gone on long enough (time is relevant to the people involved) to have made it physical. Both of which started in the mind.

I must warn you that what I'm referencing here is very different from a sexual addiction. Some may cheat multiple times in many different scenarios looking to fulfill a lust driven by the flesh that is fueled by an addiction of which there is very little emotional involvement. This is different and should be handled differently.

Pure Life Ministries is a resource that concentrates on this type of situation if that is your case. This article is specific to an emotional or physical affair that seems to take the place of your spouse. If I were to give you one single piece of marriage advice that I believe trumps all others, it would be this: Guard your thoughts.

Proverbs 4:23 states "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

That's not a verse advocating a breakfast cereal to cut down on heart disease. It means guard your thoughts. Guard your emotions. Guard who or what you rent space to in your mind. Bounce your eyes when you see an attractive person, cut off a conversation if it seems to linger too long or evoke feelings of flattery within you. These are all protective maneuvers to be placed beforehand.

A great resource for this is the book *Hedges* by Jerry Jenkins. For the rest of this article I want to focus on your choices in the event an affair has happened and come into the light, what choices do you have? You have two—release or restore.

1. Release. Trust is broken. Your heart feels as though it has been put through a meat grinder. Your view of the world has

probably grown a little colder and a little dimmer. You have an anger that burns within you and your first inclination is to either run or to get revenge. You don't possibly see how things could ever recover and you lose hope that you have a future together.

At this point you begin to focus on all your rights. I have the right to be happy. I have the right to be loved by someone else who will treat me with respect. I have the right to a divorce. Jesus said so. "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9). "*I have the right!*" Jesus said, 'Except for sexual immorality.' That is my out and I can be released from this marriage without guilt, without trying to salvage it and without a fight."

The problem is, you may be released without any of those things, but you will be released with consequences, especially if you have children. The following areas have been statistically proven to be affected by divorce:

- Children's mental and emotional well-being
- Children's academics
- Adults' emotional well-being
- Chance of divorce rises for second marriage
- Chance of divorce in children's future marriages rises
- Financial hardships due to supporting two households on same income

The first statement that went through your mind is: "*Yes, but it is not healthy for children to see mom and dad fighting all the time either.*" Agreed, it's not. But there is no statistic that says children suffer because mom and dad figured it out and then sought help and made their marriage work. There are plenty of statistics to the contrary though. There are lots of rights that you have if your spouse has cheated on you, but don't forsake your responsibilities over your rights.

2. Restore. Understandably there are going to be times when both people just cannot get on the same page and make an agreement to move forward. That's not an excuse, but it is a reality. So I'm going to focus on the ones in which the cheating spouse says, "I was wrong, I'm sorry. I want to come home."

Should you forgive them? Yes. There is life for a marriage on the other side of a nasty crisis. It takes two hearts yielded to God—both the offending and the offended—to make it work. It starts with a decision. There are times when one spouse wants to be restored and the other doesn't want to restore. Those are times when you can seek God for help with forgiveness and pray for the turnaround of your spouse's heart.

People make mistakes. People go too far. Sometimes people break your heart, but if you focus on your responsibilities rather than your rights, you can get through this. When both the offending spouse and the offended spouse seek God and recognize their own faults that resulted in this crisis, healing can begin.

It takes two to tango, it takes two to admit their wrongs, and it takes two to fix a marriage. Restoration is not an easy road and neither is release. So if you're going to have to endure the pain of a process, why not choose one that can have better results and long-lasting positive effects on your family? My wife and I chose the restoration route, and we have never looked back. Life and marriage is good.

Lord, I pray over those who have read these words today. Give them direction, give them strength, and allow Your love and forgiveness to shine through them like You did for me and my wife. Allow their restoration to be as miraculous and healing and beautiful as ours was. Pick them up from the miry clay and set them firmly upon the Rock that is Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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For the original article, visit .

Study: Lack of Exercise Twice as Deadly as Obesity

Not getting enough exercise could be twice as deadly as being obese, according to a new study.

Researchers at Cambridge University in Britain studied information from more than 334,000 European men and women over the course of 12 years.

They found twice as many deaths were linked to a lack of exercise compared to obesity.

But they also found just a little bit of exercise—20 minutes or more of walking—can seriously cut the risks of early death, especially for people who already spend much of their time sitting.

And if you can't walk 20 minutes at a time, they recommend doing 10 minutes twice a day.

"We can no longer afford to continue ignoring the relationship between physically active transport and health," *The Telegraph*

quoted Philip Insall, director of health for Sustrans. “Inactive lifestyles are responsible for thousands of premature deaths and incur massive costs for our health system. Enabling people to walk and cycle for their everyday journeys is the tonic that must be prescribed immediately.”

For the original article, visit .

This Film Promises to Tug at Your Heartstrings

Filmmaker Brian Ivie was a Southern California boy chasing fame. After reading a story about abandoned children in South Korea, he traveled 6,000 miles to film an amazing rescue story—his own.

“Before we left, a lot of people told me that I had a savior complex, that I was engaging in the modern-day white man’s burden,” Ivie says. “And in some way, they were right. I didn’t want to make a documentary in America about pedestrian domestic issues. I knew it wasn’t as sexy to film a documentary on skid row about abandoned babies. It had to be daring. It had to be exotic.”

The amazing result was a film titled *The Drop Box*, which tells the story of South Korean Pastor Lee Jong-rak and his heroic efforts to embrace and protect the most vulnerable members of society. It is a heart-wrenching exploration of the physical, emotional and financial toll associated with providing refuge to orphans that would otherwise be abandoned on the streets.

But *The Drop Box* movie is also a story of *hope*—a reminder that every human life is sacred and worthy of love.

South Korea is not the only country grappling with the issue of orphan care. Around the world, there are more than 150 million orphans waiting for forever families to call their own. On the door of Jong-rak's orphanage is an inscription that reads:

"This is a facility for the protection of life. If you can't take care of your disabled babies, don't throw them away or leave them on the street. Bring them here."

The Drop Box: How 500 Abandoned Babies, an Act of Compassion, and a Movie Changed My Life Forever, which won the grand prize at the Christian Film Festival in 2013, will be shown in theaters across the country beginning March 1. But it is more than a story about Jong-rak's ministry. It is also the amazing story of how Ivie came to meet and know Jesus in a real and unwavering way.

"To all of those people who thought so, I really didn't have a savior complex. "That summer, being a Christian meant feeling not just forgiven, but also wanted. Not just pardoned, but also delighted in. It meant that forgiveness was not the destination of Christianity, but more of the road. The road leading all the way home."

What Is the State of Your Union?

The State of the Union is an annual address by the president of the United States to a joint session of Congress. The purpose of the address is to provide a report on the condition of our nation while allowing presidents to outline their plans and priorities.

No matter who is in office, there is always a wide range of opinions on how well our country is doing. I've yet to see one president deliver this address without an opposing opinion. It comes with the territory. But what happens when you believe your marriage is in great condition, but your wife doesn't? Or vice versa?

I've been there and know of many other couples that have as well. No matter how hard it may be to come to the realization that our marriages are not as great as we thought, it needs to be addressed.

As couples, just like our government, we need to address where our marriage is and where it's going. [Tweet This] And we need to do it together. Here are some ways you can assess the state of your union and make sure it's heading in a direction that pleases you and your wife.

1. Ask questions. One of the best ways to learn the state of your union is to ask your wife.

2. Get counseling. Counseling isn't only for marriages on the brink of divorce. Bringing in an experienced person or couple can help you determine the state of your marriage.

3. Get away. My wife and I attend a marriage retreat every single year. We learn something about each other and/or our marriage each year.

4. Ask someone close to you. Sometimes we don't see what is really happening because we are in the middle of it. Asking a close friend or family member you trust can help you see things you don't.

5. Start journaling. Every couple should journal their marriage experiences. When you regularly journal and reflect, you will be able to see themes, reoccurring challenges and even solutions to problems that can help you today.

6. Date regularly. Spending time together, especially date nights, will provide a regular outlet to communicate without kids, work and household duties. Focused time can bring clarity.

7. Pray daily. Prayer time is intimate. When my wife and I pray together, we are able to intimately see each other in ways we've never seen. Praying together exposes what's really going on inside.

Marriages that end in divorce don't do so in an instant. It's a gradual process that eventually leads to the point of no return in a couple's mind. Regularly assessing the state of your union can bring awareness to challenges or potential problems that can be addressed and fixed, if needed. It can also reveal some great things in your marriage as well.

Sound Off: What are some other ways to assess the state of your marriage? Huddle up with your wife and ask her to rate your marriage on a scale of 1 to 10.

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Why You Should Quit Drinking Diet Soda

When diet sodas were first introduced to the general public in the middle of the 20th century, they seemed like the best new thing in food since sliced bread. The idea was that you could

drink sodas without counting calories and worrying about weight gain.

According to the University of Texas, 59 percent of Americans drinks diet sodas regularly, hoping to lose weight. Unfortunately, evidence shows that they do not help you lose weight. In fact, they increase your risk of becoming obese and may even be worse for your health than regular sodas.

“Artificial sweeteners are a disaster in their own right,” says board-certified family physician Dr. David Brownstein. “They’re known to cause neurological problems, autoimmune disorders and probably cancer,” he tells *Newsmax Health*.

If you’re still guzzling diet drinks, read on to see why you seriously need to quit—and you’ll also discover the best, least painful ways to ditch your habit. There are at least five good reasons, all backed by research, why you should quit drinking diet sodas:

- **Weight gain.** A study at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio found those who drank diet sodas were more likely to become overweight than those who drank regular sugary sodas. For each can of diet soda consumed each day, the risk of obesity increased by 41 percent. After 10 years, those who drank two or more diet sodas a day increased their risk of obesity by 500 percent. “Data from this and other prospective studies suggest that the promotion of diet sodas as healthy alternatives may be ill-advised,” said Dr. Helen Hazuda, professor of medicine at UT.
- **Diabetes.** A study published in the journal *Nature* found that diet sodas change the microbes living in the gut in a way that increases the risk of diabetes. Researchers at Israel’s Weizmann Institute of Science found that mice fed artificial sweeteners developed glucose intolerance. They also found that people who regularly used artificial sweeteners, including aspartame and

saccharin, had elevated levels of HbA1C, a measure of blood sugar. When they gave artificial sweeteners to people who didn't normally consume them, they found glucose levels were altered after only a week in more than half of the volunteers. A study conducted at the University of Minnesota found that a single diet soda daily raised the risk of metabolic syndrome and diabetes by 36 percent.

- **Rotting teeth.** The acids in diet soda can damage your teeth as badly as meth, according to Dr. Mohamed Bassiouny of the Philadelphia's Temple University School of Dentistry. He found that that when he put photos of people with "meth mouth" and those who drank an excessive amount of soda side by side, the damage looked the same.
- **Weak bones.** Sodas may be especially harmful to the bones of women. Researchers at Tufts university found that women who drank sodas, including diet sodas, had lower bone density than women who didn't drink them. Another study, which was published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, also linked sodas with low bone density. The phosphoric acid in sodas leaches calcium from bones.
- **Cardiovascular disease.** Researchers from Columbia University and the University of Miami found that a single diet soda daily over a period of 10 years increased the risk of heart attack and stroke by 43 percent. Drinking regular soda didn't appear to affect risk.

If you're still guzzling diet drinks, you've seen why you need to make a determined effort to quit. Here are five alternatives to help you beat your soda addiction:

- Drink unsweetened tea and coffee, hot or cold, to combat the headaches and other annoying symptoms of caffeine withdrawal. As a bonus, green tea and coffee supply

valuable antioxidants.

- Try seltzer water. If you miss the “fizz” of soft drinks, drink seltzer water. Add a splash of lemon or lime to dress it up
- Try natural beverages. Pick up naturally carbonated, fruit-flavored beverages in health food stores or make your own by mixing 100 percent fruit juice half-and-half with carbonated water for a sweet fizzy drink that’s good for you.
- Enjoy herbal teas. Herbal fruit teas, brewed strong, provide a flavorful, satisfying pick-me-up.
- Drink water. Healthy and cheap, water is perhaps the best drink of all. If plain water is a bit too boring for you, add mint, lime or lemon for flavor.

For the original article, visit .

7 Things Wives Should Stop Doing

Ladies, I recently blogged about 7 things husbands should stop doing. Today, it’s your turn.

As I started putting together the list of things, I remembered a good article I had previously read from *Family Life*, “15 Things Wives Should Stop Doing.” So I picked these seven things wives should stop doing from that list and added some of my own thoughts:

1. Don’t put others before your husband. If you don’t make your husband a top priority, your marriage will suffer. Wives, please remember to give your husband your freshest and best, not your leftovers. [Tweet This]

2. Don't expect your husband to be your girlfriend. He converses differently. He thinks differently. He processes things differently. So don't treat him like a girlfriend or be frustrated if he doesn't respond to you as a girlfriend would.

3. Don't dishonor your husband. You can dishonor your spouse by the way you talk about him in a negative light to others or by the way you talk to him as if he were a child or an idiot. Be careful not to question his judgment and abilities.

4. Never use sex to bargain with your husband. Your sexual relationship is not a game. It should not be used to get what you want. It should be a very important part of your relationship. It is not something that must be "earned" by your husband, but rather should be "freely" given in your marriage relationship.

5. Stop giving your husband your long-term to-do list. Keeping your "honey do" list short-term means keeping it manageable. If your husband feels like the list is never done, he may feel defeated and discouraged about helping you with the things that need to be done. Celebrate together the projects that you finish. If you don't, it may also communicate that you're never content with anything he has done or will do.

6. Don't make your husband earn your respect. Just as a husband should unconditionally love his wife, a wife should unconditionally respect her husband. That does not mean that she should like everything he does or agree with him on everything. And it does not mean that she should not address inappropriate behavior or actions with him. But it does mean that no matter what he does or says, she should treat him with dignity and honor because he is her husband.

7. Do not expect your husband to be prince charming. News flash ... no husband is the perfect prince charming of your dreams. If you keep expecting him to meet every dreamy expectation you have, you're bound to be disappointed and he's

bound to feel wholly inadequate. Try to focus on the things that you do appreciate about him.

What are some other things you think wives should stop doing? Sound off, graciously, in the comments section below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .

5 Easy Ways to Eat Healthier and Lose Weight

All of the time it seems that one of the most discussed topics is nutrition. Many people struggle with trying to follow recommendations for their health. The problem is that statistically many people do not have the habits that they need to be healthy.

Each day you should be getting at least five servings of fruits and vegetables but most adults in the U.S. only eat 1.6 servings of vegetables and 1.1 servings of fruit.

Eating more produce is one easy health goal that you can make for 2015. The following are five simple health goals that will help you to learn how to have the healthy eating habits that you need for your health. Plus you will find that it is easy to lose weight when you are following them.

Of course making these five changes to your lifestyle can be hard, so instead of trying to do them all at once, why not try and focus on one at a time? When this becomes part of your normal routine and does not feel like a change you will know that you are ready to tackle the next one.

Executing the process slowly will help you stick to it through the end of December 2015 and will help you end the year healthier.

1. Choose produce at each meal. Making produce one of the main attractions at each meal is going to have a lot of benefits for your health.

Eating five servings each day of fruits and vegetables is going to do a lot of things for you. It will increase your intake of minerals, fiber, antioxidants and vitamins. This can lower your chances of getting certain types of cancer, having heart disease, having a stroke, and a number of additional chronic diseases. Since vegetables and fruits help you to avoid foods that have more calories per bite, they are able to help you with weight loss. For instance, one cup of cooked pasta has about 200 calories and one cup of non-starchy vegetables has about 25 calories. You can get rid of anywhere from 50 to 200 calories when you choose a medium pear instead of crackers, cookies or chips.

Tips to make it work: Choosing to eat one serving of fruit at breakfast and snack and two servings of vegetables at lunch and dinner will help you to get the servings that you need. One serving is generally equal to one cup or a piece of fruit that is about the size of a tennis ball. You can add your fruit to things like oatmeal and yogurt, eat it raw, or make it into a smoothie.

2. Drink water above all else. While everyone knows that there are negative side effects to drinking soft drinks, regardless of whether they are diet or regular, most people do not know all of the benefits of choosing to drink more water. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* published a study that showed that people who are getting their recommended amounts of water in their diet are consuming fewer foods that are high-calorie, eating less sugar and getting more fiber.

In addition to keeping the body well hydrated, it is possible that water helps with weight loss by boosting the metabolism and helping to curb the appetite. Another study showed that people who drink around 7 cups of water each day eat about 200 calories less than those who are drinking less than one glass. It was also published in a different study that people who drink 2 cups of water before eating a meal, eat between 75 and 90 fewer calories. Plus, a German study showed that drinking 16 ounces of water can up your calorie burning by 30 percent within 10 minutes and that it can sustain that calorie burning for more than one hour.

Tips to make it work: Choose to drink 16 ounces of water four times a day. If you hate drinking water because of the taste you can add cucumber slices, lemon wedges, fresh mint leaves, lime wedges, organic citrus zest or freshly grated ginger. You can also mash tangerine wedges or berries and throw them into your water.

3. Get starch from whole foods. Today Americans consume an unhealthy amount of grains that are refined. Some of the products that Americans eat that are made with refined grains include rice, white bread versions, pretzels, pasta, baked goods, cereals and crackers. In the U.S., the average daily intake of healthy whole grains is less than one serving. Healthy grains are foods like brown rice, quinoa and whole wheat. People who eat more whole grains have a lower chance of suffering from obesity, cancer, heart disease, diabetes or stroke, according to research. One reason for the lower risk in obesity is that whole grains are more filling. Fiber actually helps to keep food around in the stomach for longer and makes you feel full longer. It also regulates blood sugar and insulin, which are known to regulate appetites and helps delay how long it takes for you to be hungry again.

One great thing that you can do for your health is to try and replace refined grains with 100 percent-whole grains. Refined grains are grains that have their natural nutrients and fiber

removed. There are many great gluten free varieties of whole grains for those who are trying to limit their consumption of gluten products. There are also a lot of starches that are rich in nutrients and are not grains. These include squash, beans, root vegetables, lentils and potatoes that have their skins on them. If you are going to try and lose weight it might be tempting to go carbohydrate-free, but instead you should be eating moderate portions. This is because whole grains are known to help provide you with nutrients and sustained energy that can help you to lose weight.

Tips to make it work: With each meal you should eat just one or two servings of starch that comes from whole foods. If you are more active, you should aim for two servings at each meal. If you are less active you should aim for one serving at each meal. There are some great choices for you with puffed whole grain cereals or oats at breakfast, chickpeas or quinoa in a salad at lunch, and squash, lentils, sweet potato or wild rice at dinner. A serving of cooked starch is just $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. It is important to follow this guideline instead of looking on the label of the package.

4. Reduce your sugar intake. Many times people try to cut sugar out all together but this does not work as well as offering themselves sugar in moderation. Each day the average American consumes about 22 teaspoons of processed sugar. This means that they are eating this much sugar in addition to the sugar that they get from natural sources like fruits. The American Heart Association says that women should consume no more than 6 teaspoons and men should consume no more than 9 teaspoons of processed sugar each day. This includes sugars found in both beverages and foods. While this might seem strict, it is important to remember that it does not remove all sugar from your diet. If you need to have sugar then allowing yourself to have a little each day will help you stay on track and keep you from bingeing on sugar later.

Tips to make it work: The first thing that you can do is stop

eating processed sugar. This means that you will not be eating packaged treats, yogurts, almond milk (that is not unsweetened) or candy. You should also realize that there are many places where the sugar could be found like in salad dressing and tomato sauce. Try finding unsweetened versions of your favorite foods or make homemade versions that do not have sugar in them. If you want salad dressing, you can simply whisk together dijon mustard, extra virgin olive oil, minced garlic, balsamic vinegar and an Italian herb seasoning. Once you have taken sugar out of your diet, you will be able to find the small things that you would like to splurge on each day.

There are healthier splurges that will help keep you on track with your diet. Dark chocolate (70 percent cocoa or greater) can be eaten in small servings each day or one or two times a week. You should pre-plan the splurges that you are going to have so that you are able to stay on your healthy eating plan. Choosing to split a dessert or buying just one cookie can help you not to overdo it on the sugar intake. Some people do not need to eat sweets, and that is great. Many people even find that the more that they avoid sugar, the less that they want to eat it. However, when there is something special going on or you have a sugar craving it is OK to eat a small amount of sugar. People who have optimal health and are able to keep excess weight off long term find a great balance with eating sugar that works for them.

5. Be aware of what you are eating. One of the best things that you can do for your health in 2015 is make sure that you are aware of what you are eating. This means that you will be focused on the cues that your body has for you when you are full or hungry, you will eat slower, and identify when you are eating because of emotions, habits or just being bored. Doing this and learning to listen to your body is a great way to really help lose weight and keep it off. Listening to the signals that your body gives you is a great way to keep you

healthy and keep your weight in check. When you learn to slow down your eating, you will be more satisfied and will end up eating less.

The University of Rhode Island found in a study that people who eat faster actually eat more than 3 ounces of food per minute compared with 2 ounces for slow eaters and 2.5 ounces for medium speed eaters. Becoming more mindful of what you are doing can also help you to realize when you are looking for food but not actually hungry. This helps because you can address these issues in ways other than eating food.

Tips to make it work: One of the best things that you can do is make sure that you are being mindful. This can be done by starting a journal of the food that you eat, how much you are eating, if you are hungry before, how full you get, and even writing down how you are feeling at the time of eating.

It is also important that you are not doing anything but eating when you are eating at least one time each day. Take a break in between each bite, focus on the texture and flavor of your food, listen to your body and stop eating when you feel full. This means that you might not clean your plate, but you will be healthier, so who cares?

While it can feel odd to slow down and eat by yourself this can be something that will help you to learn to catch yourself if you are eating too fast. It can also help you to have a new eating pattern where you eat slower and will allow you to focus more on what you are eating and taking breaks. This will lead to a healthier and happier you in the future.

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