

6 Tips for Eating Healthy While Dining Out

If you're one of the many Americans who has resolved to lose weight and become fitter and healthier in 2015, then I'd be willing to bet that "eating out less" is also one of your New Year's goals, and for good reason. Studies have shown that we are much more likely to eat poorly at restaurants than at home.

Eating in groups, from plates even Goliath would have found oversized, before endless breadbaskets and tempting bowls of chips, all under dim lighting all add up to excessive caloric consumption, not to mention that sickening sensation of guilt (maybe mixed with a little indigestion, too) that lingers long after your last sip of soda or spoonful of dessert.

After a few dietary blunders while dining out, one might come to the conclusion that restaurants should be off limits entirely, or perhaps reserved for super-special occasions, such as round-numbered birthdays and golden anniversaries.

"My diet was going well all day, but then I had a crazy day, stayed late at work, and only had enough time to grab (insert fast food chain here) for lunch. And that was a train wreck, needless to say; I mean, it is fast food, after all."

"My husband wanted to surprise me with a midweek dinner at (insert favorite steakhouse here). I had no choice but to throw healthy eating out the window. It's just the way it goes."

I have been hearing the above two statements repeated over and over again—with slight variations, of course—for years now. There seems to be a common belief among the health-minded community that if you're going to a restaurant, you might as well go whole hog and eat like, well, a hog, because eating

well outside the home is, purportedly, a near Herculean task. But this simply isn't true. Below, I'm going to give you six tips on how to stay on track when eating out.

1. Consider your options. When given the choice as to which restaurant to go to, try to think of ones that you know offer healthy items, for instance, fresh salads, steamed veggies, and grilled or baked—not fried!—meat or fish. Personally, I'm a fan of steakhouses, seafood restaurants, Japanese and Mediterranean establishments, even breakfast joints, where I know good protein sources and healthy, satisfying fats await! And remember, even fast food restaurants offer healthy options these days, so don't resign yourself to chicken nuggets or a Big Mac if fast food's your only option!

2. Do your research. OK, now that you've made your selection, it's time—if you have time, that is—to scout the menu. Before you leave, or on your way to the restaurant, Google it and pick out the appetizers and entrées that interest you most. Seeing that that the burger you want boasts 850 calories or that the calamari has 300 (per serving!) may convince you to change your mind and order lighter fare instead. And if you must have the burger (We all need a good burger once in a while!), have in mind which ingredients you can ask the server to 86, such as bacon, cheddar cheese or mayo.

If you don't have time to look up the nutrition info, read the menu when you arrive, pick out what appears to be both healthy and appetizing, then ask yourself if you would prepare this for yourself at home. If the answer is yes, order it as is. If the answer is no, then think of ways it can be altered to suit your preferences (lettuce wrap instead of a bread bun, for example, or a side salad instead of French fries). Most restaurants are more than happy to accommodate all kinds of dietary needs, including your need to lead a healthy lifestyle! Don't be afraid to speak up.

3. Learn the language. A few words to be wary of when reading

the restaurant menu:

Alfredo: This is a pasta sauce made with butter, cream, garlic (excellent and healthy by itself, I should mention) and Parmesan cheese.

Au Gratin: This means the dish contains breadcrumbs and melted cheese (the name sounds fancy, but it doesn't mean healthy).

Battered: This item has been coated in batter, and then deep-fried.

Bisque: a rich soup made with cream

Crispy: It most often means "fried in oil," which equals fattening and full of sodium.

Crunchy: Unless it's referring to vegetables, this adjective is synonymous with "crispy."

Pan-fried: Restaurants typically pan fry their food with oils commonly used for commercial frying, such as hydrogenated vegetable oils, or canola, neither of which is recommended by most nutritionists today. Moreover, the oil is often reused (yuck!). Pan-frying can be done healthily if the right ingredients, right fat and right temperature are used.

Rémoulade: a mayonnaise-based salad or seafood dressing made with hard-boiled egg yolks, oil and vinegar, and a host of other items, some good some not so good

Smothered: Chances are good that whatever is "smothering" this dish isn't good for you!

Tempura: A Japanese way of saying "battered and deep-fried"

4. Mind your meat. If you're craving a steak but also want to keep the calories and fat content of your meal low, choose a lean cut (The USDA defines a lean cut of beef as a serving [about 100 grams] that contains less than: 10 grams total fat,

4.5 grams saturated fat, 95 milligrams cholesterol). Beef cuts with “loin” or “round” in the name (top round, round tip, top sirloin, bottom round, top loin and tenderloin) are great choices.

If you’re more of a chicken person (in meat preference only, not disposition), nix the skin to save yourself 8 grams of fat. Also, opt for chicken breasts over drumsticks and wings for less calories, cholesterol, sodium and fat.

5. Start off smart. Lest you be tempted to dip your hand into the breadbasket or partake of crispy, battered, crunchy appetizers (see No. 3), order a broth-based soup or salad (no croutons with a vinaigrette dressing on the side) to arrive before your entrée. This will keep your mouth busy and simultaneously fill your stomach with healthy, hunger-squelching nutrients.

When it comes to beverages, opt for water or unsweetened tea. One soda will set you back at least 90 calories, and the sugar-free versions are also enemies of your waistline as fake sweeteners trigger insulin, which sends your body into fat storage mode, leading to weight gain. If you order wine, consider that your dessert—one 5-ounce serving contains 125 calories. And I recommend red wine over white for its antioxidant content, namely heart-healthy polyphenols.

6. Finish strong. You did your research, started off smart with a healthy appetizer, ordered your meal just the way you wanted it. Now it’s time to finish strong as that dessert menu—or, heaven forbid, a display tray—comes your way.

My first piece of advice is to ask your server to forgo bringing the dessert menu altogether (out of sight, out of mind!). But if you want to end your meal on a sweet note, here are a few suggestions on how to indulge wisely:

- Instead of baked treats, like brownies or cookies, order angel food cake. It’s often lower in fat and calories

and is even topped with fruit! It is also usually topped with cream, so kindly ask your server to leave that off.

- Don't scream for ice cream. Scream for sorbet, sherbet or low-fat frozen yogurt instead! To break it down for you, one cup of ice cream generally has around 270 calories, while one cup of sorbet has 180. Frozen yogurt, while low in fat, still has quite a lot of sugar and calories, around 215, to be exact.
- Fruit desserts, like fresh berries drizzled with honey or a parfait, are generally low in calories and fat. Plus, they're loaded with vitamins and fiber!
- Last but not least, share! Ask a friend if he or she would like to split a dessert with you to cut your calories in half and prevent you from looking down at a half-eaten bowl of sorbet and feeling compelled to "clean your plate!" as my mother used to say.

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For the original article, visit [www.creationhouse.com](#).

How to Avoid Sinking Your Family's Financial Future

A new year has started. The holidays are over. The tree is down, and the boxes and shredded wrapping paper are in the trash. But for many families this year, there will be regular reminders of those gift-giving memories—bills.

With the average household racking up tens of thousands of dollars in family debt throughout the year, it's no wonder that financial stresses tend to climb in marriages during the early part of the new year.

The following advice is only recommended if you want to sink your family's financial future:

1. Ignore your current obligations and keep adding on. Do not draw a line in the sand that says "we stop borrowing now." Let go and give in. "If we already owe so much, what's a little more?"

2. Don't tackle any of your debt. Don't even pick one single piece of debt to pay down. Better to ignore those debts altogether. Just wait for a rich relative or a lottery ticket to save the day.

3. Always use credit. It's easy to owe money. So combine the "path of least resistance" with "instant gratification" and viola! New car, home theater, kitchen remodel, or furniture set—here we come!

4. Be on a totally different page from your spouse financially. If you're not on the same page, who cares? It's just money, right? Who wants to waste time in a marriage working on a budget? There are other more fun things to do in a marriage than talk about money matters.

5. Go it alone and never look for outside help. What do financial advisers possibly have to offer? And what business is it of theirs anyway? Besides, your situation is so unique, right?

The reality is that growing debt and financial pressures are a leading cause of divorce in this country. Recognize that your marriage and family are worth fighting for, even if it means fighting your financial issues together.

I hope you'll be inspired to tackle these financial pressures together in your marriage. If you're feeling the pinch of some of your past financial decisions, look at each listed step above and do the opposite.

What other ways do you find helpful to righting your financial ship together?

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

5 Simple Ways to Dodge the Flu

The holidays are over and everyone is heading back to work and school. Unfortunately, the flu season kicked into high gear during the holidays, and many people will be bringing flu viruses with them to spread around your office, your kids' school and other places you can't avoid.

How can you dodge the flu? While you can't guarantee you won't get sick, you can put the odds of a healthy winter on your side by following five simple steps.

1. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. Hand washing is a do-it-yourself vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Your hands, and especially your fingers, are magnets for bacteria and viruses. They easily enter your body when you touch your eyes, nose or mouth. A good hand-washing using five steps—wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry—can send them down the drain.

2. Use hand sanitizers. When good old soap and water aren't

available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, advises the CDC. They're not as effective as a good hand scrubbing and some are basically ineffective, but if you use a lot of the product, it's better than doing nothing at all.

3. Clean vigilantly. Flu viruses cling to surfaces such as computer keyboards, desk tops and door handles, says an article published on . The CDC says viruses don't usually live long on surfaces, probably no longer than eight hours, so the most effective strategy might be a wipe-down with disinfectant wipes during lunch to help keep germs from spreading.

4. Get the flu shot. Even though the flu vaccine for this year isn't a good match for the most common strain of flu that's circulating, the CDC continues to advise people to get the shot, saying it will still offer some protection.

In an advisory, the CDC said that the virus had mutated since the vaccine was formulated and that more than half of the virus samples they collected were different from the strains included in the vaccine. The strain that's most common this year is linked to higher rates of hospitalizations and deaths, and even some protection beats none at all, some experts believe.

5. Stay at arm's length. It's elementary, but keep your distance from people who are sick. Flu germs spread on the air—from sneezes and coughs—but keeping a few feet away can keep you away from the danger zone, according to .

For the original article, visit .

5 Ways You Can Improve Your Marriage in 2015

What were the first thoughts you had when you read that title? Be honest:

- “My marriage is beyond improving.”
- “My marriage is going pretty good. Why would I need to seek improvement?”
- “I want to know how, but I’m afraid of the steps that I need to take.”
- “[Your answer].”

Let’s be real honest men, the first thoughts you had about areas that you would like to improve in your marriage are exactly where you need to take action.

Let’s “Husband Up!” and keep reading.

Guys, the state of your marriage is critically important to the state of your manhood. If your marriage is not going well, there’s a very good chance that many other parts of your life are rough as well. Your work and your relationships at work will be affected. It will effect your overall mood and demeanor. You’ll naturally let it effect your general attitude and anyone that comes into contact with you will get some kickback from your negative emotions in one way or another.

You need to get your marriage back to *good*, so that you can get everything else back to *good*.

No matter what your answer was at the top of the post, I want to challenge you with some ways to improve your marriage this year. It doesn’t matter if you think your marriage is going well or if you know you need to make some repairs. Every year, a husband needs to review the state of his marriage and take the necessary steps to keep it on track or get it back on

track. This is part of a husband's leadership and responsibility. It is all about initiation and consistency.

How can you really improve your marriage this year? Here are 5 areas to consider:

1. Your personal relationship with Jesus. This is the first area, because it is the your most important part of your marriage. You need to make sure you are doing everything you can do to stay consistent in your walk with Christ. Here are 3 articles you need to read to help you through this process and in building a real plan for growth this new year.

2. Your personal dedication toward maturity. The second area is all about your personal dedication towards growing in maturity every day. A man needs to have purpose in his life to feel important and a personal dedication to growing in maturity will help establish that in a man. It might involve keeping a journal, attending or running a men's class or helping out those in need. Here are 3 articles to help you maintain your personal dedication towards maturity in the new year.

3. Your personal dedication toward understanding your wife's needs. The third area involves getting and maintaining a good understanding of your wife's needs. What did you learn last year about your wife that you should apply more often this year? Take it to another level and write down those things so that you can refresh yourself every month. Make her needs a priority and you'll see how more willing she is to meet your needs. Here are 3 articles that will help you better meet the needs of your wife.

4. Your personal willingness to learn more about marriage. The fourth area has become a critical part of my wife and I both growing in our marriage. Last year we attended a marriage conference and went through a marriage class with other couples our age. A little bit of time and money will go a long

way in making sure your marriage gets stronger each year. I encourage you to be open and willing in attending a marriage conference or joining a small group marriage class this year. Here are 3 articles that will help you learn more about your marriage.

5. Your personal ability to communicate honestly with your wife. The last area is all about communication and your willingness to share what's on your heart. How did your communication go last year? Were you able to share your needs or desires? If your communication has been struggling, then I encourage you to seek ways to improve this area of your marriage. Set aside the pride and talk to your pastor about your issues.

Seek out another couple with a strong marriage and find out what tools they are using to better communicate. Or, find the courage to pray with your wife. Prayer will open the door to powerful communication. Here are 3 articles to help you better communicate with your wife this year!

Let's strive to lead a stronger marriage this year. What plans to do you have to improve your marriage in 2015?

Manturity is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better marriages and help them grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social-media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Manturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

6 Ways to Help Reverse Memory Loss

The graying of the baby boom generation is expected to bring a wave of new Alzheimer's cases, with the number of Americans with the memory-robbing disorder projected to triple over the next three decades. Related healthcare costs could hit \$1.5 trillion by 2050, unless new treatments are developed. That's twice what the U.S. now spends on all healthcare services.

Now for the good news: A half-dozen strategies have been proven to combat age-related mental declines and dementia. They may even slow the progression of Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases, according to one of the nation's leading mental-health specialists.

Eric Braverman, M.D., tells Newsmax TV's *Meet The Doctors* program that it's possible to maintain your mental edge well into older age by adopting a series of simple lifestyle changes that are good for your mind and body alike. And it's never too early to start adopting those healthy habits.

"We're basically developing dementia to some degree or another from [age] 30 and 40 on ... We see lots of [brain] atrophy from 30 and 40 on, lots of early dementia, loss of metabolism, loss of energy in the brain, and then people forget, their judgment's impaired," he explains. "All these mistakes that we make, all these memory errors. They're like our computers that get filled up with spam and make errors."

But Dr. Braverman notes these trends can be reversed, noting what's good for the body is also good for the mind.

"In fact the degree in which we can ... and repair the process is now equal to plastic surgery," he says. "The brain is connected to the body and most people are delivered head first, the same way a baby is delivered."

Dr. Braverman has spent 40 years exploring the connections between physical and mental health and come up with a six-step strategy to maintain a healthy mind and body—a prescription for healthy living that research shows can reverse and even prevent age-related mental declines.

No. 1: Exercise. “The first step is always to look at your weight,” he says. “It turns out that obesity is very dementia-causing. There’s a lot of women that are thin, flabby—or what we call normal weight obesity. They have normal weight but they’re still obese because they’re not fit. The basic rule is you really have to exercise an hour a day.”

No. 2: Sleep: “You have to sleep ... seven hours [every night],” he says. About 30 million Americans have chronic sleep problems, which increase the risk for heart disease, depression, and other serious health problems. Many resort to sleeping pills, which carry risks when taken long term. Better options, Dr. Braverman says, include resorting to mild sleep-inducing alternatives like chamomile tea and managing stress.

No. 3: Mental function. Anxiety, depression, addictions, and other mental-health disorders can increase the risk for developing Alzheimer’s later in life, many studies show. That’s why it’s critical to manage such conditions effectively with antidepressants, therapy and other mental-health strategies, he advises.

No. 4: Early testing. Dr. Braverman recommends working with your doctor to determine your “baseline” cognitive abilities, memory, verbal IQ and judgment skills. A brain scan can also provide details on how well your brain is functioning.

No. 5: Diet and nutrition: Eating a healthy diet—loaded with fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fiber and nutrient-rich foods—is critical to maintaining your mental edge as you grow older. Dr. Braverman recommends the Mediterranean diet, drinking lots of green tea, and avoiding sugary high-carb

processed foods as much as possible.

No. 6: Natural hormones. As we age, our levels of natural hormones—including estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and DHEA—decline. That's why it's important to consider bio-identical hormone supplements, if you are deficient. Work with your doctor to determine what's right for you.

For the original article, visit .

10 Bible Verses for Comfort When You're Hurting

These Bible verses are powerful yet comforting in times of trouble:

1. Job 5:11: "He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety."

2. Psalm 27:13-14: "I believe I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be strong, and may your heart be stout; wait on the Lord."

3. Isaiah 41:10: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, yes, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

4. John 16:33: "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

5. Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according

to His purpose”

6. Romans 8:37-39: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

7. Romans 15:13: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

8. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: “Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

9. Philippians 4:6: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God.”

10. Hebrews 13:5: “Let your lives be without love of money, and be content with the things you have. For He has said: ‘I will never leave you, nor forsake you.’”

All Pro Dad is Family First’s innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a byproduct, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include daily emails, blogs, Top 10 lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From , fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.

12 Things That Can Cause Marriage Failure

Of course you don't want your marriage to fail, do you? You want it to last for life.

But if too many of the things listed below are too often a part of your life, then you may be on a dangerous road in your relationship.

1. You work more on your wedding than on your marriage. You spend hundreds of hours planning and preparing for your wedding—the venue, the dress, the guest list, the bridesmaids, the groomsmen, the ceremony, the vows—but choose not to spend time planning and preparing on growing your marriage.

2. You believe that marriage is a contract. Even though you don't say it, you really believe that marriage is a transaction between two people, a contract and not a covenant. You have the mindset that most things in your relationship are negotiated—"If you do this, then and only then I will do that." You think that marriage is a 50/50 partnership rather than a 100/100 give-it-all-you've-got relationship.

3. You think that your spouse's job is to make you happy. In my "8 Mistakes I've Made in Marriage" blog post, I shared how I used to think that Susan's duty as my wife was to make me happy. I expected Susan to lift me up when I was down, to help me upon command and to meet my physical needs when called upon, just to name a few. In reality, here's what you should expect in your marriage: "8 Expectations for a Great Marriage."

4. You are not trustworthy. You cannot be trusted by your

spouse when you don't speak the truth at all times, you keep secrets or you don't do what you say you'll do.

5. You always put your kids first. You pour all of your time, energy, attention and affection into your children. You give them your freshest and best and always serve your spouse leftovers.

6. You give in to temptation. You talk about your personal pressures and problems with another person besides your spouse. You feel like the other person empathizes and understands you better. Instead of running from this temptation, you run toward it and end up in an intimate emotional or physical relationship.

7. You always expect your spouse to change. You see your spouse's faults and failures every day. It's really irritating and frustrating you. They're messy, they're lazy, they nag you, they don't help with the kids, they're always at work. You think you've done all the changing, and they haven't done a thing.

8. You treat your spouse like the enemy. You think they are on the opposing team so you keep a marital scorecard. You keep track of who spends more, disciplines more, does the dishes more, cleans more, mows more and works more. And you become bitter and resent your spouse for not helping enough or for having more fun.

9. Your words constantly tear your spouse down. You're sarcastic, not supportive, disrespectful, comparing words are toxins of the tongue that poison your marriage.

10. You don't respect your spouse. You don't respect your spouse's judgment. You constantly question their decisions and abilities.

11. You fail to ask for forgiveness and forgive. Your spouse says you hurt them. You don't see that you did anything wrong,

so you're not going to apologize. They get bitter. You get bitter.

12. You listen to foolish marriage advice. You listen to well-intended but foolish advice about your relationship from a "friend" who wants you to join their man-hater or woman-hater club rather than listening to wise advice from a trusted source.

Which of these reasons is most true in your marriage? Please share your comments below.

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

7 Secrets to Losing Belly Fat

As we age, we tend to gain weight, especially in our abdomens. In addition to making it more difficult to fit into last year's swimsuit, belly fat can have a significant impact on our health.

That's because the fat doesn't just sit there, spoiling your silhouette. Belly fat and its companion, visceral fat—the fat that hides deep in your body—continuously create inflammatory compounds that wreak havoc in your body, increasing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and many other conditions.

Don't despair, though, because there are seven surefire ways to melt belly fat away.

1. Exercise before breakfast. A British study found that exercising before breakfast burns more body fat than exercising later in the day. As an added bonus, greater amounts of artery-clogging fats in the blood that cause heart

attacks are reduced in early morning workouts. Participants underwent three trials one to two weeks apart, involving walking briskly for an hour before eating breakfast, taking the same walk after eating breakfast, or not exercising at all. Although exercising increased the amount of fat their bodies burned when compared to not exercising, exercising before breakfast caused a greater loss of fat—up to 33 percent more than exercising after breakfast.

2. Eat good fats. A diet rich in monounsaturated fats (MUFAs), such as olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds, can help melt away belly fat. Most experts agree that olive oil is one of the best for cooking and salads because of its high MUFA content, which lowers LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. In addition, olive oil contains compounds that signal to your brain that your stomach’s full, causing you to eat less and feel satiated longer.

3. Jog instead of lifting weights. Researchers at Duke University found that aerobic exercise is a much more efficient way to lose belly fat than resistance training or a combination of the two. A study of overweight adults ages 18 to 70 determined that aerobic training burned 67 percent more calories when compared to resistance training.

4. Eliminate trans fats. Although large amounts of trans fats have been eliminated from many foods, it’s still hanging around in some vegetable shortenings, cookies and snack foods. (Beware of the ingredient “partially hydrogenated oil.”) Research at Wake Forrest University found that monkeys who were fed a Western-style diet that included trans fats gained 7.2 percent more body weight than those who were fed a diet of monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil. The number of calories and amount of fat in both diets was identical. Most of the weight gain was in the abdominal area.

5. Reduce stress. When you’re stressed, your body releases a powerful hormonal mixture of adrenaline, cortisol and insulin,

which not only increases your appetite and causes your body to produce more fat, but also usually sends the extra fat straight to your waistline. For an immediate reduction in stress, close your eyes and take long, slow, deep breaths for about five minutes. Your stress level will fall—and so should those belly-bursting hormones.

6. Get enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep can throw off your body's natural rhythm and cause you to produce a great quantity of fat-inducing hormones, similar to hormones created when you're stressed. One study found that people who got sufficient sleep gained less belly fat over a five-year period when compared to those who were sleep-deprived.

7. Eat fiber. Researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center found that simply eating more soluble fiber from vegetables and fruits reduces visceral fat. They found that every 10-gram increase in soluble fiber eaten each day decreased the amount of belly fat by 3.7 percent over five years. Adding moderate activity decreased belly fat even further to 7.4 percent. Foods high in soluble fiber include apples, oats, peas and beans. Two small apples contain 10 grams of soluble fiber.

A study from Penn State found that people who ate a healthy diet that included all-whole grains lost more belly fat than people who ate the same diet but ate refined grains instead. In addition, their levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) were lowered by 38 percent, while levels remained the same in the group who ate refined grains. High levels of CRP are linked to heart disease.

For the original article, visit .

3 Keys to Raising Your Standards as a Man

“You have competition every day because you’ve set such high standards for yourself that you have to go out every day and live up to that.” –Michael Jordan

How do you raise your standards in a world that does everything it can to motivate you into lowering them? If you are anything like me, you have had victories and you have crashed and burned; however, I always want to do better for myself and for my family. That’s why we’re here.

The standards that society sets is always a fluid thing and depends on the mood and leadership at any given time. A man can’t look to society for his standards.

In basketball, Michael Jordan refused to settle for anything less than excellence. We should apply the same standards as men to our entire life. In that spirit, here are three keys to raise your standards as a man:

1. Law of nature. C.S. Lewis makes the argument in his book *Mere Christianity* that there is an unwritten and universally understood law of nature regarding our standard of behavior. That there, of course, are differences in the small things but that we can trace back to a basic moral code in all previous civilizations. His point is that this instinct is born within us and provided by a Higher Authority. Ignoring this provided instinct of what is right and what is wrong leads man to disastrous consequences.

“And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.” –C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

Take a deep examination of where the lines of your own sense of this law of nature are drawn. We all need to reach much higher.

2. External influences. What standards are we setting in our personal and professional relationships? The world has a lot to say about all of these things. And if challenged, it will do whatever it takes to get us to fall in line. We absolutely must question what is influencing the standards we are setting.

For instance, in Nazi Germany, a citizen was told to adhere to the standards of that time and no debate was allowed. Obviously, that led to the total destruction of the nation and the loss of human life. The method of achieving that society was through propaganda. Again, we can't look there for our standards. We all need to reach much higher.

3. The standard-setter. "In revolutions authority remains with the greatest scoundrels." –Georges Jacques Danton.

I submit that society is always in a state of revolution. We, in America, have been in a constant state of revolution since our inception. Born from the desire to escape the traps of those scoundrels before, America was conceptualized as man's first chance to rule himself, guided by a rigid standard of rights not given to him by man, but by God. That's in the bill of rights.

The distinction of God-given rights is highly important and widely overlooked. It prevents any human from having the authority to ever remove them. Before the ink was dry, men (scoundrels) began plotting to take back that authority. It goes right back to the point C.S. Lewis was making. We instinctively know that a higher authority sets the standards of what we are to be and that is where we must look—nowhere else.

We all need to reach much higher.

Are you interested in justifications or do you believe in reconciliations? Which one ultimately redeems us? Huddle up with your kids and ask them to tell how you could lead better.

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5 Healthy Resolutions for 2015

With the end of another year upon us, it's likely many of you reading this have been considering making a few New Year's resolutions, resolutions that, according to the University of Scranton, likely revolve around your health.

I've revisited some of the health tips and info I've found most significant this year and compiled them into this comprehensive, resolution-minded article, one I hope will help guide you as you set personal goals for the upcoming year. Whether you want to make a dramatic change for the better, or simply stick with and sharpen your current fitness lifestyle, the following five resolutions can help make 2015 your healthiest year yet!

1. Motivate yourself every day. At the dawn of a new year, many people peruse their calendars and see if there are any weddings to slim down for, a beach trip to shape up for, or a ski trip to get fit for. One or two major events, they reason, will help motivate them to commit to a regular exercise schedule and a healthier diet. But what about after the special occasion or vacation has passed? The unfortunate truth is, most people revert back to their former workout-less, junk

food-filled ways.

I love the quote from Zig Ziglar that says, "People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing, that's why we recommend it daily."

This year, let's resolve to motivate ourselves daily, not occasionally.

All of us know that being in good physical shape is important for a number of reasons that could easily compose an entire article. A few primary reasons health and fitness professionals encourage patients and clients to exercise regularly is because doing so reduces the risk of injury in daily activities, prevents certain cancers, reduces the risk of heart disease, promotes better sleep, reduces anxiety and depression, strengthens the bones and immune system, helps with weight loss and weight control, increases energy levels, and improves confidence.

And yet, while the benefits of working out are vast and indisputable, many Americans still maintain sedentary lifestyles, inconsistent exercise routines, and frankly, apathetic attitudes and an unwillingness to change. As Christians, this is purely unacceptable as the Bible clearly commands us to honor our bodies as dwelling places of the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 10:31 says: "Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God."

When you feel your motivation beginning to dwindle, remember that staying faithful to health and fitness not only benefits you and your loved ones, but it honors and glorifies the Lord. Let serving and pleasing Him be your chief motivation for being healthier in 2015.

2. Honor thy slumber. In case you think getting sufficient sleep isn't that important of a resolution, here are six

reasons given by the Harvard Women's Health Watch explaining why you should honor thy slumber:

- **Learning and memory.** Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory through a process called *memory consolidation*. In studies, people who'd slept after learning a task did better on tests later.
- **Metabolism and weight.** Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain by affecting the way our bodies process and store carbohydrates and by altering levels of hormones that affect our appetite.
- **Safety.** Sleep debt contributes to a greater tendency to fall asleep during the daytime. These lapses may cause falls and mistakes such as medical errors, air traffic mishaps and road accidents.
- **Mood.** Sleep loss may result in irritability, impatience, inability to concentrate and moodiness. Too little sleep can also leave you too tired to do the things you like to do.
- **Cardiovascular health.** Serious sleep disorders have been linked to hypertension, increased stress hormone levels and irregular heartbeat.
- **Disease.** Sleep deprivation alters immune function, including the activity of the body's killer cells. Keeping up with sleep may also help fight cancer.

Bottom line: *Sleep should be prioritized!*

If you have trouble falling asleep, there are few things you can do. For starters, make sure it's as quiet and peaceful as possible. If you have a snoring spouse or rowdy neighbors, try tuning them out with a relaxing soundtrack and a pair of headphones. (You can find thin, pillow-friendly headphones at .)

Also, set your thermostat properly; we doze off more easily and sleep more soundly when it's cooler. Another tip I love is using lavender. Research show it helps ease insomnia and

anxiety. Find a spray and spritz it onto your pillow. Finally, when you get into bed, let your mind unwind. Pray and surrender your worries and concerns to the Lord. Trust Him to watch over you and your loved ones as you sleep.

If you need to renew your mind and soothe your soul, reach for your Bible and read a passage to which the Holy Spirit directs you. Focusing on the Word and its promises will help your brain settle down and your body relax.

3. Lift heavy weights. This resolution idea will probably be much easier for men to make, as many women fear doing so will make them “bulky” and unfeminine looking. I’ve written an entire article addressing that subject here, but suffice it to say, women have zero reason to fear resembling the Hulk ... at least not from strength training. In fact, heavy weights will help them shed unwanted fat and look leaner! Here are three reasons you should start lifting heavy first thing January 1st:

- **Raise your metabolic rate.** Your metabolism is the amount of energy your body needs to sustain itself. Because muscle requires calories (aka energy) to survive, increasing your muscle size and density will increase your metabolism. Since we work against a high degree of resistance with heavy weights, we create tiny muscular tears throughout the body. We expend a greater number of calories post-workout to repair those tiny tears, thus increasing your overall calorie requirements. Lifting weights will raise your metabolism long after you’re finished. In fact, experts estimate that your metabolism stays elevated for up to 15 hours after you train. Again, this is because lifting strains your body so much that it needs extra time to recover.
- **Achieve greater muscle definition.** The next benefit to lifting heavier weights is that you’ll see greater overall muscle definition. When you lift a light weight lots of times, as most women do—no joke, I once spotted

a woman doing a 3-pound tricep kickback with one hand while chatting on her cell phone with the other for a solid two minutes—the muscles are barely challenged. As a result, your muscles won't feel any need to adapt (grow) since they can easily handle what you throw at them.

Make sure you're always pushing yourself and taking the weight up to the next level. That's when you'll see muscle definition and your form improve. If you commit to following a proper diet, heavy weights will make you look and feel beautiful (handsome, fellas) and confident in your own skin.

- **Improve your functional strength for daily life.** The final benefit you achieve by lifting heavier weights is that you improve functional strength capabilities. Since you get *much* stronger by lifting heavier weights, everyday activities will get much easier over time. Muscularity also means a lower chance of injury if you participate in sports or other recreational activities.

If you're a beginner, I recommend starting out with two weight-training sessions a week, each one lasting no longer than 30 minutes. Don't target the same muscle group two days in a row, though you can lift weights two days in a row. For example, exercise your chest and back on Monday, then legs and abs on Tuesday. After a few weeks, add in a third or fourth day of lifting. Also, make sure the weights are challenging; the last few reps should be tough!

4. Cut out carrageenan. A few months ago, I was scanning the ingredients label on my carton of almond milk and came across a word that I still haven't the slightest clue how to pronounce: *carrageenan*. I also examined the labels of my So Delicious coconut yogurt, and my husband's Horizon chocolate milk and noticed they also contained this mysterious substance.

I figured, it's probably harmless—these products are organic!

Little did I know ...

I immediately pulled out my handy-dandy smartphone to begin investigating. It turns out carrageenan, found in many dairy and non-dairy products, deli meats, infant formulas, even flavored coconut water, has been proven to be carcinogenic. The ingredient is extracted from a red seaweed (sounds healthy so far, right?) called *Chondrus crispus*, which is popularly known as Irish moss. Companies include the extract to improve the texture of their foods. (For more about carrageenan and why it's been allowed into our foods, check out my full article on the topic [here](#)).

If you find out that in fact your favorite milk, yogurt or ice cream features this harmful substance, you'll want to check out replacements right away. The Cornucopia Institute provides an extensive list of both carrageenan-containing foods and those that are carcinogen-free. I encourage you to visit the link and even contact the companies that are using carrageenan to see if they might be willing to change their minds for the sake of your and your family's health.

Alternatively, the Internet has some wonderful resources to teach you how to make your own dairy and non-dairy products at home, so I encourage you to do a little research and try a recipe or two.

And one more nutrition tip while I'm on the subject: If you're unfamiliar with an ingredient listed on your bottle of juice, your protein powder, your energy bar, etc., please look it up. The truth about carrageenan should serve to teach us that just because a product or company claims to be "all-natural" or "organic," that doesn't necessarily make them 100 percent healthy.

5. Say sayonara to Splenda. Splenda is just one of many artificial sweeteners found in countless "health" and diet

products today, such as protein and energy bars, flavored water and even vitamin and mineral supplements. I've chosen to highlight Splenda, or sucralose, because it is an especially deceiving product because it claims to be "made from sugar," which understandably leads consumers to think it's a natural, perfectly safe product. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Splenda is a chlorocarbon, which is simply a fancy name for chlorinated sugar. To chlorinate sugar, you have to chemically alter the structure of the sugar molecule by substituting three chlorine atoms for three hydroxyl groups in the overall sucrose (sugar) molecule. Chlorine, as it turns out, is quite an excitable element. It's used as a biocide in bleach, insecticide, disinfectants even World War I poison gas.

Chlorocarbons are neither nutritionally nor metabolically compatible in our bodies. Because we're not made to excrete the poison, the body shunts it into our *livers*, which is our detoxification organ. There, the chlorocarbons damage and destroy the liver's metabolic cells. Not so sweet-sounding, is it?

Splenda claims its product has been thoroughly researched, yet not one long-term human study has been conducted to determine any potential health risks. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) gave Splenda the green light after reviewing only a handful of short-term tests, and each of those was conducted on animals, not humans. Oh, and they were done by a Splenda manufacturer. Maybe they were unbiased?

In test animals, Splenda produced:

- Swollen livers and kidneys (my formerly "fatty" liver fits into this category!)
- Shrunken thymus glands
- Reduced growth rates
- Decreased red blood cell count

- Hyperplasia of the pelvis
- Extension of the pregnancy period
- Aborted pregnancy
- Decreased fetal body weights and placental weights
- Diarrhea

James Turner, chairman of the national consumer education group Citizens for Health issued the following statement:

“[T]he artificial sweetener Splenda and its key component sucralose pose a threat to the people who consume the product. Hundreds of consumers have complained to us about side effects from using Splenda, and this study ... confirms that the chemicals in the little yellow package should carry a big red warning label.”

The web site lists a variety of consumer complaints from Splenda consumption, such as:

- Blurred vision
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Migraines
- Seizures
- Dizziness
- Allergic reactions
- Blood sugar increases
- Weight gain

It is best to eliminate all artificial sweeteners completely; so bid farewell to those pretty pink, blue and yellow packets! Try to stick to natural sweeteners, such as raw honey, agave extract, maple syrup or if you're looking for a low-calorie sugar substitute, stevia or xylitol.

I hope you've found these resolution tips helpful and pray you and your family have a very happy, healthy New Year.

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