

Healthy Sleep Helps to Avoid Life Pitfalls

Every night when the Walt Disney World theme parks close, the most important hours of the day begin. Big lights go up, and massive crews of workers repair and clean every ride, every walkway, and every concession stand.

When the gates open the next morning, the parks are completely renewed. The trash from the previous day is gone, and the roller coasters are in top condition again.

A similar thing happens every night. During those precious hours your body shuts down and repairs itself. Your immune system recharges. Your major organs are restored. Old cells are being replaced with new ones. Your mind relaxes and orders its thoughts, creating a healthy mental state.

That's why you need wonderful, nourishing, restorative sleep and rest.

Edge of Collapse

Lack of sleep is just as disastrous for you as an individual. A good night's sleep is free. A bad night's sleep is costly, because it takes a toll on your health.

We live in a world where day and night no longer matter. Thanks to modern technology, we can work and play around the clock. This is not the way our bodies or minds were made to operate. God gave us a promise of deep, restorative sleep. Psalm 127:2 (niv) says, "He grants sleep to those he loves." To those who are tired, He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, niv).

Sleep and rest are so important because of what they do for

your health.

1. Sleep regulates release of important hormones. When you sleep, growth hormone is secreted. This causes children to grow, and it regulates muscle mass and helps control fat in adults. When you don't sleep enough, this hormone's function is disrupted.

2. Sleep slows the aging process. The term "beauty rest" is literally true. Sleep slows the aging process, and some say it is one of the most important "secrets" for averting wrinkles.

3. Sleep boosts the immune system. People who sleep nine hours a night instead of seven hours have greater than normal "natural killer cell" activity. Natural killer cells destroy viruses, bacteria, and cancer cells.

4. Sleep improves brain function. One study shows that short-term sleep deprivation may decrease brain activity related to alertness and cognitive performance.

5. Sleep reduces cortisol levels. Excessive stress raises cortisol levels, which disrupt neurotransmitter balance in the brain, causing you to be more irritable and prone to depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

What Happens When You Don't Sleep

The medical research is clear about what happens when you don't get sufficient sleep.

1. You increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

2. You become clumsy and "sleep drunk." Lack of sleep slows your reaction time, shortens your attention span, and impairs your memory, your decision-making process, and your coordination.

3. You jeopardize your job. A third of America's adult workers either missed work or made mistakes at work in the past three

months because of a lack of sleep. Nobody drinks on the job, but plenty of people come to work after pulling all-nighters or getting too little sleep, thus functioning as if they were drunk.

4. You endanger your life and the lives of others. Sleep deprivation is responsible for at least 100,000 crashes and 1,500 fatalities a year, according to a 2002 report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

5. You reduce your sex drive.

6. You invite diseases. A host of physical conditions are associated with insomnia, including chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndrome, autoimmune diseases, hypertension, obesity, depression, and other forms of mental illness.

7. You jeopardize your marriage. Studies show higher rates of divorce among people who don't get adequate sleep.

Getting the adequate amount of sleep is beneficial to you, and it benefits those around you.

The preceding is an excerpt from *The Seven Pillars of Health* by Don Colbert, M.D. The book can be purchased at [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), or [eBay](#).

5 Must-Do Steps to Fulfilling God's Plan for Your Life

It's simple: We don't chase after things we have no desire to obtain. Therefore, our pursuit of anything is ample proof of valid desire. But desire alone doesn't bring success. We must have a clearly defined strategy.

Defining a successful strategy is one of the most challenging exercises a man faces. Even Jesus warned of this process in Luke 14:28-30 (NIV):

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’”

God leads us in steps, not by leaps. Most men want to jump into their success, yet a “leap of faith” is not a biblical concept. If we’re going to fulfill our purpose, we must take steps to do it.

Here are five important steps you can take now to fulfill your purpose.

Step 1

You must decide for yourself what is worthy of your pursuit. No one else should decide for you. You may receive counsel from others, but you should make the decision; otherwise you will be unfulfilled in your pursuit. There are countless stories of men who achieved great success yet remained unfulfilled because they were living another person’s dream.

Step 2

Go to your Source to understand your potential. God spoke to the land and said, “Produce!” He spoke to the seas and said, “Teem with creatures!” He spoke to Himself and said, “Let Us create man!” Only God has a complete understanding of why you were created and what your potential is. You may have a hint or a glimpse of this understanding, but you will never know complete fulfillment until you fully know the Source of your potential.

Step 3

Write down on paper or develop a vision board of every dream, goal or desire that is important to you. Write down anything you want to become, do or possess. This is extremely important. I've learned that what I have received from God requires me to write it down so I can repeat it often and closely guard the accuracy of the goal He has given me.

Step 4

Narrow your focus to the top three pursuits. After you've written down what you want to become, do or possess, develop actions steps you can take now to create momentum toward those things. The big vision will come from a series of small decisions.

Step 5

Be aware that God will network you with others to help you get where you are going. People are God's hands on this earth. You may find two different types of people will come into your life—one a person you have the ability to help, the other a person who has the ability to help you. Recognizing and discerning these people is vital.

You will never achieve your purpose in life unless you become strategically motivated to pursue it. Make plans right now to get alone with God, pursue Him and listen for His affirming voice to clearly define your purpose, write it down, develop action steps and get moving.

*For the original article, visit [Fivestarman](#). Fivestarman was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

Elie Wiesel: Ahmadinejad Should Be Indicted

Famous Jewish author and Nobel Peace Prize–winner Elie Wiesel, who also happens to be a Holocaust survivor, believes that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should be indicted with incitement to commit a crime against humanity.

According to Wiesel, “Ahmadinejad has two goals: One goal is to become nuclear, and the second goal is to destroy the State of Israel. The fact is, he means it. If he goes to Germany or here to New York, he should be arrested and brought to The Hague and indicted and charged with intent to commit a crime against humanity. That would solve the problem. He should be arrested. He deserves it.”

Indeed, Ahmadinejad has engaged in incitement to commit genocide against the Israeli people. The crime of incitement to commit genocide is considered a crime against humanity in itself according to international law. According to the Rwanda Tribunal, the crime of incitement to commit genocide directly provokes “the perpetrator(s) to commit genocide, whether through speeches, shouting or threats uttered in public places or at public gatherings, or through the sale or dissemination, offer for sale or display of written material or printed matter in public places or at public gatherings, or through the public display of placards or posters, or through any other means of audiovisual communication.”

The person doing the inciting must have the intention to commit genocide, which is defined as “the wholesale destruction in whole or in part of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.” This means that even though Ahmadinejad

has not displayed genocidal intentions against Iranian Jews, that does not mean he lacks genocidal intentions, for seeking the destruction of the Israeli Jewish community in Israel is sufficient to label his goals as genocidal.

International law forbids incitement to commit genocide in Article 3 of the Genocide Convention, Article 25 (3) (e) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Article 3 (e) of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and article 3 (c) of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Indeed, Ahmadinejad's public statements against the State of Israel demonstrate that he has genocidal ambitions. Ahmadinejad incites against Zionists in a very dehumanizing manner, comparing Zionism to cancer, mosquitoes and colonial oppressors, and he also claims that the Zionists lack religious piety. He has also referred to Jews as "filthy bacteria."

Such assertions dehumanizing Zionists and Jews work to prepare the population for genocide by teaching them that the target group is subhuman. Various genocides throughout history have started out with propaganda that dehumanizes the target population. For example, in the Rwandan genocide, Tutsis were compared to cockroaches, while during the Holocaust, Jews were compared to snakes, vermin and satanic figures.

Furthermore, Ahmadinejad has called to "remove the Zionist black stain from the human society," adding that "the very existence of Israel is an insult to humankind and an affront to all world nations," requiring the wiping out of this "scarlet letter from the ... forehead of humanity." He has also claimed that Israelis are not human beings: "They are like cattle, nay, more misguided. Next to them, all the criminals of the world seem righteous. Thanks to G-d, your wish will soon be realized, and this germ of corruption will be wiped

off the face of the world.”

Yet what is even more dangerous is that Ahmadinejad sites the Shiite Islamic faith as a reason for these genocidal ambitions. He believes that the Mahdi, otherwise known as the Shiite Messiah, guides his government and their policies. Thus, some analysts believe Iran seeks to development nuclear weapons in order to destroy Israel as the first necessary showdown needed for the arrival of the Mahdi.

Unfortunately, Israelis are not the only group Ahmadinejad has targeted in such a manner, for Iran’s Baha’i community also is portrayed similarly. The Iranian state media frequently refers to Baha’is as prostitutes, filthy and incestuous. The Iranian government views them to be heretics because they don’t believe Muhammad was the last prophet, and Iran frequently claims the Iranian Baha’is are agents of foreign powers, such as the United States and Israel.

While the Iranian government hasn’t yet taken any actions directed toward the physical annihilation of Baha’is, there is evidence asserting that the Iranian government seeks to exterminate the Baha’i faith as a religious community in Iran. Official Iranian governmental documents assert that the progress and development of Baha’is should be blocked, that a plan must be devised to “confront and destroy” their cultural roots outside the country, that Baha’is should be expelled from universities, and that Baha’is should be denied employment and not have any position of influence within Iran. Since the Iranian Revolution, many Baha’is have already been killed, imprisoned, tortured and had their holy places and cemeteries desecrated.

According to Christopher Tuckwood, executive director of the Sentinel Project, while these actions don’t necessarily amount to physical annihilation at the moment, “It does provide clear evidence of an overreaching state-directed plan with the intent of destroying the Baha’i faith and community,

apparently through forced conversion to Islam.”

Tuckwood also believes it is possible that in the future, Iran could attempt to physically annihilate the Baha'is. Thus, this Iranian governmental document demonstrates that, like Israel, the Baha'i community in Iran is also a victim of incitement to genocide. As Romeo Dallaire, the former U.N. peacekeeping commander who tried to stop the Rwandan genocide, declared, “The similarities with what I saw in Rwanda are absolutely unquestionable, equal ... and in fact applied with seemingly the same verve. We are witnessing a slow-motion rehearsal for genocide.”

Given all this, Elie Wiesel is correct in asserting that Ahmadinejad should be indicted for inciting crimes against humanity, against both the State of Israel and the Baha'i community in Iran.

For the original article, visit .

Healthy Diet Helps Mask the Aging Process

No one wants to look older than his or her age. But, if your skin is full of premature sags and wrinkles, you can't avoid it.

Although you may not think of your skin as an organ, it is actually the largest organ in your body and one of the most critical. Your skin has the extremely critical role of providing a barrier against a very hostile external environment that includes bacteria, fungi, and the never-ending oxidation caused by the sun. With new skin cells

forming all the time, your skin is even more sensitive than other organs to changes in your body.

Your skin's visual appearance gives you a window into the internal state of your body. Let's face it. You know when you look good, usually it's when you're feeling strong and healthy. When your skin has a rosy glow, this means you've got good blood circulation within the skin and probably through the rest of your body. On the other hand, you often know you're getting sick when you see pallor to your skin, indicative of poor blood flow. You can bet that the rest of your body is not too far behind.

One unmistakable sign of aging is the formation of wrinkles. Scientifically speaking, wrinkles are caused by the cross-linking of collagen fibers in the skin, and this cross-linking can be accelerated by inflammation or by constant exposure to the sun. The most effective way to reduce wrinkle formation (other than staying out of the sun completely) is to reduce arachidonic acid levels in the skin, thus decreasing the potential for the production of pro-inflammatory "bad" eicosanoids.

An even more powerful approach to preventing wrinkles is to increase the levels of "good" eicosanoids in your body because of their powerful anti-inflammatory actions. These "good" eicosanoids will do far more to reduce the inflammatory process that leads to wrinkles than all the fruit acids and vitamin E creams you can possibly rub on your skin. This is because "good" eicosanoids are very powerful anti-inflammatory agents. With improved blood flow and decreased inflammation, your skin will look years younger.

Skin diseases, such as eczema and psoriasis, often are a result of excessive levels of "bad" eicosanoids. While neither eczema nor psoriasis is life threatening, both are cause for concern because they indicate a significant inflammatory process occurring in the skin. Various studies have indicated

that high-dose fish oil, a natural anti-inflammatory, can contribute to some improvement in psoriasis. Other inflammatory skin conditions, such as eczema, also respond well to high-dose fish oil.

Another key to improving your skin's appearance is to increase your production of the key structural proteins of the skin – collagen and elastin – as you age. These structural proteins give your skin its firmness and elasticity. As the production of collagen and elastin decreases with age, your skin starts to droop and sag. In order to keep collagen and elastin at increased levels, you need to increase blood flow to your skin, since that stimulates the enzymes that produce these structural proteins. Using techniques such as laser resurfacing, dermabrasion, and chemical peels, plastic surgeons not only remove cross-linked proteins from the top layer of skin, but also stimulate the blood flow to your skin. This increased blood flow enhances the new production of both collagen and elastin, but unfortunately with significant increase in inflammation and pain in the process.

Since beautiful skin ultimately begins with what you eat, the Zone Diet and OmegaRx EPA/DHA Concentrates may represent the best cosmetic product you can use.

Dr. Barry Sears is a leader in the field of dietary control of hormonal response. A former research scientist at the Boston University School of Medicine and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dr. Sears has dedicated his efforts over the past 25 years to the study of lipids and their inflammatory role in the development of chronic disease.

For the original article, visit .

10 Ways to Improve Marriage Communication

Ironically, as our information age becomes a global reality, married couples increasingly report breakdowns in simple communication.

“He doesn’t listen.” “I don’t know her any more.” “We never talk.” “He spends all his free time on the computer.” “I wish he’d look at me like that.” “She talks to her friends but never with me.” These are common complaints.

For true communication to occur, the same message that left the mind of Person A must still be intact when it is understood in the consciousness of Person B.

There’s no doubt about it: We simply must improve communication within our marriages. Here are 10 tips to get started.

1. Model respectful listening. Top of the list? Take responsibility. Don’t wait for your spouse to make the first move—step up and listen already. Good listeners tend to get listened to in return.

2. Choose to be genuinely interested in what your spouse has to say. Yes, it’s a choice. You say you love her? Then don’t tune her out when the conversation is not about sports. Make the effort to attend that PTA event together—you might have something to talk about. Read that Jane Austen book she loves so much; watch her favorite HGTV decorating program together; walk hand-in-hand around the art show; show some interest in her friends. Make the choice to be interested.

3. Write your spouse a note that reinforces your message.

- “I’m looking forward to our date on Friday!”

- “Here are some things I want us to talk to Junior’s teacher about—what do you think?”
- “Thanks for bringing me lunch yesterday; I love you so much!”
- “I enjoyed shooting the breeze with you. Let’s meet for coffee and chat some more.”

4. Schedule regular, media-free family mealtimes. This applies to both marital communication and the family dynamic. Meals can be communication opportunities *par excellence!* They’re informal family meetings, clearing houses for information and workshops where parents both teach manners and model as examples. Plus, mealtimes are an awesome ongoing opportunity—with or without children—to keep communication flowing.

5. Keep the television turned off ... unless there’s a specific show you have agreed to watch together. TV as constant background noise is:

- An invitation to tune out relationships.
- A strong message about what is important (and unimportant) in a home.
- A distraction that will always suck attention away from one another.
- An excuse to avoid communication.

6. Make eye contact when you’re talking. Also make good use of use touch, responsive and reflective feedback, and body language (smiles, gestures, head tilts, raised eyebrows, nods, etc.) to demonstrate that communication is actually occurring.

7. Do not answer your phone, text, or multitask on any level while interacting with your spouse. Doing any of the above sends a clear message of priorities.

8. Avoid surface-level or single-word responses. When talking with your spouse, it’s too easy to brush off real communication, squash first-order interaction and signal your

spouse you are not really interested.

9. Designate a central location for all important notices, dates, reminders, messages, etc. Maybe a large calendar on the refrigerator, a bulletin board in the kitchen or a whiteboard by the front door.

10. Include your spouse as a “friend” on all your social media lists. No one should get more of your time than your spouse. Include one another as primary contacts, keep one another “in the loop,” send one another messages every day and act as if you are each other’s best friend. Chances are, you will be.

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.**

Lapid Comments Draw Fire From Ultra-Orthodox Jews

Finance Minister Yair Lapid still hasn’t accepted that election season is over. His comments on Tuesday from the Knesset podium against haredim and their children are both vexing and outrageous.

Right now, as the government is getting ready to impose harsh economic policy, social cohesion is of the utmost importance,

and it seems reasonable to expect the nation's finance minister to deploy national—not sectorial—rhetoric. After all, he is everyone's finance minister.

I am sure that a lot of Yesh Atid's voters were tickled pink by Lapid's theatrical performance at the Knesset. "Fantastic—he really hung 'em out to dry," they jeered, as if we're lining the bleachers in the State Cup finals. It was Yair's father who set the precedent for the junior Lapid's sharpened and offensive style, and we all know the political lifespan of his party, which championed hatred against the haredim. Israel's existence cannot be fortified by hatred.

One could criticize the ultra-Orthodox leadership's behavior throughout modern Israel's history and, as far as I'm concerned, since the establishment of the Zionist movement and the first claims that the Jews needed a state of their own. One cannot ignore, though, a glaringly fundamental fact—that the haredi public is like an insurance policy for the Jewish nation's ongoing existence at a time when massive civilizations are roiling in oceans of uncertainty.

We mainly returned to our homeland after an extended furlough in the diaspora because, for thousands of years, we believed that God had promised this land to our ancestors and to us. We prayed three times a day for the return to Zion and its capital in Jerusalem. Our nation is a nation because of the Torah — this is what Medieval Jewish philosophers believed. Amazingly, they were right. Great nations have vanished into nothingness, and yet we are still active on history's grand stage, against all odds.

When politicians talk about the haredi public, I expect from them a little more humility and gratitude. When politicians and haredi rabbis shrilly cry out against those "Zionists," they need to lower their eyes and give thanks to the Israeli soldiers who have sacrificed themselves for the right of the ultra-Orthodox to study Torah.

The political leadership's fiery rhetoric over the haredi public is stirring hysteria. Haredim know that the train to greater cooperation in Israeli society has left its station. The ultra-Orthodox community has already accepted that those haredim who have not made Torah their trade in the fullest sense of the word will have to integrate into the national fabric and join the workforce. That will be a huge contribution both to society, and to the haredi community at large.

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

Israelis Find Themselves Between a 'Rock and a Hard Place'

In six months, Israel will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, during which Israel suffered almost 3,000 casualties and another 9,000 were wounded in fierce battles that took place throughout Sinai and the Golan Heights.

Today, with winds of Islamic extremism blowing in from Egypt—plus more than two years of fighting between Syrians loyal to President Bashar Assad and rebels trying to overthrow Assad, leaving nearly 100,000 dead—Israelis look at current events with similar trepidation that preceded the Yom Kippur War. We find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

Recent reports of the U.S. sending troops and equipment to Jordan, providing Israel with some new advanced weapons, and Jordan granting air rights for Israeli drones to pass through Jordanian air space (to Syria) all suggest that something is

in the works. Add to the mix the recent restoration of ties between Israel and Turkey, another opponent of the Assad regime, and talks of renewed coordination between us lend one to wonder when, not if, there will be a military intervention in Syria.

Israelis do care about the humanitarian disaster that is taking place in Syria, with civilians being butchered along with rebel fighters and government troops. It's a paradox that the country that's been one of our most fierce enemies, steadfastly refusing to recognize Israel's right to exist much less make peace with us, is facing this situation. Yet there's a parallel outpouring of care for the well-being of the Syrian people and worry about what will be—and whether or not it will be good for Israel.

Israel largely has sat on the sidelines, watching and not interfering in developments in Syria. And while we also are concerned we may get pulled into the fighting by having to defend ourselves, there are several notable exceptions. Among these is the repeated evacuation of Syrians injured in domestic fighting, brought across the border to Israel and treated in Israeli hospitals. Yes, whether rebel fighters or government troops, because Israel sanctifies and celebrates life, we treat people who are wounded in a civil war in a country that is at war with us.

This leads to the concern that if the fighting were not bad enough already, things could get worse and that Syrians could attempt to flee over the Israeli border for their own safety. This could pose both a humanitarian problem as well as a security risk, and it is something for which Israel must be prepared.

Beyond the humanitarian crisis that has seen hundreds of thousands flee for their safety to Turkey and Jordan (where riots among refugees have been reported), the big and immediate fear in Israel is that Syria will use its vast

stockpile of chemical and biological weapons (said to be more than 1,000 tons) against us, either as a way to draw us into the fighting and unite support for Syria against Israel or as a Hail Mary-type pass, as the falling government could launch these weapons against us with “nothing to lose.”

The video *Can't Ignore the Risks* was produced to dramatize some of the threats Israel faces. As an Israeli and father of six, with gas masks in three different sizes stored in my home's bomb shelter, the fear of this scene actually coming to pass, with chemical or biological warheads attached, is terrifying. The support we get from overseas is a comfort, but the threats we face are still very real.

Just below the surface of fear and concern, Israelis also worry about what will come. The fighting in Syria is not just a matter of Syrians fighting Syrians. Foreigners are on the ground, too, fighting with and/or “advising” either side.

It's clear that Syria's prime benefactor is Iran, a Shiite theocracy that has sustained and propped up the Syrian Alawite government for decades. As far as diplomacy or moderation goes, nothing good comes out of Iran, which today is the umbilical cord keeping the Assad regime (and Assad himself) alive.

With Iran being such a threat to Israel and the world, it would be logical for Israel to line up with the rebels to overthrow Assad, even with some tacit support. But logic here is not black and white. There are many factions of Syrian rebels fighting the government, and each gets support financially and materially by different countries and different terrorist groups. None of those supporting these factions are allies of Israel, to put it nicely.

There are really no good answers in Syria. If the Assad regime were to defeat the rebels and stay in place, the threats it poses on its own, as an agent of Iran and as a supplier of

Hezbollah, are still grave. If the rebels win, there's likely to be no shortage of infighting among them to wrest power and control over each other.

Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups could come out strengthened, controlling the WMD arsenal and literally sitting on our border. In the "best case," Syria could actually try to have elections and install a representative government. But if the Egyptian model is any example, what comes after may be worse than what was before.

There is a well-known saying that "the enemy of my enemy is still my enemy." Sadly, it doesn't look like much good is going to come on the Syrian front—not for Israel, and not for the Syrian people.

The one good thing is that, although Israel has been pressured to make peace with Syria and "return" the Golan Heights, thankfully that has not happened. Otherwise we'd see the Syrian civil war literally on our front door step, just across the Sea of Galilee from hundreds of thousands of Israelis.

The past two years' developments in Egypt and Syria provide a clear lesson for us in any future peacemaking endeavors that, in our neighborhood, maybe we will never own peace, but just rent it until a new warlord comes to power.

Jonathan Feldstein is the director of Heart to Heart, a unique virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six. Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He can be contacted at FirstPersonIsrael@.

7 Absolutes of Healthy Eating

Eating ... something so basic and fundamental, it wouldn't seem that it needed to be so complex. Yet that's what it has become, and it's no surprise that, with diet books coming out that top the best-seller list every few months often contradicting one another we find ourselves in our current state.

With 65 percent of all Americans battling the bulge and more confused than ever, who do you listen to and whom can you trust? In this article, you'll walk away with seven absolutes that will help you lay a solid foundation of healthy eating without having to ever second-guess it.

1. **Eating Out.** This is something more and more Americans are doing on a daily basis. While diet books have sold millions of copies advocating the reduction or all-out elimination of fats and later carbohydrates, they've overlooked one of the two true culprits that have led us to our current state. The first was the shift from more labor-intensive jobs like farming and factory work to more sedentary technology-based jobs. Even our entertainment is more sedentary. The other is eating out.

In fact, by the restaurant industry's own numbers in 1970, they were a \$40-billion-a-year industry. However, fast forward 30 years, and in 2000 they had grown more than 10-fold to \$440 billion, with serving sizes skyrocketing up to five times their original sizes. During these same 30 years, our waistlines had no choice but to follow suit, and they certainly did. On any given day in this country, 50-60 percent of all meals are eaten outside the home.

- To regain control, start shopping and preparing your own

meals.

You'll almost always be better off and you will save money.

- If you have to eat out, log it on your calendar so you will be aware just how often it's happening.
- Learn your portion sizes and stick with them. For example, a serving of pasta is about what you can fit into the cup of your hand—not the gigantic plateful when you eat out, literally two days worth of grains! People blame carbs when it was really the amount eaten.
- Pass on the calorie-dense bread and chips and request a house salad (not Caesar) or broth-based soup be brought out right away instead.
- Share your entrée or tell the waiter to box half of it up before bringing your meal out.

2. Be label savvy. Many people never bother to look on the back of the package to see the food's nutritional content. It seems too complicated, and who could blame them? It's unfortunate because often, right next to your favorite foods, are the healthier versions that taste just as great. I love chocolate chip cookies and would try to restrain myself to eating just the three that made up one serving until I found chocolate chip teddy grahams, where a serving is like 14 smaller pieces. This is more satisfying, as it provides more hand-to-mouth and more crunching than my usual paltry three cookies and is much lower in saturated fat and sugars. If I didn't read the label, I would have never been able to make that choice.

So here are the five main things you should look for on a nutrition label:

- **Serving sizes and calories per serving.** This is probably the biggest thing to look out for. Often manufacturers will break up what a serving is to make the label not look so outrageous. For example, I picked up one of those noodle packets every college student lives on, and

to my dismay, it said “serving size 1/3 packet”. No one opens up that single serving packaging, breaks off one third dry noodles, and puts the rest back. Plus, there is only one spice packet. They do this because the sodium content would read 2,100 mg instead of the 700 mg you see on the label. The cutoff for sodium per day is 1,500 mg. This one packet contains more than your whole day’s worth. Always look for the servings per container and multiply everything else by that number.

- **Saturated fat.** Compare other brands and pick the one that’s lowest, or better yet, that doesn’t contain this artery clogging fat.
- **Sodium.** Your daily limit is 1,500 mg, so keep this in mind when shopping.
- **Fiber.** Pick foods that contain fiber instead of others that do not. Men need 38 grams a day, and women need 25 grams. Foods that are higher in fiber also hold off your hunger better. Choose breads that have at least 2 grams of fiber per serving.
- **Vitamins and minerals.** Read the label to see what vitamins and minerals you’ll get out of eating this food, and choose the one that does the most for you.

3. Balanced eating. Low-carb and no-carb diets are finally coming off their highpoint of popularity, but they are still around. Diets are nothing new and have been around since the 1800s, with all of them suffering a failure rate of 95-98 percent within six months.

While balanced eating can mean different things to different people, the point is we were given these macronutrients (proteins, carbs, and fats) for a reason. No food group should ever be vilified; what is most important and has been said time and time again by every major health organization is the total amount of calories eaten. It’s this universal law of energy taken in versus energy expended that determines whether we gain fat, lose fat, or maintain balance. Don’t fall for all

the gimmicks.

4. Eating every three hours. Now that you understand no food groups are off limits or are the sole reason for your struggle with fat, we come to how often we should eat. The best way to explain this is to think of a fireplace in your home. Each day you have a stack of wood you need to burn, otherwise it accumulates and carries over to the next day.

When people skip breakfast, it's like you don't start that fire until noon. You missed out on a lot of wood burning hours. Also, when you go more than three hours without having nourishment, your body's metabolism goes into conservation mode and slows down. Think of that fire burning out without any more wood for fuel. The goal is to keep your metabolism fired up all day burning calories and providing you with energy to do your activities and concentrate.

People erroneously believe if they don't eat they will lose fat. Wrong. What happens is your body thinks you're in the jungle starving and will slow everything down to conserve. Often, if this continues, your body will cannibalize your lean muscle tissue to get the fuel your body, particularly your brain, needs. Your muscle is a much more readily available fuel source than fat, and your body will go to it first. So your scale drops, but you stay flabby and your metabolism drops even further. You finally eat again and the weight comes back with some friends, and this frustrating cycle continues.

Work with your body and fuel it instead of against it. Example: Eat your breakfast. Then two or three hours later, have a snack like yogurt or a piece of fruit. Continue on your day, letting no more than three hours go by without eating.

5. Drinking on the pounds. The fluids you drink often mean the difference between gaining fat or losing it. People usually don't think about the calorie content of drinks. This is a big mistake, as the calories very quickly add up, especially from

multiple drinks. Think about how many sodas someone might have in a day. Each can carries with it 140 calories, with the Gulp size canisters giving around 600 calories, or 1/2 to 1/3 of an average woman's entire day's calories. Same goes for coffee drinks at your favorite corner stop.

On the low end, with non-fat everything and no whip cream, you're looking at 160 calories—upwards to 500 calories on the dessert coffees. Some people will have a few of those a day, hardly eat, and wonder why they cannot drop the fat. This doesn't mean your favorite coffee is off limits, but you need to choose wisely and factor them into your entire day. Being aware of what you're drinking is the first step.

6. Water intake. Speaking of drinking, this is a perfect alternative to high-calorie drinks. Save the calories and actually eat the food. If water seems too dull for you, there are some great 0-calorie flavored waters out now. So how much water do you need a day? Here is a quick way to find your personal number. Take your weight and divide it by two. That's how many ounces you need to get a day. People have heard this for so long but still overlook its importance. Maybe this will help put it in perspective:

- Your brain is 78 percent water. [McIlwain, H. and Bachelard, H.S., Biochemistry and the Central Nervous System, Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1985.]
- Your blood is 84 percent water. [UC Berkeley Wellness Foods A to Z, Rebus, Inc. New York, NY.]
- Your muscles are 76 percent water.
- Even your bones are 22 percent water.

Makes more sense now why water is so important. Our bodies lose 64-96 ounces each and every day through sweating, breathing, urinating, and even sneezing. When we are physically active, we need to replace even more. Yes, you can get it from other sources, even some of your foods—this is why thirst is sometimes miscued as hunger—but nothing is better

and easier on your body than pure water.

7. Healthy not “skinny.” This is a subject that’s close to my heart. For far too long we’ve judged by the outward appearance. If someone was skinny, they were healthy and in good shape, if they were larger, they must be lazy or eat all the time. My favorite verse, 1 Samuel 16:7, speaks directly on this: *“The Lord doesn’t see as man sees, man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”* You see, the outside doesn’t always tell you the whole story. I can’t tell you how many “skinny” models or actresses I’ve worked with that when we do a body fat test, they are in the 38-percent range, classifying them as—get this—obese.

On the contrary, I have larger clients that are active and fit that are in the 28-percent range, which is normal. Yet, if you judged by outward appearances, you would be completely wrong. The problem is people fall prey to the lie that you have to look a certain way to be fit and healthy. If they cannot attain the false standard, then they give up or never embark on the journey of health and wellness.

We as believers should know better about judging by outward appearances. Our reasons for becoming active and fit should be to be set apart from the culture, not to chase after it’s unrealistic standards of beauty that don’t exist. We are followers of Christ, and this is an area where we need to lead and stop following. Be encouraged and take this journey one day at a time.

Dino Nowak holds some of the highest levels of certifications with the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Council on Exercise, and the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research. He has advised and trained celebrities in the television, film, and music industries, in addition to those of all ages who have struggled with health and fitness challenges. He is the former general manager of Equinox Fitness in Los Angeles and the author of *The Final Makeover:*

Your 40 Day Guide to Personal Fitness.

For the original article, visit .

Three Things to Do When Your Kids Drive You Crazy

Sometimes my teenage son drives me crazy. And I mean totally batty-up the wall. My other three children are grown now, but I remember having the same feelings when they were living at home.

I know I'm not alone. But I've been fortunate to have a job that reminds me constantly of the privilege and opportunity that raising children is.

I'll admit, though, that at times it requires a tremendous amount of effort to make the shift from being driven crazy by my kids to honoring them as a high priority—to expecting them and welcoming them to engage with me.

Here's a story about Andrew, a dad who just wants a few minutes of peace and quiet when he gets home from work.

Andrew's Story

When Andrew comes home from work, young Grace is eager to see him. Andrew shakes her loose from his arms and legs for a minute so he can read the mail.

Grace immediately starts talking about what happened that day, overflowing with information. It's too much for Andrew to

follow.

“Gracie,” Andrew says, “can’t you see that I’m trying to read the mail?” He goes upstairs to change his clothes.

Back downstairs, Andrew fixes a plate of leftovers and sits in front of the TV. On cue, Grace enters the room: “Ready to go play outside, Daddy?”

“Pretty soon,” Andrew answers.

As he eats, Andrew gets involved in the storyline on TV.

As soon as Andrew is done, Grace says: “Daddy, you said we could go outside! When?”

Now Andrew is frustrated and angry about missing the dialogue on his show. “I don’t want to hear another word about it,” he snaps. “I said we’ll go outside. Just be patient!”

Of course, the tears start flowing out of Grace’s eyes the minute she hears her dad’s angry tone.

Now, let’s step back for a minute.

Every dad is different, but I think many dads can identify with Andrew’s experience. (I know I can!) Andrew’s a good dad, but he let an innocent situation spiral out of control.

Why did it happen?

Basically, a series of little interruptions and frustrations between Andrew and his young daughter *combined* to produce anger instead of anticipation over their fun daddy-daughter time.

So often, frustration and anger start as an inner conflict between priorities. Andrew wanted to do one thing, but family responsibilities pulled him another way. During that battle between what he selfishly *wanted* to do and what he knew he *should* be doing, the negative emotions continued to grow.

Andrew expressed the negative emotions as threats and harsh words.

And herein lies the danger. If a dad doesn't recognize his error and commit to change, the bad habits will escalate. Being short could lead to screaming at a child for little mistakes, or it will lead to making cruel, demeaning statements.

In a worst-case scenario, it could even lead to physical abuse.

As you know, Dad, children are not always convenient. Like Grace, they can be persistent or demanding. Sometimes they will disobey or even whine and throw fits. But no matter what they do, *they do not cause their father's response.*

So how do you handle those times? Here are some ideas.

Action Points

1. Responding calmly to our children begins with reminding ourselves—every single day—that they are among our highest priorities. If we can keep that thought in mind, there won't be as much inner conflict; we'll be much less likely to let other, lesser things compete for our attention, and we can decrease the likelihood of negative emotions when relating to our kids.

2. Make a decision that you are going to do what is best for your child. Sometimes making this shift will take years, but if you constantly remind yourself that you are going to do what is best for your children, there will be no more competition for your attention and energy. You will feel less frustration because the matter has already been decided.

Before you get home from work, you will have already determined that you are going to go outside and play with your child. You will have already decided that you will take the

time to rock your baby to sleep at night, mix up a bottle of formula, cook oatmeal in the morning or do whatever else she needs.

3. Write down your commitments. I don't want to imply that making this shift is easy. It isn't! So during moments of clarity—when you feel conviction about making changes in your life or becoming a better dad—write down your plan.

When coming up with your plan, take stock of when you tend to get angry with your kids. What actions can you commit to that will make a difference? Maybe, like Andrew, you need a specific plan that will help you transition more smoothly from work to home. Maybe it means turning off distractions, like the TV or computer, or asking your wife for help.

Regardless, share your plan with someone else who can help you stay accountable. Tell your kids: “Every day when I get home for work, I'm going to play with you for 15 minutes before I do anything else.”

Or tell your wife: “I'm going to get up 15 minutes early so I can cook breakfast for the kids.”

What do you think? Leave a comment below and tell us how *you* make the shift!

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment. NCF believes every child needs a dad they can count on, and it uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father-figures their children need. Subscribe to Casey's weekly email tip by clicking here: [I want tips on how to be a great dad who loves, coaches, mentors and inspires my children.](#)

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

Panel: Not Enough Data to Support Suicide Screening

There is not enough evidence to recommend universal screening to find people at risk of suicide, according to a government-backed panel.

As it did in 2004, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) issued draft guidelines on Monday that conclude “there is not enough evidence to make a definitive recommendation for or against screening.” Its statement is available for public comment here: .

“Although we did not find enough evidence to say ‘here are the right questions and tools to find the people who may be at risk for suicide,’ doctors should be screening for depression and alcohol abuse disorders in their primary care population,” said Dr. David Grossman, a member of the Task Force.

Depression and alcohol abuse are both risk factors for suicide, said Grossman, who is also a senior investigator at the Group Health Research Institute in Seattle.

About 37,000 Americans kill themselves every year, according to researchers who published a review of past research in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* that was used to inform the USPSTF’s decision. Many of them visited their family doctor within the year before their death.

“What they’re trying to figure out is should we screen every person who walks through our door? Is that going to help us find people and get them effective treatment?” said Elizabeth O’Connor, the review’s lead author from the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, Oregon.

Grossman said the USPSTF's recommendation does not apply to people who are already viewed to be at risk for suicide.

Screening and Treatment

For the new review, O'Connor and her colleagues pulled together 56 studies testing the accuracy and effectiveness of screening and treatments for suicide from 2002 through 2012.

Overall, the tools used to identify people at high risk for suicide in the studies varied from questionnaires to interviews, but none were perfect.

For example, the tools were able to diagnose between 52 percent to 100 percent of the people who were at risk for suicide, but 20 percent to 40 percent of people identified as high-risk would be false positives, according to the researchers.

The tools were also less effective at finding teens at risk for suicide – as was treatment.

For example, talk therapy was associated with a 32 percent reduced risk of suicide attempts among adults, while it wasn't linked to any benefit among teenagers.

While O'Connor said she couldn't say how many deaths that 32 percent reduced risk may have prevented, Grossman told Reuters Health that the Task Force found it promising.

But Grossman added that most of the studies included in the review were on people who were already viewed to be at an increased risk for suicide.

"It's difficult to take that research and apply that to someone who was just identified through screening," he said.

O'Connor told Reuters Health that the new study also doesn't mean doctors should disregard possible risks for suicide, which include – among other things – health disorders,

substance use disorders and depression.

“It’s always really important to look for any indicators... It is absolutely imperative to follow up because it is a real issue,” she said.

Amy Brausch, a psychologist who has studied adolescent self-harm and suicide at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, said studying suicide can be difficult, but it’s important.

“I think more trials are needed and it isn’t done as often because it’s a high risk population—which brings liability with it. But it’s a population that really needs it,” said Brausch.