



Healthier Way

simplified

A guide to a healthier, better you



Ian Cox

Healthier Way: A simplified guide to a healthier, better you

By Ian Cox

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Introduction

When I started writing *Healthier Way*¹, way back in 2013 I had the idea of a book that would help pretty much anyone lead a healthier life. I think for those that read the book, which admittedly was not that many, it did help. While the sentiment of the book was right, for our modern 24/7 world it was just a bit too long and probably overly complex, even though that was not what I intended when I wrote it. If you like plenty of detail, which I do being an engineer, I am sure you would have found the book interesting but for everyone else you are probably just looking for a book that gets straight to the point and gives some useful pointers on how to be healthy.

This is what this book is all about, condensing what I wrote before but gets straight to the point and gives some easy to follow rules, which should lead to a healthier, better you. The philosophy from *Healthier Way* still holds true and is based on the five following principles:

1. Calorie balance
2. Eat healthy
3. Goal setting and learning from your mistakes & successes
4. Move more
5. Realism and willpower

Having spent another 4 years being healthy, since I finished writing the book, I am even more convinced that these 5 principles are the cornerstone to a healthier life. Before I wrote *Healthier Way* I used to struggle a lot with staying motivated with any sport or exercise, which meant I never really got fit and healthy for a long period of time. Now that I apply these principles to my everyday life, they have helped me to stay fit and healthy for many years. I am about to approach my mid-40's (yikes) and even at this grand old age I am as fit and healthy as I have ever been, which is just great for my overall wellbeing.

I am not going to witter on any further with the introduction, as that went on for too long in the previous book. What I will say though is if you want further insight into the brief explanations that I am going to give here on the five principles, then *Healthier Way* is still available from Amazon, which will give you all the in depth detail.



Calorie Balance

Calorie balance is the idea that you balance the calories that you are consuming against those that you are burning so you can achieve your health aims and maintain a healthy weight ². In reality this is much harder than it sounds, because if it wasn't, we could all just eat a sensible amount, do a bit of exercise and we would all look great. If only life was that easy! For me this is the key principle out of the five and probably the hardest to achieve.

There are three main issues which makes calorie balance difficult to achieve:

1. Many of us have become more sedentary, especially if you have an office or sit-down job.
2. As we get older, our metabolisms slow down for several reasons, so we don't need to consume as many calories to maintain our weight.
3. There is an abundance of cheap calorific food and drink.

When you combine these three factors together it is easy to see why many of us don't achieve calorie balance. We sit down for most of the day, thus not burning many calories, then as we grow older we don't need as many calories to maintain our current weight and probably worst of all it is all too easy to consume cheap calorific food and drink, because let's face it, it tastes really good.

How do you achieve calorie balance? By knowing how many calories your body really needs so you can achieve your goals and maintain a healthy weight. Your age and how active you are will largely determine how many calories you need each day. Consume under these required calories and you will lose weight, consume over and you will put on weight. So how do you work out how many calories you need? You can use the calculator on the Healthier Way website (www.healthier-way.com) but for those of you who like a bit of maths (and let's face it who doesn't 😊), the formula below, which uses the Mifflin - St Jeor method ³ will allow you to calculate your daily calorie needs:

$$\text{BMR for Men} = (10 * \text{weight [kg]}) + (6.25 * \text{height [cm]}) - (5 * \text{age [years]}) + 5$$

$$\text{BMR for Women} = (10 * \text{weight [kg]}) + (6.25 * \text{height [cm]}) - (5 * \text{age [years]}) - 161$$



So as an example, if you were a 38 year old man that is 1.78 meters tall and weights 82 kilos, your daily calorie requirement would be:

$$(10 * 82) + (6.25 * 178) - (5 * 38) + 5$$

$$820 + 1112.5 - 190 + 5 = \mathbf{1747.5}$$

For this person they need 1747 calories a day to maintain their current weight of 82 kilos, assuming they did nothing and just laid in bed all day, please note I am not promoting this lifestyle choice! Now most of us are somewhat active during the day so to get a true reflection of the number of calories you require each day you need to multiply this answer by the activity level below.

Activity Level	Multiplier
Sedentary (spend most of the day sitting down e.g. office worker)	1.25
Lightly Active (spend most of the day on your feet e.g. teacher)	1.4
Active (spend most of the day doing some physical activity e.g. postman)	1.6
Very Active (spend most of the day doing heavy physical activity e.g. construction worker)	1.8

Lets say this person spends most of the day in a office, their multiplier would be 1.25, which would make their calorie requirement each day:

$$1747.5 * 1.25 = 2184.4$$

You're probably thinking that 2184 calories a day is actually not that much, and you would be right. In the UK we are told that the recommended calorie intake for a women is 2000 a day and for a man 2500 a day. Well if this person consumed 2500 calories a day they would soon be putting on weight. What's worst as we get older we need even fewer calories. So how easy is it to eat more calories than we actually need? Below is an example of what our fictional person might eat in a day:



Food	Calories
Breakfast	
Granola cereal with semi-skimmed milk	250
500 ml of orange juice	200
Lunch	
Wholemeal bagel with cream cheese	350
Packet of wholegrain crisps	150
Apple	100
300 ml of semi-skimmed milk	150
Dinner	
Homemade spaghetti Bolognese with cheese	600
3 slices of garlic bread	290
Half a honeydew melon	100
350 ml of orange juice	150
Snacks & drinks during the day	
Oat bar	150
Banana	100
Around 2 litres of water	0
Total	2590

That is not a huge amount of food and fairly healthy but it is still 2590 calories, well above the 2184 calories our fictional person needs. Let's make this unhealthy to see how easy it is to eat even more calories:

Food	Calories
Breakfast	
Bacon sandwich with ketchup	350
350 ml of orange juice	150
Coffee with sugar	60
Lunch	



Wholemeal bagel with cream cheese and ham	350
Packet of wholegrain crisps	150
Apple	100
Bottle of coke	200
Dinner	
Homemade spaghetti Bolognese with cheese	600
3 slices of garlic bread	290
Chocolate ice cream	160
Two glasses of wine	200
Snacks & drinks during the day	
Chocolate bar	260
Banana	100
Can of coke	140
1 litre of water	0
Total	3110

By adding coke, wine, chocolate and a bacon sandwich we are now at a whopping 3110 calories for the day. This goes to show how easy it is to eat way more calories than you need and put on weight.

In reality most of us are not completely sedentary and we end up doing some form of exercise even if it is just walking to the shops and back. Exercise can have a real positive impact on our calorie balance and when structured properly can be the key difference between putting on weight and maintaining a healthy weight, so you can achieve your health goals. Let's get back to our fictional person and see the effect exercise has on his calorie balance if he runs three times per week.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Calorie Intake	2630	2697	2540	2486	2366	2159	2341
Calories Burned	1575 <i>(11 mile run)</i>	0	700 <i>(5 mile run)</i>	0	910 <i>(6.7 mile run)</i>	0	0



Net Calories	1055	2697	1840	2486	1456	2159	2341
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- Average calorie intake per day (not including exercise): **2459**
- Average net calorie intake per day (including exercise): **2004**

In this example his average calorie intake, when not including exercise is 2459 per day. Weighing 82 kilos and requiring just 2184 calories per day to maintain his weight he would then start to put on weight. If this person carried on eating like this each week and not doing any exercise, he could end up weighing 104 kilos or 16 stone. But by running over 22 miles in a week his average calorie intake is 2004 calories per day, which would mean he would lose a small bit of weight. While exercise is an inefficient way of burning calories, in this example 22 miles burns a measly 3,185 calories, when combined with sensible eating it is the difference between maintaining a healthy weight and putting on weight. Exercise also has a range of other benefits that we will discuss later.

Combining sensible eating with regular exercise is the best way to achieve calorie balance so you can achieve a healthy weight and reach your health goals. There are other ways to try and do this, dieting is the route lots of people go down, but this usually ends in failure because it is hard to diet all the time as your body ends up craving what you are not giving it. The calorie balance approach has worked for me for over 6 years and continues to be the best method I have found to keep me healthy. Also once you get into the routine of eating sensibly and exercising each week it becomes an integral part of your life that you can really enjoy and it allows you to eat naughty food every now and then without feeling guilty.

If you think this calorie balance approach will work for you and you want some further insight, then pick up a copy of the original Healthier Way.

BMI

I am just going to talk about BMI or body mass index⁴ briefly. Bottom line I am not a huge fan of BMI. It is a statistical tool used by governments and organisations like the World Health Organisation to determine the overall health of a nation. When used like this then it provides some useful insight, but we have all been forced to use it as individuals to determine if we are a healthy weight or not. There are four BMI categories, underweight, normal, overweight and obese with the implication that if you are not in the normal category you are unhealthy.



Now this is not always the case and you can easily be underweight or overweight and still be healthy. I have been in the overweight category for as long as I can remember but I run over 20 miles per week and would consider myself healthy, not according to BMI though. I'm not saying ignore BMI completely as it does give a broad indication if you are a healthy weight or not but don't let it rule your life and force you to lose lots of weight if you are active and healthy.



Eat Healthy

Eating well and following a healthy, balanced diet can be tricky as there is so much contradictory advice. Hardly a week goes by when this subject is not debated in the national media. It is of course a very important topic right now as we are unfortunately becoming unhealthier and diet (according to the media) seems to be the main reason why many of us are becoming bigger. Personally, I would contest this as I think our sedentary lifestyle is just as much to blame.

What is a healthy balanced diet? The answer to that question really depends who you talk to as there are many different opinions. Some people are okay with fat but despise sugar, others say you should not consume any dairy products, whereas some would be happy for us to hardly eat any carbohydrates. I take the view that you need a well-rounded diet that comprises of all the main food groups, which is vital when you are exercising. I have broadly followed the UK NHS guidelines⁵ for many years and it has worked really well and kept my weight to a healthy level when combined with regular exercise. This is my recommendation for a healthy balanced diet:

- At least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day (including frozen and dried varieties). This should be around a 3rd of your diet.
- Starchy foods including bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. Always chose wholemeal or wholegrain varieties. If you currently eat just white bread, pasta and rice you have to move over to wholemeal and wholegrain. If you are eating potatoes leave the skin on and don't fry them. This should be around a 3rd of your diet.
- Milk and dairy foods. This should be just under a 6th of your diet.
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans, nuts and other non-dairy sources of protein. It is recommended that you eat at least two portions of fish per week. This should be just under a 6th of your diet.
- Just a small amount of food high in fat and sugar, i.e. cakes, biscuits, sweets and chocolate. This should be no more than a 10th of your diet.
- 6 – 8 glasses or fluid a day, preferably water or alternative low calorie drinks

Now plenty of people will complain there is too many carbs or not enough protein or some other fad issue with this diet. What I will say is a diet based on the above will give you the nutrition and vitamins your body needs, along with carbohydrates for energy and protein so that you can build new cells and maintain tissue. This diet will also provide you with the right fuel so you can exercise



properly. Carbohydrates are really important when you exercise, and they are not the ‘evil’ food group that many diet books would lead you to believe, although I do concede they will probably lead to increased weight gain if you are not exercising and eating refined carbs. If you are worried about carbs then eat more on the days that you exercise (if you exercise in the morning make sure you have carbs the night before as well) and reduce your carb intake on days that you are not.

If at the moment your diet does not resemble anything like my recommendation then I would not jump straight in at the deep end and change it in one go. I would move over to this type of diet slowly. If you are eating a chocolate bar every day maybe try eating one every other day and replace it with some fruit or maybe unsalted nuts. Do keep an eye on the number of calories you are consuming. Just because you are starting to eat healthily, it does not mean you can eat as much as you want. Healthy food can have plenty of calories in it so just keep an eye on how much you are eating.

As for drink, you should mainly be drinking water throughout the day, around 6 – 8 glasses or whenever you feel thirsty. This is especially important when you exercise, I will always have a bad run if I have not drunk enough water. Also keep an eye on the other drinks you are consuming as these can have plenty of calories in them and be pretty unhealthy.

Now I’m not going to give you a meal planner, you are much better off thinking about your diet based on my recommendations and what works for you and your lifestyle. It will take you a few months to get your diet right but going on that journey is important as you will come to understand what your body needs, especially as you exercise more. You will need to adjust these recommendations if you have any food allergies, like gluten or dairy, or you have any other specific dietary requirements. What I will give you is a couple of examples which will hopefully give you some inspiration when thinking about your own diet.

Example diet for a single day - 1

Breakfast

Porridge with semi-skimmed milk and banana

Glass of pure unsweetened orange juice

Lunch

Home prepared wholemeal bagel with cream cheese

Wholegrain crisps



Apple or another piece of fruit

Cup of coffee or tea

Dinner

Homemade paella with rice, pepper, peas, chicken and king prawns

Half a honeydew melon

Glass of water or semi-skimmed milk

Snacks & drinks during the day

Unsalted mixed nuts with raisins

6 – 8 glasses of water

Example diet for a single day - 2

Breakfast

Wholemeal toast with scrambled egg

Cup of coffee or tea

Lunch

Home prepared salad with grilled chicken

Grapes or another piece of fruit

Glass of semi-skimmed milk

Dinner

Homemade spaghetti Bolognese with peppers, mushrooms, courgettes and wholemeal pasta

Yogurt

Glass of unsweetened fruit juice

Snacks & drinks during the day

Unsalted mixed nuts with raisins

Banana

6 – 8 glasses of water



If you can, make sure most of your meals are home made or home prepared. Making everything from scratch means you can control what has gone into the food you are eating as convenience food, while quick and easy, does tend to have a lot of added salt and sugar. It will also be difficult to achieve a balanced diet with ready meals and convenience food as you won't fully know what has gone into them and if they are going to provide you with the right nutrition. There is a plethora of recipe books out there that have healthy recipes in them and you will also find recipes on the Heathier Way website.

Finally, for the healthy eating section we need to talk about cigarettes and alcohol. Bottom line if you smoke you need to quit if you want to be healthy⁶ as exercise is going to be hard if you are filling your lungs full of carcinogens. I would not pretend to be able to give you any advice on how to give up smoking; I have never smoked so I do not have any relevant experience. The only advice I can give is go and see your doctor who will be able to help. As for alcohol my advice is to drink in moderation or to give it up entirely if you can. I still do drink alcohol but only socially and I try to limit the amount I have otherwise I find exercise much harder than it needs to be. Alcohol can also be quite calorific which is not going to help the healthy lifestyle. If you think you are drinking too much, then again go see your doctor who can advise you. That's it lecture over!



Goal Setting

If you really want to become healthy it must be a long-term goal. To get all the benefits that come with being healthy you have to stick at it and not just make an effort when you have got some life event coming up (wedding, holiday etc.). But the question is how do you stay motivated so you stick with the new healthy routine all year round? The method that I have used, which has worked for me for many years is goal setting. But before we get to goal setting you need to ask yourself a serious question before you embark on this new healthy life, why do you want to be healthy? There are many benefits from being healthy^{7 8}, which include:

- Improved energy levels
- Improved confidence from achieving your health aims and improving your body image
- Improved mood and wellbeing
- Improved sleep (both the length and quality)
- Improved mental clarity from improved blood flow to the brain
- Improved immune system which helps you fight common illnesses
- Just feeling very good about yourself which has positive benefits in every other part of your life

But you still need to decide for yourself why you want to be healthy. The benefits above are all well and good but they may not be the thing that really motivates you. As many of us are time poor you may find the only time you can exercise is at 6 am before work and if it is a cold winter's morning where are you going to find the motivation to drag yourself out of bed and exercise. That is why you must decide for yourself what is motivating you to be healthy and then commit to the new healthy routine. Once you have decided what is driving you to be healthy how do you stay motivated? This is where goal setting⁹ comes in.

My overall objective is to be healthy but then I have goals to help me achieve this overall aim. My current goal is to run the Brighton half marathon in a sub 1:40 time. The trick is to set yourself a goal that is challenging but at the same time achievable and then committing to it. I have run a half marathon in a time of 1:40 so going below this time, with the right training should be achievable. By having a training plan and needing to stick to it to achieve my goal helps to give me the motivation I need when I do have to drag myself out of bed at 6 am. But how do you determine your goal so you can realistically achieve it? This is where SMART comes in.



SMART¹⁰ is a management technique used in business, but it does translate well to any part of your life when you are trying to set goals for yourself. SMART stands for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely and works like this:

Specific	Goals should clearly define what you are going to do.
Measurable	Goals should be measurable so that you have tangible evidence that you have accomplished them.
Attainable	Goals should stretch you but not be extreme. You will also figure out how to meet them.
Realistic	Goals should be realistic otherwise it will not be possible to achieve them. If possible you should take previous achievements into account.
Timely	Goals should be linked to a timeframe so it creates a sense of urgency.

SMART helps you define your goals instead of coming up with something woolly like “I am going to run a couple of times a week and see what happens” or something unrealistic like “I am going to run a half marathon in under 90 minutes next year”.

To show you how SMART works let’s run through a real-life example, my goal of running the Brighton half marathon in a sub 1:40 time.

Specific: I am going to run a specific distance, 13.1 miles in February next year in a time of under 100 minutes. The goal clearly defines what I am going to do.

Measurable: The measurable part of my goal is I want to run the half in under 100 minutes.

Attainable: To attain my goal I will need to come up with a training plan and maybe make some other lifestyle changes, like making sure my diet is clean and healthy. To attain your goal you will need to make positive changes to your life and be honest with yourself that you can keep to these changes otherwise you will not achieve your goal.

Realistic: I had achieved a 1:40 half marathon time two years ago when my training for that event was not as good as it could have been. With some



improvements to my training plan, focussing on speed endurance, then the goal is probably realistic.

Timely: The Brighton half is February next year, so there is a specific time frame. It is important to set a time frame as it gives you a specific point in time to achieve you goal by, which then provides a sense of urgency and helps to push you along.

The goal I have set myself is SMART and we will see next year if I do manage to achieve. If I don't then I will need to determine why that is, it could be that I was ill before the race or I could not realistically train as much as I needed to. Whatever it is try and find out why and then adjust the goal to fit to the new reality. When you do achieve your goals though, enjoy it and reward yourself as you would have earned it.



Move More

If you want to be healthy you are going to have to exercise on a regular basis. Calorie balance and healthy eating will get you part of the way there but to get all the benefits of being healthy exercise needs to be an integral part of your routine. There is a plethora of information out there about the different types of exercise that you could take up and it can be difficult to figure out which is going to be the right exercise regime for you, as there are pros and cons no matter which one you choose. Whatever exercise you choose give it a good 3 – 6 months to see if it is working for you. If it's not working for some reason, then analyse why and try and find one that is more suitable. Just a word of warning, if your exercise regime is causing you constant pain then stop and go and see a doctor or physiotherapist and get their advice. When you exercise you will often get little niggles or mild strains and that is to be expected, but that is different from constant pain that really hurts. Just be aware of this and exercise sensibly.

So which exercise should you choose? That is a very difficult question to answer because it depends on your situation. You need to take several factors into account, including: the amount of time you have to exercise, whether you prefer to exercise on your own or as part of a team/club, if you have access to the right equipment, and what you are physically capable of right now. I am not going to be able to advise you on exactly the right type of exercise regime for you in this book, but I can give you some guidance. The table below lists some of the more popular exercises/sports you can do, some of their pros and cons and a SMART goal you might be able to set yourself to help keep you motivated.

Type of Exercise	Pros	Cons	SMART Goal Example
Walking	Fairly low impact Very accessible, as long as you have decent shoes One of the easiest exercises you can do, assuming that	Does not burn that many calories per hour Can get boring quickly as once you can walk a good distance it can be hard to set yourself challenging goals	Complete a 10 mile walking challenge in 6 months' time



	you are able bodied		
Running	<p>Burns lot of calories per hour</p> <p>Very accessible, you just need the correct running shoes and running kit</p> <p>You can run almost anywhere</p>	<p>High impact, can be very hard on the body and can lead to injury if you don't run sensibly</p> <p>Physically and mentally demanding</p> <p>If you run on a treadmill it can get very boring</p>	<p>Run your first ever 5K in 6 months in a time of under 35 minutes</p>
Cycling	<p>Low impact</p> <p>If you are willing to push yourself it can burn lots of calories per hour</p> <p>You can cycle almost anywhere</p>	<p>Can be expensive as decent bikes and all the cycling gear can be costly</p> <p>If you like to cycle leisurely and on the flat it will not burn that many calories per hour</p>	<p>Complete next year's London to Brighton bike ride (or any other bike ride of your choice) within 6 hours</p>
The gym	<p>Variety of exercise that you can do: weights, treadmill, rowing machine, classes, etc.</p>	<p>Gym memberships can be very expensive</p> <p>Can get very busy at peak times making it difficult to get on equipment</p>	<p>Complete a Tough Mudder (or any other extreme assault course) next year. You would need to run each week as well to</p>



	<p>You can go to the gym at a time that suits you</p> <p>If you are willing to spend lots of time on the cardio equipment it can burn lots of calories per hour</p>	<p>Can be difficult to set SMART goals</p> <p>Can be an intimidating environment</p>	<p>achieve this goal</p>
Martial Arts	<p>Very structured training with clear goals</p> <p>A very respectful environment</p> <p>Enjoyable and motivating training with other people</p>	<p>You have to go at set times each week which may not fit into your lifestyle</p> <p>Gradings and competitions can be intimidating</p> <p>Depending on the martial art it may not burn that many calories</p>	<p>Pass your next grading. The timescale for this will be set by your club and instructor</p>
Football or any other team sport	<p>Team sport so it can be a lot of fun and motivating</p> <p>If you train and play matches regularly it can burn a lot of calories</p>	<p>Training will be at set time(s) each week which may not fit into your lifestyle</p> <p>Can be difficult to set SMART goals as there are a number of factors out of your control</p>	<p>Finish in the top half of your league by the end of the season (can be difficult to achieve as it depends how good your team is)</p>



		The competitive nature of team sports is not for everyone	
Circuit training	Very structured training Burns a lot of calories as they are usually high intensity It is fun and motivating to train with other people	Training will be at set time(s) each week which may not fit into your lifestyle Can be difficult to set SMART goals and because of this it can lose its appeal	Complete a Tough Mudder (or any other extreme assault course) next year. You would need to run each week as well to achieve this goal

When thinking about the type of exercise that you want to do, try and weigh up the pros and cons and determine which one might be best for you, but do also consider your current level of fitness and any long-standing injuries. If you have not exercised in over a year it is advisable to take it slowly to start with, even if you used to be very fit. When you start thinking about the goals you want to set yourself, consider the amount of time you have to train. As a guideline you should be thinking of training at least two times per week, ideally three or four. I would not recommend training any more than this because you have to give your body time to rest and repair otherwise you are likely to get injured. I would also aim for a 5% - 10% improvement in your exercise of choice per month.

Getting into a regular exercise regime is key to being healthy, but you should also get into the mind set of moving your body whenever you can¹¹. As I said at the start of the book we spend a lot of our day sitting down or generally not moving, which is not good for us. Getting into the habit of moving whenever you can is very beneficial to your overall health.

When thinking about which exercise to do there are some other important considerations. Firstly, get the right equipment. This is important because if you don't have the right equipment then it will either make the exercise harder than it needs to be, or it can increase the risk of injury.



Secondly when you exercise you need to consider nutrition before, during and after exercise. If you have a healthy diet then you will be getting most of the nutrition you need to exercise effectively. Make sure you don't have a large meal three hours before you exercise otherwise you will not digest it in time and it can become painful¹². It is ok to have a small snack, like a banana, up to an hour before exercise if you find that you need the extra energy. If you are exercising for longer than an hour take some fluids with you, either water or a sports drinks. Also think about taking on extra carbohydrates if you are exercising for longer than an hour. Energy gels are an easy way to get extra carbs on the move but read the guidance on them carefully as some need to be taken with water. As for nutrition after exercise, you need to get fluids, carbohydrates and protein into your body as soon as possible to aid with recovery¹³. I always have a protein shake after exercise as it gets both carbs and protein into my system very quickly. I will then have a main meal around 1 hour later and I will drink plenty of water so I am getting everything I need to recover effectively.

Thirdly decide if you want to exercise indoors or outdoors as both have their pros and cons. Indoor training, on the whole, is not affected by the weather, apart from if it is a very hot day and the building does not have air conditioning. If you train outside then you are at the mercy of the elements. Remember that if you want to be healthy you need to train all year round so it is no good just being a fair-weather exerciser. You will need to train through the wind, rain, snow, cold, heat and everything else in between. Training outside does provide greater visual stimulation as the scenery will change as you move through it and you can vary where you train.

Finally, always remember to warm up and down. The warm up can either be some stretches or taking it easy for the first 5 minutes of your exercise routine. For the warm down it is vital that you stretch after every session. Make sure when you stretch that you can feel your muscles just starting to stretch and hold each one for at least 30 seconds, I would recommend a minute. Warming up and down will help you to avoid injuries.



Realism and Willpower

The last of the 5 core principles is realism and willpower. If you want to be healthy for the long term, this principle of the philosophy is just as important as the previous four. When most people start any sort of new healthy regime, neither realism nor willpower are typically considered. For me though, both are very important because if you are not realistic about what you can achieve, you will become disillusioned and give up. Similarly, if you don't have the willpower to stick to the new regime, then you will give up at the first opportunity. If you do want to be healthy for the long term, then you need to take both realism and willpower seriously.

Realism

Lots of people tend to have unrealistic expectations when they start any sort of diet or exercise programme. This, in part, comes from the diet and exercise industry as it continually promises things that most of us will never achieve. It also comes from our own perception of how we think we look and how we would like to look. Many of us will never achieve the body beautiful that the diet and fitness industry promises as we don't have the time to train 5-6 times a week that would be needed to have lumps and bumps in all the right places. For me I have to snatch small amounts of time to fit my running into as I have both a day job and a family with two kids. I would love to run more but I have to be realistic about it and realise that I can't run the 40 miles a week I would like to without it impacting on other parts of my life. So I run just over 20 miles a week by getting up early before work and going for a short runs in the week with a long run at the weekend. This keeps me fit and when combined with a balanced diet I can keep myself healthy. If I have an event coming up then I do try and train a bit more than this but I have to be realistic and realise that I am not going to take huge amounts of my PB's because I can't put in the necessary training. I have come to terms with this as it is more important to stay healthy and not to be a perfect looking human being that can run a half marathon in under 90 minutes (I wish!).

What I am trying to get across is that if you have been on diet or exercise plan before with the aim of trying to achieve a perfect body shape or to lose an unrealistic amount of weight you need to depart from this way of thinking. This mind-set will lead you down the wrong path as you will set unrealistic expectations of yourself. You need to focus on being healthy for the long term, which is a sustainable long-term goal if you follow the philosophy in this book.



You will in all likelihood lose some weight and improve your body image but that is a positive by-product of being healthy. Being healthy for the long term is a realistic goal whereas achieving unrealistic amounts of weight loss or trying to get the perfect body is just setting yourself up for failure. Move away from this type of thinking and focus on the realistic goal of being healthy.

Willpower

According to the Collins English Dictionary willpower is defined as¹⁴:

1. the ability to control oneself and determine one's actions
2. firmness of will

Kelly McGonigal, PhD and author of *The Willpower Instinct*¹⁵ defines willpower as:

The willpower response is a reaction to an internal conflict. You want to do one thing, such as smoke a cigarette or supersize your lunch, but know you shouldn't. Or you know you should do something, like file your taxes or go to the gym, but you'd rather do nothing.

It seems that willpower is our ability to resist temptation or to get on and do something when it is easier to do nothing. If you want to be healthy then you will need willpower for both of these situations: you need to resist the temptation of eating too much junk and processed food, and you need to exercise regularly. If you can't do both of these things then you will not be able to get healthy. Willpower will also play an important role if you are to become healthy for the long term. It does require a firmness of will to be healthy week in week out and not to become downbeat when things don't go exactly as planned.

An all too familiar argument that I often hear is "I can't get fit and healthy because I don't have the willpower to stick to the healthy diet and exercise regime". I am often told that I have lots of willpower as I go out and train each week, eat healthily and push myself to achieve my goals. Do I have more innate "willpower" than the next person? I am not sure that I do. I think what we perceive as willpower is how certain people train their brains and bodies so they approach challenges or situations in a way that provides a successful outcome, be this the simple act of resisting a sugary snack in favour of something healthier or the force of will that ensures someone goes out and trains each week to achieve



their fitness goals. I believe some people use the lack of willpower argument as an excuse for why they can't achieve something, like being healthy. For me willpower and the behaviour that comes with it is all about how you figure out how to achieve any challenge that is put in front of you. What I have tried to show you in this book is a philosophy that will change how you approach the challenge of being healthy. I have tried to use a rational approach by analysing the various issues that accompany trying to get healthy, and then to provide a solution. So be it calorie balance, healthy eating, goal setting or moving more, at each stage I have tried to look at it logically. This provides a holistic view of how to stay healthy for the long term. I believe if you properly focus on a challenge, analyse it rationally and be prepared to learn from your mistakes you can achieve your aims and objectives. This is where the goal setting is particularly important as it will force you to sit down and think about your objectives and whether you can realistically achieve them. Too many people give no real thought to if their goal is in any way achievable when they start a weight control programme. When they don't achieve their goal they give up, and typically blame it on a lack of willpower. The reason why people give up is not a lack of willpower it is usually because the goal was not realistic or achievable in the first place. Following the Healthier Way philosophy and taking a rational approach to the challenge of being healthy will help with your willpower as you will learn how to achieve your objectives.



Wrapping Up

That's it for the simplified version of Healthier Way. I hope I achieved what I set out to do at the beginning of the book, which was to give you a shorten version of the original book but that still got the main parts of the philosophy across? If you want to learn more the original Healthier Way book is still available on Amazon and goes into much greater detail. I will be posting videos on the all new and improved Healthier Way website and across social media with hints and tips, product reviews, recipes and giving general advice on how to become healthy. Thank you for reading the book, I hope you enjoyed it and found it useful. Below are my top tips for being healthy, which you can use as a quick reference guide as you start your journey to a healthier, better you.

1. The healthier way philosophy is based on five core principles, for it to work and so you can become healthy for the long term you need to get on board with all 5:
 - Calorie balance
 - Eat healthy
 - Goal setting and learning from your mistakes & successes
 - Move more
 - Realism and willpower
2. Before you start your journey sit down and really think why you want to get healthy. It has got to be for a good reason otherwise you will not stick with it when times get tough. There are plenty of good reasons why you should get healthy, but you have to do it because you really want to, not just because you feel you should.
3. Before you start your new healthy regime go and see your doctor as they can advise you on the best way to approach it depending on your own circumstances.
4. Look at the number of calories you are consuming from both food and drink. Food today, especially processed food is very calorific and it is very easy to consume hundreds or thousands of calories above your daily requirement, even if you are eating healthily. Remember the key is calorie balance. You need to balance the calories that you are consuming against those that you are burning, primarily through exercise, so you are able to achieve your health



aims. It will take a few months but you will figure out the correct calorie balance for you.

5. You need to eat a healthy balanced diet, if you don't then you will struggle with the exercise. If your diet is considerably unbalanced right now then slowly move over to a balanced diet but don't change it in a single day. A 3 - 6 month period is the right sort of timescale.
6. Drink water to make sure you are properly hydrated all the time. 6 – 8 glasses a day or when you feel thirsty is a good guide. For me water is the most important fuel for exercise, I always have a bad run if I have not drunk enough water throughout the day.
7. You have to exercise to be healthy so find a form of exercise that you think you will enjoy by coming up with a pros and cons list. You may not find the type of exercise that you like straight away but keep trying different types until you find one that suits you. Walking is a perfectly acceptable form of exercise if you can't face other types like running, cycling or team sports, just remember it will not burn that many calories so you will need to keep a close eye on your calorie balance.
8. When you do start exercising take it slowly and build up, especially if you have not exercised in over a year. If you are going to run then maybe start off with running for 3 - 5 minutes and then walk for 1 minute over a distance of two miles. Then over a few weeks reduce the amount of time you are walking until you get to the point where you can run the 2 miles without stopping. There's no shame in taking it slowly and by doing so you are more likely to stick with it because you will be able to see real progress. You will get very despondent if you try and run 2 miles in 15 minutes on your first ever run because you will probably not get past the first mile before you are gasping for breath.
9. It is important to plan out your new regime. Once you have set your goal determine how many times per week you need to train and what each training session should consist of (speed vs stamina vs endurance training). If you are training as part of a club or a team this will be determined for you to some extent. I would recommend that you train three to four times per week, two at a minimum, so you are able to make decent progress. Also plan out your diet, so the type of meals and snacks you are going to eat each day. Make sure it is a balanced diet and you are getting the required calories and nutrition



to support your exercise regime.

10. Buy yourself the right equipment. Don't go out running in a pair of old trainers that are sitting at the back of the wardrobe as this is a sure-fire way to get injured. Having the right equipment and clothing is important as it will make exercise just a little bit easier, it will cut down the risk of injury and you will feel good about yourself as you have the right kit.
11. Once you have built up a decent level of fitness then I would recommend that you try and improve by 5 -10% per month. For example, if you are running a distance of 5 miles try and increase this slowly to 6 miles within 1-2 months. You are less likely to get injured by taking this approach and you will find that it is achievable, which is important to build confidence. If you have set yourself a goal then take this into account. If you want to run a marathon in 6 months you will not achieve this by increasing the distance by 10% per month. It is probably more realistic to run the marathon in 12 –18 months but do other shorter events along the way.
12. As you start to train regularly it is a good idea to have an easy week every 4 – 6 weeks. Train for around 50% - 75% of the time you would in a normal week and take it easy. If for example you are running 20 miles per week you might run just 12 miles for your easy week at a nice steady pace. This will help to prevent both injury and fatigue.
13. Make sure you warm up and warm down when doing any exercise. The warm up can be the first part of your training, so if you are cycling take the first 5 minutes nice and easy and get yourself properly warmed up before you increase your pace. For the warm down it is vital that you stretch after every session. Make sure when you stretch that you can feel your muscles just starting to stretch and hold each one for at least 30 seconds, I would recommend a minute. Warming up and down will help you to avoid injuries.
14. Move whenever you can as it will help to burn calories and help you to achieve calorie balance. If you are going to the shops then walk if it is practical or use the stairs at work instead of using the lift. Fitness bands and most GPS watches track your steps, which can help you determine how much you are moving each day. Just a note on fitness watches, the 10,000 recommended steps a day does not seem to be based on any scientific underpinning¹⁶, it's just a nice round number and equates to around 5 miles. Achieving 10,000 steps a day will not necessarily mean that you are healthy



so don't rely on it as a measure of fitness.

15. If you do get injured stop exercising and wait for it to heal; exercising when injured will lead to long term problems. There are various techniques for aiding the healing process, one of the most popular is RICE – Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation¹⁷. There are plenty of articles on the internet explaining the different techniques.
16. If you are training regularly over a number of months you might get to the point where you are feeling fatigued. You will know when this happens because you will have 3 – 4 training sessions in a row where you have low energy levels and the training is really hard work. When this happens to me my legs feel like they have lead weights in them and I struggle to run a good distance. If this happens to you miss a couple of training sessions so you can rest your body. You should then find that when you go back to the training your energy levels have returned to normal and you can continue to push on.
17. Music can be very motivational when you train. When I run I always listen to music but it is not suitable for all sports. If you are playing team sports then it won't be possible to listen to music while you are training. If you cycle you really should not be listening to music as you have to be very aware of your environment, especially when you are cycling on the road. If you run then it's fine to listen to music but make sure it is not too loud and do be aware of what is going on around you as you could cause an accident if you change direction without looking. When I am on long training runs then I listen to audiobooks, they help the miles fly by.
18. Set yourself goals, but they must be SMART. Goal setting is very important to keep you motivated. It gives you something to aim for and will help you make the adjustments that you need to make in the rest of your life in order to become healthy. Do make sure that the goals you set are realistic and attainable. You will not be able to complete a 500 KM road race by cycling just 50 KM per week because that is all the training you can fit in.
19. Learn from your mistakes and successes. If you don't achieve your goals analyse why it happened by looking at the available evidence, and then modify your approach. When things go well, analyse why it happened and decide if you want to make it a permanent change.
20. When you do achieve your goals reward yourself, you would have earned it.



21. Be realistic with what you can achieve. You are not going to go from couch potato to Olympic athlete in the space of a few weeks or months. It is also likely that you will not have enough time in your week to put in the training necessary so you can compete with the very best in your chosen sport or exercise. You are just trying to be the best you can be with the time you have available, that is what is important.
22. When you first start exercising and eating healthily it is very tempting to go back to your old habits of eating too much processed food and not exercising. It is vital that you get on board with all aspects of the Healthier Way philosophy as it will help to provide you with the willpower you need so you can resist these temptations.
23. Whenever you train or if you are entering an event try and envisage yourself completing the task. Visualise yourself crossing the finish line or completing the training session, this will put you in a positive frame of mind and it will help you make it round. If you are just thinking about how hard the exercise is and that you have still got a long way to go you will be in a very negative mind-set and it's more likely that you will give up.
24. Periodically, maybe once every three to six months, look back on the progress you have made. It might be that you can now run 5 miles whereas 6 months ago you could barely run a mile. Or you have dropped a jean size or maybe you are now only eating chocolate once per week. Whatever it is looking back on the progress you have made is very motivational as it proves to yourself you can achieve your health goals, even if you did not think you could at the start. If you can resist the temptation try not to track your weight every day as it can lead you down the wrong path.
25. This is about sustainable change so you have to stick to the philosophy each week. There will be weeks when you don't, like when you go on holiday or around Christmas but for most of the year you have to stick to the new healthy routine. By sticking to it you will see positive change in your health and wellbeing, which means you are more likely to achieve your goals. These positive changes will motivate you to become even healthier, you will then set yourself new challenges, which will lead you into a positive upward spiral.



26. Only you can make this change to become healthy. No one else can do it for you. Friends and family can support you, but ultimately it is up to you. You are responsible for your own health!



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