

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Edwin Lau

10-Week Jump-Start Wellness Plan: Part Two

Welcome to Part Two of Dr. Lau's revolutionary wellness plan. If you've followed along with the first half of the program and completed each week's challenges, you've undoubtedly noticed dramatic shifts in your level of health.

Dr. Lau also encourages patients to shift their wellness attitude, from one centered on illness to one focused on prevention. The second half of this program will help you do just that.



Week Six: Get Excited About Exercise!

Challenge: Custom-tailor an exercise program to fit your needs.

Adhering to a regular exercise program is a daunting challenge. The secret to overcoming this challenge is creating momentum. Once you start reaping the rewards of exercise — such as increased energy and reduced risk of disease — staying motivated will become second nature.

Dr. Lau suggests that you begin by closing your eyes and spend a few minutes visualizing what you will look and feel like when you reach your fitness goal. Imagine fitting into that pair of jeans hanging in the back of your closet — or playing soccer with

your children without getting winded. Next, write a paragraph depicting the life you visualized. Keep this sheet in your wallet or purse and review it whenever you feel like skipping a workout.

Following are a few winning tips from Dr. Lau to help you get — and stay — in shape:

1. Keep regular chiropractic appointments. Nothing interferes with a workout program faster than an injury. Fortunately, visiting Dr. Lau can help you prevent injuries by keeping your spine in optimal alignment and providing all-natural remedies for muscle soreness.

2. Set your schedule in stone. The key to sticking to a workout regimen is to incorporate it into your schedule. Reorganize each day so that workout time is available and vow to honor this commitment. Most experts agree that aerobic exercise should be practiced for at least 30 minutes, five to seven days per week. In addition, it's important to engage in resistance training, such as weightlifting or calisthenics, for at least 30 minutes twice per week. And, don't forget to stretch for at least 10 minutes following each workout.

3. Adopt the 10-minute rule. Commit to participating in your scheduled activity for at least 10 minutes, even on days when you don't "feel" like working out. If you remain too tired or worn out after 10 minutes, then — and only then — abandon your workout. However, the simple act of getting started will usually propel you to keep going.

4. Focus on fun. A common mistake made by would-be exercisers is choosing an activity that they don't enjoy. This is a sure-fire way to court failure. Why torture yourself? Get creative. If jogging isn't for you, consider tennis, hiking or rollerblading. How about enrolling in a salsa dance class or taking up surfing?

5. Use the buddy system. To stay motivated, forge an alliance with a workout buddy. Choose a friend or neighbor with a similar schedule, fitness level and workout goals. Forming a workout group with several other individuals is another option. For example, walking clubs are an extremely effective strategy to keep those new to exercise hitting the pavement.

6. Start slowly. Too much exercise too soon can provoke muscle soreness and discourage would-be athletes. So, focus on the long term and start slowly.

7. Mix it up. Top athletes know that cross-training can catapult an individual to the heights of fitness. If the prospect of engaging in the same form of exercise every day makes you yawn, shake it up. Choose several types of activities and schedule one a day.

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Resources: If you have trouble sticking to a workout regime, read *When Working Out Isn't Working Out* by Michael Gerrish (St. Martin's Griffin).

Week Seven: Embrace Nature

Challenge: Connect with nature.

The chiropractic philosophy of health teaches that — like all of nature — human beings harbor a powerful sense of inner wisdom, which channels us toward optimal health.

Unfortunately, the trappings of today's fast-paced society isolate us from our bodies' inner wisdom. How many times have you ignored signs of stress or fatigue because your schedule could not spare a minute of downtime?

Because medication and surgery also mask the attempts of our bodies to communicate with us, doctors of chiropractic feel that they should only be used when absolutely necessary.

This week, remind yourself that you are a natural being by surrounding yourself with nature. Take a weekend hike with your family or watch a sunset. If you live in the city, visit a park or arboretum. Unearth your green thumb by tending a garden or houseplant. Adopting and caring for a pet is another fun way to connect with nature.

Resources: Contact your community's open space district for a list of hikes in the area.



Week Eight: Focus on Financial Health

Challenge: Update your household budget.

Financial problems may hurt more than your pocketbook. Research reveals that financial health has a profound impact on physical well-being.

Money woes are linked to an increased risk of depression, anxiety and other physical disorders. Scientists recently took a look at this wallet-health connection in a study of 1,036 Ohio residents. They found members of households with high credit-card debt — relative to their income — are more likely to suffer from physical impairment and emotional stress, compared with people who keep their “plastic” spending in check (*Soc Sci Med* 2000;50:517-29).

This week, schedule a few hours to review your household budget. If you have a home computer, investigate your bank's online services and consider purchasing one of the many quality, time-saving money management programs, such as Quicken® or Microsoft Money®. It may also be helpful to schedule weekly or monthly budget-planning meetings with your spouse or family. If you feel overwhelmed, consider visiting a professional financial advisor.

Resources: *The 9 Steps to Financial Freedom* by Suze Orman (Crown) outlines a renowned program for getting and keeping financial control. *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert T. Kiyosaki (Techpress) and *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Wealth* by Ric Edelman (Harper Resource) provide more powerful insights on money management. If you're one of the millions struggling with credit card debt, read *Your Money or Your Life* by Joseph R. Dominguez (Viking).

Week Nine: Show Some Spirit

Challenge: Connect with your spiritual side.

For centuries, “modern” medicine dismissed the role of spirituality in health care as mere hocus-pocus. But in recent years, an onslaught of scientific evidence has confirmed that spirituality significantly affects quality of life. Research shows that those who engage regularly in spiritual pursuits enjoy longer lives, reduced blood pressure and a lowered likelihood of disease.

There are a number of ways to connect with your spiritual side. Options include prayer, learning to meditate, enrolling in a yoga or t'ai chi class, keeping a journal, volunteering for a local charitable organization, reading

sacred texts or attending worship services.

Resources: Don't know where to start looking for volunteer opportunities? Check out Volunteers of America at www.vo.org.

Week 10: Adjust Your Attitude

Challenge: Focus on the positive this week.

Did you know that a grumpy attitude may not only result in lost friendships, but also in lost years from your life? One recent study, which tracked 839 subjects for three decades, found that pessimists were 19 percent more likely to die early, compared with optimists (*Mayo Clin Proc* 2000;75:140-3). Another study followed 99 Harvard University graduates from ages 30 to 60. As evidenced by results of physical examinations, pessimists were more likely to suffer poor health in middle age, compared with optimists (*J Pers Soc Psychol* 1988;55:23-7). Other research indicates that optimists are more likely than pessimists to recover from cancer (*Psychol Aging* 1996;11:304).

This week, make a conscious effort to focus on the positive. To uncover the silver lining, start by surrounding yourself with optimistic friends and avoiding “toxic” acquaintances who drag you down. Next, identify those instances that trigger pessimistic thoughts. Correct this destructive habit by acknowledging any positive aspects of “negative” situations. For instance, rather than harping on the negative circumstances of a rainy day — such as increased road traffic — focus on positive factors, such as the tranquil sounds and smells of rain, the decreased risk of drought or the beautiful flowers that will develop as a result. Psychologists call this strategy **reframing**. And, experts report that consistent reframing can metamorphose a pessimist into an optimist.

Resources: Ask at the front desk for copies of past *Optimal Health University*™ handouts on the health benefits of a positive attitude.