

Nine to Nourished: A Recipe Roadmap

*Learn the 9 Core Ingredients
to Refuel Your Relationship
with Food, Body, & Mind*

By Lauren Dorman, MS, RD, CDE



Hi, I'm Lauren

Founder of Don't Diet Dietitian

I'm Lauren, founder of Don't Diet Dietitian and Schools, Master Food + Mood. I'm a Registered Dietitian, Speaker, and Expert in Nutrition & Emotional Eating. I help both women and teens address the real root solution and strategies that enable them to feel calm, confident, and empowered around food, body, and mind.

I've spent the past 22 years deeply caring for and listening to those with food struggles, which has nothing to do with actual food itself and everything to do with the **9 Effective Ingredients** that you'll find in this guide. I have learned how to provide the best support through a heart-centered, nonjudgmental space.

Although a lot of people will try to sell you one, there IS no perfect nutrition or workout plan for your total well-being. I don't believe in a *one-size-fits-all* approach to health. Sustainable success is all about tending to a process that *feels good* to you.

For those who think they have "tried everything," healing at the **root cause** of disordered eating, overeating, or bingeing can shift all areas of life. I will guide you toward letting go of old patterns surrounding self-doubt and limiting beliefs, instead laying the foundation for building emotional intelligence and developing a satisfying relationship with food that'll allow you to thrive.

When you enter my world, you'll evolve into taking on a *growth* mindset, which promises to bring more joy, peace, love, and fulfillment. YOU are the expert in your life; thus, YOU get to choose what tools, skills, and strategies work best for you.

You're about to embark on a journey of creating meaningful, lasting change. Your mind and body have become accustomed to particular patterns, but now that you have a desire to change that, you can look forward to breakthroughs, *Aha!* moments, both big and small wins, smiles, and surprises. There will be some chaos along the way – with highs and lows, fun and frustrations – but all the successes will make the journey well worth it.

Let's begin by sifting through those **9 Effective Ingredients** so you can start integrating them into your life!



Lauren Dorman





Don't **DD** *Diet*
DIETITIAN

SCHOOLS,
MASTER FOOD + MOOD
Elevate Eating + Emotional Well-Being

WELCOME to *Nine to Nourished: A **Recipe Roadmap***, which will take you on a life-changing journey of discovering the 9 Core Ingredients to Refuel Your Relationship with Food, Body, & Mind.

These are the NINE Effective Ingredients for your life that will NOURISH you from the INSIDE OUT!

I am here to provide support for anyone who is struggling with food, body, and mind – anyone who feels that they have nowhere to turn. Do you not feel seen and heard? Perhaps you have been struggling since you were a little girl or since your college years or even just recently. But it really does not matter. *Now* is the opportune time to get the much-needed guidance on how to make sense of it all. Diet and wellness culture can be both confusing and misleading.

In a world where the words *healthy, health, wellness, and lifestyle* feel chaotic and overwhelming, I intend to bring calm to your mind as we sift through these very special ingredients together.

If we were making a pot of soup and left out a few main ingredients, how do you think the soup would taste? The same goes for your mental and physical health. So many women out there are trying to figure things out, but they're missing some key ingredients that are necessary to see real change happen. However, as they gradually integrate these powerful ingredients into their lives, they'll begin to feel calmer, more confident, more consistent.

If you were to apply just *one* ingredient from this Guidebook, it may help shift your life to places you never thought you could even go. You may want to underline or highlight, take notes, and even reread a few times to help you process, apply, and integrate the information into your own life.

I truly hope that you find this simple rather than overwhelming. Because when the brain experiences less confusion and more clarity, that's when you can begin to act.

Consider this my gift to the Future Version of *you*. I am here to help you make a massive shift that will impact your health forever. You are about to become the CHEF. So, for your new Vision, let's put on your apron, chef hat, and a fresh pair of heart-shaped glasses.

These 9 Proven Ingredients matter and will turn challenges into changes, struggles into small, simple steps. So, let's get the fire started and heat things up a bit. This one recipe is about to recharge your life.

NINE TO NOURISHED: A Recipe for a Sweet & Savory Life

Ingredients:

4 cups VISION
3 cups BELIEFS
2 cups SELF-LOVE
1 pint THINKING
3 tbsp COPING
1/3 cup REGULATING
1 quart NOURISHMENT
1/2 cup MOVEMENT
Pinch of EXPECTATIONS

Ingredient #1: VISION

It's a cold, windy, and very rainy day.

You get in your car, and you have your keys, bag, phone, and music. You even have bottled water and a snack. Yup, you're all ready to go! But wait...you quickly discover that the windshield wipers aren't working properly. So, how far will you really get?

The same goes for life. If we don't have a clear vision ahead of us, rather than moving forward, we will stay exactly where we are. If you plan ahead in life, you have a better chance of becoming successful.

Think about your **Vision**. Get it down on paper. This way you'll be able to go back daily to your vision, or as often as you wish, and also focus on the Big WHY. When this ingredient — your future Vision — is well-defined, it sets you up to persevere, problem-solve, and commit.

Most people are walking around with their fingers crossed, just hoping for the best with little or no clarity, direction, or accountability. Do you frequently wonder why nothing is working? Well, this could be why.

Without building a vision that is foundational, it is all too easy to slip back into old behavior patterns — thoughts such as *I can't believe I'm back here again* or *This time I really messed up!*

But beating yourself up could contribute to a lot of the stuck, start, stop, and overwhelm.

When the vision is not clearly defined, change is either only *temporary* or it simply does *not* happen.



Let's begin with these 5 questions. Feel free to actually write responses.

I'm here to help you see how this key ingredient will allow you to get started and then keep you engaged throughout the change process.

Six to 12 months from now, where would you like to see your health?

Why is this important for you to achieve?

What impact would this change have on your life?

What would worry you about not achieving such change?

How would you know that you achieved it?

Thinking about your answers, did you encounter any struggle(s)/distress?

Notice any thoughts, feelings, or sensations in your mind or body. Be kind and gentle with yourself. It's OK to acknowledge that the change process is challenging. Such compassion will lead you to become stronger and more effective as you navigate the other Key Ingredients.

Though it may surprise you, all the *small* actions taken each day that align with your vision add up and constitute part of the process that will help guide you toward reaching long-term goals.

Your WHY

If you can dig deeper into a clearer *internal* rather than external (which tends to be short-lived) vision, there is a much greater chance of long-term consistency. **Any change that you make must truly have value and impact your life and relationships favorably.**



Some *intrinsic* reasons for meaningful change can be:

- Being present for the important people and/or things in my life
- Being able to contribute to my family
- Maintaining my freedom and/or welcoming more of it
- Maintaining my independence without feeling like a burden to others
- Feeling more confident to do _____ (you name it)
- Not feeling so controlled by food/body
- Being able to go out to eat without guilt so that I can focus on the present and my current relationships
- Being able to feel/experience and cope with my emotions in healthier ways (feeling calmer, more fulfilled, more at peace; no longer feeling managed by my emotions)

Values

Values, which are deeply held beliefs about what is important to you, drive our behaviors. They can guide what we do. Think of them as the *building blocks* to our meaning and purpose. They indicate how, over time, you want to live your life. So, to create your future vision, you must have *clarity* about which values are important to you. Values can include family, health, growth, mindfulness, self-esteem, generosity, fun, humor, independence, honesty, and hope.

If someone were watching you right now and knew your values, would your behaviors reveal what you *truly value*?

If the answer is *no*, that is okay; accepting where you are right now is also an important part of creating change. You might have lost touch with your values and are now learning to understand where you are now vs. what you value, what you consider important. And with this curiosity, you can begin to align more of your actions with your values.

“Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.” —James Clear, American author and speaker

Think about your Top 10 values. What does each value mean to you? How does it show up in your life? On a scale of 0-10, how aligned is your life with this value?

Identity

This work involves changing your self-concept, along with your habits and behaviors, to align with your desired vision and goals (we will delve more into this with the **Thoughts** ingredient).

You can begin to treat yourself as if you already know who you would like to be, which trains your mind and body to believe what is possible and embrace who you are now becoming.

How you see yourself and your future Vision shapes your attitude, actions, habits, and behaviors.

Ingredient #2: BELIEFS



You become what you believe, not what you think or what you want.

—Oprah Winfrey

Is the recipe in your life now contaminated with certain fears, blocks, and limiting **Beliefs**?

As humans, we tend to fear the possibility of failure, so we stay stuck and safe to avoid what we perceive as a risk or discomfort. Dwelling on what could go wrong or what we could lose reinforces these limitations. The thought *What if this doesn't work out?* is one example of a *limiting belief*, or a belief that is holding you back. Unless you release such beliefs, you will keep working increasingly harder only to remain in the same place. Think of these beliefs as a *resistance* and that what we resist persists.

Here are some examples of common negative core beliefs that feel true but are *not*:

I can't get better.

I am a failure.

I am unlovable.

I am lost.

I can't trust anyone.

I am not good enough.

(NOTE: 80% of women don't believe they are good enough.)



If you feel any of these, perhaps you would be willing to think about *why* you may have a certain belief or beliefs? Where did it/they come from? Specifically, from whom? How old were you at the time?

A client of mine shared a childhood memory with me from when she was 11 years old. She remembers that at a family party, a cousin pointed out her belly; since that day, she has *never felt* that her body was *good enough*.

Another client spoke about how she tried many diet plans and would lose and gain, then feel completely out of control around sweets. Ever since, she's felt *like a failure*.

Yet another client expressed her father's constant criticism of her body, food amounts, and school grades – from the time she was 6. Since then, she has felt *unlovable*.

While the comments may not necessarily have been made to intentionally harm, especially long term, those who spoke unknowingly used damaging language that ultimately caused an impact on a core limiting belief. Many of our beliefs were influenced before we reached the age of 7. Thus, at an early age, someone or something else (parents, caregivers, friends, media, culture) made this decision *for you*.

Beliefs are decisions. You may have decided that you're not good enough, you aren't worthy, you're not lovable, and you can't trust people. You likely absorbed criticism that led you to develop specific core beliefs about who you are. As a result, such thinking became your reality. Now in your adult life, these beliefs are preventing you from achieving your desired health and well-being. This is because our brains will always look for evidence that the old, limiting belief(s) is/are *true* to allow us to stay safe and comfortable. You may therefore not yet be open to the idea that they're simply *untrue*, which is indeed valid based on your lived experiences.

If you had no tools to fact-check, then of course you would continue to buy into these limiting beliefs and believe that they are true? ***Well, that is about to change.*** We'll be seeking 15-20 *new beliefs* to refire brain cells to create and reinforce new, neural patterns. So, if you keep telling yourself that you *can't*, then you likely *won't* be able to; but telling yourself that you *can* will open up a whole new world for you.

Your own knowing is more powerful than anyone else's advice.

—Jamie Kern Lima, American entrepreneur and investor and author of
Worthy: How to Believe You Are Enough and Transform Your Life

The belief of when I am thinner, when I am more successful, when I am _____ (insert word that most applies to you), then I will reward myself with kindness. You were conditioned to feel and believe that this is from our cultural messaging; however, this belief is *not true*, and right now you deserve *kindness* and *compassion*. Both are necessary for a deeper understanding of ourselves and our capacity to create change.

You can choose to close the gap between the way you treat someone you love and the way you treat yourself. You can make a different decision and, at this very moment, identify a limiting belief. You can respond by making a NEW decision. Would you be willing to sit alone for maybe 10 minutes or so and as part of this 5-step process think of *what evidence you have* for your specific limiting belief?

- What evidence is there for this belief?
- What's the evidence against it?
- What is the truth?
- What does this truth mean for my health, well-being, behaviors, actions?
- What will you change?

Can you now see the truth of your new decision and the lie resulting from your limiting belief?

I let go of the misunderstanding that _____.
(Example: I wasn't worthy of health and well-being.)

The truth is that _____.
(Examples: I can heal my relationship with food, body, and mind; I can be patient and focus on the process, not the outcome; I have choices/options to feel my best by respecting, loving, nourishing, and caring for my mind and body).

What if you told yourself that you've tried everything but didn't get the results that you wanted, so you really have no reason to think that you'll get different results this time through this guidebook? First of all, is that actually true — have you really tried *everything*? Or does it just *feel* that it is? Was the “everything” that you tried through the diet industry? If so, holding on to this belief could be discouraging and could create feelings of hopelessness.

Any time that we overthink something that does not feel good to us, our emotions spiral down. That's when we are probably experiencing a limiting belief, meaning that it's simply untrue. Perhaps you can gently tell your mind, in a kind way, *Hey, that's not true, nor is it helpful*. Because when you question your beliefs, you can break through unhealthy thought patterns.

You're the one who gets to decide what *does* feel good to you; you can keep evolving, practicing, learning, and implementing small actions, relying less on *results*. Using this approach, your limiting belief will begin to shift, and you'll start feeling joyful, confident, lighter, clearer, calmer, stronger.

Through forgiveness, we find strengths and are able to let go of past beliefs that haven't served us. You can accept the present, welcome a future filled with possibilities, and embrace the notion that you are *not* your past mistakes. Accepting that everything we experience is for our own *growth* can allow us to shift from disempowerment to empowerment.

The heart is for giving. The heart is forgiving.

—Danielle LaPorte, Canadian author and entrepreneur

When it comes to forgiveness, we are not well-trained. But if you feel ready, you can choose to begin with *I see what happened, and I choose to forgive*. What is it that *you* need to forgive within *yourself*?

As you start to become an observer of your own beliefs, you will meet yourself with more understanding. With the consistent application of this ingredient, the new beliefs become *who you are*. They will determine your behaviors, actions, and choices in your everyday life, ultimately shaping your new reality.

Become the Best Chef of your Life...the one who is fully alive and present and who wholeheartedly commits to feeling joy.



Beliefs work best in combination with the next three Ingredients – Self-Love, Coping, and Thinking – for a powerful impact on your future self.

What would be possible if over time you learned how to practice ***shifting your beliefs?***

Ingredient #3: SELF-LOVE (The Secret Sauce)

*I choose to feel good about myself each day. Every morning,
I remind myself that I can make the choice to feel good.*

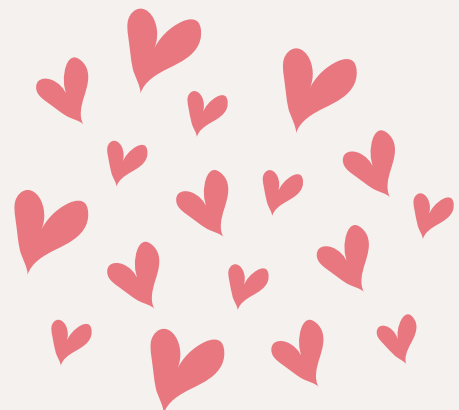
This is a new habit for me to cultivate.

—Louise Hay, former American motivational speaker and author

Self-love is about accepting yourself unconditionally, while *self-worth* is an evaluation of your personal value and growth potential. When a home is built, it first needs the *foundation* because without it, the whole house would crumble. Think of self-love and self-worth in combination as this very foundation.

Self-love comes from self-worth, or the internal sense of being good enough, of being worthy of love and belonging from others. Self-love is a *journey*, not a destination. It takes time and practice to develop a healthy sense of self-worth. Embracing self-love doesn't necessitate a big transformation in your life. Just treating yourself a *little* better than you did yesterday, then a little better the next day, and continuing this pattern will add up, making a world of difference and building the foundation for strong self-worth and genuine self-love.

If you have low self-worth, then information, education, plans, tools, strategies, skills, and support to help you achieve a healthier lifestyle will simply not work. Unless or until you integrate this very important ingredient, you will never feel truly fulfilled. You're never too old, nor is it ever too late, to welcome this ingredient into your life; if you so choose, your *best days* can lie ahead.



Think about how you would respond if someone were to ask, *How are you today?* Would you say *I am strong, talented, confident, and happy?* Most likely not. It can feel uncomfortable or unnatural to admit our strengths. It is just not familiar or socially popular to do so. One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself in this one lifetime is how to master kindness, self-worth, self-reflection, and *self-love*. You have a number of strengths that make you uniquely you.

Why don't we all love ourselves right now *as we are*? Because many of us allow negativity and insecurities to create a dark cloud over ourselves. The experiences in our lives shape who we are, and we create narratives about our own self-worth by how we fit into the world. Social media plays a significant role in this, often causing us to not feel good enough and to feel more alone (to be discussed more in the Regulating ingredient).

Our brains have a negative bias, meaning that many of us focus on our poor decisions and past failures rather than on our successes. In other words, we minimize our positive qualities. As a result, it can be very difficult to love ourselves; but at the same time, change IS possible. We can work toward such change by focusing on self-acceptance and self-respect.

When it comes to health and wellness, *self-concept* is rarely spoken of. It is how you see yourself and how you perceive that *others* see you. It *informs* how you think, act, and feel in the world right now. There is a link between having high self-esteem – a positive self-concept –and enjoying improved emotional health.

Your self-concept is probably one of the most important indicators of your long-term success. It gives way to a positive self-worth, which together with self-love makes up that *secret sauce*.

Statistics reveal that 80% of girls and women feel that they are *not* good enough. And when they don't feel good enough, 89% of those females will opt out of activities they consider important. Your job, car, bank account, body, clothing, attractiveness, social media following, etc., all have nothing to do with how valuable or worthy you are as a person.

I want to zero in on the topic of *body doubt*, which can deplete women's energy, cost them a lot of time and money, and lead to missed moments of joy. Based on the world's standards of beauty, what were you taught to believe about your body?

Even if they desire to make certain changes, if women accepted their bodies as is, then they would care for them differently because all actions are created from emotions. If we feel low self-worth, we're teaching our brains to pick ourselves apart and say things about our bodies that we would likely NEVER say to a close friend or family member.

What would you tell the person you love the most to do if they were faced with the choices that you are now dealing with?

You are *not your body*; however, it's your *relationship* with it that is of the utmost importance. Your body is a key partner in your life – without it, you would not be alive.

How do you feel when you think your body is a problem?

This is typically when food and feelings get all tangled up. Early in the process, my clients have expressed feelings of hopelessness, frustration, resentment, inadequacy, loneliness, and resentment. This downward spiral of emotions is what leads to disordered results.

Together, let's take a step back...what does being *worthy* really mean to you? For me, I find worthiness in kindness, compassion, empathy, and respect.

What is *self-doubt* costing you?

Imagine for a moment if your self-doubt were silenced. How would you show up? What would you do with that power?

In a world that profits from our insecurities, you can take back this power and learn the steps to achieve improved self-worth.

In the book *Learning to Love Yourself: The Steps to Self-Acceptance, the Path to Creative Fulfillment*, author Gay Hendricks states, "You don't need to go around loving yourself all the time for your life to work wonderfully. You just have to go around being willing to love yourself. Willingness lets you flow with the stream rather than against it."

When you have an upward spiral of emotions such as love, trust, encouragement, and empowerment, things begin to feel calmer and easier. Self-love improves your overall well-being and is associated with less stress and anxiety and reduced depression. It leads to increased happiness, improved self-acceptance, higher self-esteem, stronger self-awareness, and greater self-forgiveness.

When you are able to accept yourself the way that you are, the mind can relax from all the stories that it creates, and you can meet yourself with *love*. This requires courage and undoing. If you were to look at yourself with love, what would shift? If you're friends with yourself first, many areas of your life will change for the better; the pieces of the puzzle really begin to fit. You can celebrate the good days and still be kind to yourself on the bad or not-so-good ones.

Might you be kind to yourself just as you would be with a friend or a loved one, shifting away from labeling days as being *good* or *bad*?

Comparison. Everyone's life is different; just because others are doing certain things doesn't mean that you *should* be, too. You are on your own journey and are amazing just as you are. Stay in your Loving Lane.

One of the best ways to begin building self-worth is by challenging the mean whispers in your mind, which we'll learn about in more detail with the next ingredient (Thinking). Remind yourself that no matter what you do or don't do, you are *worthy* and *valuable*. Implementing this Guidebook's many Ingredients into your life can build up your self-worth.

Our brains are not fixed; rather, they are easily adaptable. With each new experience and every effort to grow, you have the power to transform your life by rewiring your recipe – your brain – and embracing who you truly are. Are you ready to mix unstoppable self-confidence, self-worth, and self-love?

What is one aspect that you love about yourself?

If you would like to dive deeper into Self-Love, I highly recommend these two books:

Self-Love Workbook for Women: Release Self-Doubt, Build Self-Compassion, and Embrace Who You Are by Megan Logan, MSW, LCSW

How to Meet Your Self: The Workbook for Self-Discovery by Dr. Nicole LePera (The Holistic Psychologist)

Ingredient #4: THINKING

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. —Albert Einstein

So many people have what I call *messy Thinking*. Only 8% of what we worry about tends to come true. Such senseless worrying distorts our reality, taking away opportunities for growth and calm. It causes us to have lower self-esteem, along with less confidence and compassion. It can also make it difficult and, in some cases, impossible to see *solutions*.

All our negative emotions come from our thoughts. It's the story that you tell yourself — your very *own* thinking — that can create so much suffering. Think about negative thoughts as unloving scripts that we have on repeat. Don't believe all the negative thoughts that you think. Thoughts are just thoughts. They can't stop you from what you've decided you are going to do. You likely need to keep shifting and reframing countless times day after day, a skill that requires tremendous awareness. When the mind is disrupted, you can turn the dial from an unhelpful thought to one that is more helpful to the life you wish to create. Imagine that you're in your car when a "dark" song comes on that you really dislike. Would you just continue to listen to it, or would you change the station to find another one that you enjoy and is more uplifting?

Thoughts create feelings, actions, and results. It all begins with our *thoughts* about a particular circumstance or situation. These are the things you tell yourself about the situation. Those thoughts trigger emotions and influence the way that you *feel*. Depending on the thought, it can produce a positive or negative emotion(s). The emotion that you feel drives your *actions*. Depending on the emotion you're feeling, these actions may or may not support or be in line with your values, vision, and goals. The actions you take will determine your *results*. Positive actions will drive you toward your goal, while unsupportive ones will keep you stuck.



An important question to write down and deeply think about is *If you were consistent with your health habits, what would you be THINKING, DOING, and FEELING?*

When you become someone you've never been before, be patient with yourself. You are about to learn and practice a different way of thinking and feeling that has not been ingrained and habituated. It's as if you are the main character in a brand-new script. These new thoughts (the script) will create new choices and decisions to improve your total well-being. You can't just jump from a seed to a flower. First, you must plant the seed, which will bud, sprout, and then become a flower. Just as that does not happen overnight, it will take time for you to slowly bloom into the person you want to become. Your Beliefs (Ingredient #2) planted that seed; it is your Thinking (Ingredient #4) that actually begins the bud. Research has shown that it can take anywhere from 66 days to 365 days – yes, up to a full year! – for new thinking and behavior patterns to develop.

Many women have confided in me about their most private, mean, inner-bully conversations with themselves. Below are some of the most common ones I have repeatedly heard:

I feel addicted to certain foods.

I am constantly hungry and thinking about food.

I can't stop eating _____.

I feel like a failure from all the dieting/plans and my unfulfilled goals.

I will be better tomorrow.

Why am I so tired, irritable, and moody?

I should try to find the one diet that works.

I am being SO bad for eating this.

I had a good day until I ruined it.

Why don't I have willpower and discipline?

I am just not motivated enough.

What is wrong with me?

With your current thinking, you can draw upon curiosity, compassion, and kindness as you ask a specific question: *Where did I learn to think like this?*

Prepare to start this mind journey by saying goodbye to the all-or-nothing, black-and-white thinking patterns because they're a big trap, setting you up for negative thinking and only creating more unhealthy thinking habits. If that's the case, then why do so many of us think this way? It's because the brain loves routine and is structured as such to try to make sense of things, to categorize and simplify. In other words, when we're faced with decisions, it's easier for us to have fewer options to choose from. Such rigid thinking may also stem from societal messages, nutrition misinformation (the diet industry prefers that we think this way so they can continue to hugely profit), overly critical parents, our beliefs, perfectionism, and overachievers.

What are some things someone might say if they live by this thinking? You may commonly use words like *should/shouldn't* or *always/never*: I can *never* lose weight; I am *always* out of control around chocolate. When it comes to movement, you may procrastinate and tell yourself *If I only exercise once or twice a week, why bother? What's even the point?* (In the Movement ingredient, we will learn much about how this thinking can harm your health). You find that even the smallest mistakes can lead to thoughts such as *I failed* or *I really messed up*. For example, if you had a few cookies at night or a little ice cream, you might pass judgment and get angry at yourself.

Perhaps you are labeling yourself, identifying whether you were *good* or *bad* based on certain food decisions that you made. But it doesn't have to be this way. What if we are always making choices, some of which are aligned with our vision and our *Why* and others that are not. Ruminating, obsessing, and guiltig all become major barriers to enabling you to develop a healthy relationship with food.

Why does something that we enjoy, that we derive pleasure from, need to have any guilt associated with it? Food guilt is something that we learn, which means that we can also *unlearn* such thinking. In a study involving participants who were eating chocolate cake, those who connected guilt to consumption were more likely to overeat. They reported feeling a loss of control and engaging in unhealthy eating patterns. Your mental energy would be better spent by working to overcome food guilt, which can generate self-criticism and precipitate low mood, harming both emotional and mental health.

You have the ability to change the way that you think and feel about food, health, self-care, well-being, nutrition, and movement. Many women and young girls who learn to do this begin to feel more confident, calmer, and more energetic, with less anxiety and overwhelm. Eating finally feels easier; it starts to become considerably less taxing.

The negative *what-ifs* can easily take over. So, rather than worrying about losing control, finding it too hard, becoming unhappy, being unable to do it...what if we flipped things around and instead focused on more *uplifting* thoughts: *What if I can actually learn how to enjoy food experiences? What if I slow down and can be more present? What if I don't lose control? What if it isn't so hard after all? What if it makes me happy?*

You can also replace *What IF* with *What IS*. YOU get to decide right now that any past failures or attempts do not have to determine your future possibilities. Change happens with the next best choice. These new thoughts create powerful actions. You have yet to meet the Best Version of *you*. She lies ahead...

Here are a few ways to challenge negative thoughts:

1. Is there any evidence that this thought *isn't* true?
2. Am I jumping to conclusions or assuming the worst?
3. If a friend thought this, what would I say, how would I reassure her?
4. Are there positives in this situation that I am ignoring?
5. What's the most realistic outcome?
6. If the worst possible outcome occurred, how could/would I cope?

Mentally addressing yourself by name could help ease the chatter and rumination in your mind. In the book *Chatter: The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It*, Dr. Ethan Kross discusses specific distancing tools to calm the chatter in one's head caused by that individual's inner voice: adopting a fly-on-the-wall perspective, assuming a detached observer's perspective, imagining how you'd feel in the future, and writing in a journal. Kross describes his own chatter as being "so intense it felt as if there were no way out, until suddenly I found the way. I said my own name."

In one study, participants who used distanced self-talk reported experiencing less shame and embarrassment compared to their peers who were immersed in negative self-talk. There is a power to distanced self-talk. It is a wonderful tool to use to gain emotional distance, improve stressful problem-solving tasks, and facilitate wise reasoning.

It could look something like this: *[YOUR NAME], what do you need right now? You're feeling tired and overwhelmed. Yes, the cookies and chips will help in the moment to soothe and distract, but since you're not feeling hungry right now, [NAME], what would be a caring thing for you to do for your body and mind? What's aligned with your vision and values?* Perhaps picking up a book, watching a podcast, sitting outside, going for a walk, taking time out to stretch, or listening to some music. If any of these ideas appeal to you, by all means, give them (any or all, at different times) a try! If you're comfortable sharing, feel free to reach out to let me know about your experience.

After two months of counseling on the 9 Ingredients, one of my clients expressed the following: "I was out to lunch with my best friend enjoying tacos, my margarita, the flavors, the textures, the smells. I slowed down. I was in the moment. I was connected to the conversation and feeling alive again. When I felt a sensation of fullness arise, I left some on my plate. It was amazing to no longer feel guilt, shame, or anger. There was no more spiral of thoughts by the mean girl in my head. I moved on with my day feeling calm and confident."

In Danielle LaPorte's book titled *How to Be Loving: As Your Heart Is Breaking Open and Our World Is Waking Up*, she devotes a chapter to loving thoughts, saying, "You identify the weeds in the garden of your mind, and then choose the loving thought that you want to nourish. A loving thought should feel real and true to you; no one else can tell you how to think." By enhancing your thinking, you will develop a more optimistic outlook on things. Your brain wiring will be designed to better cope with life's stressors. Some of your brain regions will thicken, resulting in improved mental and physical health.

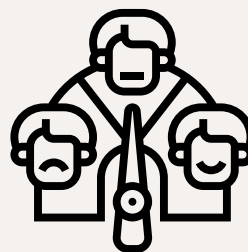
Ingredient #5: COPING (with Emotions)

As humans, we need and often use **Coping mechanisms** to survive, some of which are healthier than others. If you're reading this, you're likely looking to shift the current unhelpful coping strategies that may be serving you for a particular reason. My first question won't be what is wrong with your behavior, but what is *right* about it; then together, we will problem-solve to create an individualized, step-by-step plan of action for long-term behavior change.

So, at the moment, what is or are the benefit(s) of this behavior or action? *How* and *why* is it serving you?

For many who first embark on their journey with me, they don't really understand why they are using certain behaviors to cope with some uncomfortable emotions. Then, as we sift through these ingredients, they gain so much awareness, complete with *Aha!* moments and the realization that things now make a lot of sense, or a lot *more* sense. We develop these negative coping skills to bring us short-term comfort, temporary relief. We may seek to disconnect from our bodies as a means of coping and survival; some may be dealing with deep pain that probably requires professional expertise, such as from a psychologist or trauma therapist.

Imagine if you went for a car wash repeatedly, but it was the *engine* that needed work and a tune-up. Your car would be sparkling clean, but how would it run? I want you to be able to identify the *root* cause of your unhealthy coping mechanisms related to food, nutrition, body, and health habits, then learn skills and strategies for healthier coping that will benefit your vision and values. When you have the ability to shift your coping patterns at the root level, so many things begin to change for the better as you find safety in your body and begin to rely increasingly less on coping in ways that no longer serve you.



Those who have poor emotional coping skills are at risk for a host of physical and mental health problems, including but not limited to the following: high blood pressure, headaches, anxiety, leg weakness, depression, insomnia, gastritis, chronic pain and inflammation, heart disease, and autoimmune disease.

You may be reluctant and afraid to face your emotions because you think the feeling will never end. Most emotions last about 90 seconds, which can move through your entire body. If they last more than 90 seconds, then it begins to loop through your mind. It may surprise you to read this, especially if you grew up learning to suppress your emotions. However, there are no *good* or *bad* feelings, only ones that are more pleasant and either unpleasant or less pleasant. Perhaps you do whatever you can to avoid scary emotions by trying in some way to *fix* yourself.

Most of us never learned how to process and cope with our emotions (shame, fear, anger, etc.) in a healthy way. But despite whether we process and cope, we will still eventually have to deal with them. Did your home life consider it less than acceptable to display certain emotions? For instance, were happiness, joy, and excitement welcomed while anger, anxiety, and sadness were not and were instead seen as unacceptable? If so, then you may have learned to shut down certain emotions by putting on a mask and forcing a smile. Social pressures, cultural influences, and past experiences all shape how we cope with our emotions. You can make a shift by allowing yourself to acknowledge and accept yours; instead of ignoring or dismissing them, let yourself trust and cope with even those feelings that bring discomfort.

If we are unable to apply other coping strategies, our emotions can lead us to restrict or overeat. Or, if we can't identify our emotional needs in general, we may turn to food to numb or distract. During stressful times, it's therefore essential to make self-care a priority and find healthy ways for us to cope. We can build these emotional coping muscles by learning how to *respond* vs. *react*.

Here are some examples of **reactive** (unhealthy) vs. **responsive** (healthy) coping. Be aware that emotional energy/actions will follow from these thoughts.

Reactive: *I give up! Why can't I just eat right? I am always doing this to myself, and I just don't get it. Now I am lying here in bed with my mind angry about what I just did to myself.*

Responsive: *I have been bingeing the past 3 nights, but I'm going gentle on myself. I cognitively know that I'm full, but I keep eating. I recognize that some of my needs have been unmet; my husband is traveling, I haven't been sleeping that well, and most days I don't think I eat enough during breakfast or lunch. I'm going to prioritize sleep, hydration, and nourishing meals and will shift to cope in healthier ways by calling a friend or listening to music. But if I do choose to cope with food, I won't beat myself up for it. Rather, I'll move on without guilt and try to make helpful decisions.*

Reactive: *Right now, I'm so tired and emotional. I feel like a mess. The kids are driving me nuts, the house is a disaster. I just want to relax, scroll on my phone, and eat some ice cream to de-stress and self-soothe.*

Responsive: *I'm feeling so overwhelmed, just exhausted. Uncomfortable emotions are surfacing. I am still choosing to align and decide where I want my health to go in the future. I am thankful that I chose to eat 3 meals and 2 snacks, so right now I'm not ravenous. I feel an urge for food; however, I am not feeling a sensation of hunger so at the moment I'm going to respect my strong body, prioritize myself, and do something kind to care for it.*

Reactive: *I am so bad – I'm such an emotional eater! Why can't I just get it together and get back on track? I was so good all day. This always happens to me...I feel so defeated!*

Responsive: *I am a human being who at the moment is using food to cope, which is okay. All eating is an emotional experience. There is no such thing as 'emotional eating.' The guilt or shame from that nonsense label only leads to negative feelings. I refuse to listen to that programmed thought. On most days food is not my only coping mechanism, but today it's needed. I will slow down, enjoy the textures, smells, and flavors and move on with my day.*

In the book *Practical Optimism: The Art, Science, and Practice of Exceptional Well-Being*, author Dr. Sue Varma says, "Stress really isn't the issue. The problem is our perception of it. If we perceive something to be manageable, it likely will be. Think of how powerful that is. We develop this awareness not by avoiding, but by learning to sit with and process our feelings in controlled, compassionate ways."

What are some emotional loops that you get caught in?

Has anyone ever been able to relax with someone yelling at them to do so? And that's essentially what we are doing to ourselves when we react. When you overthink, you're under-feeling, not processing the emotion. You can pause, check in with how you're feeling, pay attention to what you're thinking that caused the feeling, acknowledge and validate your emotions, and assess a situation so that you can *respond* rather than react. This can all happen in seconds. All the responses come from a calm energy that is kind, curious, empathetic, and nonjudgmental.

In the reaction, you're overthinking; in the response, you're feeling and becoming grounded and present to the feelings and sensations in your body. Your chest may feel heavy, your heart may beat fast and feel like it's throbbing, your stomach may feel uneasy. Allow those feelings to come and go, simply observing, not engaging. Emotion is energy in motion, meaning that it moves through your body.

We would never judge our organs: *I am happy with my heart, my kidneys are not useful, my brain sucks, my pancreas is awesome.* But that's exactly what we do with our *mental* well-being.

You can learn to identify your reasons for eating, your feelings, and your emotional triggers. You are capable of acquiring tools that you can use to cope with stress, as well as adopting new ways to stimulate dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin, and endorphins other than through food.

When you find yourself turning to food, ask yourself these questions: *What is going on for me here? What might I need? What is my body telling me?*

Research has shown that feeling bad about “emotional eating” can make you more likely to eat past comfortable fullness.

You can use the **H.A.L.T.** acronym.

H: Am I actually **Hungry**? When did I last eat? How can I nourish myself right now?

A: **Angry** or **Anxious**. What is going on in my life now that is stressful or very difficult?

L: **Lonely** or Sad. Am I connecting enough with people? Does being around others feel pleasant or unpleasant?

How can I get some support at the moment? What other coping strategies can I use to work through these emotions?

T: **Tired**. Am I well-rested? Have I allowed myself sufficient rest and relaxation (commonly referred to as R&R)?

How can I take some time for myself? What would make me feel more rejuvenated?

Next, start small with getting your daily **D.O.S.E.** of the feel-good hormones (see below) and make the next best choice to feel *better*. This will help you cope better in stressful situations as you integrate D.O.S.E. on a regular basis. Many of these actions regulate your nervous system, which is crucial to coping in healthy ways (Regulating will be addressed as the next ingredient).

Dopamine: movement, meditation, new experiences

Oxytocin: hugs, social time, acts of kindness

Serotonin: sunshine, outdoor walks, gratitude

Endorphins: laughter, movement, dark chocolate

Other positive coping skills to consider: journaling, meditating, reading, deep breathing, playing with a pet, doing aromatherapy, singing, dancing, drawing, resting, listening to music, gardening, practicing yoga, walking, swimming, talking to a kind friend, compiling a gratitude list, sitting out in the sun, getting fresh air, enjoying a day at the beach, visualizing a happy place, identifying feelings, seeking support through therapy

Ask yourself what would feel inspiring, uplifting, and calm.

A note about ADHD:

For children and adults with ADHD, food behaviors have nothing to do with self-control, willpower, discipline, or lack of motivation. They are not lazy. There is a dysregulation of dopamine in the brain and executive function deficits, making it hard to self-regulate. Having low impulse control and ignoring both hunger and fullness cues are common. Using food as the only coping mechanism to self-soothe is normal for most and can lead to bingeing and feeling out of control.

Feedback from a client: *The counseling sessions helped me understand the Why and How to. They're geared toward helping you for the long term. I was done with the quick fixes. I wanted to ditch diets and end the shame that I felt whenever I tried a new one. Some outcomes the past month have been better moods, easier meal and snack prep that seems more fun, the ability to tune into my hunger and fullness levels, and healthier coping of my emotions. I am taking action and feel more confident and comfortable in my own skin. Thanks for guiding me through the process of health and healing.*

At the moment, what brings you true joy and happiness and lights you up?

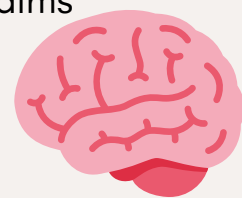
How can doing more of this activity support you in coping with your emotions through more ease and kindness?

Coping with emotions is a process that takes time. It is best blended with the Thinking and Regulating ingredients and is one of the ways to master your true well-being. There will be challenges and setbacks ahead, but also plenty of welcomed changes and new opportunities. Each day, you'll continue to learn and problem-solve. If you change your thinking, then you will ultimately be able to propel yourself forward to reshape your life in a more beautiful and meaningful way, becoming your healthiest self.

Ingredient #6: REGULATING

This vital ingredient is the control center of the body, allowing you to perceive, comprehend, and respond to everything around you. It controls your heartbeat, digestion, and the way that you feel. Constantly feeling stressed and burnt out, sleeping and eating poorly, and/or not reserving time for yourself can all significantly impact this system. If you learn the skill of **Regulating** your nervous system by filling up your cup, you will be more likely to prioritize and master your true well-being.

When your brain perceives danger, it turns on the sympathetic nervous system – the *fight-or-flight* response. As a result, you may experience warning signs that alert you to a stressful situation. These can include a racing heart, tense muscles, sweating, and blushing. When your brain thinks that it's time to recover, the parasympathetic system turns on and calms your body.



There are two parts of **parasympathetic**:

1. dorsal vagal (freeze/shutdown) You feel numb, trapped, dissociated, helpless, depressed, and lonely. You may often think/say *I don't know*.
2. ventral vagal (play/safety) You feel safe, calm, connected, centered, grounded, alive, hopeful, capable, creative, and socially engaged.

Balancing these two systems is KEY! If your body constantly feels as if it's on high alert (say, in the case of a dangerous situation), the stress hormones *cortisol* and *adrenaline* will be released, causing problems to arise. You may feel unease, uncertainty, and/or a strong sense of worry. The reason? *Humans are not designed to be constantly under stress*. Thus, maintaining a *balance* can help you respond to different kinds of stressful situations, resulting in improved emotional and physical health.

Some signs of your sympathetic system working overtime include fatigue, anxiety, panic attacks, poor sleep, digestive issues, headaches, dizziness, and muscle pain; over time, though, it could lead to more serious problems such as high blood pressure, heart problems, and overall weakened immune function.

There is typically a story behind the stressful state. Here is an example:

My partner is judging me for not working out and based on the amount of food I consume. He thinks that I'm lazy (sympathetic/fight-or-flight). Nothing I ever do ever seems to be good enough (dorsal vagal/shutdown). The truth is that he really cares about my well-being and loves me as I am (ventral/ play). So many of these stories that are completely untrue could be replaying in our minds like a movie. They're simply inaccurate, which requires us to shift into the regulated nervous system state, especially by using the **5 Strategies** below.

The first step to a Healthy Nervous System is to understand and recognize these signs and learn strategies and skills to restore balance to it.

Nervous System, Food, and the Body

If you're consumed by a fight-or-flight response, your digestion shuts down, making it difficult to absorb any incoming nutrition. This is why this ingredient is crucial to your nutrition and well-being, though it is rarely addressed in mainstream health and wellness.

Your body and nervous system understand dieting and restrictions with food as being unsafe and threatening. However, your body will ultimately win because nourishing our bodies regularly is as important as breathing.

Why do we have a body? To experience life, not to please and attract beauty ideals. Think of it as living in a home with a constant feeling of distress over the way your body looks or feels. Such thinking will take a toll on you and cause a *dysregulated* nervous system. Creating safety in your body helps you feel more regulated – and you can even wish to change your body's appearance while still accepting, respecting, and caring for it.

A desire to lose weight is a thought in the brain that many develop as a result of some type of emotion – for example, shame, anxiety, disgust, fear, sadness. It's a *response* to emotion. Many believe that weight loss will improve their lives and make them feel happier and safer in our world. Very few studies on dieting have followed participants for longer than 6 months, and of those dieters, there is strong research to show that after five years, 80% had regained their lost weight. This is why I choose to focus on these *root-level* Ingredients: to address nutrition and health in a way that works forever so that you don't have to spend a lifetime yo-yo dieting through short-term programs that more often than not cause future harm.

Here are **4 Ways to Start Regulating Your Nervous System:**

- **Meditation and Breathwork**: Deep breaths help restore control to the parasympathetic nervous system and will send signals to your brain and body that no emergency is happening. An experiment took place involving 117 individuals who practiced feelings of gratitude through meditation for just 15 minutes three times a day. When these people stopped feeling negative emotions such as anger and annoyance, their immune systems strengthened by 50%, lessening any pain and inflammation they were experiencing. Engaging in self-reflection and mindfulness practices can help reduce stress and anxiety, increase self-awareness, and enhance overall well-being.
- **Journaling**: Putting your thoughts down on paper can lead to a better mood, improved sleep, more self-confidence, and a stronger immune system. You can begin to write 2-3 minutes a day and increase to any duration that fits into your lifestyle. You can write about any and all things in your life, as if it's a "brain dump"; however, focusing on the *good* aspects of your life will help the brain shift toward looking for more of the good in the future. Life will always have its ups and downs. You are constantly changing, shifting, and evolving. A gratitude journal is a great place to begin. Labeling emotions and acknowledging events have been known to have a positive effect on people. It frees the brain from the enormous job of processing experiences and provides peace of mind to allow for better sleep. So, this tool is quite effective, not to mention cost-effective!

- **Reduced Screen Time**: Most of us are sleeping with a highly addictive device or machine right beside us. Early phone use disrupts circadian rhythms, your desire to get up and exercise, your productivity later in the day, and how you fall asleep at night. When you check your phone first thing in the morning, it increases your dopamine too early in the day, which puts you in a state of reward-seeking behavior that distracts you and depletes dopamine reserves needed for effort-based rewards. You can certainly listen to music and meditations; it is the urge to start *scrolling* that becomes the issue, with the actual scrolling causing any adverse effects.

Given the constant distraction from today's cellphones and other modern technology, nutrition, sleep, and movement have generally become less of a priority. I must admit that I was surprised by a study that reported how reducing social media use by only 15–40 minutes a day had an average of 15% improvement in immune function. Other research on decreased social media usage revealed a 50% improvement in sleep quality, with 30% fewer depressive symptoms.

How do you feel when you get a break from your phone? Or do you have a difficult relationship with it in terms of too strong an attachment? Would you prefer to step back and give yourself a little screen-free time to enjoy some other activities? Think about what those might be. Movement, nature, reading, meditation. What else might you like to do that does not in some form involve being on your phone?

It does not have to be a drastic change. If your current screentime is 7 hours, you can try for just a half-hour less, so 6.5 hours. It's your choice, of course. But you'll likely see how you can benefit from time spent away from your phone and will notice an improvement in how you feel both physically and mentally. Although it may be hard at first, you are bound to appreciate having more time to spend really *enjoying* your life.

- **Movement**: There is science behind the feel-good “high” after exercise. The brain produces more endorphins, a feel-good neurotransmitter. Movement in any form will help your body release tension to feel more relaxed. Walking, running, cycling, practicing yoga, doing Pilates, stretching, dancing. How would *you* like to move? Movement will be discussed in further detail as Ingredient #8.

Other ways to help regulate your nervous system include singing, laughing, getting a massage, receiving hugs, resting, sleeping, using a weighted blanket, taking a cold shower, being out in and enjoying nature, and employing EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) therapy, which involves “tapping.” Indeed, it can be the simplest things that are the most powerful in building new, healthier habits.

To end, let’s take a look at books for personal development or self-improvement. While they can be helpful, if you’re unable to consistently integrate these nervous system regulation tools into your life, you could read 50 personal development books over years and still find yourself reverting to old habits.

Through your awareness and implementation, you may be surprised by some of the outcomes with regard to your thoughts, feelings, responses, emotions, and decisions. Be proud of yourself for being open to this work. Movement, breathing, and sound are the best ways to move emotions through the body. If you are eager to create change but are finding it difficult, it might help to consult a therapist who specializes in *somatic therapy*, a form of body-centered therapy that examines the connection between mind and body. If you feel ready, I encourage you to use these tools to *rebalance* and ***regulate***, which can be incredibly rewarding.

Ingredient #7: NOURISHMENT

Many professionals, health coaches, and nutritionists offer well-intended advice. However, when it comes to nutrition and health information, we must be particularly careful. While there is an abundance of nutrition information out there, much of it is not quality- and evidence-based. My aim is to make **Nourishment** both simple and sustainable.

MyFitnessPal partnered with Dublin City University in Ireland in analyzing more than 67,000 videos on the social media platform, comparing them to public health and nutrition guidelines. They found that only 2.1 % of TikTok content is actually accurate. Unfortunately, *every single day* I find myself having to debunk these types of myths—for both children *and* adults.

I believe that everyone deserves access to and education through a Registered Dietitian (RD) — a genuine expert in nutrition science who can provide practical solutions to help others improve their physical, mental, and emotional health outcomes. This is why I created the guidebook that you're in the process of reading!

Nutrition is a science, food is a behavior, and behaviors are thoughts and feelings being acted out. We want to learn what kind of questions will help guide our clients to internally motivate them. This involves a *whole-person* approach. RDs dig deeper, below the surface, to understand our clients' visions, values, beliefs, past struggles, and barriers. No one is more qualified than a Registered Dietitian to provide sound nutrition and support by way of an easy, enjoyable, and stress-free journey of behavior change.

When you were younger, was food used as a reward or punishment? Do you often hear the term *cheat days*? Or perhaps have you used it yourself? If you feel the need to cheat in situations that involve food, then you are probably not relating to food well. For many, a cheat day is a scheduled binge-eating day and a disordered eating pattern. This goes back to the black-and-white thinking patterns that were discussed in the Thoughts (Ingredient #4) section, which can lead to guilt, shame, and overeating.

The psychological effects of calorie restriction include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood swings
- Social isolation
- Binge-eating behaviors
- Activation of brain-reward systems involving food
- An increased preoccupation with food and constant hunger

The diet industry does not take hormones and body physiology into consideration. First, the hungry brain decreases its satiety hormone, called *leptin*, signaling that you are full and nourished. The hunger hormone known as *ghrelin* is what stimulates your appetite and affects your food intake, impacting your feeling of fullness. So, after losing weight through calorie restriction, leptin levels may drop, which could lead to a greater appetite, food fixation, and regained weight. Simply put, the diet industry, which depends on repeat customers, is not concerned about whether weight-loss programs will work long term. It becomes a vicious cycle, with many ending up weighing more than they did before they started and developing other problems as a result of yo-yoing.

Dieting is a common form of disordered eating that stresses out the body and mind. I want women to realize that the blame and shame they put on themselves for believing they're not being strong, or that they don't have enough control and willpower, have nothing to do with them and everything to do with the *diets* themselves – the plans, the programs, the rules, etc., are not designed to be permanent fixes.

Based on my many years working to help clients create their own diets (a way of eating for life), I came up with **5 Simple Strategies** that work for good. But before we review the simple, I want to introduce the 3 ways that people tend to overcomplicate nutrition:

1. By focusing on a *diet* or *plan*, whose rigidity impacts your ability to make choices; the act of dieting can create anxiety, stress, overwhelm, and suppressed emotions.
2. By hyperfocusing on *calories* or *carbohydrate* restriction instead of nutrient balance, variety, satisfaction, and frequency
3. By listening to the media, which confuses us, making the brain think that it's just too hard, but it's really not. Remember that the diet/wellness industry *needs* repeat customers. So, it's not about the food, but rather *behavior* and *brain wiring*.

Let's focus on *simplifying* nutrition and health by promoting behavior change and self-care activities. Healthy eating can and should incorporate a variety of foods, such as those that are nutrient-dense and those that are not. In addition, focus on *how you feel* when eating certain foods and what these different foods do for your body. Healthy behaviors include getting adequate sleep, managing stress better, learning how to cope with feelings, and incorporating joyful movement.



I strongly favor these **5 Strategies to Simplify Nutrition**. Which one(s) can you start with?

1. Nourish your body every few hours with meals and snacks. (*Think of your body as a racecar with pit stops throughout the day; do not go longer than 4 hours without nourishing. Also, skipping breakfast leads to cortisol dysregulation and hormonal issues.*)
2. Honor hunger and fullness (see scale below).
3. Aim for high fiber (whole grains, oatmeal, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, beans). Ideally, food labels should indicate more than 3g of dietary fiber per serving.
4. Instead of restricting, focus on what you can add for variety and nutrients (think of a *colorful* plate!).
5. Eat sufficient fats for hormone health such as olives, nuts, avocados, nut butter, flax seeds, chia seeds, and salmon.

*Bonus Strategy: Whenever possible, engage in ***mindful eating***; remove any distractions (for example, turn off your cellphone) and tune into your senses: smell, look, taste, and feel. Slow down and savor each bite of your meal or snack.

Everyone needs to find what works best for them as individuals. There is no secret solution, one-size-fits-everyone because our eating behaviors are complex. Think of your meals and snacks as a pattern, not day to day, and whether over time you are getting enough nutrition. So, for instance, assuming that you have 3 meals and 2 snacks a day...in two weeks there are about 70 chances to eat. Of those 70 meals/snacks, were most of them nutrient-dense? Did they make you feel your best mentally and physically? If you start to give yourself *power*, not food, there will be no more *I messed ups*. Moving forward, these are the words you deserve to feel about food and body... *Calm, Joyful, Easy, Love, Peace, Beautiful, Nourish, Confident, Satisfied, Simple!*

Hunger-Fullness Scale

A guide to help you connect with your body to learn when and how much to eat.

- Overly Hungry*
- 0** Painfully hungry. Urgent need to eat.
- 1** Ravenous and irritable.
- 2** Very hungry and ready to eat.
- Normal eating range*
- 3** Polite hunger. Ready to eat, but can wait a bit if necessary.
- 4** Early signs of hunger, will need to eat soon.
- 5** Neutral. Not hungry or full.
- Comfortable time to stop eating*
- 6** Beginning to feel full.
- 7** Comfortably full.
- 8** Overfull, slightly uncomfortable.
- Overly full*
- 9** Uncomfortable. Over stuffed.
- 10** Painfully overfull. Very uncomfortable.

Ingredient #8: MOVEMENT

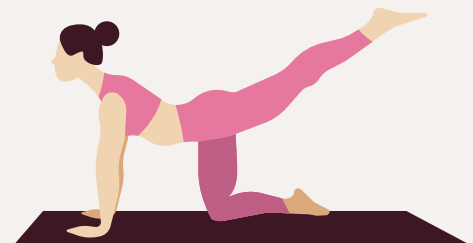
- *If I can't work out twice a week, it's just not worth it.*
- *I need to burn off this donut!*
- *Walking isn't real exercise.*
- *No pain, no gain!*
- *What's your excuse?*
- *Eat less, move more.*

These are common thoughts surrounding exercise that I hear often, though they're not accurate.

Developing a healthy relationship with **Movement** is an essential ingredient to taking care of yourself and meeting your body's needs. When it comes to movement, what do you really want? What types of exercise will keep you coming back again and again? (Think about what *feels good* to you!)

So many harmful messages and pressures from our culture promote exercise as something that we *should* be doing to attain a specific – yet unattainable and unrealistic – body appearance. Many view exercise as a way to burn calories and compensate for indulging in “bad” foods or eating “too much.”

A 2019 study found that at some point in their lives, 60% of people experience fat shaming and/or body shaming. This type of shaming triggers emotional responses that mimic stress, anxiety, and depression. Often, the person targeted will internalize such comments and start to feel self-conscious, believing that they are lazy and unmotivated, which leads to self-critical talk. Not surprisingly, disempowering language is unhelpful for anyone who desires to improve their activity and total well-being.



What's Your Relationship With Exercise?

HEALTHY

- You exercise to feel good mentally, physically and emotionally
- You have non-appearance-related fitness goals
- You honor your body's limits
- You listen to your body when it's not functioning at 100%
- You feel accomplished with any form of movement
- You allow recovery periods without shame or guilt
- You explore all different forms of activity
- You are true to yourself and know what makes you happy

UNHEALTHY

- You exercise to "earn" or burn calories
- You exercise for weight loss only
- You exercise to the point you feel sick
- You exercise when you're already sick or injured
- You feel guilty or lazy if you don't have a high-intensity workout
- You rarely take rest days
- You think a gym is the only place to get beneficial movement
- You're following an exercise program you do not thoroughly enjoy

@dont_diet_dietitian_

In the book *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*, author John Medina writes, “The benefits of exercise seem nearly endless because of its impact systemwide, affecting most physiological symptoms. Exercise makes your muscles and bones stronger and improves strength and balance. It helps regulate your appetite, changes your blood lipid profile, reduces your risk for more than a dozen types of cancer, improves the immune system, and buffers against the toxic effects of stress. By enriching your cardiovascular system, exercise decreases your risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. When combined with the intellectual benefits exercise appears to offer, we have in our hands as close to the magic bullet for improving human health as exists in modern medicine.”

Talk about powerful! I remember rereading that statement and thinking *Wow, if only more people could concentrate on regular motion rather than body size (and weight loss), they'd be empowered to move their bodies more frequently.*

Research shows that individuals who are motivated to exercise for *appearance*-based reasons tend to have poorer body image and lower self-esteem, while those who exercise for health and the pure *enjoyment* of it are more likely to have a more positive body image.

If you were to embrace the **16 Benefits of Movement** below, what significant shifts would you consider and perhaps be able to make?

Benefits of Movement

reasons to move your body that have nothing to do with body weight, size, or shape

- improved mood
- improved sleep
- improved ability to do activities of daily living
- decreased risk of injury
- improved bone health
- improved blood pressure
- improved balance/
decreased risk of falls
- improved energy levels
- improved quality of life
- improved self-esteem
- decreased risk of anxiety and depression
- improved brain function
- improved insulin sensitivity
- decreased risk of heart disease and stroke
- increased flexibility
- decreased risk of developing some common cancers (ex: colon, breast, lung)



There is no need to compare yourself to another person's fitness journey. Focusing on what brings *you* the most joy is where the real success lies. Expect not to necessarily feel a desire to exercise prior to doing so; however, once you make the effort to start moving and begin to do it consistently, pay close attention to how you feel immediately after and the rest of the day. You'll be teaching your brain that *this* is the New You. Be kind to, patient with, and proud of yourself. As you learn to incorporate this effective Ingredient into your life, you'll soon be able to celebrate the significant impact it clearly has on both your mental and physical health!



Ingredient #9: EXPECTATIONS

Expectation is the root of all heartache. –William Shakespeare

You can't learn to walk before you crawl, and you can't learn how to ride a bike before training wheels, nor can you learn how to drive without practicing repeatedly. So why do most of us set such high **Expectations** for ourselves in the areas of diet and health?



We have spent a lifetime absorbing and developing a narrative around food, health, and our bodies. We are so conditioned to behave and do as we *should*, following a social pattern. We are living according to other people's expectations. What is considered normal is established not by what is necessarily *good* for people, but by what is *expected* of them. It's unrealistic to let go of a lifetime of these expectations surrounding diet culture in just a few days or even a few weeks. My goal is to provide guidance to help you recognize the unnecessary demands, pressures, and expectations that you have put on yourself. If you're open to doing small things each day without seeing immediate results, it will definitely be a game-changer. Our expectations determine our *satisfaction*.

Why is it that we can be so self-motivated and at the same time engage in self-sabotage? It's simple. As we learned with Ingredient #6 (Regulating), our nervous system is hardwired for *comfort*, while another part of ourselves is desiring *growth*. Managing that pull is the key to not feeling as if you're on a hamster wheel. Then you can begin to master the game of *yourself*. What seems hard or even impossible today will be easier or at least less difficult a week from now, as the reward comes once the energy has already been spent.

In the past, have you given up when you didn't see desired results in the specific time frame you thought possible? Did you feel the need to be perfect? Was the program unrealistic?

This common mindset also keeps so many stuck in a start-and-stop cycle while trying plenty of new experiences. Perhaps such strategies appealed to you because, for instance, they promised easy, quick weight loss. But in reality, they provided a false sense of hope. Because there IS no magic bullet or pill out there. You know your life, values, and goals better than anyone else. If you try *too hard*, more often than not, you'll end up *worse* off than before you started. We go further by pacing ourselves, as patience gives way to steady progress, driving the process into *action*.

Among the reasons that people may struggle are:

- Mental health
- Social issues
- Lack of support
- Purposeful behavior (coping mechanism)
- Distrust (trust issues)
- Stress
- Trauma
- Confusion
- Low confidence
- All-or-nothing thinking

So many people I meet have been waiting for the *right* time to start something meaningful, when their motivation and discipline have reached a certain level. The truth, though, is that *motivation doesn't just magically appear!* Waiting for the perfect moment is a false belief that many convince themselves will eventually happen. But there IS no perfect moment. It's never a good time. Do you want to know the *simple secret?* It's the *action*—actually getting started—that leads to the motivation needed to embark on that journey of change.

You can align with the feeling you want by saying: *I am or I am becoming _____ (healthy, joyful, strong, loving)*, which releases the perfectionism to take action *now*. It would be helpful to review Ingredient #1 (Vision) because you must come from there to reach your goals and practice being the person you deeply desire.

Healthy behaviors do not have to be hard. Break it down to simple and easy, and they will be sustainable for life. —Lauren Dorman

If you only brushed and flossed your teeth once a week but expected to have healthy teeth and gums in 6 months, that would be silly, correct? Well, the same goes for your health and life expectations. There IS no quick fix. We must chip away each and every day, building these lifelong skills. If you learn to *reframe* failures and setbacks as *learning experiences*, you can bounce back by developing strategies for Coping (Ingredient #5). It is important to show yourself that you can stick to a step-by-step process toward change rather than making huge changes all at once: *Hey, you are doing this step by step, one day – or one Ingredient – at a time!*

If you knew you'd get the results that you wanted a year from now, how would that change the way that you approached this process of change?

When it comes to **Expectations**, here are **5 Questions** to reflect upon and also journal about:

1. Can you cope with the disappointment and uncomfortable feeling of slower results?
2. Even if you were not seeing progress/results, what would inspire you to keep going? (Hint: Vision/Values)
3. How would you know that you were moving toward your goals?
4. Have you thought about the consequences of *not* creating change?
5. Moving forward, how will your expectations shift so you don't give up on yourself too soon?

When my clients begin the 9 to Nourished Experience, they spend roughly the first three months setting up foundations and building habits with repetition and support. According to research, most nutrition interventions with counseling take 6-12 months to create long-term behavior change, with plenty of struggles and wins along the way.

There is no linear model of healing, so let's imagine a spiral staircase where you are committed to a path of health and wellness. Each step is taking you forward and higher. As you circle around, you may revisit both old and new struggles, though this time from a different perspective: When you find yourself back in the same challenging pattern, you no longer feel hopeless, disheartened, or blame; there's no more back at square one. With all the right Ingredients you can now implement, you have the Recipe for Success!

Be aware that no one's journey has an absence of triggers and challenges; they're inevitable because well, we're all human. When you can digest that reality, your response to progress will dramatically change. You won't be at the exact place you were before because on this spiral staircase, you'll always be coming from an elevated step and a higher level of understanding.

YOU are the expert in your life, so it is YOU who gets to come up with the solutions that work best for you. I believe in your ability to implement these **Core Ingredients** to help you learn and figure things out.

To start, which TWO Ingredients (micro-actions) would you like to try to integrate into your life?

1.

2.

Imagine if each month you committed to work on 1-2 Ingredients. Where would you be by the end of the year? Think about Ingredient #1, Vision.

Wins: _____

Behaviors/Actions: _____

Shifting Thoughts: _____

Movement: _____

Nutrition: _____

Feelings (Mood, Energy, Calm, Mindfulness):

Struggles & Triggers (what I can learn from them):

At the end of the day, ask yourself: What is ONE thing I would be proud about tomorrow?

You are no longer rushing to the next goal because you realize how good you feel in the process. You are building confidence from your small wins throughout. Feelings of growth drive your momentum rather than results.

My hope is that through these recharging Ingredients, you have enjoyed more clarity to prompt you to act and bring you closer to a happier and healthier you. May this Recipe Roadmap help you reconnect to yourself, build healthy habits, and prioritize what truly matters in your own special life.

If you really enjoyed digesting these Ingredients, I've developed **The Nourish to Flourish Experience**. Please click [HERE](#) for more information. Through this self-paced course, you can finally feel so clear and confident on how, why, what, and when to nourish your body, mind, and heart! You'll be able to improve your immunity and well-being, creating the behavior shifts that you desire without all the yo-yo dieting.

Feedback from two of my clients:

Client 1: *I have stopped obsessing over food and instead tune in to my hunger and fullness levels. I know exactly how to create simple plates that I enjoy and now find myself able to cope with my emotions instead of stuffing them down. I am no longer living by rules, which has helped me take better care of myself.*

Client 2: *I loved the class series self-study! I have listened to the first several lessons over and over and can't wait to get to the next one. With 50+ years of diet talk/mentality to reprogram, I am a work-in-progress; there is lots to learn and relearn! I was so sucked in by diet culture but already feel some relief in terms of challenging and changing that way of thinking and trying to live better. When I think about all the money and time I spent, let alone all the anguish that I felt, it makes me feel sad and angry, too. I feel so duped by how diets were actually designed to fail. But now I'm moving on from that! Also, that it's really all just food—there's no such thing as 'good' or 'bad' foods; nutrient wise, they're just different.*



Your next chapter of vitality awaits you. Please fill up your cup each day with these 9 purposeful Ingredients.

I want to fuel and NOURISH my body in a LOVING way from the inside out.

I EXPECT, BELIEVE, and know that I am worth it.

I can REGULATE and COPE with my emotions to feel calmer, more at ease.

I can shift my THINKING to create actions that align with my values/goals.

A clear VISION lies ahead.

And now I can MOVE forward.

It really means the world to me that you have taken the time and energy to read this guidebook. If you would like more support, you can contact me [HERE](#) for a FREE, 30-minute Clarity Call so that I can get to know your needs at a deeper mind-body level.

Thank you!

Lauren