

BALANCE your LIFE

Transform Body, Mind & Spirit

by Teresa Dunn White and Margaret Furtado MS, RD, LDN, RYT

When you think of balance what comes to mind? Do you see those poised gymnasts who not only have mastered walking that narrow beam but, with precision, can tumble and flip and never falter? You might even see the old two pain balance scales. Is balance a “place” where you go, maybe hang out? Can we invite our friends to be with us in “balance”? Does the word “balance” bring to mind the yin/yang sign, or maybe a nutritional pyramid?

My weight loss journey has led me in several directions and each one has helped me discover new aspects of me. The journey itself has been filled with lessons and self work that led to a wonderful self transformation. My perception of balance is discovering and mastering true transformation on all levels of life, including body, mind, and spirit. After discovering that my healing would involve all three of these aspects, I respectfully refer to myself as a “holistic bariatric patient.”

BODY

Nourishing the body includes proper diet and nutrition. When available and/or possible, provide organic foods to fuel your body. Eat foods with lots of vibrant, rich colors, such as broccoli, carrots, beets, and squash. Incorporate whole grains for added fiber and eat lean proteins. Cut calories in dairy by using low- or no-fat products.

Supplement your nutritional needs with vitamins and minerals that suit your requirements. Consult with your physician, dietitian or nurse for specific recommendations.

Balance your nutritional and caloric needs while encompassing exercise. Doing a form of cardio will get your heart rate pumping and raise your metabolism, while practicing yoga will strengthen your core. Of course, yoga is a “work in” as well as a workout, because it also nourishes your spirit and mind.

Exercise gets your energy moving making it easier for you to flow through life. On the flip side, be sure to allow your

body rest time by providing adequate sleep time. Hydrate with at least 64 ounces of water daily and wear sunscreen.

Your body will thank you for doing this basic self care, but it will really thank you if you go beyond the call of necessity and provide extra care. Pamper tired sore muscles with an occasional spa day, and utilize the sauna room and the hot tub as you prepare for your massage. Our bodies do so much for us, it’s about time we start paying them back with kindness.

MIND

Nourishing the mind creates a happy mind, and that promotes general wellness. Stimulate your mind by reading, playing word games or working crossword puzzles. Have you ever considered taking a class just to broaden your knowledge? Check out your local colleges for creative writing courses, learn a new skill, or challenge yourself and learn a new language.

They say what you don’t use, you lose. Read books that interest you, and if you are real brave, read books on subjects you have never considered. There is a great big world of ideas and adventure waiting for you to discover.

Try finding a cause that you believe in and volunteer your services. There are soup kitchens, women’s and children’s centers, nursing homes and animal habitats that are begging for volunteers. This strengthens your mind and allows you to reach out to others.

Let your creativity flow with activities and hobbies. Have a room in your house designated to your creative ventures.

Clear your mind from chaos and toxicity, sometimes this is best accomplished by just sitting still and relaxing.

Try to stay positive. Negative, rigid and inflexible attitudes decrease your ability to deal with the stresses of life and prevent you from enjoying yourself.

Don’t worry, be happy. Thoughts are things, so be mindful of what you’re thinking...it really does matter.



SPIRIT

You can improve your ability to deal with daily situations and emotional issues that arise by nourishing your spirit just as you nourish your body. Living a peaceful and balanced life begins by obtaining inner peace.

Read positive affirmations daily and be mindful and conscious to keep negative thoughts or words away. Listen to relaxing music.

Have inspirational artwork displayed in your home and, if possible, in your workspace. Just having a photo of something you find relaxing and inspiring near you can nourish your spirit each time you glance at it.

Spending time outdoors observing nature is a good way to nourish your spirit. Pick a beautiful spot and watch the sunrise. If that's too early, watch the beauty in the horizon as the sun goes down. There's something very soothing about being near water. If you are able to spend time at a lake, river, ocean, or even a fountain, your spirit will appreciate it. An indoor fountain is an option if you don't have any outdoor location to go to in order to be soothed by the relaxing sounds of water.

Set aside as much time as you can to engage in moments of meditation. It doesn't have to be one large block of time. If you can take five or ten minutes at a time, several times during the day, to rest your mind and nourish your spirit, you will notice a difference in the level of inner peace you have.

If you never tried meditation, look in to it...there are wonderful resources online to help you. If you have meditated, but not lately, get back to it...even 5 minutes a day will make a difference. If you never practiced yoga, look into finding a qualified teacher to make sure you're in the right alignment. Local yoga classes can be found online at www.yogafinder.com.

I recently had an amazing opportunity to meet Margaret Furtado, Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) & author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well After Weight Loss Surgery* and

Recipes for Life After Weight Loss Surgery: Delicious Dishes for Nourishing the New You. She has graciously agreed to contribute to this article and shed insight for us.

TERESA: Margaret, as a Registered Yoga Teacher, how important do you think meditation (quiet time) and yoga are in balancing a chaotic lifestyle and weight maintenance?

MARGARET: First of all, thanks so much for inviting me to be a part of this wonderful article! It's something very near and dear to my heart and I'm happy to share my thoughts and experiences.

I feel strongly that some kind of meditative practice, like meditation, deep breathing, and yoga (including gentle yoga) as a regular practice is SO important. Although I've never had weight loss surgery, I'm a work-in-progress with my weight (don't have "skinny genes" for sure), and when I'm not doing my regular yoga or deep breathing, the scale not only creeps up, but so do the negative thoughts. We're human, and any negative thoughts or energy out there, and unfortunately there is plenty of negativity, can bring down our spirits much more readily if we're not involved in a regular spiritual practice.

Personally, I first found yoga, or yoga found me I should say, about 10 years ago, while I was living in Boston. I was at the gym two hours a day and the trainers thought I was training for a triathlon, but I was anxious and disheartened about life events, etc. I thought more and more treadmill time would help, but I just found my breath getting more and more shallow and my speech more and more rapid. Finally, I had a full-blown panic attack and thought it was a heart attack! The doctor in the emergency department wasn't the nicest, he just said..."I don't know what's wrong with you...see your doctor." Thankfully, I had a wonderful, compassionate healer in my life

at the time...an amazing, holistic nurse practitioner in Cambridge, who told me about anxiety and yoga. I never looked back. Yoga was the only thing that literally helped me catch my breath. I know some people think of yoga and headstands and crazy poses, but true yoga means “yolk” or union...yin and yang, and is really all about connection with the breath. The fancy poses aren’t the most important part...the really important part is the end, or “savasana” aka “corpse pose,” where you relax enough to meditate.

Bottom line: even if you feel you’re calm and not stressed, it’s a good idea to start some kind of meditative practice to help you stay that way.

TERESA: How important is the concept of a holistic lifestyle in weight management and for post-op bariatric patients?

MARGARET: I talk about a holistic lifestyle in my newest book, *Idiot’s Guide to Eating Well after Weight Loss Surgery*, in terms of the importance of what I call “intangibles” in regard to managing your healthy weight long-term. That includes proper stress management, high-quality sleep, and perhaps holistic treatment therapies. I mention meditation, deep-breathing, yoga, acupuncture, and massage. They’re all healing and may help you with long-term weight loss success by helping you to stay calm, which helps calm stress hormones, and may help with your weight long-term.

I find some of my bariatric patients are very anxious pre-op, regarding surgery, fear of the unknown, etc., and I sometimes, with their permission, demonstrate how to do deep-breathing, and have them practice in the office. I can’t tell you the satisfaction I get from seeing them smile broadly and tell me...“Wow, I was breathing all wrong my whole life and it feels so good to really breathe the right way!” Sometimes, they show their families and they all start a deep-breathing practice!

TERESA: What are your thoughts on a vegan/vegetarian diet for those of us that have had bariatric surgery?

MARGARET: You know, Teresa, being a registered dietitian for over 25 years, and graduating from two university nutrition programs (B.S. and M.S. degrees), there was, in my experience, quite an emphasis on meat and an apparent marginalizing of a vegan diet or vegetarianism, although one professor in particular stands out as supportive. In the bariatric community, there may also be a general feeling, in my estimation, that only animal protein will suffice after bariatric surgery, particularly those surgeries with a malabsorptive component, such as gastric bypass and duodenal switch procedures.

While it’s true that animal protein contains a higher quality of iron (heme) vs. lower-quality non-heme iron in vegetable-based protein, and heme iron is absorbed at a higher rate than non-heme, my current feeling is that it’s perfectly acceptable to have a vegetarian, and even a vegan diet, after gastric bypass or duodenal switch surgeries, with the proper diet and high-quality supplementation. Patients who have had these surgeries are recommended to take daily multivitamin with minerals, calcium, iron and vitamin B12 supplements anyway,

so ensuring they’re well-absorbed/high-quality supplements, taken as directed, is key. Another important factor is getting blood tests done as recommended by your surgical center. In the nine years I’ve been working as a bariatric surgery dietitian, I’ve seen patients who eat meat all the time have low iron levels, and vegetarians with excellent blood iron levels. The difference, in my estimation, was proper supplementation and close follow-up. Vegetarian diets, such as lacto ovo, which include dairy products and eggs, along with vegetarian protein, are pretty easy to follow while getting plenty of protein and calcium. Also, contrary to popular belief, vegan diets, completely vegetarian in origin with no animal products at all, can still be easily planned, including soy milk, tofu, edamame, and beans to provide sufficient protein and other nutrients. Vegetarian diets may also help with weight loss, since they’re typically low in fat and lower in calories than animal products. They’re typically high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals too, and cholesterol-free, since cholesterol is made in the liver and only comes from animals. Former President Bill Clinton recently announced he lost more than 30 pounds by going to a vegetarian diet, suggested by his physician, Dr. Neal Barnard. I wrote a couple of Yahoo blogs on “The Bill Clinton diet” based upon his disclosure, and President Clinton states he’s never felt better.

In conclusion, I highly support a vegetarian diet for bariatric patients, if carefully planned with your registered dietitian and team. Of course, vegetarian diets may not be for everyone, but if it is for you, and your team has helped you create a balanced meal plan and appropriate supplements, I say, “Go for it!”

TERESA: Is it true when one’s spirit is heavy, it’s often projected physically on the scale?

MARGARET: Yes, I believe that, Teresa. I’m reading an amazing book right now called *Energy Medicine*, by Donna Eden, with David Feinstein, PhD. I can’t say enough good things about it. Dr. Oz is quoted in the beginning of this book as stating, on one of his Oprah show appearances, that, “The next big wave in medicine will be energy medicine.” Among other things, the book discusses how our thoughts can influence our bodies, negatively and positively. Positive thoughts really make a difference, and negative thoughts, unfortunately, don’t impact our bodies well and may add to our weight loss challenges.

TERESA: We get information from our surgeons about the importance of vitamin and mineral supplementation. I attended your lecture at a Bariatric Summit and heard you speak about the importance of probiotics. Can you share with us why they are important to us?

MARGARET: As I see it, probiotics will be the wave (or among the waves) of the future of bariatric surgery and nutrition. I’ve been working with it with my bariatric surgery patients for the past 18 months or so, and the surgeons consult me whenever they feel a patient may benefit from it. Just about anyone may benefit from probiotics since many of us have

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TIRED of all the Monday morning diets...

- ... of having your every thought, mood, and action directed by the number on the scale?
- ... of the "How could I have eaten that? I know better, I should have done better, I hate myself, I can't go to the party looking like this," speeches to yourself?
- ... of being last on your list of priorities?
- ... of always worrying about what other people think of you?
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"bad" bacteria that overtake the "good bacteria." This could affect things like bowel regularity, gas, constipation, vitamin B12 production, and possibly even weight loss. Probiotics, or "food" for the good bacteria, found in cultured foods such as yogurts, pickles, and many fruits and vegetables, may help ensure that the good bacteria we do have in our bodies stays around. Probiotic supplements are widely available, but you want to check with your doctor and dietitian to help ensure they're right for you. If they are for you, it's important to invest in the proper blend of probiotics, since not all are created equal and not all have the bacteria they purport to have. Also, you don't want to start too fast. Although a therapeutic dose is 10 billion bacteria (aka CFU's or colony forming units), starting too fast can cause rebound gas and diarrhea. I often recommend starting slowly; say 1 to 3 billion CFU's a day and advancing by that amount every few days. Again, check with you doctor, but if okay, I've seen patients go from weeks of dysentery and/or profuse diarrhea (with negative stool cultures, so not *c. difficile*) to formed stools in a matter of a few days. That's why more and more surgeons are interested in them.

It makes sense that probiotics may help, since the human body (mostly in the colon) possesses 100 TRILLION bacteria and only 10 trillion total cells, so we're more bacter than cells! Also, gastric bypass surgery and duodenal switch, and to a lesser extent, the sleeve, may change bacterial "neighborhoods," and cause "smellier gas and stools," in that case probiotics might improve one's quality of life by lessening odor. •



about teresa..

Teresa Dunn had her RNY bariatric procedure over eight years ago in Charleston, West Virginia with Dr. Robert Shin. She maintains a 200-pound weight loss and spends her time motivating others with her writing and motivational speaking. She has worked in the nursing field for over 20 years and is Certified in Nutrition and Weight Loss Management and a Licensed Massage Therapist. Teresa is the owner of A Peace of Zen Massage & Wellness. In her free time, Teresa enjoys writing, blogging and making jewelry.

about margaret...

Margaret Furtado, MS, RD, LDN, RYT is the author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Eating Well After Weight Loss* (2009, Alpha Books) as well as *Recipes for Life After Weight Loss Surgery* (2003, Quayside Publishing). She has spent the last nine years working in the field of bariatric nutrition and obesity medicine, including approximately four years as a Lead Dietitian at Tufts Medical Center, two years at Massachusetts General Hospital's Weight Center and now three years at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. Margaret is one of the co-authors of the *Bariatric Nutrition Guidelines* published by the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS), and gives talks related to bariatric surgery and nutrition throughout the world, including Paris, Brazil, and Portugal.