

**Catholic Education Ballarat  
Newsletter Article – Feb 2023**

## **Don't Let Life Get in the Way of Your Nutrition Habits: How to Stay on Track**

We all know that healthy eating is important and has a great influence on many aspects of our health. However, it can be a challenge to stick to your intentions. Often work, social and family commitments get in the way.

Below are a few simple strategies to make it easier to stay on track with your nutrition and sustain good habits into the long term.

### **Understand your habits.**

Firstly, think about your current nutrition habits and what might be sabotaging your health goals. You may be skipping meals which causes you to crave sugar later on, snacking whilst you're in front of the tv, or having a biscuit every time you have a cuppa.

Choose a couple of nutrition habits you would like to change which you know will improve your health, and then set some goals.

### **Setting goals**

Goals are important so you have something measurable to work towards. If you're trying to create a new habit, it is not realistic to expect that it will happen magically on its own. You need to think about it and plan it properly.

Make your nutrition goal short-term - something you will work on over the next two weeks. Then write down what the goal is so that it is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. For example...I will eat one cup of salad at lunchtime three days per week. In order for the goal to be realistic, you need to easily imagine yourself achieving the goal that you have set in the next two weeks.

### **Make healthy eating easier.**

Think about the barriers that come up when you are trying to eat well. For example, if you are too rushed in the morning to have breakfast, then time is the barrier. If you find yourself buying less nutritious lunches at work, then planning is the barrier.

Some strategies to address barriers to healthy eating include:

- Write down what meals you are planning for the week and from this, write your grocery list

- Prepare meals in advance when you have more time on the weekends
- Freeze some meals ready for those days you get caught out – things that freeze well include soup, stews, curries, casseroles, muffins or bliss balls
- Cook a larger portion at dinner during the week so you have some leftovers for lunch
- Have some nutritious easy options on hand to make meal prep quicker. Things like tins of tuna, sachets of brown rice, small tubs of hummus, have some vegetable in the freezer
- Pack your lunch the night before...even if you are working from home.

### **Set up your surroundings for success.**

This sounds like an obvious one, but if you have the pantry and fridge well stocked with healthy options and reduce the availability of less healthy choices, it is more likely you will succeed. This way you don't have to rely on your willpower to walk past the chocolate in the cupboard...because lets face it, that is a hard task!

Make the healthy options more visible. If you want to eat more fruit, make sure the fruit bowl is well stocked with fresh fruit and somewhere you walk past regularly. If you are trying to increase vegetables, chop up some veggie sticks, store them in a sealed container, and have them at eye level in the fridge.

### **Staying accountable and motivated**

Tracking your goal can help you to stay focused. You might write your goal in your diary or on the calendar and tick each day you manage to do this task. This way it keeps the goal in mind, rather than it being forgotten.

Keeping a food journal can be a good way to get an idea of your food habits and the things that you find most challenging. I mean, who remembers what they ate three days ago!? By tracking, you can start to see established patterns and then this makes it easier to set your goals.

Tell someone else about your goals you have set – it might be a friend, work colleague or your partner. This establishes some accountability and has been shown to increase the chances of success.

It is important to remember that with consistency and perseverance, you will see results. New habits take time to develop. Life can often get in the way of your best intentions, but by understanding your habits, setting goals, planning, preparation and using tools to stay focused, you will notice the results that good nutrition can bring to your health.

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