



strength * spirit * solace

Newsletter

April 2006

Dear friend...

This month's issue focuses on some work-related health and nutrition topics. On that note, I'd like to invite employees, business owners and team leaders of all kinds to take a more proactive and progressive approach to encouraging healthier behaviors within their work teams. Specifically, you might consider:

- Advocating for the phasing out of junk foods in vending machines, cafeterias and break areas, and the phasing in of healthier, more wholesome options
- Calling for healthy foods and drinks to be served at meetings
- Encouraging employees to participate in local athletic events, fun-runs, walks, hikes and outdoor activities
- Becoming an advocate for life-work balance, including time for family, workouts and stress-relief
- Setting a healthy personal example

This last point is perhaps the most important. You'll have far more luck inspiring healthy lifestyle choices if you embody them yourself. Employees naturally look to their manager and peers for an example of what they need to do to succeed. You may not be able to dictate healthy life changes among everyone on your team, but you can educate, encourage and set an example for the people on whom your team's success depends.

Keep up the great work and let your light shine on!

Namasté,

Sara

Meditation

The universe can often relay messages to us through signs. Often, we are too busy to stop and consider what may or may not be a sign. We may ask the universe for guidance, yet fail to recognize the sign it sends us in response. Learning the subtle language of signs can help you interpret the guidance the universe sends your way. We all have been blessed with a connection that allows the universe to communicate directly with us. To be able to understand the information relayed over that connection, however, it is necessary that we learn to pay attention and know what to look for. To see and correctly interpret a sign, you must open your heart and mind to the universe and invite its guidance into your life.

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Poses You Can Do at Home



Sun Salutations, or Surya Namaskar, are traditionally performed in the morning to greet the new day. The sequence of 8 postures can be a complete practice in itself, or can prepare you for a longer asana routine. Sun Salutes are often performed in sets of 5, but if you are new to the practice it's wise to begin with 2 or 3. Each time you flow through this sequence, synchronize your breath with the movements of your body.

1. To begin, stand in Samastithi. Distribute your weight evenly over both feet. Establish a slow, steady rhythm for your breath. Find your center.
2. Next, inhale and stretch your arms out to the side and overhead into Tadasana (Mountain Pose). Reach your heart and arms to the heavens, sending your greeting to the sun.
3. As you exhale, hollow out your belly and fold into Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), connecting down into the earth. Keep your legs firmly engaged.
4. Inhale and lengthen your spine forward into Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend). In this pose, the gaze is lifted, the spine is extended, and the fingertips can stay on the floor or rise to the shins.
5. Exhale and step or lightly hop your feet back behind you into Plank Pose. Your wrists should be flat on the floor, shoulder-distance apart, and your feet should be at hip distance. Take a full breath in as you lengthen through your spine.

6. Exhale and lower into Chaturanga Dandasana (Four-Limbed Staff Pose), keeping your legs straight and pushing back into your heels or bringing your knees to the floor. Build heat in the center of your body as you hold this challenging posture.
7. Inhale and carve your chest forward into Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward-Facing Dog), directing that energy out from your heart. Pull your shoulders back and open your collarbones. Engage your legs but relax your gluteal muscles.
8. Exhale and roll over the toes, coming into Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose). Ground down through your hands and feet as you lengthen your spine. Remain here for five breaths.
9. On your fifth exhale, bend your knees and look between your hands. Then inhale and step or lightly hop your feet between your hands, returning to Ardha Uttanasana.
10. Exhale back to Uttanasana, surrendering into the fold.
11. Inhale, reaching your arms out wide to your sides and coming to stand through a flat back. Feel a renewed sense of energy as you draw your arms overhead into Tadasana.
12. Exhale and return to Samastithi, your home base. Remain here for a few breaths, feeling the movement of energy through your body, or continue on to your next salute.

** Poses You Can Do at Home are from Yoga Journal.*

Nutrition – Brown-Bag Inspirations

With a little know-how, you can create satisfying salads, sumptuous sandwiches, savory snacks and healthy desserts. Once you get into the brown-bag groove, you'll find that the time spent planning, preparing and packing your lunch pays off – with better nutrition, greater variety and a break in the day that lifts you up without weighing you down. Cover the balanced-meal basics, bridge energy gaps with healthy snacks, and you'll find that less wholesome options lose their lure. Your body will run more smoothly, and your workdays will, too.

Here are some great ideas:

Salads. Main-meal salads are easy to prepare, and they're rich in vitamins and minerals. Start with greens or raw veggies and add fruit (apple, pear, fresh or dried figs, apricots) for sweetness. Pine nuts, cashews, seeds and avocados supply extra protein, plus healthy fat and texture. Brown rice, whole-grain pasta, couscous or bulgur give energy and satiety. Add protein with fish (salmon, tuna, crab), meat (chicken, beef, lamb) or vegetarian options (beans, peas, lentils, hard-boiled egg). A few cheese crumbles (mozzarella, feta) add substance and flavor. Cold-pressed nut, seed or olive oil provides the base for a healthy dressing.

Sandwiches. Start with whole-grain bread, which is rich in antioxidants, vitamin E, folic acid, zinc and magnesium. Seeded and sprouted grain breads help sustain energy and blood-sugar levels. Be inventive with your sandwich fixings: Add slices of avocado or sliced artichoke to turkey, chicken or lean roast beef. Swap iceberg lettuce for arugula, chicory, spinach, endive or thinly sliced cucumber. For cheese sandwiches, add thin

slices of apple or pear, or grated carrot and tangy apricot chutney. Consider mayo alternatives like hummus, herbal cream cheese spread, or sun-dried tomatoes.

Wraps and pockets. Pita breads and tortilla wraps are a great way to turn a salad into a sandwich. As with breads, choose whole and sprouted grains. Pita bread is especially tasty when filled with Turkish, Greek or Middle Eastern–flavored ingredients. Use hummus or feta cheese, plus a mixture of chopped, crispy salad leaves, tomatoes, and bell peppers. Dressings, used sparingly and made from healthy oils, add flavor. Be sure to store them separately and add them last.

Savory snacks. Cut a selection of vegetables into rounds or strips to dip into guacamole, salsa or hummus. Include whole-grain flatbread or crackers and some string cheese. Organic trail mixes, nuts and seeds, and homemade soups (warmed tomato, chilled gazpacho) make tasty treats, too. If you've scheduled a workout during your lunch hour or after work, a well-timed healthy snack can provide the additional nutrients your body needs to function well. Consider stashing a nutritional-shake mix, containing healthy carbs and proteins, in your desk drawer for times when solid food isn't an option (a half serving can make an excellent snack).

Desserts. Apples, bananas, pears and figs make tasty, easy treats. For a more substantial effect, try a small serving of plain yogurt sweetened with honey and studded with naturally sweet fruits like strawberries, raspberries and cherries. Keep around a mix of raw pecans or almonds with dried cherries, apricots or dried unsweetened coconut, to fill in when others are indulging in doughnuts or candy, or whenever you get tempted to hit the vending machine for quick energy.

Your Questions Answered!

Do you have a question? Email it to me at sara@saradelaney.com.

Q: *Nearly once per week, an email pops into my inbox: "There's cake/cookies/donuts in the conference room to celebrate a birthday!" What can I do to avoid being the office party-pooper but still stick to my nutrition plan?*

A:

First, get your priorities in order. Are you really interested in eating cake right now? Are you really even hungry? Is a sugar, refined-flour and trans-fat infusion at 3 p.m. really in your best interest? Or is this more about you being ready for a break from your desk and wanting to be part of the festivities?

If your appetite has been stimulated by the mere mention of food, grab a healthy snack from your desk drawer before you head down the hall to wish the birthday person well. If you've decided to partake, but want to keep your intake to a minimum, cut your own thin slice of cake, take one nice, big bite (frosting and all, if that's what floats your boat), then drop your plate in the trash so you can give the birthday person a proper birthday hug. If you stay to socialize, try popping a piece of sugarless gum or candy to reduce the

temptation to seek seconds. If your office mates seem to celebrate every occasion with a sheet cake, pizza party or platter of brownies, try starting a new potluck tradition and make sure your offering is compatible with your meal plan.

Finally, you can start each day with a quick mental sketch of your food-intake intentions: Do you plan to eat healthy meals today? Will healthy snacks be available? Envision yourself eating healthily throughout the day, and know where your nutrition is coming from in advance. If you plan mindfully, you decrease the chances you are going to eat mindlessly. If a gooey, 350-calorie brownie wasn't in your food vision for the day, then keep that in perspective when unforeseen celebration temptations pop up. And, by the way, the birthday boy or girl doesn't give a darn whether you actually eat the cake. Given that, and your larger intentions for your health, you can adequately address what matters most to you and still participate in the celebration!

Contemplate...

Becoming more conscious about the work-related food traps you face on a daily basis, you can do more than escape unwanted pounds — you can also reduce your stress, increase your productivity and improve your outlook. Feeling healthy and energetic on the job makes the hours you spend at work more rewarding. And that is sweet satisfaction indeed!



Sara Delaney
Certified Yoga Instructor
Nutrition Therapist In-Training
720.810.7027
sara@saradelaney.com

*"When you come to the edge of all that you know, you must believe one of two things:
There will be earth upon which to stand, or you will be given wings to fly."*