

# Cultivate Natural Energy



More than a third of Americans say they are so tired that it interferes with work and daily activities. Why? Most Americans suffer from low energy due to poor daily eating and lifestyle habits. A typical day may include hitting snooze a few times, a few cups of coffee, no breakfast, sugary snacks, quickly eaten processed meals, late night snacks and a few hours of restless sleep. To get through the day Americans use counterfeit energy such as stimulants like caffeine that give temporary energy but only drain energy in the long run.

How energetic you feel largely depends on how well your mitochondria are functioning. We have hundreds of mitochondria in each of our cells that when working optimally provide us with energy. To function optimally the mitochondria require quality fuel that includes whole organic nutrient-dense foods, a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, restorative sleep and oxygen from regular daily exercise.

The first step to cultivating increased natural energy is taking a look at your daily habits. Are you eating well, sleeping well, exercising, managing your stress and feeling passionate about life. By making a few basic lifestyle changes from morning to night you will feel a profound increase in your daily energy. The following are a few practical tips and techniques to increase your daily energy using healthy daily food and and lifestyle habits.

## **Listen to Your Body**

We are unique individuals and there is no one perfect way of eating that will give all of us optimal energy. What provides me with natural daily energy may not work for you. You must discover what works best for you. Learn to listen to your body and understand what foods it needs and when it needs them. The body is very smart and it provides us with the instinct to just know what we need for energy. However, due to modern day marketing and artificial, processed foods our body is confused and sent mixed signals causing our instinct to know what to eat to be blurred. The body is constantly sending us messages that we tend to overlook. The body tells us we are tired by producing the dark circles under our eyes. What do we do? We drink more coffee and keep moving. Do you have digestive problems? This may be a signal from your body that you are not eating the right foods or not eating them correctly.

## **Make Small Changes**

Small changes produce big results! It's like climbing the stairs of a tall building. Each step gets you one step closer to having the energy you need to live the life you love. Add these changes gradually. Drastic shifts make it difficult to maintain any new change. If you wake up tomorrow and decide you are only going to eat "healthy food" and never eat ice cream again, you will crave the ice

cream like crazy and produce internal stress causing you to go on an ice cream binge. Gradual introduction of healthy foods and healthy habits allows you to implement the changes without stress producing long-lasting results. Choose the changes that will benefit you the most. Start with the easy changes. When you start with the easy changes your body has the opportunity to build energy. With increased energy it will be easier to add the harder changes.

### **Drink More Water**

Drink more water! The body is 75% water and it needs to be constantly replenished. Water helps to balance the body's metabolism and chemical processes. Water increases the yin in your body. We want a balance of yin and yang foods. Yin foods make the body light and airy and allow energy to go through our whole system. If we are too yang this causes us to have low energy and be tight, stressed, tensed and contracted. Do you crave sweets? Craving sweets, a yin food, may be an indication that your body needs water. Next time you are craving a sweet try drinking water and see if your craving goes away. Drink filtered water and change your filter regularly. The amount of water you should drink differs per person dependent upon size, activity, climate and diet. I suggest drinking 1-2 glasses immediately upon waking. Drink most of your water in the morning and afternoon to prevent waking up to use the bathroom at night and disturbing your deep sleep. Carry a bottle of water with you all day and drink it!!

### **Eat Whole Organic Real Foods**

Eat whole organic real foods! A whole, unprocessed real food is one that is as close to its natural state as possible. Anything made, packaged or has a label is most likely not a whole food. Whole foods provide our bodies with optimal energy because our bodies can use these foods in the most efficient and healthy way possible. Whole foods do not have manmade elements such as chemicals, pesticides, artificial flavoring, artificial sugars, unhealthy fats and refined carbohydrates. Manmade elements do not provide the body with the fuel and nutrients it needs to function and the body works overtime to process them. Whole foods are found in nature and include: Beans, whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, beans, eggs, fish, lean meat, fish oil and extra virgin olive oil.

### **Eat Breakfast**

Eat breakfast! If you eat breakfast you operate with full energy all day. Without breakfast you are running on empty often causing you to reach for caffeine to give you an artificial energy boost. Breakfast is called breakfast because you are "breaking the fast" from not eating while sleeping. Food jump starts the body and increases the energy for the day. For optimal energy breakfast should include a combination of high fiber carbohydrates, protein and fat. This combination helps to normalize blood sugar levels and provides your body with the fuel it needs early in the day. Examples of energizing breakfasts include:

- Large bowl of fruit with a superfood drink
- Superfood Smoothie

- Egg omelette with veggies and hummus
- Slow cooked oats topped with almonds, pumpkin seeds and berries
- Scrambled tofu with veggies and berries

### **Eat Low Glycemic Load and High Fiber Foods**

Eat low glycemic load and high fiber foods! Glycemic load measures the real response of your blood sugar (insulin levels too) to an entire meal. It is the effect a total meal has on your blood sugar. Everything you eat in a meal, including carbs, protein, fat and fiber, affects how quickly or slowly you absorb the sugars in food. High glycemic load meals mean that the combination of foods will cause all the carbs in the meal to be absorbed very rapidly and raise your blood sugar. This causes your energy to go sky high temporarily and then you crash. Low glycemic load meals mean the combinations of foods either don't have many carbs or the carbs are absorbed slowly and won't lead to rapidly rising and high blood sugar levels. This keeps your energy balanced for the whole day. Foods that have a low glycemic load are often high in fiber which slows down your digestive process, keeps you fuller longer and helps maintain your energy level. Low glycemic load foods include: vegetables, fruit, beans, nuts, seeds, olive oil and whole grains.

### **Eat Whole Grains**

Eat whole grains! Whole grains are high in fiber and therefore have a low glycemic load, are absorbed slowly and help maintain balanced blood sugar levels. They also provide us with B vitamins. Examples of whole grains include: brown rice, quinoa, slow cooked oats, amaranth, teff and buckwheat.

### **Eat Dark Leafy Greens**

Eat dark leafy greens! Greens provide us with calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, phosphorous, zinc, vitamins a, c e and k. They are filled with fiber, folic acid, chlorophyll and many other micronutrients and phytochemicals. All of these things provide our body and mind with energy. Experiment with new greens such as: bok choy, nappa cabbage, kale, collards, watercress, mustard greens, broccoli rabe, dandelion greens, green cabbage, arugla, endive, chicory and beet greens.

### **Eat a Variety of Colors of Fruits and Vegetables**

Eat a variety of colors of fruits and vegetables! Fruits and vegetables contain special disease-fighting compounds that help fight cell damage in the body. The healthier our cells are the more energy we have. For the biggest protective punch eat a variety of different colored fruits and veggies providing all the phytonutrients we need for optimal energy production.

Red: tomatoes, radishes, red onions

Purple/blue: purple cabbage, eggplant, purple peppers

Green veggies: brussel sprouts, asparagus, green beans, cucumbers peas

Orange/yellow: butternut squash, carrots, yellow peppers, pumpkin, summer squash, yellow corn

White: cauliflower, turnips, icama, kohlrabi

### **Experiment with Protein**

Experiment with protein! A key to balanced energy is finding the optimum protein intake. Due to our individuality protein requirements vary dramatically from person to person, at various times in life. Experiment with the sources of protein and the amount of protein and listen to your body to determine the sources and levels that provide you with optimal energy. Sources to experiment with include: animal protein, chicken, eggs, beans, grains such as quinoa, tofu, edamame, nuts and seeds.

### **Take a Daily Multivitamin**

If you are not eating a balanced diet it is likely that you have a vitamin or mineral deficiency that may be causing you to have low energy levels. The body depends on certain vitamins, minerals and compounds to create chemical reactions that provide us with our energy. To prevent nutrient deficiencies and normalize energy levels take a daily multivitamin / multimineral supplement.

### **Get Rid of Caffeine, Sugar and Artificial Energy**

Get rid of the artificial energy! By artificial energy I mean caffeine and sugar. Both provide us with a quick energy lift and then cause us to crash. The ups and downs of artificial energy throughout the day cause an emotional roller coaster ride. You may feel happy and energetic for a while and then suddenly, unexplainably, find yourself feeling depressed and tired. Cut the caffeine by switching to green tea and drinking more water. Cut the sugar by snacking on natural sweets such as fruit and sweet root veggies.

### **Increase Daily Activity**

Most people spend the majority of the day sitting. Being sedentary causes low energy levels due to decreasing muscle mass and decreased efficiency of mitochondria. The key is to move your body more everyday!! Regular activity improves your mood, increases your number of mitochondria and how efficiently they work and helps you sleep better. Start the day with some form of cardiovascular exercise. Walk instead of drive places. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Remember, little changes create big results. Get between 30-45 minutes of cardiovascular exercise in daily. Add strength-training and stretching to your weekly routine. Change your exercise program every 6-8 weeks to prevent your body from accommodating to the exercise program. Experiment with a variety of forms of exercise including: walking, elliptical, yoga, gyrotonic and pilates. Participate in new activities such as tennis, biking or hiking in nature. Try interval training which includes short burst of high intensity exercise followed by longer periods of less intense exercise. The more you move the better you will feel.

### **Slow Down and Enjoy the Ritual of Eating**

Slow down and enjoy the ritual of eating! To properly assimilate and digest food we need to be relaxed. The nature of our parasympathetic nervous system is to rest and digest. If the body is not relaxed, inactive and calm it can not properly digest food. While we eat we assimilate what is going on around us. We take in the energy of the people and space around us. To gain optimal energy from the

food you eat:

- Find a location that is peaceful, relaxing and that you enjoy.
- Surround yourself with people you enjoy or eat alone and enjoy the peace and quiet.
- Appreciate the food you are eating.
- Eat slowly with awareness.
- Take time to breathe and take breaks while eating.

### **Chew your Food Well**

Take the time to chew your food well. Chewing your food well provides you with increased energy because it allows for proper assimilation and digestion of food. Complex carbs are broken down in the mouth by an enzyme in saliva called amylase. Only by chewing the carbs and mixing them with amylase can food be properly assimilated. If food is not digested properly the body does not have the fuel to provide you with the energy you need to get through the day. Try chewing each bite 100 times.

### **Manage Your Stress**

Stress has a direct effect on our daily energy levels. Acute stress causes the body to be in an alarm state that releases stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones negatively effect our mitochondria which then cause us to eat more, burn less fat and sleep less. Many Americans live in a constant state of acute stress. The key is to learn to effectively manage daily stress levels. Find what relaxation techniques work for you and do them regularly!! Some choices include: yoga, meditation, physical activity, massages, hobbies, reading, journaling or daily walks through nature.

### **Breathe Deep**

Most people go through the day using shallow breaths. Shallow breathing does not allow the proper amount of oxygen to get to your organs and tissues causing oxygen deficiencies in the body that result in decreased energy. Make deep breathing part of your daily life. Take a few breaks each day and just focus on your breath. To increase your oxygen intake you want to breathe using your diaphragm. Take a deep breath and let it fill the bottom of your torso (abdomen is relaxed), then the middle and finally the top. Exhale and release from top to bottom.

### **Sleep Well**

Sleep!!! Good sleep is key to having high natural energy. We have certain deep states of sleep that are necessary for rest, relaxation and regeneration. If we don't get into these deep states we never allow the body to properly rest and reenergize causing us to feel tired all day. Experiment with how much sleep you need. Some need 7 hours others need 10 hours. Try to sleep with the cycles of the day. Go to bed around 9-10 and wake around 5-6. Try to not use the alarm and see when your body naturally wakes up. Exposure to natural sunlight helps to regulate the sleep/wake cycle. Dim your lights when it is soon time for bed to simulate dusk and allow your body to begin to relax. Being active, engaged and passionate during the day helps you sleep deep and well at night. Stay away

from stimulating activities prior to bed.

As you gradually make the transition from energy depleting foods and habits to healthy energy producing foods and habits you will notice a gradual rising of your natural energy. Be patient because it takes time for the body to adjust to your new eating and lifestyle habits. Increased natural daily energy will provide you with the energy to live the life you love. Take action now!!!!!! If you want support in making these changes in your life call Dr. Mowry today.

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