



THE NO-FAIL DIET PLAN IN 5 STEPS



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The No-Fail Diet Plan in 5 Steps

Introduction

There is no doubt about it. The dieting industry is a **huge business**.

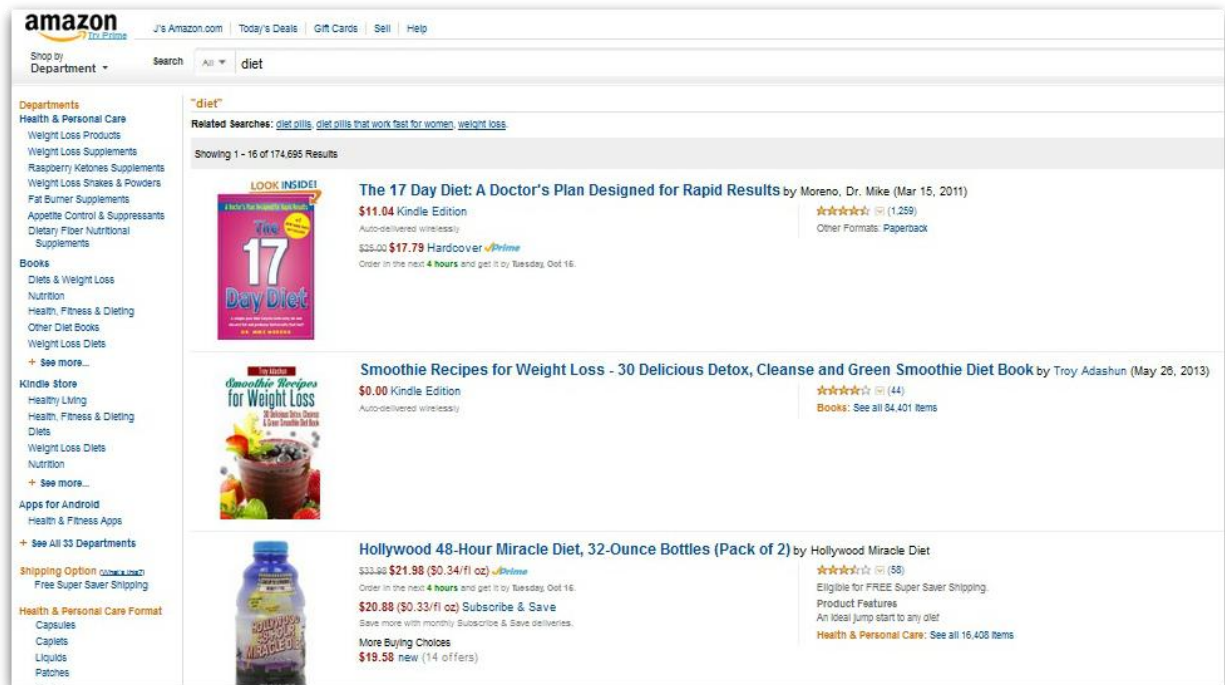


Image Credit: Amazon.com

According to Marketdata, the **US weight loss market** was worth \$61.6 billion in 2012 and is expected to grow 2.6% in 2013.

Did you catch that? **61.6 billion dollars! In one year!**

That is a lot of money being spent on diet products or plans... that aren't working!

Fitness for Weight Loss states that **90-95% of dieters regain the weight** they lost *within 1-5 years*. There is also scientific evidence suggesting that the process of dieting actually causes changes in your body that **inevitably lead to putting the weight back on**.

*So if these facts are all true, why diet, right? RIGHT!
That is a big part of the whole problem, I propose!*

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If you are reading this, then you are most likely someone who has an interest in dieting. You most likely understand that we have a problem in America, especially, with obesity and Diabetes.



Photo Credit: [thenext28days](#) via Flickr

You may be a mom, like myself, who'd like to get somewhere closer to the pre-baby body than where you are now, but who struggles to find the time for regular exercising with all of life's other demands. And anyone who diets is obviously trying to shed unwanted pounds.

Have you "tried every diet under the sun," like many of us, only to be left feeling utterly frustrated, even exhausted, with your efforts resulting in little to no results, or perhaps gaining all of the lost weight back?

Chef John and I co-hosted a BlogTalkRadio show recently, [Foodie Talk with Chef John and Anne](#), and in just the couple of months we co-hosted the show, we covered several topics related to weight loss. These shows have been the most popular of all of our shows.

But as I talked with our guests during these shows, I realized that there are some key points that seem to be missing in a lot of the discussion I've previously heard or read about dieting.

What to Expect from this Book

If you are looking for the next fad diet or an earth shattering revelation about dieting, then this book is not for you! You can stop here, save yourself the time reading it and spend some time [browsing over 170,000 dieting books and products on Amazon here](#) ... I value your time, so I'm just being brutally honest here! I don't want to waste your time any more than I want someone wasting mine. 😊

But if you are one of the many who've tried it all, or even have tried a few things you thought sounded great but found them to approach dieting too much from a "one-size-fits-all" angle, then you may want to keep reading.

This eBook will address 5 basic steps that I believe will help you create a no-fail diet plan for YOU! Okay, if you get nothing else from this book, please read this statement carefully:

*I think the **greatest key to "no-fail" dieting** is found in our own **attitudes and mindset about dieting** as well as our body image and the messages that have been ingrained into our heads about **what beauty is**. I will go into this much more in depth in Step 4 of this plan, but I firmly believe that this is one of the biggest factors leading to "failure" for many women, especially. We have got to change this about ourselves and the women around us ... the notion that we all have to be a certain size or shaped a certain way to be beautiful, because it is **just not the truth**.*

As you move forward into these 5 steps, I just ask you to keep in mind that **the most important thing with any goal** is not to become overwhelmed and to *just take it one step at a time.*

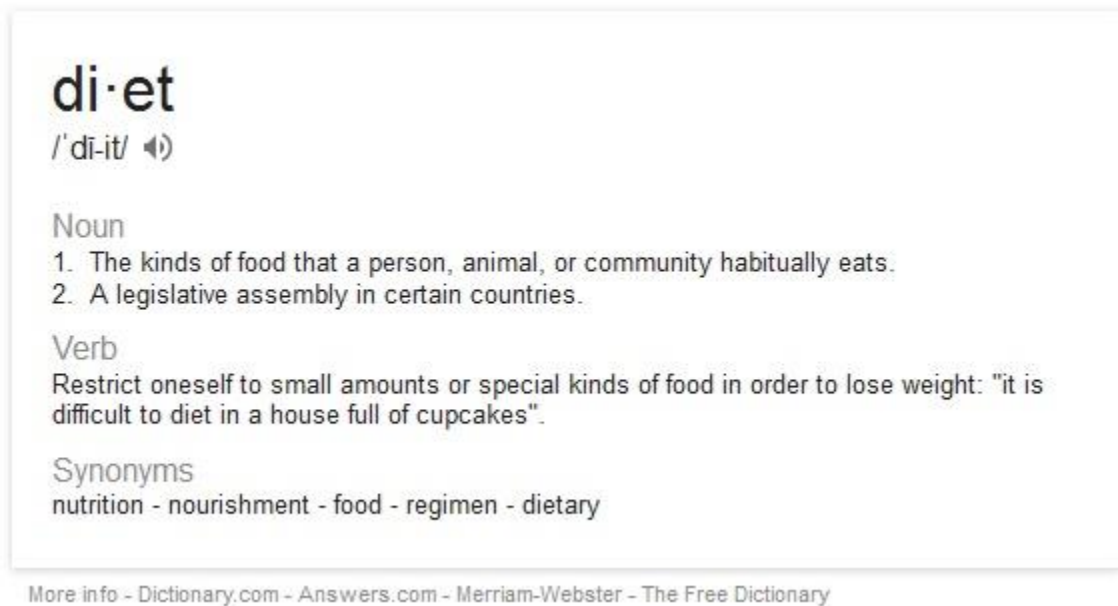


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Step 1: Define diet

Perhaps part of the problem is in our definition of diet. Let's take a look!

When I typed in "diet definition" into my search engine, here is what came up at the top of the results returned:



The image shows a dictionary entry for the word "diet". The word is written in a large, bold font as "di·et". Below it is the phonetic transcription "/ˈdi-ɪt/" followed by a speaker icon. The entry is categorized into "Noun" and "Verb". Under "Noun", there are two numbered definitions: "1. The kinds of food that a person, animal, or community habitually eats." and "2. A legislative assembly in certain countries." Under "Verb", there is a definition: "Restrict oneself to small amounts or special kinds of food in order to lose weight: "it is difficult to diet in a house full of cupcakes".". Below the verb definition is a section for "Synonyms" which lists "nutrition - nourishment - food - regimen - dietary". At the bottom of the dictionary entry box, there is a line of small text: "More info - Dictionary.com - Answers.com - Merriam-Webster - The Free Dictionary".

I would venture to say that most dieters are defining diet with the "verb" definition above, when, if we would slightly adjust our perspective and see the word diet defined with the first noun definition above, we would likely see a different result from our "dieting" efforts!

After all, research has shown that what we eat determines about 80% of our weight and fitness. You can [read more about that here](#).
(Source [1]: Yahoo News)



Photo Credit: [Wal-Mart Corporate](#) via Flickr

Have you ever heard that statement, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results"? Do you know who said that? Albert Einstein.

We could put the word "diet" and the verb definition right under the definition of the word, "insanity", in the dictionary as a prime illustration. If you've been trying for years and years to lose weight, only to gain it back...

EVERY

SINGLE

TIME,

Then you know exactly what I mean. You may even be thinking.... *yes, it does feel at times like I'm losing my mind during this process of repeated failed dieting attempts.*

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So your first step is to redefine the word diet in your mind, in your vocabulary, in your thought processes. It's a 100% paradigm shift... we've got to change how we have been trained to think and act when it comes to this word.

And that is going to take some time, but in doing this, you can stop throwing your money down the drain on the next big fad diet that gives you **nothing but empty promises!**

Step 2: Identify your most important goal for your “diet”

In [Part 2 of my interview with Julie Edwards](#), who battled anorexia, she talked about the problem of the obsession-like focus with dieting on losing weight and exercising. You can [listen to the clip of that discussion here](#).

I don't think anyone would argue that those topics need to be addressed when talking about dieting. But the biggest problem she pointed out was that the focus starts out, usually, on becoming healthier **and then shifts more to** losing pounds and getting enough exercise to achieve that goal. She and I share the opinion that the focus needs to stay more on becoming healthier!

It is so easy to become obsessive, or borderline obsessive, about reaching a certain weight. Then if you are **someone with an addictive personality**, the line for crossing over into a full blown eating disorder is so much closer and easier to cross without even realizing it.



Photo Credit: [Christy McKenna](#) via Flickr

Now that we have redefined “diet, what is your main goal for your diet? I think we need to start thinking more in the long-term than short-term. Using the verb definition of the word diet seems to keep the focus so short term, and that is another reason why I think the pounds don't stay off.

Of course, we want to lose some pounds if needed, but my guess is that most people, when thinking about the “kinds of food habitually eaten”, would want to make sure those foods are nutritious, healthy foods.

If the focus is more on eating healthier, **as opposed to losing a certain amount of weight in a certain amount of time**, I believe weight loss can be a natural “side effect”, so to speak, **over time** (think *long-term*), of the *focus on healthier eating habits*. And if you are creating new habits, it becomes a new lifestyle, thus, a little easier to maintain for the long term.

Perhaps step 2 is not so much identifying what that goal is, rather than realizing that we have been programmed to think the most important goal is losing the weight, when in fact, it really is becoming healthier?

That is a question only you can answer for yourself, but the way you approach planning your “diet” day in and day out will be a direct correlation to what you decide your most important goal is.

Step 3: Understand the Individual/Personal Factor

Recognize that **creating a diet plan is and should be very individual** and personalized to *your unique needs and nuances*.

This is another point that Julie Edwards discussed in during my interview with her (Part 2). She addressed it from the perspective of someone having battled an eating disorder and the fact that dieting, in the verb sense of the word, does not take into consideration the differences of each person, whether that be differences in metabolism, lifestyle, addictive personality tendencies, etc.

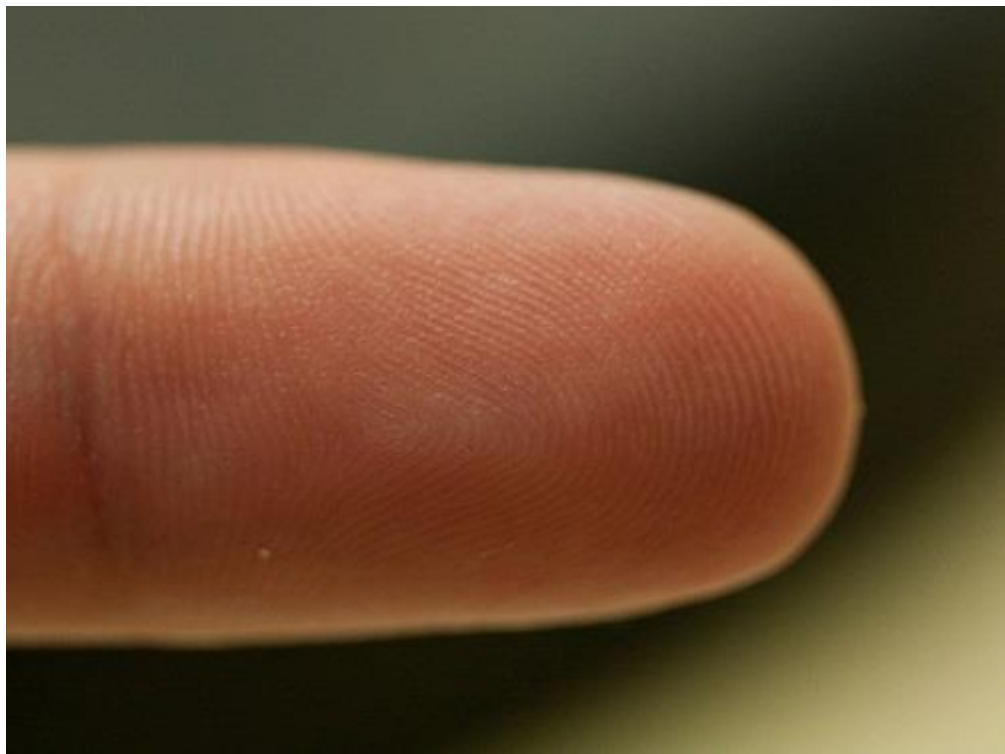


Photo Credit: [Geoffrey Fairchild](#) via Flickr

All of these individual differences are important, but in my humble opinion, the latter is extremely important particularly as a parent raising a daughter who will not be mature enough to understand some of these deeper issues and how to apply them to developing healthy eating habits as she grows into a young woman.

Some of this will be addressed more from a bit of a different angle in the next step, but keeping in mind the fact that we each are made uniquely, and thus, cannot approach how we eat in the same way, whether that is in dieting in the verb sense or the noun sense, is critical to finding success, I believe, in **establishing the type of relationship with food that is going to benefit us long-term**.

Food Sensitivity and Allergy

Another part of understanding the individual/personal factor of any “diet” is determining if you could possibly have food sensitivities or allergies. The prevalence of these have been on the rise in America for some time, and more and more people are discovering the development of sensitivities or allergies they never experienced in the past.

Our family experienced this firsthand several years ago, and for us it has been an **ongoing learning process** in figuring out the different levels of sensitivities, how they are impacting each of us and how best to manage each one.

For example, I have a level of sensitivity to a number of foods. Most of them are easy to manage day to day, but by far, *my most severe one is salicylates*. This is challenging and more complex to manage because salicylates are found in a lot of different foods, ***all which are considered very healthy foods otherwise!***

I’m talking about spinach, berries, almonds and peanuts!



Image Credit: [jayneandd](#) via Flickr

There are some others, but those are the main ones that I would eat the most of before discovering this sensitivity. And the symptom I get when I consume too much of those foods day-to-day is ...

Extreme fatigue.

I used to get ***so sluggish*** on some days! I could not have been happier to learn what was causing this. My life was drastically changed for the better.

When our family began this process of identifying food sensitivities and allergies, it actually started out with our son, who was struggling with eczema. As I researched for ways to help him beyond traditional medicine (what we were doing medicinally at the time did not seem to be working very well, and I wanted to avoid having to move to stronger steroids, etc. if possible), I stumbled onto the [website of a Nutritionist, Suzanne Myer, MS, RD, CD](#), with over 25 years of experience helping clients with food sensitivities.

As I read on her site the variety of symptoms that can be caused or exacerbated by food sensitivity and further explored this as a possible solution to our son's problem with eczema, I began to sense that John and I may also have some food sensitivities. Through her elimination diet, under her supervision via phone consultations, we were able to identify a number of food sensitivities for each of us. Since modifying our diet and maintaining it, we have all seen a **huge difference in our health and symptoms** we had been experiencing regularly.

One of the biggest lessons that came from this experience has been learning about the role of foods in causing **systemic inflammation** in the body, and that physical symptoms resulting from food sensitivities left untreated can change over time, or manifest in the body differently.

You can read on Suzanne's website that food sensitivities can also affect a person's ability to lose weight. So again, if you can **change your approach** from "I need to lose weight" to... "I need to change my diet (in the noun sense) in an effort to develop healthier eating habits and to make it the best diet for me (personalized to your individual needs)", then the weight loss goal you also are after may become a natural result over time.

That is *exactly what I experienced*. I had been trying to lose a few pounds, but the "dieting" and exercise I had been doing did not seem to be working. After I discovered the food sensitivities I have and learned to manage those, in addition to a focus on healthier eating habits, over time I noticed I had lost those few pounds without really even trying.

And if you suspect or wonder if you may have underlying, previously unrecognized food sensitivities, I highly recommend Suzanne to you. Give her a call and let her know you heard about her from me (I receive nothing in return ... I just believe so strongly in the work she does after seeing how it changed our lives and it help her know how you found her). I know that she would love to answer any questions you may have and help you figure out if this could be a factor to your diet challenges.

Finding "new favorites" ... the flavor factor

One last part of individualizing "your diet" is what I call finding new favorites. We all have *favorite foods that are not necessarily the healthiest choices* on a regular basis, especially if consumed in excess.

For me, one of those foods is chips and salsa. It was my "go to" snack food in college. And that was a time in my life when I was more focused on getting healthier.



Me in college sometime between 1994-1998

I guess chips and salsa was my main "guilt food", although, at the time I saw it as a "healthier" snack than some of the other snack foods!

I have since learned that chips may contain a high level of carcinogens (Source [2]: [NYTimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)), and since I may have a genetic predisposition to a certain cancer, I have decided that is not a risk worth taking with the foods I regularly consume. Sometime after my daughter was born, however, I found myself snacking on chips and salsa regularly in the evenings. It had become like a comfort food for me... again.

It was becoming a habit and I knew I needed to do something about it. I realized that what I liked most about chips and salsa is the tart flavor of the salsa. Then I thought about a recipe I had come across that I eat often that also has a tart flavor but is much, much healthier, [Marinated Lentil Salad](#). I sometimes would eat it as a snack.



Lentils being a legume and high in protein, they are an excellent snack because they are filling and so nutritious. Another ingredient I use in the salad that makes it super healthy is red onions, considered a super food (Source [3]: [HealwithFood.org](#)). So I began substituting this for the chips and salsa as my evening snack, and I found it be just as satisfying!

When I shared this with Laura Wellington, author of [The Four Star Diet](#), during my interview with her for our BlogTalkRadio program, she had experienced something similar with regards to texture. When she realized that what she liked most to snack on was something crunchy, she found a satisfying healthier snack alternative also. You can [listen to the audio clip from that interview here](#) if you'd like to find out what it was!

So think about your current eating habits and what it is about those foods you eat regularly that maybe are not the healthiest options. If you can identify what it is about those particular foods that you like most, then you may be able to find a healthier alternative. Feel free to utilize our [Ask The Chef](#) series and we will do our best to try to help you if you would like some suggestions!

I know a big one for a lot of women is chocolate. Have you ever tried carob?



This was something else we first discovered during our journey with food sensitivities, and I am going to be very honest with you ... it does not taste “just like chocolate.” But for me, it’s close enough, especially when it is paired with other flavors!

I had not had chocolate in a while when I first tasted it, and it was definitely a “suitable substitute” for me on occasion. I personally do not need to eliminate chocolate completely from my diet but I do try to eat less of it and substitute carob sometimes. My son, however, cannot tolerate a lot of chocolate, and he does not really know the difference at this point!

Like with most things, moderation is key with carob, as our Nutritionist informed me that too much can cause constipation, but it still is a healthier alternative to chocolate as it has more health benefits than chocolate and does not have the high sugar content. You can read more on our blog about it: [Carob: Chocolate’s Fraternal Twin and a Healthier Alternative](#), and here are a few recipes if you would like to try it:

[Brown Rice with Strawberries and Carob Chips](#)

[Butterscotch Haystack Cookies with Carob Chips](#)

[Carob Cashew Butter Bars](#)

(Note – You will not likely find it in the mainstream grocery stores, so find a health food store in your area and pay them a visit or give them a call to see if they carry it.)

Step 4: Determine the role of body image and cultural influences on your dieting habits

You cannot turn on the television or go to the store without being bombarded by the media with the constant messages about what Hollywood or society supposedly thinks women should look like. It is *literally everywhere* we turn.

What I find most intriguing about this topic is that many men don't necessarily agree with this standard we have allowed the media/society to set for women! In preparation to air [Part 2 of my interview with Julie Edwards](#) about her battle with Anorexia for Foodie Talk with Chef John and Anne, I asked John if there was a celebrity who did not fit that "super thin standard" that has been set whom he finds attractive.

I knew from past discussions we've had that he, in fact, does not like this so called standard! He thinks most of the women in Hollywood are actually too thin and that some of them even look as though they could be battling an eating disorder (as, in fact, we know many of them have from time to time!).

The woman who immediately came to his mind was Christina Hendricks, the actress who plays a character named Joan in *Mad Men*. Not being familiar with her, I went right to the internet to see what she looked like.

If you know who she is, I do not have to tell you... she is a **gorgeous red headed actress!** She also is most definitely *not* that super thin "standard".



Photo Credit: [Tattoo76](#) via Flickr

If you have not heard Part 2 of my interview with Julie Edwards yet, you can [listen to the audio clip of my discussion with John about this just before the interview here.](#)

What you may not know (and we did not discuss on the show) is that she also was named in 2010 by *Esquire Magazine*, **a men's magazine no doubt**, as America's Sexiest Woman (Source [4]: [Fox News](#))! So our culture is pushing an image of women, for what reason I am not sure, that many men don't even find attractive, and in that process, putting undue pressure on women, and even our young girls, to look this way. There is something very wrong, in my humble opinion, with this, especially when it is **contributing to "failed dieting" and even the development of eating disorders** for some, as Julie also addresses in our interview.

My question is ... is that "cost" really worth it?

You can take a look at the statistics on eating disorders on our blog here... they were mind-blowing for me. I figured they were high, but never would have guessed them to be ***that high.***

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It is time for us, as women, to change this about our culture. This can be difficult, but I believe it is possible. And I think the **best, most logical starting point** is with ourselves, and then in how we are raising our daughters and influencing young girls in our circles of influence!

We need to get back to engraining into our daughters and young girls that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," not Hollywood!

What kind of body image do you, personally, have? *What standard have you set for yourself* that could be contributing to your own "diet plan" currently? Are the ideas you have for the body you want realistic? Here's [another clip from my interview with Julie that you may find helpful](#) in answering these questions.

I think what she discusses in that clip may be a key to helping us change out how we see ourselves as beautiful! I will share something personal with you about this. For me, at some point as an adult and after having a little more experience working with makeup, I found that when I can apply eye makeup a certain way, it really brings my eyes out and I feel best about myself when I'm able to "make up" my eyes a little. I don't like a lot of it, but I've found that just the right amount of shadow, eyeliner and mascara work well for me. What is one thing you like most about yourself and what kinds of things can you do to maximize that strength?

Change the Diet You Are Feeding Your Mind

If this is a struggle for you, my suggestion would be to make some changes to what you are feeding your mind. Guard the "diet" of your mind until your thought processes on this have changed. And this means not only restricting the negative messages you may be unintentionally or inactively feeding your mind, but replacing those negative messages with positive ones.

I have found some songs that I enjoy listening to that really speak on some level to this issue and that help remind myself of where I want to be on this mentally. **The music we listen to is an easy way to feed our minds healthy "food"** because we listen to music while driving. So while you may not have a lot of time to add these messages via positive reading material, if you replace some of the music you are listening to with some music with messages like this, it can go a long way in helping to "reprogram" your thinking!

The first song is called [More Beautiful You](#) ... and the second is called [Voice of Truth](#). (Click on each song to see a video from YouTube and hear the song for yourself.) In the resources section, I will provide some books I recommend also for those of you who enjoy reading and have the time or are willing to make some time to also do some reading. But starting with music will help immensely!

Getting Personal

Recently, I told John that I wanted to lose 3-5 pounds. His response was, "Why? I don't want you to lose 3-5 pounds." Music to my ears! Now some of the pressure I was putting on myself could be relieved a little at least.

I asked Julie in Part 3 of our interview how her experiences with an eating disorder have influenced her parenting, because I'm always interested in becoming a better parent. One of the things that stuck in my mind that she said is that she and her husband do not have a scale in their home.

I think this is an excellent idea. **Take the focus completely off of the number.** Gauge where you are with your weight and body with how you feel (health wise and about yourself) and the clothes you wear (meaning, if you find your clothes getting too snug, it may be time to evaluate your eating habits again to see if you need to make some adjustments if you don't want to buy a new wardrobe or gain weight). Unless your doctor has a concern with where you are, maybe you should not either, or at least not "obsess" over it!

Step 5: Be Aware of the “Health Buzz Words” Used by Marketers on Food Labels

If you are just starting in the process of becoming more health conscious, you may not realize that reading food labels is not as simple as it may seem.



Image Credit: [Michael Pereckas](#) via Flickr

Many labels use what I call “**health buzz words**” to draw your attention to their product when, in fact, that product may not necessarily be any healthier than one without those words used on the label.

I discuss this much more with our guest on our BlogTalkRadio show, *Are Healthy Foods REALLY Healthy for YOU?* In that show, Jaimi Ellison, Nutritionist and Personal Trainer, gives some great information about how to read food labels when making the decisions as a consumer in the store. You can [listen to the audio clip from that discussion here!](#)

If you take some time to educate yourself about this, your learning curve in the journey towards healthier eating will be much less and your progress should take less time!

With this factor regarding food labels and the potential for food sensitivity combined, the journey can be complex and take some time. I *wish* I had known more of this earlier on, say, like in college when I first started working towards healthier eating habits!

I am passing what I have learned along to you in hopes that I can save you the time it took me to learn it. If you already knew all of it, great! I hope you are experiencing success in your pursuit of better health.

Bonus Tips!

I have a few more tips to share that I think might be helpful in creating a healthier “diet plan”. Just like the 5 steps outlined above, these tips are all things I have learned along the way in my own journey as well.

Some may seem like common sense, but if you are like me, it’s never a bad thing to have reminders of common sense things we may forget as life gets busy day-to-day. I tend to forget a lot of the common sense until I get a tough reminder that I’m not doing some of those common sense things!

The Importance of Hydration



Photo Credit: [Greg Riegler](#) via Flickr

This is a biggie!! You’ve probably heard or read that we should drink 6-8 glasses of water every day. I don’t know that I have ever drank this much water in a single day. It is ***one of the most challenging areas of health for me.***

And it is a prime example of getting some tough reminders (of the common sense things we know we should be doing) that I have not always stayed ***hydrated enough***, even if not drinking the full recommended amount. The **scariest one** happened while on the plane trip home from finalizing the adoption of my son in 2008.

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There were other factors, but hydration was definitely one of the biggest, because I got ***so thirsty***. It was the last leg of the flight. We were about 30 minutes from landing in Atlanta, Georgia. I had missed the last meal that was served while in the bathroom changing my son's diaper.

Because I had not gotten vaccinations before the trip, I was avoiding raw foods, so when I learned that the American menu item was no longer available, the Korean option I decided against because it included some raw veggies. I suddenly began to feel extremely weak and started trembling, uncontrollably. I also got very thirsty. My mouth was extremely dry.

It was scary because no matter how much I drank, my mouth still felt very dry. Literally, I would finish that tiny cup of water they normally bring and would ring the stewardess for another one. After several of these, I asked if there was a bigger serving they could bring, explaining I had become very dehydrated. They actually brought me one of the big bottles of water they use to fill the little cups with.

I was drinking so much water, I kept having to go to the bathroom and may have actually been in the bathroom as the plane landed. I had gotten very nervous about what was happening, knowing there was probably no one with medical credentials on the plane, and nothing was helping. ***I continued to tremble uncontrollably***, even after the stewardess brought me a pizza stick to eat.

So I could not have been happier about the plane landing and getting off. I was so weak, however, that I could not even carry my son, who had only wanted to be held by me. I was amazed by John's ability to carry him, our carry-on and then to be able to also roll our baggage when we were able to get to it after getting off the plane. He seemed like a superhero to me because of what he managed to do! When I think back to it, I see Super Man in my mind.

I had known as we were flying that I needed to stay hydrated, and I tried but clearly did not drink enough water. I've always found drinking 6-8 glasses difficult, but I do try to remember now to drink water regularly throughout the day because I never want to experience that again!

Finding the Right Water for You

When I first started working on drinking more water (in college), I found that there were some types of water that tasted better to me than others. I don't care for tap water, usually, or spring water. I like purified water the best. I think at that time I may have used a Brita pitcher, but if I drink bottled water, I make sure it is purified.

I also know that I like it best pretty cold. I can stand it lukewarm if I have to, but I much prefer it and will drink more day to day if it's cold.

So if you have a hard time drinking more water, figure out if there are certain types of water you like best and that may help!

More water tips

Drinking water can also be used as a natural way to discourage unhealthier eating, such as when you are going out to eat for supper or going to a party (think holidays especially!).

Drink a half to a full glass of water about an hour beforehand, and your stomach will feel less empty and you will not eat as much of the foods that aren't as healthy, as party foods and foods when eating out normally are.



Photo Credit: [torbakhopper](#) via Flickr

Sometimes when you think you are hungry, it may actually be that your body is beginning to become dehydrated, but the signal it gives can mimic hunger! Try drinking a half a glass of water before reaching for a snack. If you still feel hungry after drinking the water, then go for the snack, but chances are, it may often be that your body actually needs hydration and you can avoid consuming unnecessary calories!

If the taste of water, or lack thereof, is your biggest obstacle to drinking more water, try squeezing some fresh lemon or lime juice into a glass of water or creating your own fruit-flavored water. Here are a couple of ideas that you might want to try from a fellow blogger friend of mine, Valerie Remy-Milora: [5 Fun and Simple Ways to Get Your Kids to Drink Their Water](#).

Healthy snack ideas

One of the biggest problem areas for any “diet” is snacking. Convenience foods are the easiest snack foods because normally when we snack we may not have the time to spend preparing our snack. But I probably don’t have to tell you that the vast majority of convenience foods are also some of the unhealthiest foods!

So taking some time to ***plan ahead and prepare some snack foods in advance*** can help tremendously in your goal to develop healthier eating patterns. I mentioned earlier my Marinated Lentil Salad. It really does not take long to prepare, and it will get me through almost a week of evening snacking.

Another filling and easy snack idea is an apple. I read or heard somewhere that this can also be used (like what I mentioned about water above) to fill your stomach a little bit before going to a party or out to eat for supper.



Photo Credit: [Energetic Spirit](#) via Flickr

If you eat an apple about an hour to 30 minutes before going, you will eat less at the party or restaurant!

Empty calories

Become knowledgeable about the kinds of foods that provide your body with “empty calories,” meaning calories but no real nutritional benefit to your body. Things like soda and chips come to mind here.

I love Mello Yello. It’s my soda weakness. When in college, I allowed myself to have one for lunch every Friday. That way I would not feel “deprived” and could enjoy it in moderation. I have since allowed the habit of drinking it more regularly creep back in and need to work on that area again.

So if you can **figure out where in your diet you are consuming empty calories**, you can decide how to enjoy those things more in moderation and replace the regular consumption habit with something more nutritious.

A benefit of this is that I have found when I make sure I am consuming “enough” (different for everyone!) nutritious foods during the day, I am ***less apt to feel a need to snack in the evening!***

Stress Eating

Are you a stress eater? We are! Whenever I have a stressful day, I am so much more likely to crave some of the “comfort foods” I enjoy, most of which are not very healthy!

So just like with snacking, planning ahead and having some things available that I love but that are healthier options helps a lot. But also, I think this is a time you may want to say is “okay” to indulge, ***if*** you are able to do so without going too far overboard.

And if you are experiencing **a phase of life that is particularly stressful for a longer period of time**, of course you want to be aware of this and find other ways to manage the stress, such as going for walks and getting some exercise or maybe it’s taking some time for yourself after your kids go to bed for a bubble bath, reading or something you really enjoy but don’t usually have time to do. Find what works for you... again, everyone is different and finds different thing relaxing.

GMOs

Do you know what GMOs are? I had heard about them, mostly from my sister, but I had not really known much about them until recently when I interviewed Zack Kaldveer from the Organic Consumers Association about them for our Foodie Talk with Chef John and Anne show.

Boy, am I **glad I took time to begin learning more about GMOs!** What I learned inspired me to continue learning and to stay informed on efforts to require GMO labeling by certain states. This is a topic that would fill an entire different book or report, but it is one about which anyone concerned with healthier eating must become knowledgeable.



Photo Credit: [MillionsAgainstMonsanto](#) via Flickr

I feel somewhat late to the topic, but since the movement to require labeling is just taking off, I know I am not the only one just beginning to really understand what GMOs are and why we need to be concerned about them.

If you already have a basic understanding about GMOs... good for you! This section is not for you. But if you, like me, are new to the topic, I highly recommend that you, too, begin learning about it.

Why? [Watch the video clip about GMOs here.](#)

You can listen to our interview with Zack Kaldveer here: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#).

Or if you prefer to read information, the transcript of the interview is available on Kindle for just \$0.99: [GMOs in Food: What Every American Needs to Know](#).

Build your recipe collection

Starting our food blog has helped us to build a much bigger recipe collection than we had when we started! While you may have no desire to blog, there are tons of recipes available online, whether through recipe eBooks, blogs, or other recipe type sites. [Pinterest](#) has become one of my favorite ways to search for new recipes.

Wherever you enjoy finding new recipes most, I encourage you to try new recipes often and *grow your collection of favorites*. The longer you look for certain types of recipes and try them, the more you will find you have favorite sources for recipes and you will learn if there are certain types of recipes you enjoy trying more often than others.

For us, we seem to enjoy trying new breakfast and side dish recipes most often. Maybe it's because those are areas where we seem to have a greater need for something new and different?

But as we have added more favorite recipes to our "collection", it becomes **easier to plan for our family meals**. We have more to "rotate" through so we can keep a good variety and not get into a "diet rut".

Your subscription to our newsletter (for which you received this guide as a gift to say thank you!) will include recipe ideas each week. Some of those are recipes Chef John has developed; others are those we have found and thought you might enjoy so we pass them along to you.

If there are certain types of recipe ideas you would prefer to receive over others, please let us know! We want our newsletter to include the types of recipes **you** want, but we cannot know what those are unless you tell us.

So please take a moment and answer **this 1 QUESTION**:

I am **most** interested in seeing more of this type of recipe in future newsletters:

- Main Dish
- Dessert
- Crockpot
- Seasonal
- Other

Balance



Photo Credit: [Gordon](#) via Flickr

With all of the information I've given so far, I would say one of the most important things to remember is to find a balance! Usually, extremes are not healthy or ideal in life, whether in the eating habits we have, in our work habits, spending habits or otherwise. If your life gets out of balance in any area towards one extreme or another, it usually does not work well or you find yourself dissatisfied.

My experience has been that it is a day-to-day effort to find that balance, and it is not always easy. But I've also found that if you are at least **mindful of needing to find balance and working towards it, you are able to at least hit somewhere close enough** to keep your life manageable and from reaching a place where you do not want to be.

Accountability

Finally, being accountable when it comes to what you want to achieve can be a catalyst that propels you to success. It has been the times in my life when I knew I had to answer to someone for a goal I had set that I was better able to stay focused and committed to those goals consistently.

This could be done through a personal journal if you are one who will stick with reporting to yourself in a journal. I think for most of us, however, it would be better to have someone to report to, who can also provide some encouragement as needed along the way.

Perhaps you have a friend who has similar goals who would be willing to be an accountability partner. I had a group of friends in college that were like an accountability group for some goals we had set as a Bible study group.

If you are unable to find an accountability partner and would be interested in participating in a group via social media (it can be private), you can [express your interest on this form](#) and you will be notified when an opportunity to join a group is open.

Personal message

Thank you for reading through this guide. I hope you found it helpful in some way. I would love to know your thoughts. Please email them to me at anne@flayve.com.

And just remember that wherever you find yourself in the topics mentioned, you can get to a **better place** if you feel like that is what you need to do. Just take the first step and keep going! Let us know if we can serve you in some way.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are the resources I mentioned I would share, books or other resources highlighted somewhere above.

Blog Talk Radio Shows Mentioned

[Interview with Julie Edwards about her experiences with Anorexia](#)
Interview with Laura Wellington, Author of *The Four Star Diet*: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)
[Are Healthy Foods Really Healthy for You?](#)

Books

[GMOs in Food: What Every American Needs to Know](#)

Media Center

*Here you will find all the audio clips and videos referenced above.

Recipes

[Brown Rice with Strawberries and Carob Chips](#)

[Butterscotch Haystack Cookies with Carob Chips](#)

[Carob Cashew Butter Bars](#)

[Marinated Lentil Salad](#) – Great as a snack, side dish or even a main dish; Our 6-year-old son who also loves tart flavors likes it as well

Sources Cited

- [1] [Exercise Is Not Likely to be Your Ticket to the Weight Loss Express](#)
- [2] [Eating Well; Acrylamide in Food: How Big Is the Risk?](#) by The New York Times
- [3] [Health Benefits of Eating Red Onions](#) by HealWithFood.org
- [4] [Christina Hendricks named Esquire's Sexiest Woman Alive](#) by Fox News

Other

[Ask The Chef](#)

[Carob: Chocolate's Fraternal Twin and a Healthier Alternative](#)

[Brita Water Filtration Pitcher](#) (Affiliate)

Disclosure: This eBook contains affiliate links, which means if you purchase through those links, you still get the same great product at the same value, but I may be compensated a commission fee. Thanks in advance for helping to cover costs for the time to publish this eBook and to maintain our [food blog](#) and [website](#), providing valuable content to families looking for recipes and other helpful information.

Final Note:

If you or someone you know is struggling with a picky eater, you may like to check out our eCookbook, [What to Cook for Dinner for a Picky Eater](#), available on Amazon for only \$3.99.

Please remember to email me at anne@flayve.com with any feedback or questions. I enjoy hearing from you.

If you prefer to interact on social media, you can connect with me on any or all of our social media networks:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[Google+](#)