

Alaska Strength & Muscle March Challenge “Exercising Intellect”

Intellect Challenge

You will need – 10 minutes of your choice, 5-7 days a week, a pencil/pen and notecards – jar/or baggie

Once a day - Identify 1 (just ONE) unhealthy food you normally eat and DON’T EAT IT!!!! If it’s a wrapped food like a candy bar put it in a container – if it’s perishable (like ice cream) fill out a card and record nutrition (grams of fat-protein- carbohydrates and sugar and note if there are preservatives) put that in the jar in its place – at the end of the week add up your savings – Now multiply that by 52 weeks and show yourself how significant small changes incorporated into your lifestyle can be– those calories you just bagged can be a big savings over a year and conversely all those added calories over a year make a difference too.



If you are like most typical adults who are gaining 5 pounds annually this alone can be key to maintaining a healthy weight year after year.

Exercising Intellect

Intellect is the ability to think reason and understand. Intelligence, aptitude and skill hold similar meanings and can be demonstrated by ones tendency to do something well, especially skills that can be further developed – like sound nutritional eating.

Where do you exercise intellect? What challenges are currently testing your Intellect related to health and wellness? Is family meal planning difficult? What about packing healthy lunches for yourself and your family during the



workweek? Maybe finding healthy snack foods that your family enjoys are easier said than done.

Before jumping with both feet into your own health and wellness shortcomings, I challenge you to think of something you do well that requires your intellect. Maybe you are an excellent bookkeeper and keep your families' finances in top order. Maybe you're a gifted cook, repairperson, or the best bedtime story reader around. What makes you good at that skill? What have you done to develop this talent? Make a list if you like concrete evidence. Focusing on a skill we do well can provide insight for other areas we want to improve. Too much focus on our own areas of incompetence will only reinforce other negative feelings like helplessness and failure. Reflecting on shortcomings without addressing solutions really only serve to further reinforce helpless feelings.

My Story

For me, the scale is not and has not been the best tool to track and measure health and wellness. When I was a teenager I became a slave to the scale. Every morning I gauged my self-worth on the number that appeared between my feet. In fact, the moment I jumped out of bed I pulled the scale out from under my bed (placement of scale alone is a big red flag!) for the first of about 10, daily weigh-ins. Most of the weigh-ins led to devastating self-talk about how fat and unworthy I was. What a devastating way to start ones day. I have never really been medically overweight. That's how far out of touch I was with a realistic body image. Very few times do I remember feeling empowered by the scale and when it did yield a number I was happy with it was linked directly to starving along with excessive exercising, misusing laxatives and over the counter stimulants. These actions were not an exercise in intellect. In fact they led me down a path towards depression coupled with a serious eating disorder that would require intensive therapy. Over time the

scale fed more and more into feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and incompetence and did nothing to support my health. During this same time I was an avid athlete participating year round in a variety of sports with figure skating as my main emphasis. For various reasons at that point in my life, like so many young girls, my definition of “health” was “beauty” and that hinged on being thin. All the exercise and conditioning, skill acquisition, and sportsmanship lessons taught by coaches and fellow athletes along with health classes and a practical Midwestern upbringing did not override my desire to be thin. Strong, unfortunately, had not yet come into fashion. I would like to think that times have changed for young women, that health, nutrition and strength are valued above being thin and that the number of eating disorders and depression linked to a poor self-image has decreased. I fear that we still have a long ways to go though which is why I lend my voice to the campaign for health. I am living proof that no matter how many mistakes you’ve made in the past change is ALWAYS possible. It’s never too late to re-write your life story. Arming yourself with education is a key factor in facing and letting go of habits that lack intellectual connection to improved health and wellness. So, there’s a little piece of me. I hope to make you think and feel – no more, no less.



What is your story to illustrate intellect?

Prologue

Recovery was a very long process for me. It required several changes the biggest was rewriting my own perception of myself, which I continue to work on. Using my intellect to improve my own health has been quite a journey. Being honest without beating myself down about daily habits that lack intellect has been one key for personal success. Trading in poor late night snacking habits with a protein snack and a book is one example of applying intellect. Focusing on the positive replacement habit adds positive

fuel to my success. Reading is another way to increase intellect – I am currently reading *Your Brain On Food* a scientific look at chemical reactions related to different foods and drugs commonly used today. I personally like to look at the science of health and nutrition because science removes all of the “feelings” that typically get interwoven with eating. That whole mind flip of really treating food as fuel has been equally paramount to rebuilding a more successful relationship with my health.

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