

A NATION OF ONE

By Elisabeth White

Have you ever tried on a One Size Fits All (OSFA) piece of clothing and thought, “who, in their right mind, could think this could suit everyone?” Our bodies are different and it’s not a secret or a surprise when labels like these aren’t to everyone’s taste. We’re all looking to find that perfect fit that makes us look great and feel our very best.

So why would you settle for a nutrition plan or diet that isn’t uniquely tailored to your needs?

There’s an approach to health and wellness that wants to put people in a box; it’s a “one size fits all” attitude that aims to eliminate the so-called burden of choice; but you know that your body is a complex and unique vessel for all the good inside you. It’s home to a powerful, considerate brain that allows you to make the best decisions when it comes to looking after it.

When determining your efforts for health and wellness, knowing what’s out there will help you get the most out of a diet or healthy eating plan and your body will thank you. It doesn’t have to be as arduous and mundane as an OSFA approach would have you believe.

While designing your own diet or nutrition plan can seem confusing and overwhelming, make things easier by starting with a destination in mind. When choosing your health and wellness destination, consider the following:

1. Where are you going? Are you looking to lose weight? Strengthen your heart? Stave off dementia? If you can clearly define your goals, it will be easier to chart a course to get there. If you’re not exactly sure of what you are trying to achieve, start with research. Decide whether you are trying to lose weight or burn fat. They may sound like the same thing, but there are differences. Do you have high cholesterol or are you about to train for distance running? They both involve the heart, but there are different paths to success for either goal. If you can figure out your actual destination, choosing the best path for yourself becomes clearer.

2. How will you get there? Break out your best googling fingers...it’s time to do some research. You’re going to need to decide whether you’re prepared to make a complete lifestyle change or if (like many Americans) you’re just looking for the “magic pill.” Let’s say that you’re interested in heart health. Obviously, exercise is going to have to be part of your plan, but let’s focus on the nutrition

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aspect. If you check out the options, trends and latest science related to heart health, it may spark questions like “What is the Paleo diet?” and “What’s so good about raw foods?” “Should I try the Ornish diet and why is it deemed ‘heart healthy’?” Recent studies can be helpful, for example, with choices like the Mediterranean Diet. Long considered a heart-healthy diet, Reuters recently published a study of the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet and the brain. The study indicated that this diet – rich in veggies, fruits, grains, and fish – may help to “preserve a more youthful brain in old age.” The study, conducted by a leading author at Columbia University, also proposed that this particular diet may be linked to reducing the risks of certain degenerative brain conditions. This choice may be able to get you to your goals for your heart and protect your brain along the way. Whichever road you chose, there is a wealth of sources and studies being conducted right now to help you decide the best course for you.

3. Pick-ups and journey aids. If you’ve decided to make a sweeping lifestyle change, like changing your everyday diet, it will likely benefit you to add some smaller, more contained choices to compliment it. That’s right, I’m back to the exercise topic. Of course, if you’re going for heart health, you’ll want to throw in some cardio and maybe add some light weightlifting. But there are other things, like introducing a few detox days, that may help you achieve your goals. Even meditation may help. Look for opportunities that suit your personality and be open to things you may never have tried.

4. Manage your expectations. While you’re on this journey to a better, fitter, happier you, try not to get caught up comparing your journey to those of others seeking the same. That’s the beauty of designing your own wellness plan – you can incorporate all of your quirks and idiosyncrasies without regard for others’ judgement. Making your own custom plan will ensure that you are getting the things you want and need on your way to wellness.

Remember that while nothing worth it is ever easy, that doesn’t mean it has to be difficult. Be patient, but stay determined. This is about you, your body, and your health.

We are not a Nation of One. The OSFA approach might seem convenient, but in reality, we are a nation of many and no two people are alike in their needs and desires to be healthier and more fit. With all of the wonderful, creative roads to go down, explore often and treat your body to the perfect fit.

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