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# One Size Doesn't Fit All: How to Find the Best Health and Fitness Routine for You



What if your success or failure in a new healthy pursuit has nothing to do with which foods you eat or the kinds of workouts you do? What if we didn't have to keep looking for the magic bullet to all this health, body, and weight stuff because all of the information we need to make healthy lifestyle changes is already available?

Most of us know what it's like to be on a health-and-fitness rollercoaster. We find out about a new fitness program or diet trend from one of our friends or the Internet. We do some basic research and, between the enthusiastic testimonials and dramatic before-and-after pictures, we decide this is the thing for us. We buy new workout clothes,

get fitted for new sneakers, maybe we clean out our pantries in preparation for a sugar detox. We tweet about how excited we are (#newme). We know that this is the change we've needed and we can't wait to get started.

We jump in with both feet: Our all-new fitness routine and diet overhaul have us feeling great. We're chipper. We're happy. We're on a mission. We're committed. But a couple of weeks later, the number on the scale has barely budged. We look in the mirror and can't really tell: Do I look different?

The novelty of the new lifestyle has worn off, and in the absence of the dramatic changes we were promised, it's getting more difficult to get to the gym or wake up for that morning run. The foods we were able to limit in the beginning are more tempting than ever. Cue the ice cream, bottle (or three) of wine, and the crushing feeling of failure.

It doesn't have to be this way.

## Why Diets and Training Programs Don't Always Work

Diets and training programs themselves aren't all bad, but the way they're marketed to us is the real problem. We are promised amazing, life-changing results. We are shown unbelievable examples of people who experience dramatic physical changes in almost no time at all. We are made to believe we can buy into a fast-track plan to achieve the fit and healthy life of our dreams. If you do such-and-such just 20 minutes per day or three times a week, you'll lose weight, gain muscle, and become a superhero version of yourself!

Unfortunately the reality is that every training program and diet requires a lot of work. And a lot of it. Getting fit means working out when you don't want to sometimes. It means committing to a routine of workouts, just as you would to a job. For many people, it involves tracking food and workouts meticulously, at least in the beginning. And it's finding out how to become your own biggest motivator.

# READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

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*NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.*

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Diets and training programs themselves aren't all bad, but the way they're marketed to us is the real problem. We are promised amazing, life-changing results. We are shown unbelievable examples of people who experience dramatic physical changes in almost no time at all. We are made to believe we're buying into fail-proof plans to achieve the fit and healthy life of our dreams. If you do such-and-such just 20 minutes per day or this other thing just three times per week, you'll lose weight, gain muscle, and become a superhero version of yourself!

Unfortunately the reality is that every training program and diet requires hard work. And a lot of it. Getting fit means working out when you don't want to sometimes. It means committing beyond just a couple of weeks. For many people, it involves tracking food and workouts meticulously, at least in the beginning. And it's figuring out how to become your own biggest motivator.

If we were shown people barely managing to push through the most basic of workouts, people whose weight doesn't change several months into a program, and people struggling to let go of their favorite snack foods, would we want to jump on board? If we knew in advance about the potential headaches, lethargy, and mood swings that can result from cutting our carbohydrate intake, would we pull out our wallets to shell out for cookbooks and meal plans? It's not very likely.

Marketers do what they do best—sell us on the ultimate outcome, the dream. And when we're a few days or weeks into a new program or diet and realize we're not seeing the amazing results we bought into, we think it must not be for us. Self-doubt creeps in, motivation seeps out, and before we know it, we're back to old routines.

#### Why One Size Does Not Fit All

It's one of the first things we learn in school: Everyone is different. And it's especially true when it comes to health and fitness. Our bodies react differently to certain types of training. Our stomachs handle different foods in a variety of ways. Some of us are excited for a workout that others dread. Unfortunately this kind of nuance tends to be absent from marketing and advertising, and we're lead to believe that a given product is just perfect for us, no matter who we are or what we need.

But if that were truly the case, we would have cracked the code to health and happiness long ago, and no one would be struggling with their weight, their health, or even their body image the way so many of us are today.

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The truth? The best diet and the best workout program are the ones you can stick with. Each of us needs to find a workout program that we can consistently do. We need to get our bodies adapted to moving every single day. And we each need to find a way of eating healthy that works well within our lifestyle day in and day out.

#### 4 Simple Steps to Decide What's Right for You

To become healthier as individuals and as a society we need to become people who try different things, listen to our bodies, and find positive lifestyle changes that we can stick with for the long haul. There's no such thing as one-size-fits-all in the health and fitness world. There's only what works for us as individuals. It might not be easy. (It won't.) But it will be worth it.

So, how do we figure out which diet and/or workout routine will truly will help us feel healthy and happy for the long haul? Start by asking yourself these questions:

1. Do I enjoy it? You don't have to be over-the-top obsessed, but you have to enjoy it enough to push past the resistance your mind will give you after the novelty of it wears off. The opposite question to ask is, "Do I dread it?" If so, it's not the program or diet for you.
2. Is it sustainable? We all have different schedules. An exec working 70 hours per week is going to have different availability than a college student with a light class load. Even if you love what you're doing, the time commitment has to be sustainable, or else you'll burn out. Chopping veggies for 30 minutes every day or lifting weights for an hour might not be right for you. Start with a time commitment that's without-a-doubt manageable. You can always add in additional time later.
3. Is there a community of like-minded people to support me? This doesn't have to be a physical, in-person community, but you should have access to some sort of community. Maybe you really enjoy bodybuilding but love working out alone with your headphones on. Perfect. There are hundreds of bodybuilding forums online where you can learn from and support other people pursuing a common goal. Without this kind of support, you can feel very isolated, and it's easier to quit when you feel like you're going it alone.

The same goes for diet. You will benefit from a community of people eating the same way and providing recipes, ideas, and support to keep you motivated.

4. Is it working? Check your progress after two months or so by re-testing a workout you did at the very beginning of your program: Can you complete it faster? Are you lifting heavier weights or doing more reps? You can also measure physical markers like body measurements and weight or cholesterol, blood pressure, etc.

By accepting that finding the right health and fitness program will involve trial and error and that whatever you settle on will take some hard work, you'll bring yourself one step closer to the lifestyle that helps you be the best version of you.

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