



OUTLIERS:

10,000 HOURS TO A HEALTHY BODY

By Barbara M Mendez, RPh, MS

Diets don't work. We have all heard this before and although we may understand it in an abstract way, and may in fact have enough tangible experience to know this first hand, many of us continue to eat what we want when we want it, only to embark on another fad diet the week before our high school reunion or in the dwindling days of spring, as bikini season moves ever closer. We take on our new eating plan with gusto and determination only to find that three

days into it we are scouring the kitchen for even a crumb of food that resembles chocolate. By the fourth day we are back to our old ways, eating ever more to make up for lost time. The never-ending cycle continues.

The reason diets don't work is because we aren't accustomed to eating in the way the diet outlines we should. Most of us don't start our day with Melba toast and cottage cheese. Heck, most of us don't

even make time to eat breakfast at home! So the idea of changing all of our habits and then maintaining those changes after just a few days is unrealistic.

I recently read the book *Outliers*, by Malcolm Gladwell. Those of you familiar with Malcolm's work in the *Tipping Point* and *Blink*, know that he has an uncanny ability to turn mundane information into the most fascinating story line. His ability to weave a tale, whether discussing the success of Hush Puppy shoes or the achievements of Bill Gates, is always captivating and leaves us wanting more.

In his latest book, *Outliers*, he discusses the many factors involved in creating the most successful people in history. What exactly helped Bill Gates become so adept at the then obscure industry of computer science? What contributed to the Beatles diversity and ultimate success? *Outliers* is a fascinating look at all the circumstances that come together to create the people whose names we know, who have achieved ultimate success and who inspire us to believe that anything is possible.

According to Gladwell, there are many factors involved in creating *Outliers*. It has to do with a series of lucky circumstances that often put these people in the right place at the right time. Month or year of birth, for example, plays an enormous role in the success of Ice Hockey players and also played a role in Bill Gates' success. Cultural legacy, where our immigrant families came from and when they landed in the States also plays an important role. But the one contributing factor that all *Outliers*

shared, that had little to do with luck, was practice.

According to his calculations, *Outliers* practiced their trade in excess of 10,000 hours. In the case of the Beatles, their early days in Hamburg Germany forced them to play twelve hour sets for weeks at a time, allowing them to practice as a band, improve their musicianship, play with different styles and genres of music, so that when it came time to write their own material, the result was a diverse sound that was influenced by blues and jazz as well as rock and roll. The result, as we know, is albums like *St Pepper* and *Abbey Road*. For Bill Gates, he grew up in a community where some of the mothers had formed a charitable organization and one of their contributions was a computer. At the time it was one of the few computers in the country and was the size of a room. But it gave Gates an ability to start working on this new technology and according to Gladwell, he spent countless hours in the computer lab, practicing what would eventually become his trade. We all know how that turned out for him.

The concept of practice is inherent to success and can be applied to anything, including the practice of eating well to achieve and maintain a healthy body. It takes time to cultivate the eating habits required to make permanent change in regards to our weight or health. It's unrealistic to believe that lasting change can happen overnight. It takes time and it begins with a single step.

To get you started on the practice of a

healthy lifestyle, ask yourself what habit you can begin practicing to help you get there. Maybe it's improving upon breakfast or hitting the gym more often. Perhaps making sure you have your eight glasses of water daily. Whatever it is, pick one thing and begin it. Once you do, and as you build the courage and confidence that practice breeds, you will find yourself taking on the next thing and it will feel natural and comfortable. Change shouldn't overwhelm you. You don't want to feel stressed out by it because if you do you will not stay with it. It should be a gradual evolution and with focus and tenacity, it will take you where you want to go.

PRACTICES FOR A HEALTHY BODY

Get off to a good start: The way you begin your day dictates how the rest of the day is going to go. If you skip breakfast, you will probably find yourself making up for it later, after dinner, which is the worst time of day to be consuming calories. If you are the type that grabs a muffin and coffee on your way to work, then you might find yourself needing a cookie, or some other sugary snack around 3 or 4 in the afternoon. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so it is important to get it right.

One of my favorites is a vegetable omelet with sliced tomatoes, because even if you don't have time to prepare it at home, it is available in nearly every diner. The protein will give you energy and stamina, while the vegetables provide fiber and antioxidants. The best vegetables to include would be spinach or asparagus. Another great option is oatmeal. Add some

walnuts or almonds, blueberries, cinnamon and ground flax seeds to boost fiber, nutrients, and antioxidants while helping you feel full for a longer period of time. Oatmeal is also now available in Starbucks, so you can continue to grab it on the go if you have a very busy life.

Shoot for Seven Servings: Full of fiber and bursting with nutrition, getting adequate fruits and vegetables in the diet is the cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. Seven servings may sound like a lot, but it really isn't when you consider that 1/2 cup broccoli or a handful of carrots is a serving or that a medium banana also makes up a serving. Refer to *October 2008 Healthy Living News: Harvest and Abundance at <http://www.lifestylenutrients.net/newsletters/October2008.pdf>* for a reference guide on what constitutes a serving size, then begin implementing ways to meet your daily requirements. Doing so will help you feel full longer, provide antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and will contribute to your overall sense of wellbeing.

Keep Healthy Snacks on Hand: Unhealthy snacking can often side track the best intentioned eating plans. You may wonder where you are going wrong and why you can't seem to lose weight despite doing so many things right. The answer may reside in what you are snacking on mid-day and the foods you eat on the run. Take a look at what you are snacking on and see where you may be able to do better. Having healthy snacks available will keep you fueled properly all day, work with your metabolism to optimize fat burning and keep you from craving the unhealthy stuff.

Refer to my blog post: How Bad Can One Cookie Be?, at <http://www.barbaramendez.blogspot.com/> for more on snacking and for some ideas on what to keep on hand.

Begin Exercising: This is the one practice everyone loves to hate but then can't live without when it becomes a habit. Exercise gets a really bad rap for a practice that delivers weight loss benefits, mood enhancement, stress relief and longevity. It is the cornerstone of a healthy, balanced life, yet most people dread even the thought of it.

The key to regular exercise is finding something you enjoy. Personally, I hate going to the gym. I have spent countless dollars on unused gym memberships. But I love Yoga and the style of Yoga I do engages my cardiovascular

system, as well as my muscles. The fact that is also engages my mind makes it the perfect workout for me. Once I discovered Jivamukti Yoga School, I never looked back.

So I encourage you to spend some time looking for your ideal workout. It could be regular walks with your friends. Bowling is another workout as are skiing, dancing, and biking. The only requirement is that you do it consistently, a minimum of three times a week for 20 minutes at a time. It really doesn't need to be more than that.

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