

Module 0: Introduction and Preparation

The Balanced Healthy Path Method will show you how to make stress-free lasting changes to your mental and physical health. In Module 0, you'll learn how to use this course so you're successful in making changes that stick.

Introduction

Welcome! Congratulations on your choice to improve your health over the long term. This course is the culmination of my fifteen years of work as a wellness professional (yoga teacher, Ayurvedic Practitioner, and Registered Dietitian). And it will be the foundation of my future practice as a physician.

Lifestyle habits, the things we do each day: eating, sleeping and moving form the cornerstone of our health. These are the things we do all the time, so they have a big impact on our health. By starting small with one habit at a time, we can make important changes that can even prevent disease.

Don't worry if you've tried and failed in the past. This time it will be different. I've designed this course so that you make small but important changes that accumulate over time. Think of it like interest in a bank account, it starts out small but grows over time.

At the end of a few months and years, you'll accumulate a wealth of health!

Now let's talk about a few principles to consider as you start this course.

Make one change at a time

You'll have four modules which cover areas of your life. It's okay if you browse at all the modules and read through all the information (I'd probably work that way). But it's important to make **one change at a time**.

Much of habit change science supports this notion. When we decide on one change, we focus and put our energy into making that happen. You're more likely to be successful if you make one change at a time. Achieving success in one habit, makes it more likely that you'll continue.

This doesn't mean you stop at one change. I'll ask you to keep a log of changes and habits you'd like to develop. You'll periodically review the log and decide where you'll focus next.

Focus is key. Making one change allows you to focus on that area and be successful. We often try to multitask, and we get distracted. How many times have you taken a minute to look at a news article then gone down a rabbit hole? Or checked facebook for a minute, which turned into 30 minutes?

Allow 4 Weeks for the Change to Stick

When you make a change, you must allow time for the change to stick. By stick, I mean the change becomes something that you do almost automatically. It's become a part of your routine.

As an example, at the start of the COVID pandemic, we all had to switch to home exercise routines. I had a good routine of swimming at a local pool. I'd had a stationary bike that I used intermittently, but not very much. My change was to become habitual about stationary biking. I found an app that I liked with fun instructors, then scheduled in rides a few times a week. After around a month I

became habituated. I rarely miss rides. My ride is a habit I don't think much about. I'm ready to move on to another habit.

Hold Yourself Accountable

Keeping yourself accountable makes you more likely to succeed. This principle is built into many of the fitness apps -- like the move goals on the Apple Watch or daily awards and badges in Fitbits. The psychology behind this works: we like achieving goals. It's motivating to see progress, to get a sticker or an electronic badge.

At my yoga studio, we run yearly yoga challenges where students are challenged to practice yoga for thirty days in a row. Each time you practice you get a sticker by your name. It really works.

In this course, I recommend using your own tracker. It can be paper or electronic. Many planners now have tracking pages, where there's a list view for a month. You can check off the days you've completed your habit. I'm also including an electronic one you can use.

The most important part is to have a daily check in. Did I complete my goal? If not why? Making your desired habit something that you do each day is important for your long term success. That's why principle #1 is important: make one change at a time.

Set yourself up on paper or with an electronic tool.

Tool: Habit Tracker Template

Plan with an Ongoing List of Changes In Each Area

You may already have an idea of things you'd like to change. In this course we'll get specific as we move through each area. Goals are great, but they need to be

SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Sensitive). We'll go through examples in each area in this course.

I recommend that you keep a log in a notebook or electronic document with headings for each area of the course. This will be a living list that you update and change as you learn and grow.

From the list, I'll help you to make SMART goals in each area, that we can break down into actions and habits. Goals are important, but your daily actions are how you make the changes.

I have an example google doc with some of the changes I've made over the years as I've developed this program.

Tool: Example List and blank list

Use Technology as a Tool

Technology is wonderful, but make sure that you don't get bogged down in technology. Use it as a tool and keep it simple. I recommend using a pocket notebook that you like or an electronic file or calendar for tracking. I will give specific apps that may be helpful for the modules of the course. Remember not to spend too much time on technology which is a tool. We don't want technology to distract us from our end goal.

I'm guilty of spending lots of time looking for the best planner or productivity system. Really a simple list I keep in a notebook and an electronic calendar are most effective for my needs.