



by Jillian Michaels

Getting the Big Picture on Your Health

Winning Secrets from *The Biggest Loser* Trainer



NBC Photo/Mitchell Haaseih

When it comes to achieving overall health, we need to look at the big picture. Optimal health is a closed system of the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the way we live our lives, the way that we consume.

People don't fully understand this big picture. They think they need to be thin to be healthy, and the truth is that you need to be healthy to be thin. There's always going to be the latest quick-fix diet fad or pill or the latest surgery. We live in a world where we want quick and easy; we consume and buy in bulk, eat fast food, and expect things to last on the shelves, forever—and that's making us unhealthy.

There's more. It's not just our bodies, but our planet that's unhealthy. We spray pesticides on our food. We pollute the environment, transporting food around the world, so we can have berries that are sprayed with seven different poisons because they're out of season.

I know many of you are already feeling overwhelmed with your businesses and families—all the while you want to be healthy. Simple changes will make a difference in your overall health. It's not scientific; it's common sense.

Let's take this scenario. You're late for a meeting, so you grab lunch through the fast-food drive-through. You know it's a bad choice. Buying processed foods when the same grocery store sells fresh and organic foods is a bad choice. Passing up the opportunity to get your produce at the local farmer's market, where the food hasn't been processed for transport, is an unfortunate choice because not only are you sacrificing your own health but also the health of the planet. The junk on foods from other areas of the world runs off into the water supply, contaminating our water with hormones, pesticides and antibiotics.



Here's something else to chew on: The chemicals we put in our bodies from processed foods affect our body's biochemistry. Your biochemistry not only dictates your metabolism, but it also affects your immune system and whether you get cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and hypertension. Overall health affects longevity and how we age.

Overall health affects virtually every aspect of our lives. If your health isn't stable, neither is the foundation for building your business or your personal relationships or anything else that matters.

If you've seen *The Biggest Loser*, you've seen how morbid obesity can result from a life spiraled out of control. The contestants on the show are terrified of failing; they're terrified of trying. As a result, they don't experience exhilaration; they never win; they never achieve their dreams.

It's not just about looking better. The truth is that we want to live longer, healthier and happier. Envision yourself at 70. Do you want to be vibrant, able to travel, learning languages and enjoying family and friends, or do you want to be the person on a respirator, using a walker and on bed rest because of heart disease, cancer or diabetes? The choice is yours.

Fitness isn't just about health; it's also about being empowered. Fitness creates self-confidence; it creates strength. A fit person is a potent person. You see it on *The Biggest Loser*, where people go from being absolute wrecks in every aspect of their lives to being confident, powerful, strong, motivated and inspirational—all the stuff that comes from being healthy.

Nutrition is one aspect of overall health. Exercise is another. There are people who diet off their excess weight. The problem is that it

tends to come back. What happens when you diet is you damage your metabolism (slowing it) and lose muscle mass. When you start eating normally again, your body has adjusted to the slower metabolism and the weight creeps back on.

The truth is that, if you want to get it off, keep it off and accelerate your weight loss, you have to combine exercise and diet.



WHERE TO START

Making a Commitment to Good Health

1. You start by taking the first baby steps and putting yourself out there. Your baby step might be to get a gym membership, a book on weight loss or fitness, or joining a Web site to get support and learn about calories. Every step after that is easier as you stretch that emotional fabric, little by little.

2. Next is knowledge. Knowledge gives you the power. You need to understand how your body works so the efforts you make are not in vain. You have to understand calories. You have to understand the difference between processed white bread and whole grain bread and what it does to your body. You have to understand what types of exercises are going to do the best things for your body and will ultimately give you better results. People who don't understand their bodies put in the effort but don't get the results.

3. Set small goals. I've written in one of my books about the "goal pyramid," which gives you a roadmap to achieving your goals. Document what you want to achieve (your ultimate goal) at the top of the pyramid. That might be to lose 20 pounds or to run a marathon, for example. Then, work backward from there. OK, what's getting in your way? If it's that you don't eat healthy foods, set a goal for one week to eat healthy foods. The first step toward that goal might be a trip to the farmer's market. See? It's an action plan that makes achieving your goal possible.



I hate to exercise, but I make it work for me. I changed my attitude. Now, I look at my time in the gym as "my time." I do things that I'm going to like, including martial arts. If I try to take classes I hate, I'm not going to do it.

Exercise, when I'm stressed or anxious, makes me feel good. I know that when the exercise is over, I'm going to feel like a million bucks. I know I've done something good for myself—and that feels great—but exercise also biochemically changes your mood. It releases serotonin, endorphins, growth hormone and testosterone. Exercise is a natural antidepressant. Make it work for you.

To explain the importance of overall health in another way: Think about your car or house. Obviously, you work hard to make the payments. You'll have many cars and houses, but you only have one body. Your longevity and quality of life are determined by how you take care of your vehicle. I don't care what sacrifice you have to make for that commitment—whether it's putting aside your business for that hour in your day or forgoing a shopping trip, making the big-picture investment into your health is going to pay off tenfold. **S**

*Jillian Michaels is a strength trainer and life coach on NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, the competitive weight-loss reality TV show. A motivator and author, her books include *Winning by Losing: Drop the Weight, Change Your Life* and *Making the Cut*.*

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