Humboldt County Memorial Hospital

Dietitian's Corner

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Make 2022 Your Year

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I'm writing this in December and I can already see it. You decided this would be the year. You'd cut out a food group because it was the cause of everything wrong in your life. You'd drink your weight in water each day. You'd hit 1,200 calories and consider your nutrition "done" for the day. You'd never lay your eyes on sugar or fat again. You'd climb the hill of "perfect healthy eating" and be victorious. And here you are…3 weeks into the year. And you've failed. And I'm here to tell you not only is that okay, that's good. Forgive yourself. Congratulate yourself on avoiding putting your body and brain through un-needed restriction and disordered eating.

Why, you ask? Here is what we know…restricting calories too low can be damaging to your body and your health. Hitting a calorie goal doesn't automatically mean you're eating more healthful. Too much water is actually dangerous and can have serious health risks. Cutting out whole food groups is only appropriate in very specific people and you probably are not one of them. Your body needs sugar and fat.

What can you do instead of getting caught in the trap of diet fads and subsequent self-blame that only reinforces unhealthy eating habits and beliefs? Redefine your definition of healthy. Focus on variety and portions. Stop labeling food "good" or "bad" so you can release the hold those foods have on your psychological wellbeing. Pay attention to your body and find what foods and amount of these foods make you feel the best. Make one small change at a time so you can feel successful with each small win or use it as a learning experience to figure out what does/doesn't work for you. I know these things are not as exhilarating as a dietary restriction, they're the opposite of everything that diet culture tells us is the "right way to eat healthy." These things, though, are the things that make a difference, improve your physical health without sacrificing your mental health, social life, or enjoying your favorite foods.

So yes, make 2022 your year. But make it your year to redefine what "healthy" really means. I'll be here each month to talk about just that. And if you'd like to chat in person or you'd like some personalized help, come see me at HCMH. Cheers to 2022!