Each January, every treadmill is occupied at the fitness club; health foods fly off grocery shelves; and we're bombarded with endless tips and tricks to lose the extra pounds we've gained since Thanksgiving. With all the pressure and gimmicks, it's no wonder one third of New Year's resolutions fail by the end of January, according to time management firm, FranklinCovey.

Rather than bombard you with health practices that will burn you out by February, consider our guide as a compilation of realistic habits that are a framework for a better life; not because you have to practice them, but because you want to. We've surveyed local and national experts in nutrition, fitness and emotional health to help you make the best of 2013.

**Healthy expectations and guidelines will get you on the right path to well-being and happiness.**

**BY ALISON ROTH**

BODY

Being physically fit does not mean you have to run a marathon or climb a 14-er every weekend. Although those are opportunities that are well worth seizing, there are other ways to incorporate exercise into our always-busy routines.

**SWEAT SMALL**

People who engage in leisure-time activity such as biking or going for a walk gain as much as 4.5 years of life regardless of their weight, according to a study led by the National Cancer Institute. Incorporating activity creates habits that will last longer than any guilt-induced, once-in-awhile run. Certified Personal Trainer and CEO of Denver-based Aspire Performance, Josh Harnish says, "Move at times when you normally don't. Take the stairs instead of the elevator; squat while brushing your teeth; or engage in a five-minute circuit before and after work." Not only will you live longer, but you will sleep better; reduce the risk of stroke, cancer and diabetes; regulate blood sugar; increase energy and prevent the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's.
NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE

For men, an important area to focus on is the core. “A strong core creates a solid foundation and posture that is critical to perform any type of exercise,” says Harnish. “A well rounded abdominal routine will help you reach your goals.”

Women have other areas of the body that can become weak. “Older women often develop a roundedness to their shoulders that causes them to hunch forward,” says Melanie Webb, Certified Personal Trainer and Outdoor Adventure Guide for SOL Fitness Adventures. “Strengthening the backside can help a woman stand tall as she ages, and it is a preventative measure against bone loss during menopause.” Webb recommends that every woman over the age of 24 engage in a regular strength training program, such as lifting weights or using resistance bands, to combat the aging process.

GET OUTSIDE

Getting outdoors is often ignored when discussing physical health. Although exercising at a gym is better than no exercise at all, some fresh air will add a youthful and relaxation to your health. Webb says, “I’ve seen clients on my outdoor fitness trips relax, smile, look years younger and break old destructive habits. Exercise is an incredible healing tool when coupled with Mother Nature.” Needless to say, ignoring Colorado’s mountains, lakes, rivers and trails is a tragedy in itself.

OVERHAUL YOUR OUTLOOK

If you incorporate exercise and healthy routines into your life, but find yourself munching on fast food and sweets more than fruits and veggies, then it’s time to reevaluate your outlook on eating. “Food is the solution to physical hunger; it is not the solution to stress, boredom, sadness or a craving,” says Suzanne Farrell, registered dietician and owner of Cherry Creek Nutrition.

PLAN AHEAD

Farrell believes meal plans should be well-balanced and include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, fish, lean proteins, plant proteins (nuts and beans) and unsaturated fats. “Establishing regular meal patterns is key,” says Farrell. “Eat every 3-4 hours: Three meals and 1-2 snacks per day.” And planning ahead is essential. When you have healthy foods accessible at home and work, you won’t stop by the drive-through or

Hiring a Personal Trainer

“Make sure your personal trainer is qualified with either a degree or a nationally accepted certification. Here are a few certifications to look for: NASM, ACSM, NSCA and ACE. Ask as many questions as possible and spend time together to ensure there are no personality conflicts.”

—Josh Harnish, Certified Personal Trainer, CEO of Aspire Performance

“Working with a trainer is a lot like having a relationship. Think about what you need to reach your goals. Do you need the boot camp style trainer barking at you or would you prefer the quiet, intellectual type? Ask questions and look for someone who has great people skills. If the relationship isn’t working, don’t be afraid to ask for a referral and move on. Chances are the trainer is secretly hoping you will too.”

reach for that bag of chips. “I don’t believe in a lack of willpower, but a lack of pre-planning,” says Farrell. “Prep when you get home from the grocery store. Cut up fruits and vegetables and bag them for snacks, or buy healthy on-the-go snacks like goodnessknows snack squares.”

STOP PLAYING GAMES
Consuming fatty or sugary food leads to a spike in dopamine, which triggers feelings of happiness. You’re more likely to reach for those same foods again in order to continue the effect. Sharon Day, the director of nutrition at Cancer Treatment Centers of America, says, “Drinking water can fill you up so you won’t eat what you’re craving. Distract yourself by talking on the phone or going for a walk.” It also helps to know whether or not you have good self-control, according to Day. If you have strong willpower, then eat a small portion of what you’re craving. But if you’re indulgent, it might be best to avoid it altogether.

EAT WITH YOUR BRAIN
Emotional eating affects the stressed, sad and bored. But this is never a reason to eat. “Ask yourself first if you are hungry,” says Farrell. “If not, you may be eating for emotional reasons. Identify what is really going on and keep a feelings journal.” Many studies back up the importance of understanding hunger and fullness. Research done at Ohio State University revealed that eating mindfully is just as effective as obeying nutrition-based rules for reducing weight. Some tips: Chew slowly while sitting at a table. Set down your fork between bites. It causes your brain to register what it’s doing.

DRINK BEVERAGES WITH BENEFITS
Drinking tea to combat ills dates back centuries. Studies say that some teas are more effective than others. “Black teas and green teas are rich in antioxidants and help fight pre-cancerous cells,” says Day. According to Penn State scientists, drinking green tea controls the blood sugar surges caused by eating starchy foods. And black tea is linked with lowering blood pressure, alleviating stress and lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes and strokes. Studies also show that 2-3 cups of coffee a day lowers the risk of depression in women, prostate cancer in men, Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s. Just skip the unhealthy add-ins such as cream and sweeteners.
Cancer Prevention

Dr. Robert Wascher, Surgical Oncologist at Cancer Treatment Centers of America and Author of *A Cancer Prevention Guide for the Human Race*

**What is a common myth related to cancer?**
Contrary to popular belief, some of the worst cancer killers are most strongly linked to lifestyle factors (including cancers of the lung, colon, breast, head and neck).

**What basic steps do you recommend in order to lower the risk of cancer?**
Some of the most important strategies for reducing cancer risk include avoiding tobacco; eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains; avoiding red and processed meat; maintaining a healthy weight; engaging in 3-4 hours of moderate activity per week; and receiving recommended cancer screening exams.

**What screenings should we expect from our doctors in order to check for cancer?**
Current screening guidelines vary from one type of cancer to another and can be found on the American Cancer Society’s website, [cancer.org](http://cancer.org). In addition to screenings, I think it is a good idea to undergo a complete physical exam by your doctor at least once a year.

Talking Teeth with *Denver’s Smile-Maker*

With practices in downtown Denver, Park Meadows, Smoky Hill and Beaver Creek, Dr. Anil Idiculla is the only Ivy-League trained orthodontist in those areas. Learn about his services at [i-ortho.com](http://i-ortho.com)

**What role do teeth play in a person’s overall health?**
Dr. I: Smiles have a huge impact on confidence and perceptions. According to studies, people with healthy, straight teeth are perceived as having a better social life and personality; they seem healthier and wealthier.

**So what can one do to improve oral health?**
Dr. I: I always recommend using an electric toothbrush, as well as a water flosser by Waterpik. Avoid eating foods that stain your teeth. If you do eat them, brush afterward. Concerning whitening, I recommend consulting a dental professional. He or she will more effectively and quickly whiten teeth, as opposed to over-the-counter whitening treatments.

**Are there any foods that improve teeth and gum health?**
Dr. I: Eating a few bites of cheese after a meal will decrease cavities, neutralize plaque and strengthen your teeth and jaws. Also, basil reduces bacterial film in the mouth; broccoli prevents dental erosion; and sea salt strengthens teeth by infusing them with the right minerals.
Mind, body and soul comprise a trinity of health that cannot be ignored. Each affects the other, whether you’re sending your brain on a donut-induced sugar rush or quieting your thoughts with peaceful meditation.

**PICK YOUR PRIORITIES**

Healthy mental practices form habits that will take you much farther than an extra scoop of ice cream and negative self-talk. Take a couple minutes to write down your top five priorities. Pausing to reflect will refocus your energy and help you see what really matters, such as quality time with family, exercising each week or attending a spiritual institution. Actively say no to obligations that don’t fit within these priorities and post the list somewhere you’ll see it daily.

**GET SOCIAL**

A study by Brigham Young University found that strong personal relationships lower stress significantly by providing solutions to problems while reducing the problems’ perceived significance. These positive social networks can lead to a greater sense of well-being and even boost immunity. And with the increased use of social networking and cell phones, we need to be extra vigilant about our relationships.

**SIGN UP**

Learning new things boosts our well-being, according to Brown University. Throughout life, your brain’s neural networks restructure and strengthen themselves in response to learning experiences. So signing up for those fly-tying lessons or French classes will not only check an item off your bucket list, but also increase your brain’s ability to learn and grow.

**GET COMFORTABLE WITH QUIET**

Another boost to your mental health is meditation. “Maybe you’re the type who will benefit from sitting cross-legged in silence or perhaps you need movement, like dance or walking meditation,” says Webb. “The key to getting results is to find a style that motivates you to practice.” A study at UCLA reports that incorporating simple meditation into everyday life reduces feelings of loneliness and regulates emotions. Recent research at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee found that practicing meditation lowers the risk of heart attack, stroke and death.