

Make Healthier Habits a Family Project!

Why does it seem that the minute we resolve to make changes to our eating and exercise habits, suddenly everyone around us seems to subsist on a constant diet of potato chips and cookies? When you share a home with people who either don't "need" or want to change their habits, getting them to jump on board the train for the healthier eating habits journey isn't always easy. Although their behaviour may be innocent, it can sure feel like a wrench is being thrown into your efforts to stick to a plan. You've already taken charge of your health by deciding a change in your habits is on the menu. Although you can certainly fly solo, having the support of family and friends can help you better implement the change and stick to it. In fact, it can sometimes be added motivation to make healthier habits a family project because you know it's a good thing for them as well.



However, should your family not be 100% on board, you can't let that throw you off course when you've come so far and have been making so much progress.

Mission Not-So-Impossible!

Enlisting people's support may be challenging but not impossible. With a bit of planning and some shrewd discussion, you may find that you can not only get your loved ones to support *your* lifestyle efforts but also help change *everyone's* eating habits for the better. But...where do you start? In short: with you. Inform your family and friends of your reasons for making these changes and why this is so important to you. You need to be clear about what you want; this is not the time to be vague. It's OK that this is about you. Some ways to start the conversation may include:

- It's very important for me to be able to make healthier choices in eating and exercise so that I can feel _____.
- I've come a long way but this is sometimes a difficult journey and I would really appreciate your support.
- Can we talk about things we can do to make this acceptable to everyone?

Get Granular

Be specific. If you just say, "I need you to help me!" or "Support my efforts!" that leaves the door wide open to misinterpretation. It will lead to disappointment for you, frustration for them, and it won't get you any closer to getting their support for your cause...nor will it help you learn how to cope if they don't meet your expectations.

Make a list of the precise behaviours you would like them to adopt and why that will be helpful to you.

- Do you need them to keep snack foods out of the common kitchen area because you find it too tempting to stray from your plan when those items are in plain sight? Write that down.
- Would it help if they eat dessert in another part of the house rather than at the dinner table because sweets are a particular area of difficulty for you? Put that on the list.
- Would you prefer that no one discusses food at all because it makes you feel pressured? Jot that down.

Then present it to your family out loud... but do be prepared to negotiate a bit. They may not all be on board and that's ok... this is where open discussion begins to find a solution that everyone is comfortable with.

Sometimes if you can offer something in exchange for their cooperation, it may be easier for them to buy into the idea. For example:

- They can eat their way most of the week but the family could decide together on a meal that follows your plan on, say, Wednesdays. Perhaps when they see that healthy doesn't mean sacrificing taste, it will make them more receptive to eating this way more often.
- Regardless of how they eat, perhaps they can stick to a regular meal schedule to help you out by having set meal times and cut down the snacking opportunities.
- Assume the responsibility for making the agreed-upon changes. Come to an agreement about how to handle the new plan – ask them if it's ok if you remind them about a part of the agreement that they forget. For the time being, this is your personal project. But maybe once they see for themselves the benefits you're gaining, they may decide down the road that this could be a family affair. As you know, the old saying about being able to "lead a horse to water, but not make him drink" is especially true with lifestyle changes. People come around in their own time; for now, this is about you, and that's fine.

Other ideas for your list might include asking them to:

- Avoid making negative comments about your efforts or the foods you eat.
- Offer encouraging words on a regular basis. Positive reinforcement can make it easier to stick with your plan and help you get back on track if you veer off course.
- Help you celebrate milestones by indulging in a spa day or taking a healthy cooking class.
- Be a healthy food cheerleader by encouraging you to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Be Realistic

Although you would like their support and it's important that you tell them so, it's also important that they understand – and that you believe – that you don't expect them to change their lives for you. Remember, you've been considering this for a while...they are just being made privy to a lifestyle change now. If you can get them to agree to adopt a few of the same eating habits as you are, then consider that a win. Also, bear in mind that they can support you even if they don't change their ways one iota. Keep your expectations low and realistic, and as previously mentioned, remain open to negotiation. Your commitment will be key in showing how serious you are and may even inspire the most reluctant of your friends and family to make some changes of their own!

Friends or Foes?

Change – even for the better – can sometimes throw people for a loop. When someone is used to relating to you a certain way, then any change in that can cause insecurity. Food and eating are traditionally very social activities and we sometimes develop relationships with people that revolve around reinforcing each other's less healthy habits. Some families/friends enable each other by being a safe place to bond over high fat, high sugar desserts. It's possible that your change to a healthier lifestyle might cause a friend or family member to take stock of their own eating and activity habits and feel “inferior”. In such cases, you may notice that those people might say or do things to make you question your choices or make you feel bad. In what may seem like a plot to help you fail they may bug you to eat more than you want to, may make fun of the new foods you're trying or may even remind you of how many times you weren't successful in making healthy changes in the past. Realize that your commitment to change may be making them feel you want to discard them along with your unwanted snacks! They may feel left out, or they may not like the attention you are receiving for taking charge of your health.

Communication is key. They may not even realize they are doing this or that it's hurting you. Ask them what's going on and reassure them that you can do other things to maintain your relationship other than focusing on food.



What Can I Do?

Aside from being clear and consistent in what you need, there are some other ways that you can include your loved ones and get them to help rather than hinder you!

Where?

- **Designate certain rooms as food-free areas.** If the kitchen was your former hangout/office/socializing room, pick another place to read your mail, help with homework, and make your phone calls. The less time you spend in the kitchen, the more likely you are to avoid absent-minded snacking.

Who?

- **Find a food friend** – either a family member or a friend who has similar motivation to get healthy and manage their weight. Someone who shares your goals can act as a cheerleader for your successes and as a support in times of struggle. You can share tips and tricks for recipes, introducing new foods, and other inspiring healthy ideas!
- Take the opportunity to teach your kids or other family members about what you've learned so far. Help them learn to listen to their body's signals of being full versus being stuffed. Enlist their help in keeping you on track if the temptation is too great, and being supportive in helping you get back on track if you indulge once in a while!

What?

- Tell your family which foods you find particularly difficult to avoid and ask them to keep them out of sight. Perhaps they can keep their preferred snack foods in sealed storage containers in their bedrooms. You can also ask for their help by requesting that they not leave food on the table when they are done with their meals.
- Designate a cupboard and/or fridge shelf that is strictly devoted to healthy snacks and foods. Ask that everyone respects the contents and takes care to not mix in unhealthy items.

How?

- Even if it hasn't been your habit until now, try to get everyone on board with keeping to a regular family meal schedule. When everyone is doing their own thing, mealtimes become a solo activity and everyone loses out on the social aspect. When families try as much as possible to eat dinner together they generally eat healthier foods. The side benefit is that you may even get to know each other again in this tech-driven era!



Mind Shift



From here

"My kids don't need a diet and I can't afford to cook different meals for everyone with my busy schedule."

"I'm afraid people will get upset because I'm putting my needs at the forefront and that the things that we used to enjoy doing together -- like eating -- will now keep us apart."

To here

"I'm just going to keep focusing on a healthier lifestyle. There is a lot of online support and people to follow on Instagram and other social media platforms...maybe I could be one of them! My kids may see it's cool to make healthy choices!"

"I can't control how people will react to the changes I am making, but I can control how I react to their reactions. I know my relationships are based on more than the social activity of eating. We will find other ways to connect and make memories."

How to get there

Be honest with your family about why you are so motivated to make these changes. Let them know how you feel better about yourself. If they forget about the things you discussed that will help you stay on track, just gently remind them. Remember, this is a change for them too.

Understand that it can take a while for people to adapt to change... especially if they found mutual comfort/support for *their* unhealthy eating and activity habits that you both shared. Be mindful of being overzealous or trying to change them. You may indeed become an inspiration for examining their own habits but it isn't something you can force upon them.

Your loved ones don't have to change a thing to be able to provide words of support. Be creative in replacing old food-related activities with healthier ones. For instance, if you and your loved one had a monthly pizza date, you can replace it with a healthy activity like a walk or movie date. You can also keep your pizza outing but keep it to a single slice and add a salad.



***You have the knowledge
you need to succeed!***

And remember, if at any time you have questions about your **CONTRAVE** therapy and would like to speak to a nurse counsellor, call **1-855-CNTRAVE (1-855-268-7283)** from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday EST.

CONTRAVE is a prescription medicine that is used for weight management:

- in patients who have obesity or;
- in patients with overweight and at least one medical condition associated with their weight (such as high blood pressure that is controlled with medicine, Type 2 diabetes, or a high amount of lipids (cholesterol or other types of fat) in the blood).

CONTRAVE should be used along with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity.

CONTRAVE should be taken exactly as your Healthcare Professional tells you to.

Please refer to the **Patient Medication Information** insert in your product package for important safety information.

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