

Health Series #2: 12 Steps to Optimal Health

November 17, 2016

I'm pleased to introduce this month's guest Dona Bradley.

Dona Bradley is the manager of CSNN (Canadian School of Natural Nutrition) Vancouver Island.

Dona is here to share 12 Steps to Optimal Health, the second in this series, and like the first, one of the most basic and misunderstood requirements of life. Dona also touches on supporting locally grown food and the Optimal Diet.

You can learn more about Dona and the CSNN by calling: 250-741-4805 or go to: <http://csnn.ca/nanaimo>

12 Steps to Optimal Health

- 1.** Drink plenty of fresh clean water daily. Start your day off with ½ a lemon squeezed into a glass of water. This is cleansing to the liver and a good way to kick-start your digestion.
- 2.** Eat a diet rich in fresh whole foods (organic if at all possible). A plant based diet, vegetarian or not, is high in fibre, rich in antioxidants and nutrients. Follow the 80/20 rule which means that 80% of the food on your plate should consist of natural unprocessed good quality foods. These should be vegetables – fresh and organic if possible, whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, and legumes. This can include wild fish, poultry (organic free range if possible) and meat (pasture-raised organic if possible). Whole foods take more time to prepare, but with forethought and planning, this can be easily accomplished.
- 3.** Try to avoid processed foods. Avoid , poor quality fats, sugar, refined salt, excess caffeine and alcohol, nicotine and drugs (both pharmaceutical and recreational). Rotate foods to avoid constant exposure to allergens such as wheat, eggs, citrus and dairy.
- 4.** Increase digestion. Eat food mindfully, chewing thoroughly. Do not drink large quantities of liquids while eating solid foods. Increase stomach acidity (HCl) by drinking a bit of apple cider vinegar or lemon juice with honey and 4 oz of water, 15 minutes before eating. Taking betaine before meals can be helpful (consult with a holistic nutritionist regarding this). If you have difficulty digesting certain foods, take a good quality digestive enzyme complex at that meal. Digestion can also be increased by practicing Simple Food Combining.
- 5.** Increase consumption of raw lactic acid fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchee, cucumber or other vegetable pickles, miso soup for their probiotic qualities or take a good quality probiotic.
- 6.** Help your liver by doing a gentle cleanse twice yearly, plus consuming foods that support a healthy liver: carrots, greens, beets, apples, pears, watercress, radish, parsley, artichokes, cherries, grapefruit, parsnips, garlic and onions. Fresh fruit and vegetable juices are very beneficial.
- 7.** Eat more foods containing Omega 3, 6 and 9 essential fatty acids, or supplement with capsules or oil. Avoid poor quality refined fats and trans fats such as hydrogenated oils, shortening etc. found in refined and package foods. Emphasize good quality fats from flax, hemp, olive oil, butter, coconut oil.
- 8.** Exercise daily. Get plenty of outdoor exercise. Practice meditation. Laugh often. Enjoy friends.
- 9.** Supplement your diet with a good quality multiple vitamin/mineral with at least 25 mg. B complex, calcium/magnesium, Vitamin E, Vitamin C, cod liver oil.

10. Practice good sleep hygiene. Turn off all electronics at least one hour before bedtime, keep electronics out of the bedroom. Make sure that your bedroom is dark. Get plenty of sleep, ideally 8 hours.

11. Support your health by supporting local organic agriculture. Save money by eating with the seasons. In the winter, we can eat food like cabbage, carrots, beets, parsnips, squash, potatoes, kale, chard at a very reasonable price. Buying green beans from the garden in the summer makes good economic sense, but purchasing them from far-away lands in the winter is costly on many levels. Plant some crops in your backyard for nearly year-round harvesting. A small greenhouse or “cloches” can lengthen the harvest by many months. Greens are cool weather crops that grow well here on the “shoulder seasons”.

12. Learn how to sprout grains and beans for winter eating. This only takes minutes per day but is very economical instead of buying far-away greens.

If you want to try eating local and sustainably grown food but think you can't afford to spend more on food, here are some strategies:

- Save money by eating with the seasons. In the winter, we can eat food like cabbage, carrots, beets, parsnips, squash, potatoes, kale, chard at a very reasonable price. Buying green beans from the garden in the summer makes good economic sense, but purchasing them from far-away lands in the winter is costly on many levels.
- Plant some of these crops in your backyard for nearly year-round harvesting. A small greenhouse or “cloches” can lengthen the harvest by many months. Greens are cool weather crops that grow well here on the “shoulder seasons”.
- Choose basic foods and cook from scratch. For instance, instead of buying canned beans, get dried beans, soak and cook. You will pay a fraction of the cost by using dried beans (save even more by drying your own beans from the garden).
- Learn how to sprout grains and beans for winter eating. This only takes minutes per day but is very economical instead of buying far-away greens.
- Eliminate packaged refined foods from your shopping list. The foods to eliminate are sugary carbonated beverages, bottled water, white sugar, processed desserts and snacks, white bread, luncheon meats, TV dinners, frozen pizza, boxed cereals, farmed salmon, and factory-farm meats.
- Join with your neighbours to buy from a local buying club. You can purchase large bags of sustainably grown food, cases of staples, share with your friends and enjoy the savings.
- Buy local foods at the peak of the season when the price is the most reasonable, and then preserve them for later eating.

All of these strategies will save money so that you can pay a little bit more for those luscious bunch carrots, local strawberries or blueberries in season. Once you bite into a fresh crispy local apple or celery you will never want to eat their commercially grown counterparts again!

The fact that you will be helping the local economy, the environment, your own health and the biodiversity of our small local farms and not supporting the industrial based food system is a reward in itself.

Supporting local agriculture in our own communities and talking to friends, family and neighbours about food is a start in changing from an industrial based food system to one that supports self-sufficiency where food sovereignty is the priority and fair trade prevails.

OPTIMAL DIET: This diet will make cleansing less of a necessity in the future, and keep you healthy for life!

- Plenty of organic fruits and vegetables. Lots of colour and variety.
- Organic whole grains such as brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats etc.
- At least 30 grams of fibre daily (from fruits, legumes, grains, vegetables, nuts and seeds).
- Good quality fats from flax, hemp, olive oil, butter, coconut oil
- Ample clean filtered water.
- Avoid eating processed and refined foods and eat only whole natural foods.
- Eat good quality protein every day (fresh fish, tofu, legumes, organic meats).
- Avoid dairy, poor quality fats, sugar, refined salt, excess caffeine and alcohol, nicotine and drugs (both pharmaceutical and recreational).
- Rotate foods to avoid constant exposure to allergens such as wheat, eggs, citrus and dairy.

Dona Bradley, November, 2016