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Fall 2021

### Junky to Healthy

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Author Note

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## Abstract

Eating healthy is not always easy. In fact it can be quite challenging especially if you think you are alone. A support group is a great way to feel like you are not alone. This is not your average support group. Since I am a little rough around the edges, you could say the support group is too. It does have structure because I want it to succeed but people can yell, scream, cuss and throw squishy balls at the wall.

## **Introduction to your Capstone Project**

### **Section 1: Innovative Approach**

Eating healthy is very challenging especially when most things that are unhealthy for us are so convenient. What better way to start eating healthier than to do it with others who also want to eat healthier? A support group is an innovative way to help others along a lifelong journey. The support group is a group of my coworkers who want to eat healthier for various reasons such as weight loss, better health, more energy and/or better sleep. A few stakeholders would be myself (which I'll have to define as the leader), my coworkers (members of the support group) and lastly health insurance companies.

My approach is action. This action includes weekly surveys, pictures and weekly meetings. The surveys are to track the progress on energy levels, sleep quality and overall feelings on how they feel as a whole. Pictures are for visual representation. We look at ourselves every day, it is difficult to see the change that way. The meetings are with myself and my coworkers. The weekly meetings are to build on small but healthy changes that can be stuck to. Small changes over time tend to stick instead of big changes quickly.

Insight from others is helpful in a group setting. To hear what works for others can be helpful not only to me but other members of the group. Even though I consider myself a healthy eater there is always room for improvement even for myself. As the weeks moved forward we all shared recipes for dinner, lunches and smoothies. As a

fun activity I brought my blender along with almond milk, the other group members brought fruits and vegetables. We tried various combinations of juices and smoothies. Trying these various combinations can really give us a feel on what fuels our body the best. Not everyone is exactly the same.

## **Section 2: Emotional Intelligence**

I thought I would be better at the talking or discussing part of the group since I have worked with the group members for years. This makes me feel a little annoyed with myself. I talk to them every day. When everyone's eyes are on me I get all tongue tied. It is very frustrating for me. When I have something I want to explain, it makes so much sense in my head but when it comes out I get confused looks with questions. I do answer them after explaining more than I thought I would have to explain.

The emotional state of others is somewhat fragile when it comes to their health. Some are sad they have "let themselves go " while others are very mad about it. I am hyper aware of how others do not want to hold themselves accountable. For example, "I could not eat the things I am supposed to eat because of baseball practice, dance, etc...for the kids", which really shows the importance of meal planning.. Eating healthy is not easy, society has made it very easy to eat terribly but we have to rise above. We have to plan better, not only for ourselves but also for our children so they do not need to eat terrible food either.

My proposal has not changed but it has changed the amount of effort required. I am more of a nagging mother sometimes. So instead of nagging, I want them to come up with a plan to overcome a poor choice.

Emotional Intelligence has to be considered while doing this type of approach, since diet and/or weight can be hard on some people emotionally. The level of discussing and explaining how food is fuel for life does require a lot of emotional intelligence. Some people find food comforting for various reasons, happiness or sadness, etc.

Eating healthy, shopping on the outside of the store and saying no to fast food helps you in so many ways. Energy levels change, they get better and higher. Sleep improves, quality and the amount needed gets better. There is a high probability that the caffeine people think they need will get less too. It could have many other health benefits too. Such as weight loss, lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar levels and a better lipid panel.

### **Section 3: Creative Thinking**

Since my approach is action my movements within the group need to be action based. Action models have to be done with some creativity. Some creative actions are models, engagement, things and socially. For engagement and social participation I want everyone to discuss one step forward and one step back. Meaning, describe the one main positive and negative from the previous week in relation to food, cooking, or eating habits. This is not optional, everyone has to talk or at least write it down during the surveys. Then I can discuss on their behalf, anonymously if they so choose. I think this will be effective because others may have a similar set but discussed how they overcame it. For a model, I am asking everyone to bring in one fruit and one vegetable. I will bring coconut water and almond milk. I want us to figure out a good juice or

smoothie combination to drink every day for the next week, then keep a journal of how we felt while drinking it.

The action approach through a group gives us the opportunity to try new things and explore new ideas. When we bounce ideas off of each other it is the breeding ground for better ideas. The smoothie or juice idea could really help people. They are many benefits, decreased bloating, swelling, water retention and/or joint pain just to name a few. It gives us all a chance to be creative while having healthy eating habits.

#### **Section 4: Your Innovative Solution**

My project is eating healthy through a group meeting. I have designed this group and my workers are the group members. The process is sort of like dealing with toddlers. My co-workers whine and complain along with loads of excuses. There are always going to be birthday parties, holidays and celebrations. Smart choices just need to be made. The innovation here is that I have come up with many ideas that I never thought I had. For example, when there is a party just make smart decisions. If someone had a goal of weight loss then calories need to be cut before or after so someone can still eat the cake which has more calories.

I believe that my solution gives people control of their bodies while still enjoying some of the unhealthier things in life. One of the things I do, if I know, I am going to dinner and likely make poorer choices in food then I alter things before dinner. It might

be smaller portions or eating lower calorie yet filling food throughout the day before dinner.

### **Section 5: Results**

The benefits to the stakeholders, which are those trying to eat healthier, insurance companies and myself, could literally be endless. Changing our eating habits to that of a healthier style has so many benefits, improved overall health and well being. The stakeholders could decrease their BMI with weight loss. Their energy levels will increase along with quality of sleep. Other major health benefits such as glucose levels and cholesterol have been improved through better eating. Many of these changes decrease risk of heart disease, obesity, hypertension and diabetes which increases their longevity.

I had a very enjoyable experience doing this project. I did not think I would gain much from this project. I learned a lot about myself along the way. One thing is even though I thought I did well with my eating I can do better. I also learned I really enjoy helping people do better and reach their goals.

I am not sure if this is positive or negative but change does not happen without commitment. Meaning just saying, "I want to eat healthier" does not mean much unless someone actually commits to eating healthier. Throughout this whole process there were so many excuses from adults. I am grateful my peers were my co-workers, as they were forgiving when I was not as nice as I would have liked. This taught me I need to

continue to work on that aspect of myself. If these were people I did not know, feelings would have been hurt in a different way.

There were so many positive outcomes from the “eating healthy support group.” Many of the people lost weight and are feeling great. A few people have lab work to get in the near future and I am excited to see those results. For one person, changing their diet while adding regular exercise has increased their energy so much they have given up coffee/caffeine. This makes me so, so excited. We have decided to get this going for some people.

### **Section 6: Conclusion**

When I began this project for eating healthy in a group setting I was unsure how it would go. Overall, I am so surprised how well everyone did. Of course, some people fell off of the wagon but they picked themselves up and kept moving forward. I believe it would have been harder to pick up and keep moving forward if there was not the encouragement from the group.

We had a little bit of a funny thing happen. One week we decided that if we saw each other eating something we should not be eating that we would “slap it out of the hands” of whoever is eating the not so healthy food.

There were so many improvements throughout this project of those deciding to change their eating habits. Some people took weekly photos, there were so many different improvements. Some were thinner and some looked awake, healthier with improvement in skin appearances. Even in the short period of time, some had improvement in blood sugars and cholesterol. Others lowered their blood pressure.

The bottom line is if food is convenient, processed and is in a bag from a factory it is not good quality food. If you are shopping on the outside of the grocery store then you are doing a pretty good job. Eating healthy has many benefits but that does not mean you cannot ever eat your favorite icecream again. It has to be in moderation on a certain day of the week.

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