

# Small decisions can lead to BIG outcomes

*Just ask these health experts*

**I**mproving our health can feel like an overwhelming, complicated mission requiring boot-camp like discipline.

To lose 20 pounds, for example, the diet industry might have you believing you need to follow a strict meal plan of one carrot and a side of cardboard.

Oh wait, too many carbs in that carrot. Make that one side of bacon and a piece of lettuce.

Nope, eating meat will destroy the planet. Eat plants, only.

But only eat them between noon and 6 p.m.

Confusing.

In his best-selling book, "Atomic Habits," James Clear discusses the idea of habits as the "compound interest" of self-improvement.

Instead of trying to create a radical transformation, he touts making small, easy changes that, over time, lead to big outcomes.

"If you can get 1 percent better each day for one year, you'll end up 37 times better by the time you're done," Clear writes on his website.

We emailed health and wellness experts in the Wenatchee Valley to get their tips on small, daily behaviors that can make big, compounding changes. Our experts represent a range of specialties in traditional medicine, yoga, gardening and even pets.

Not surprisingly, their advice focuses primarily on movement, sleep and diet as primary drivers of health. However, the importance of mindfulness, meditation and stress management are also mentioned.

Wenatchee strength coach Ruben Payan advises that our mindset lays the groundwork for success on our



Carin Smith



Scott and Diane Parsons

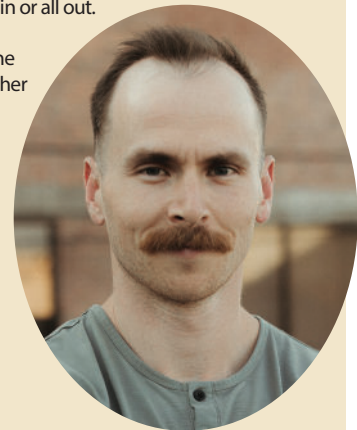
## DITCH THE BINARY APPROACH

"Most people are either all in or all out.

When in reality, the little here and the little there go so much further than being all in for three months and all out for the next nine.

I constantly tell clients, 'Some is better than none, and a little is better than a lot.'

Especially if we are really playing the long game (which must be the goal in my opinion)."



### Cy Grimmert,

Wenatchee physical therapist and founder of Forge Physio

path to health.

"In your pursuit of health and fitness, resist the urge to compare your journey to others," he says. "Every moment you spend measuring your progress against someone else's is energy diverted from your own growth. Cherish your unique path and celebrate every step forward; the progress you make is yours alone."

Ruth Parsons, a licensed clinical social worker living in Wenatchee, reminds us to practice mindful self-compassion. "I believe that (is) the single most important habit people can practice for quality of life," she says.

"Mindful self compassion is the practice of noticing our own suffering with kindness, acceptance and a desire to help, just as we would a friend," Parsons continues. "Our modern brain has a hair trigger for 'what's wrong.' Dwelling in this mindset results in self-criticism, feeling isolated and 'stuck in a rut.' Mindful self-compassion is the practice of noticing negative self-talk without judgment and asking yourself, 'What would help me get through the difficulty in this mo-

**SLEEP AND EXERCISE ARE FOUNDATIONAL**

"There is no medication in the world that can compare to the benefits of eight hours of good sleep, nightly, and 30 minutes of exercise, daily. ... Sleep is medicine and affects everything else, including your emotional health, mental health, immune system, growth, hormone balance, and cardiovascular system. Exercise ... is a natural anti-depressant and, of course, provides a huge improvement in cardiovascular health, mental health, lowers blood pressure, lowers blood sugar, and helps maintain a healthy weight."



**Elizabeth Dunham,**  
otolaryngologist at Confluence Health in Wenatchee

**AVOID BEING SEDENTARY**

"Move. As much as possible. Take the stairs. Walk whenever possible. Our bodies are meant to move, and movement keeps us healthy and fit. It doesn't have to be extreme. Instead, focus on regular daily activity that is fun. It will help your body, mind, and spirit!"



**Becket Mahnke,**  
Confluence Health chief medical information officer and pediatric cardiologist

ment?"

Typically, we lose health slowly over time, so it follows that we may regain our health if we change our daily decisions over time.

Chad Hurst, of Hurst Chiropractic in East Wenatchee says: "All of us make hundreds of health decisions every day with every forkful of food, every

minute of activity, and with every moment we choose to put our brain under positive or negative influence. Your behaviors or habits are simply a summation of the small incremental choices you make every single day. This statement is both empowering and frightening to those who take their health seriously because it means that the person who has the greatest influence over your own personal health is you."

Health Coach Mericia Apfel of Wenatchee encourages us to detox from environmental pollutants in our everyday products for good health. "I believe most inflammation, gut issues and hormone imbalances are related to overuse of toxins that get stored

Use no more than half the trail when you're in a group, pushing a stroller.

10 MPH

Please keep pets on 6' or shorter leashes.

Give people a heads-up when you're passing - a bell ring or "on your left"

Thank you for keeping our parks safe and enjoyable -- for everyone!

**here for everyone!**

Check out our new video series:  
[chelanpud.org/parks-and-recreation/our-parks](http://chelanpud.org/parks-and-recreation/our-parks)

## IF YOU ADD JUST ONE EXERCISE

"Incorporating single-leg balance exercises into your daily routine is a low-energy, yet highly effective way to improve your physical well-being. This simple activity improves stability in the ankles, knees and hips, while also raising your body's awareness."

**Ruben Payan,**  
*Wenatchee strength coach*



## PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR POSTURE

"The most common posture, when done over months and years, that causes significant stress to the spine, changes the shape of the spine and increases muscle tension is forward head posture. This posture is most common when sitting at a desk or on soft furniture. The one small change a person can make daily is to sit up straight by lifting their chest and retracting their head so that their ear canal is over the point of their shoulder."

**Chad Hurst,**  
*chiropractor and owner of Hurst Chiropractic in East Wenatchee*



## LET FOOD BE THY MEDICINE

"If I had to pick one habit for anyone to implement daily, it would be to ingest an adequate amount of whole foods and nothing else. What I mean is, provide your body with enough food that has not been processed at all; or very minimally. Additives, preservatives, refined sugars, food coloring, excess calories from hidden ingredients ingested over time result in a plethora of chronic diseases."

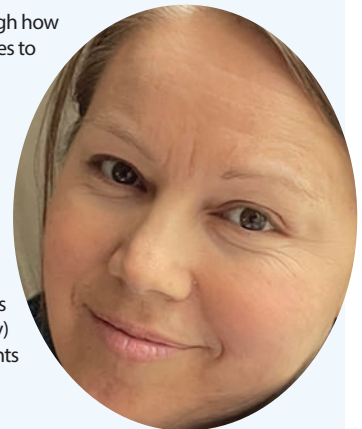
**Zarima Whiting,**  
*nurse and owner of Aloha Health Clinic in Wenatchee*



## ASSIST THE BODY IN CLEANSING

"I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for our bodies to detox. There are many daily ways to do this in our lifestyle. We can incorporate NASA-approved air purifying plants in our homes/office space; incorporate more cruciferous veggies and antioxidants in our daily meals; (use) infrared saunas and/or dry brushing ... (try) quality binding supplements ... etc."

**Mericia Apfel,**  
*Wenatchee health coach*



## WILLINGLY ACCEPT CHANGE

"I think being open to and allowing life to happen, even when painful, can be a person's healthiest choice ... As a massage therapist, the body shows me the resistance in a person's life. Every area of tension has a story of resistance attached to it. And it accumulates. As tension accumulates, pain increases and quality of life decreases. So the number one thing I think someone can do to improve their overall health is – find willingness to accept life's changes."

**Diana Grace,**  
*massage therapist and owner of Wenatchee's Strengthgrace*



in our fat cells," Apfel says. "Detoxing regularly may reduce the inflammation and other chronic health-related symptoms." She suggests adding more cruciferous veggies and antioxidants to our daily meals to help with detoxing.

Scott Parsons, 14-year host of the "Garden Guru" radio show on Wenatchee's KOHO FM, believes behaviors that are healthy for the planet are ones that are ultimately healthy for us.

"When one chooses to pursue the behaviors that contribute to a healthful food supply and educated population, the best outcomes will follow," Parsons says. "Becoming a net producer is a wonderful start in the garden. One quickly learns which foods are possible to produce in quantity, as well as how superior the cooking and eating qualities of these foods are. Stay active, get outside every day, rediscover common sense.

## MAKE MINDFULNESS A PRACTICE

"The most effective principle for improvement is consistency. As for what to practice, I'd recommend taking at least five minutes each day without distraction to intentionally still your body and mind, slow down your breath, and pay attention to how you feel on a whole. This will provide reprieve and balance for your nervous system and valuable insight into how to best care for your current self."

—Dakota Shae,  
co-founder of iLa Yoga in Wenatchee



Eat low on the food chain, to ensure a worldwide food supply for all."

Not forgetting our furry friends, veterinarian Megan

Kelley, of Cashmere Veterinary Clinic, identifies prevention as the key driver of health for our pets. "Weight management at a young age will set any size dog or cat up for success later in life. Even a moderately overweight dog will develop arthritis by age 6," she cautions.

Retired veterinarian and author Carin Smith of Wenatchee doubles down on this advice by recommending exercise for you and your dog: "Just get a dog and take your dog for a walk. Every day, twice a day, and start short if you are not used to walking," Smith says of building health. "Cats can also learn to go for walks on a leash, but it is much easier to teach them starting when they are young," Smith adds.

Improving our health by changing behaviors doesn't have to involve intense pain, sweat or hunger. Get started by choosing one of these tips from our health and wellness community. Optimize for the starting line, not the finish line, and build that 1% to a healthier you by Independence Day.

Still want to lose 20 pounds? For an average adult, skipping the afternoon chocolate chip cookie and adding a daily 30-minute walk could lead to a 24-pound weight loss in a year. **F**

## Try this simple meditation

Kari Lyons-Price of Meditate Wenatchee says, "The greatest thing you can do for your health is to begin to understand when your body is in stress-response mode and when it is not. Gaining this knowledge about how your system works is how you can begin to train yourself away from chronic stress, but you must include the body – it keeps the score."

She offers this mindfulness practice:

### Step 1: Pause and Connect

Find stillness anywhere, standing or sitting; close the eyes if that's OK, make contact with your body – a hand on the belly or chest – anywhere where your body needs connection or comfort.

### Step 2: Feel What is Here

Ask yourself, "Do I feel safe? Am I in stress response?" Turn your attention to the physical sensations of the body – heart rate, breathing, muscle tension or pain. If you find you are in a state of threat, anxiety or stress, ask yourself, "How did I get here?" Stay here and get familiar with what stress feels like in your body. Even though the mind says, "We're good," often the body has a different story, and it holds the key to unlocking our stress habits.

### Step 3: Invite Calm

Whether you find yourself in stress response or not, stay here for another full minute and focus on the breath, inviting calm, ease and connection into your whole system.

It takes time and this is a practice, so keep going, maybe several times every day, for 2-3 minutes at a time. You could even keep a journal and note each day what you find, what stress feels like and if you are able to shift out of it. Habits take a long time to form and take equal commitment to transform.

*Meditate Wenatchee partners with Wellness Place to offer support for cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers. A free, in-person summer program on mindfulness-based stress reductions is in the works. For more information, contact Wellness Place at 509-888-9933 or [info@wellnessplace-wenatchee.org](mailto:info@wellnessplace-wenatchee.org).*



Kari Lyons-Price