

Meals are Like Sonnets

My client Mary has maintained her nearly 20 pound weight loss for several months now. She's confident that she'll continue to eat a nourishing, calorie-controlled diet and will not revisit those lost pounds. Why?

I asked Mary what she attributes her success to and she said, "I learned the rules. Meals are like sonnets. Once you know the rules, there are an infinite number of ways to make a meal."

I like this description. With my guidance, Mary came up with her own rules. Instead of following a 7-day menu from the internet or a list of rules in a diet book, Mary played with her diet and her environment (at home and work) until she found the set of rules that worked for her.

Want to see them? Here are some of the highlights...

1. **Start the day with a balanced breakfast.** Make sure it includes a good source of protein. Sometimes Mary eats leftovers for breakfast — a lean hamburger or a piece of chicken fills her up for longer than a bowl of cereal.

2. **Eat three meals a day.** Mary packs a lunch for work, every day. Before figuring out her eating habits, she skipped lunch and snacked throughout the day.
3. **Eat low-calorie foods** like fruits and non-starchy vegetables at every meal. This keeps Mary feeling full with fewer calories.
4. **Exercise.** Every day.
5. **Plan ahead.** This will help you stick to these rules.

The bottom line is that there are many ways to a healthy plate. The critical, but often overlooked, part is that we have to figure out what our healthy plate looks like and what we need to do to create it.

A healthy diet and losing weight are not about following someone else's set of rules. Rather we may need to stumble a bit and try out new ideas to create our own best plan.

A skilled nutritionist can help you define your own rules, so you can create your best diet, packed with satisfying health-boosting, disease-fighting foods.

By Jill Weisenberger, MS, RDN, CDE, FAND



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