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A Back-to-School Fitness and Nutrition Breakdown: Eight Lessons You May Need to Relearn

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Your school days may be long behind you, but that doesn't mean you know it all. According to Warren Honeycutt, many of us are operating under erroneous assumptions when it comes to fitness and nutrition, and for the sake of our health, it's time to relearn those lessons. Here, he shines a light on eight common myths.

Now that your kids are back in school and your family's schedule is beginning to

normalize, you may be thinking of starting that exercise regimen or healthy diet you never managed to get off the ground in between summer camps, pool trips, and family vacations. But before you hit the gym, Warren Honeycutt has a question for you: Do you *really* know all you think you do about healthy living?

Misinformation about what's healthy and what's not often masquerades as "common knowledge" and "common sense," he says—and what better time than back-to-school to relearn lessons you may have gotten wrong the first time around?

"If you want to (finally!) move the needle on your health and fitness, you have to separate fact from fiction, once and for all," says Honeycutt, author of *Get Lean for Life: 7 Keys to Lasting Weight*.

"While willpower and motivation are crucial ingredients of positive change, they won't do you much good if they are driving unhealthy habits."

A respected expert in weight loss, fitness, and nutrition, Honeycutt knows what works and what doesn't. He is a championship bodybuilder who has been a Southern Classic Physique Champion, two-time Mr. Tennessee, and six-time Mr. America finalist. Now, at age 62, he enjoys perfect health without any prescription medications. Honeycutt offers personalized fitness training through his comprehensive Get Lean program, which features detailed fitness videos for exercising at the gym, at home, at the office, and while traveling; personalized meal plans; motivational material; and more.



Here, Honeycutt reveals eight common-but-bogus nutrition and fitness lessons you need to stop believing—and what to do instead:

Bogus Lesson #1: Cardio is all you need. Most of us know that cardio (i.e., aerobic activities like running, swimming, biking, etc.) is great for the heart, lungs, and burning fat. So as long as you're raising your heart rate and breaking a sweat on a regular basis, you should start seeing the results you want, right? Well, yes—but only to an extent. While cardio *will* help you lose weight, it does little to tone muscles, strengthen ligaments and tendons, or increase bone density.

“Most people want to not only lose fat; they also want to look and feel good in the process,” says Honeycutt. “So if you're working toward a more toned and trimmed body, you'll need to add strength and resistance training activities into your repertoire, too. This will help you develop the shape you desire.

“I recommend spending 30 minutes doing resistance training three times each week, immediately followed by 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic activity,” he adds. “By doing resistance training first, you'll deplete your body of glycogen, meaning that when you start the cardio portion of your workout, you'll begin burning fat immediately. However, if cardio is first, it will take roughly 30 minutes before you begin to burn fat.”

Bogus Lesson #2: When it comes to weight loss, all you need to remember is “calories in, calories out.” Yes, it would be nice if weight loss worked just like basic arithmetic, and all you had to do was burn more calories than you eat. However, not all calories are created equal.

“The only place where a ‘calorie is a calorie’ is the dictionary,” comments Honeycutt. “In reality, the body digests and metabolizes different foods very differently. For example, if you eat 100 calories of simple carbohydrates, they will be digested quickly—and if you don't burn them almost immediately, they will be stored as fat. However, 100 calories of protein will be digested much more slowly and can be burned over the course of several hours.”

Bogus Lesson #3: “If I can get it off, I can keep it off.” Many people assume that once they can finally fit back into their “skinny” jeans, they'll be home free. But according to Honeycutt, that all depends on *how* they lose the weight. For instance, many people who use boxed meal programs gain back the lost weight (and then some) once they go off the program because they haven't been

educated on how to eat for life. Similarly, restrictive diets tend not to provide lasting results because practitioners simply aren't willing to avoid a long list of foods (many of which they may love) for the rest of their lives.

“This is why I really don't use the word 'diet' (yes, it really *is* a four-letter word): It makes people think that once the desired weight has been lost, they can 'stop dieting,’” he shares. “The only way to keep weight off after you've lost it is to make sustainable changes that you can stick with for a lifetime.”



Bogus Lesson #4: Salads are always a healthy choice. Their primary ingredient is leafy greens, and, usually, they involve other vegetables too. So salads *must* be one of the healthiest choices on any menu, right? Not always. Depending on the dressing and other toppings like cheese, croutons, and meat, many salads are actually full of unhealthy sugar, calories, and fat.

“For instance, the quesadilla explosion salad at Chili's has 1,430 calories,” Honeycutt points out. “Compare that to the grilled chicken sandwich, which has 1,100 calories, the chipotle steak bowl with 970 calories, or the ancho salmon with 600 calories. While many restaurants *are* doing a much better job of offering healthy options for diners, those options aren't always what we think they are. When eating out, take a moment to look over nutrition information online, and, overall, educate yourself about nutrition so that you can make educated guesses.”



Bogus Lesson #5: When shopping, look for items that say “natural” or “healthy.” If you're faced with two similar products at the grocery store and you purchase the one that claims to be made

with “natural ingredients,” you probably assume that you’re doing your health a favor, right? Not necessarily. Unfortunately, you can’t always take food packaging at face value.

“Remember that marketers’ jobs are to make you buy their products, *not* to safeguard your health,” Honeycutt says. “Just because a package says ‘all natural’ or ‘whole grain’ doesn’t mean it’s not still loaded with sugar or calories. For instance, one popular cereal that’s generally reckoned to be healthy has 11 grams of sugar per serving! If you want to get an accurate picture of what you’re buying, read the nutrition facts and ingredients, not just claims on the box front.”



Bogus Lesson #6: Writing everything down can’t make that much of a difference. You may have heard that when you’re starting a new nutrition plan, it helps to write down everything you eat and drink, right down to the smallest snack and sip of soda. You may also have thought, *That just sounds like a lot of work for very little reward. And anyway, I thought I left note-taking behind when I finished school! I can remember what I ate without writing it down.*

“But that’s the thing—we *don’t* remember...or we remember selectively,” Honeycutt comments. “It’s so easy to forget about the piece of candy you picked up from a bowl on a colleague’s desk, or to tell yourself that you didn’t eat *that* many French fries. But when you get into the habit of writing everything down, you’re forced to pay attention, and you make better decisions. The good news is, after the first month or two, you really can rely on your memory, because healthy habits will be second nature.”

Bogus Lesson #7: “I’ve been exercising and eating healthy for four months. I’m home free.” Sooner or later, maybe even after months of living healthy, something will happen that causes you to veer off track. Perhaps you’ll overindulge in decadent meals while on vacation, or you’ll get out of the habit of exercising during a busy period at work. Then you think, *Well, that’s it. I failed. I’m not cut out for this kind of lifestyle.* And before you know it, you’re back to your old unhealthy habits.

“First, let me assure you that everyone—yours truly included—falls of the wagon sometimes,” Honeycutt says. “WHEN, not IF, it happens to you, keep your focus forward. Instead of beating yourself up about your mistakes, direct your mental energy to planning your next meal or workout. Remind yourself that tomorrow is a fresh chance to make good decisions. Think about it this way: If we all gave up the first time we stalled while learning to drive, we’d all still be walking! Treat your fitness mistakes the same way you would mistakes in any new endeavor.”

Bogus Lesson #8: “Joining a gym will help me kick start my fitness journey.” Once you’ve made the decision to get fit, it’s tempting to head to the gym and sign up for a membership (and maybe

buy some brand-new workout gear on the way home). But while enthusiasm is a good thing, allowing it to convince you to shell out a bunch of cash up front probably isn't the best idea.

“If you talk to gym employees, they're likely to tell you many new members show up regularly for a few weeks, then drop off the face of the earth,” Honeycutt shares. “Often, the problem is a lack of motivation once the initial enthusiasm fades. And sometimes, gym rookies are so intimidated by the ‘regulars’ they stop coming! That’s why I advise you to start small when integrating exercise into your life. A pair of tennis shoes, elastic exercise bands, and 5- or 10-pound dumbbells are all you need to get started. Once you have established a physical fitness habit, *then* you can upgrade to that gym membership.”

“Knowledge really is power when it comes to creating and sustaining a healthy lifestyle,” Honeycutt concludes. “This fall, use the tried, true, and proven best practices I’ve just shared to help you improve your fitness and nutrition report card. Talk about lessons that will really pay off over a lifetime!”

About the Author:

Warren Honeycutt is the author of *Get Lean for Life: 7 Keys to Lasting Weight Loss*. An expert in weight loss, fitness, and nutrition, he is a championship bodybuilder who has been a Southern Classic Physique Champion, two-time Mr. Tennessee, and six-time Mr. America finalist. To learn more, please visit www.getlean.guru.