



Salsa **S**exyTM

Life style journey to
lose weight
have fun
live positively

Jeanel Carlson

<http://salsasexy.com>

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Dedicated to all our friends and family that kept asking, "How did you guys do it? You look great!" Your positive response was our inspiration and we are grateful.

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Introduction:

Welcome to the journey of Salsa Sexy

If you want my body, and you think I'm sexy,
come on girl and let me know.

— Rod Stuart

Chapter 1:

Do you want to get Salsa Sexy?

Welcome to the journey of Salsa Sexy! This book is a guide for people who want to lose weight, live positively and use an activity like dance to resurrect the sexy diva or dynamo within.

My husband Shahrouz and I are not psychologists or dietitians. He is an aerospace engineer with a PhD and I'm a business professional who is also a certified yoga instructor. We are a financially secure couple with a decent income and no kids, which has given us the fortunate opportunity to travel extensively, to see wondrous lands, to enjoy fine dining and wine. Even though we had denied it would catch up to us, by pursuing this over-consumption lifestyle, we knew deep down that the moment would come where we'd stand in the front of mirror and regret what we saw. The rolls of fat around the thighs, stomach and puffy face with double chins developed slowly and were not pleasing to the eye.

Shahrouz and I have been married for more than 15 years. Before marriage, Shahrouz was 170 lbs and I was 115 lbs. During our marriage, we exercised regularly for minimum of 30 minutes almost everyday and had a fairly active

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lifestyle. However, the level of activity was not enough to prevent us from gaining weight. We could not sustain continued weight gain and on the other hand we could not stop traveling, eating in restaurants nor did we stop drinking.

Soon our happiness declined and maintaining health and weight loss became the core part of our life. We kept traveling, tried to order healthy foods in restaurants and began watching our weight. However, as we tried harder and harder to lose weight, we actually gained more. Our big mistake: we adopted a diet program rather than changing our lifestyle. We learned the hard way that diets alone do not work.

We knew we had to change our lifestyle, but we could not find a path that fit our personalities. We had mental obstacles with a subconscious mindset telling ourselves that it was hard to change and we couldn't do it. We had friends and family who fit the overeating and drinking way of life and it was hard to set new boundaries with a group who overindulged. We had time pressures with work travel that gave us excuses not to change our lifestyle. The list goes on and on.

One day Shahrouz stepped on the scale and saw a number that he could never believe he could reach — 210 pounds! And I put on clothes that once fit me perfectly and now I looked ridiculous in or I just couldn't fit into. Reluctantly I approached the scale to learn I weighed 137 pounds. It was the "ah ha" moment and time to confront the fears, patterns, addictions, excuses and insecurities, and take action. Time to become the people we wanted to be instead of resolving to become old and fat. It was time to throw out the diet and do the necessary soul searching, because the change needed to come from within first.

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Change started with the mind first and then progressed by developing the commitment and dedication despite the consequences. Some friends stopped calling and coming around as new friends with similar interests emerged. A strong sense of resolve cultivated as it takes great courage to get out of your comfort zone. There were some rocky moments as a lifestyle transition pushes you to new heights. However, the lifestyle change has led to one of the most fun, rewarding and exciting times of our lives. We look better today than we have since our teenage years, we have dropped the weight back to when we were first married, and have a more positive outlook on life than before.

We are regular people on a quest for a happier and more fulfilling life. We've found strategies that have worked for us, and we want to share those insights to help others live happier lives. Salsa Sexy combines the best of all the disciplines we've encountered presented in a very practical way with actions and tools to help you on your journey.

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The beginning

The evolution of this journey of salsa started when Shahrouz and I met back in 1994; brought together because we both loved to dance. We met at a party he had at his apartment. He said that I crashed the party because I showed up tagging along with friends without a formal invite. When I arrived, there was Shahrouz: a tall, broad, confident man with thick black hair and stunning big, brown eyes. He was the life of the party, dancing away – enticing the ladies with his ability to tango, cha cha and Persian dance.

I asked him to teach me some of the ballroom styles. He had asked me in his notable Persian accent, “What is your name?” I replied, “Jeanel.” He said, “Ah, that sounds like angel.” My friends were giggling nearby overhearing our conversation. I asked for his name, he replied boldly, “Shahhhrooz.” “That sounds like schmooze!” I replied sarcastically. My friends busted out laughing. Shahrouz displayed a refreshing sense of humor and asked, “What is schmooze?” and we hit it off right away.

We started dating by taking ballroom classes together. The classes were more formal and we learned some waltz, foxtrot, tango and rumba. Now 15 years later, we are happily married; however, because of the impracticality of waltz, tango and foxtrot we could not practice outside of the dance studio what we had learned in ballroom classes. I always had a passion for Latin-American dance like salsa and merengue and we recently discovered that many cities have restaurants and bars offering these styles of dance, which is much more practical to apply versus waltz or many other ballroom dances.

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My love and affection for Latin-American customs dates back to the era of my student life in the early 90's. As a student I had gone to Costa Rica and became enamored with the culture and dance. Salsa and merengue were my favorites because of the high energy of the music and lively beat, you couldn't help but want to get up and groove. I had taught Shahrouz what I knew, which was some basic steps and turns. Throughout our marriage we'd occasionally go out and have fun dancing salsa and merengue.

Over a year ago, we decided to take a real salsa class to expand our knowledge beyond the basic club moves I had learned years ago in Costa Rica. And it opened our eyes to the most fun, uplifting way to exercise. As we practiced, our heart rates went up and the pounds shed. The more we danced, the more energetic we became and we developed a more positive outlook on life. Our stomachs flattened and muscle definition began to become noticeable. Shahrouz and I had gained weight over the years and he particularly struggled to reduce the pot belly and love handles. Now his stomach is back to the size of 15 years ago. Talk about Salsa Sexy!

Shahrouz and I regained a new vigor and enthusiasm. We became more confident, happy and sexy. As we started losing weight, we aimed to lose more. Just a few months earlier Shahrouz's doctor told him to lose 40 pounds. At that time Shahrouz and I thought his doctor was crazy. Now we realized that we can regain the bodies we had when we met. Who says you have to reach midlife and become overweight, listless and without zeal? We found our motivation: Salsa Sexy!

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There is a diva or dynamo within you dying to emerge!

Shahrouz and I developed this lifestyle program for those who are asking if there is something more; for those who desire finding the passion of a child by adopting a manageable, yet dynamic lifestyle.

What is Salsa Sexy?

The life changing program called Salsa Sexy is a comprehensive lifestyle strategy to lose weight while:

- Assessing areas in your life for positive redirection
- Shaping and toning the body to look sexy
- Increasing energy and metabolism
- Improving sex drive
- Enjoying social interaction
- Elevating your confidence level
- And just having more fun

Salsa Sexy is a program for lifestyle change. The program is based on Shahrouz and my success.

Salsa Sexy lifestyle has three main, specific objectives: **Lose Weight, Have Fun, and Live Positively.**

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Lose and Maintain Weight

Food and exercise are always the staples of any healthy lifestyle. This book reviews what Shahrouz and I followed with the dos and don'ts of food choices — metabolism burning foods versus those that add on the pounds. Salsa Sexy meal options, that Shahrouz and I followed, are also outlined in the book to give you meal and snack suggestions to ensure you accomplish your goals. The salsasexy.com blog will also provide healthy eating tips and information to keep you up to date in your journey.

For the exercise component, Shahrouz and I used salsa dance as our main method for calorie burning supplemented with weekly yoga and daily walking. This book will provide an introduction to salsa dance and the benefits. Dance is a fabulous, fun way to burn calories. However, you can always choose not to use dance as the calorie burning method once you've read our story. This book will also encourage yoga as a supplemental activity in your fitness regime along with breathing and meditation to help balance your body and mind.

I'll also cover how Shahrouz and I determined weight loss goals, calorie consumption and calorie burning requirements with easy to use worksheets to track everything. We suggest making a copy of the sheets and placing them on your refrigerator or by the mirror in your bathroom. It is important to remind yourself of the commitment you made and to stick with it. The sheets in your daily routine will help you from falling off the wagon with excuses. In this process support is key; therefore, partnering with friends to go through the journey together and setting up daily positive reinforcements will keep you successful.

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Keep in tune daily with salsasexy.com for news regarding which restaurants offer Salsa Sexy meals and atmosphere, as well as fitness centers and dance studios that will fit the Salsa Sexy lifestyle.

Have Fun

Salsa Sexy wants the fun back in fitness. From dance to yoga to aerobics, Salsa Sexy encourages you to check out your neighborhood fitness centers and studios to find work out programs and activities that are not only fun but provides the social interaction that makes fitness most enjoyable.

Dance is a recommended activity due to the sheer fun while burning calories. Like singing, dancing is a soul level expression that often time gets inhibited by our egos and insecurities; and often we become intimidated of how people will judge us. However, watch any baby around lively music and they immediately start bouncing, smiling and moving. Dancing is an innate desire. If you remove your negative voice from your head and let go, you'll find it can open the door to a fun, personal expression while burning tons of calories.

Additionally, dancing provides social connections that make it more even more joyful. Today's society has statistically lonelier people than ever before. Our individualistic culture is disconnecting us from face to face connections and interactions. Researchⁱ shows that loneliness leads to higher blood pressure, higher stress chemicals like cortisol and decreased

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immunity. These effects may often spiral into the vicious cycle of other negative patterns of over-eating and a sedentary lifestyle.

Fortunately, this book and Salsa Sexy's website will introduce you to the many benefits of dance. Dancing also provides opportunity for social interactions and forming friendships that benefit you mentally and physically. From burning calories to socializing with friends, dancing offers loads of health benefits.

Live Positively

Living positively is an inner dance; finding the balance between the body, mind and spirit. As with any lifestyle change, the first gift to you is to do the necessary inner work to ensure that the outer work and Salsa Sexy benefits stick. Taking the time to observe how you treat yourself through your thoughts and habits will provide you with the freedom to make profound and exciting, positive changes in your life. After all, your world on the outside is simply a reflection of yourself on the inside. In other words, for your sexy diva or dynamo to emerge on the outside, the journey will begin from within.

Additionally, Salsa Sexy encourages balancing your fitness routine by including yoga practice, meditation and affirmations. Regular yoga asana (body postures) practice will help keep your muscles flexible, long and strong. Strength training activities like yoga are very important to incorporate to ensure bones stay strong and muscles developed.

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In addition to yoga asanas, at least ten minutes of meditation per day will assist you in staying focused, positive, calm and balanced. Deep breathing calms down the nervous system and meditation has profound benefits to developing a greater sense of balance and harmony.

Lastly, practicing positive thinking through daily affirmations will retrain your brain toward positive outcomes. Observing how you speak to yourself and developing the practice of affirming will assist you in reaching your goals.

As with any new program, please consult your doctor to ensure you are ready for the commitment. When I teach yoga classes I remind the class that they are in charge of their bodies and need to observe how their bodies feel and react to the postures to ensure they are working at their appropriate level. This premise holds true for this program as well.

It is important to work with your doctor to help set appropriate and attainable goals. The doctor visit can help you set a benchmark from where you started with weight, cholesterol levels, body mass index and blood pressure. A physical exam can help you understand any issues that you should watch for in your lifestyle change. You can use this information as a starting point for the positive changes that you will accomplish with your commitment to the program.

ACTION: Make a doctor's appointment for a physical exam to get you safely on your Salsa Sexy journey.

Chapter 2:

Salsa Sexy is a lifestyle, not a diet fad

Unfortunately as mentioned in the first chapter, diets alone won't work. Everyone knows that diets are the clichéd four-letter word that yo-yo's your life into ups and downs like a rollercoaster. Salsa Sexy is a lifestyle change. It's doing the work in the mind, body and soul. It's about looking honestly inside you and making new choices: choosing positive thoughts, healthy foods, habits and activities. You're obviously reading this book because you are ready to make a change. You may be tired of doing the same things and getting the same results. You may frankly be tired of being tired.

When making a lifestyle change, it starts with you making a commitment to yourself. I often hear people provide a long list of reasons why they cannot take care of themselves. Family, work and other commitments are put in front of the most important person: you!

Imagine you are in an airplane and the familiar safety rules come on. Can you hear what they say? Something to the effect of, "Please take care of your air mask first and secure your air flow before assisting others." Have you ever thought about this statement? Basically the airlines know that if you try to help the passenger next to you before taking care of you first, you could risk your own life as well as the life of the person next to you. If you

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care for your situation first, you are in a more secure position to help others next to you. Therefore, you are a better use to those around you because you helped yourself first.

In reality how good are you to others if you have not taken care of yourself first? If you are overweight, tired and depressed, how good are you to your family or your job? The lack of commitment to yourself gives the limited and disempowered you to the world. Secure your own health and wellbeing first and you will be in a more secure position to help the others in your life and take care of your responsibilities. Remember, you come first and others come thereafter. It doesn't matter who they are.

This book is targeted toward people who want to reinvigorate their lifestyle. Fortunately, committing to changing your lifestyle can result in many benefits beyond weight loss. If you could find a program, in addition to weight loss, that could also help you:

- Redirect your energy to positive areas
- Shape and tone the body to look sexier
- Increase your energy and metabolism
- Improve your sex drive
- Engage in and enjoy social interactions
- Elevate your confidence
- And simply have more fun,

wouldn't you say sign me up now? Yes! Then read on. Salsa Sexy may be for you. Let's review the benefits of Salsa Sexy.

Assessment for positive redirection

As with any lifestyle change, the first gift to you is to do the necessary inner work to ensure that the outer work and Salsa Sexy benefits stick. Taking the time to observe how you treat yourself through your thoughts and habits will provide you with the freedom to make profound and exciting, positive changes in your life. After all, your world on the outside is simply a reflection of yourself on the inside. In other words, for your sexy diva or dynamo to emerge on the outside, the journey will begin from within.

Shaping and toning

Regular participation in the program will not only help you lose weight but will also help you shape and tone the body. Participation in local dance classes like salsa, tango, merengue, bachata or even hip hop will introduce you to basic moves so you learn the fundamentals of the dance. You don't have to have dance experience or great talent in dance to take and enjoy classes. The classes will help you increase your heart rate to maximize fat burning. Before I started salsa dance, my thighs and stomach had that undesirable cottage cheese type fat accumulated throughout the area. I did squats and ran but those areas hardly ever changed. Then I adopted our program, amazingly my thighs, buttocks and stomach have next to no fat left. You cannot see giant crevices of cellulite any longer. The focus on the hip and leg movement from dance will engage large muscle groups to tone the legs and core abdominal area. With regular practice, over time you may see more definition, toning and reduction of cellulite.

Energy and metabolism

The regular commitment to program will also help you increase your energy levels and metabolism. Dance like salsa is lively, fun and upbeat. The more you actively practice, the more your energy will increase. In addition, the Salsa Sexy meal options explore low calorie, fat burning foods that can maximize your metabolism for weight loss. High calorie, fatty foods and heavy meats are difficult for the body to digest and metabolize causing you to lower your energy levels. Sugary foods give a temporary energy rush just to face an energy crash in a few short hours. This rollercoaster ride creates increased craving of unhealthy foods and the cycle of weight gain, low energy and stagnant metabolism.

The Salsa Sexy meal options focus on a low calorie, low fat balanced intake of protein, complex carbohydrates and high fiber to help with weight loss. The meal options also encourage the use of hot spices like cayenne peppers and jalapenos. Did you know these spices can help boost your metabolism up to 25%? Spices make the food taste wonderful and give you fat burning metabolism benefits. If you don't enjoy spicy foods, you can use dietary cayenne pepper supplements to give your body a metabolism boost without putting the spices in the foods.

Sex drive

Excess fat can drain your body causing you to become easily tired with lower sex drive and interest in activities. The extra weight you have on your body is like carrying extra baggage on your shoulders throughout the day – it weighs you down, literally. No wonder many people who struggle with their

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weight also find themselves uninterested in sex. Shedding the pounds with the program can help you find that spark.

Also an added benefit, salsa dance can be a very passionate and sexy expression. The music is lively but sensual and romantic. The movements in the body and connection to your partner can give you the added vaavoom needed to spice up your sex life. As the pounds shed and the metabolism increases, the libido begins to kick in. As you lose the weight, you look sexier, your partner looks sexier and you feel more attracted to one another. It's a positive cycle of benefits. You and your partner may burn even more calories once the spark gets reignited!

Social interaction

Salsa Sexy also introduces you to social situations and provides an avenue to meet new people. Latin culture is very social and outgoing. At salsa or Latin dance clubs you can see many people dancing with more than their date or partner. If your partner is tired and wants a break, there is no harm or cultural taboo to simply dance with someone else. It's a very interactive experience where you don't have to be shy to talk and dance with others.

This opens up conversation and new friendships. For singles, it is a very easy and non-threatening way to meet sexy looking people with similar interests. If you are asked to dance at a salsa club, it usually means just a dance; it is not a sexual advance or getting asked out.

Confidence

Learning to dance and move your body not only helps you learn a new skill that makes you feel sexy but also builds your confidence. Again, as you shed the pounds and you adopt healthier eating patterns, you feel more self-assured and desirable. The dance classes help build your core muscles and improve your posture. You begin standing taller, with your shoulders back and head high. Your stride becomes more fluid. Simply as you look good, you feel good and you radiate this confidence and positive energy to those around you.

Fun

How many exercise classes and gyms have you tried that you loathed because it was just not that fun? An hour on the treadmill staring at a TV screen is a monotonous and uninspiring way to get in shape. If that were my exercise plan, I'd be sure to fail because it is *extremely boring*. Well, dance like salsa is positively addictive. The music alone is infectious.

Ready to take the first step in reigniting that passion from within?

ACTION: Commitment to you

Make yourself a pact. Write down on a piece of paper: "I ___**your name**_____, hereby commit to taking care of myself first and making the lifestyle changes necessary to bring me to my highest and greatest good. I make time for exercise and healthy eating habits so I can be my best. I make positive choices for my habits, practices and relationships. I deserve to be first in my life."

Now this pact doesn't mean you neglect your children or your job. It means you set boundaries. You turn off the television, computer or other time sucking distractions and you say no to some things so you can fit in time for caring for you.

Congratulations! You've accomplished the first step in resurrecting your diva or dynamo on the journey to Salsa Sexy.

Part 1:

The sizzling dance of salsa

"We don't say 'I'm *bailando* [dancing] a conga', but 'I'm *arrollando* [being overwhelmed] in a conga.'"

—Cristóbal Díaz Ayala

Chapter 3:

Introduction to salsa dance

Shahrouz and I lost weight primarily through our regular participation in salsa dance. Many of you may not be familiar with salsa dance so let's review the background of salsa dance. Salsa dance is a lot of fun not only due to the style of dance but due to the fabulous, uplifting music. Dance like other forms of exercise create chemicals in the body that can provide a natural, elevated feeling along with many health benefits. Benefits of dance expand beyond physical and also benefits memory and your mind. First let's explore the origins and the basics.

Salsa dancing origins

Salsa has many roots from Cuba to Africa and even the West. Today's salsa dancing blends Latin-American and Western influences, mainly from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Colombia. There are three major salsa styles: Cuban Salsa ("Casino"), New York Style ("Mambo on 2"), and Los Angeles Style ("On 1").

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Salsa is typically a partner dance; however, there are solo forms, such as pole dancing (suelta), and Rueda de Casino where groups of couples exchange partners in a circle. Salsa can be improvised or performed with a set routine, choreography and freestyle.

Basic movements

The basic steps of salsa involve three weight changes (or steps) in each four-beat measure. The beat where one does not step usually contains a pause. Different styles of salsa are often differentiated by the timing of the step (On beat on one or off beat on two). After six weight changes in eight beats, the basic step cycle is complete.

As a salsa dancer changes weight in the legs, the upper body remains level and steady. The hips end up moving quite a bit — which is famously known as the "Cuban hip movement."

Connection to the music

Finding the beat is an important aspect to gaining the connection in the dance. According to Sam Gill from salsa-challenge.comⁱⁱ, "music is the principal external factor that serves to connect the partners in dancing. The rhythm or beat provides the pace and establishes the basis for the temporal coordination of partners. The musicality of the music creates the shifts and moods and breaks for the dancers to jointly express themselves by dancing in a way that complements the music."

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Dance can become a wonderful, almost out of body experience. Sometimes you may go dancing and not feel motivated to dance; however, when you hear the music and begin dancing, you lose yourself in the moment and you can't understand what happened to the time.

Gill references work from psychologist and educator Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who has gained wide recognition and even best-selling author status for his research into the nature of happiness and creativity; he is best known for the concept of flow, which is essentially the experience of losing yourself. In reference to losing yourself in the dance, Gill's article stated:

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called this experience "flow" and, while this word is still used, many today may more likely call this experience "zone" or "being in the zone." Csikszentmihalyi studied the phenomenon as experienced by rock climbers and surgeons among others. What he was interested in was to identify how flow happens and what its significance is to our lives. Csikszentmihalyi believes that the experience of "flow" corresponds with the experience of happiness. No wonder we dance all night. It makes us happy! Salsa dancing is fun.

Flow occurs when there is a correspondence of action and awareness. This simply means flow is experienced when we are aware only of our actions; when we are in our moment; when we are fully present to what we do. This makes sense. We're not, in some part, standing beside ourselves commenting on our dancing as we are doing it; rather we are wholly absorbed in our dancing.

Csikszentmihalyi found that an important factor in creating flow is the matching of the challenge of our activity with our skill or ability. He found

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that flow is most likely to occur when we experience a challenge demanding our fullest concentration on our activity, but that if the challenge becomes too great, too much beyond our present skill level, we experience anxiety and may simply shut down. If the challenge is too low, then we tend to get bored and thus distracted from what we are doing.

ACTION: Listen to salsa music or your dance music preference.

Check out YouTube or search music online to listen and familiarize yourself with the music and the dance. Listening to the music and feeling the beat is the first step in learning to dance.

Chapter 4:

Benefits of dance

Health benefits of dancing

From burning calories to socializing with friends, dancing offers many health benefits. According to the Mayo Clinic “dancing can burn as many calories as walking, swimming or riding a bicycle. During a half hour of sustained dancing you can burn between 200 and 400 calories. One factor that determines how many calories you'll expend is distance. In one study, researchers attached pedometers to square dancers and found each person covered nearly five miles in a single evening.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Aerobic exercise like dancing can lower your risk of coronary heart disease, decrease blood pressure and help you manage your weight. The Mayo Clinic also stated: “Regular exercise can lead to a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure and an improved cholesterol profile (see Medical Essay, June 1991). Experts typically recommend 30 to 40 minutes of continuous activity three to four times a week. Dancing may not provide all the

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conditioning you need, but it can help. The degree of cardiovascular conditioning depends on how vigorously you dance, how long you dance continuously and how regularly you do it.”

The Mayo Clinic study also showed the benefits to bones: “The side-to-side movements of many dances strengthen your weight bearing bones (tibia, fibula and femur) and can help prevent or slow loss of bone mass (osteoporosis).”

The amount of benefit you get from dancing depends on, like most exercises, the type of dancing you're doing, how strenuous it is, the duration and your skill level.

Mental benefits of dancing

We see from the research that dancing provides the heart-healthy benefits of an aerobic exercise. However, dancing is truly unique because it also allows you to engage in a social activity. Dancing is especially stimulating to the mind. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine even found dancing can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in the elderly.^{iv}

According to the article “The Health Benefits of Dancing”^v referring to the New England Journal of Medicine study, *Leisure Activities and the Risk of Dementia in the Elderly*,

Participants over the age of 75 who engaged in reading, dancing and playing musical instruments and board games once a week had a 7

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percent lower risk of dementia compared to those who did not. Those who engaged in these activities at least 11 days a month had a 63 percent lower risk.

Interestingly, dancing was the only physical activity out of 11 in the study that was associated with a lower risk of dementia. Said Joe Verghese, a neurologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a lead researcher of the study, "This is perhaps because dance music engages the dancer's mind."

Verghese says dancing may be a triple benefit for the brain. Not only does the physical aspect of dancing increase blood flow to the brain, but also the social aspect of the activity leads to less stress, depression and loneliness. Further, dancing requires memorizing steps and working with a partner, both of which provide mental challenges that are crucial for brain health.

ACTION: Sign up for classes.

Research your preferred dance class in your area to determine which ones would best fit your schedule. Sign up and attend one, even if you don't have a steady partner as in most dance classes like salsa you will rotate and dance with other students.

Part 2:

Your inner dance

People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something one finds, it is something one creates.

—Thomas Szasz, "Personal Conduct," *The Second Sin*, 1973

Chapter 5:

Taking an honest assessment

Now that you have a pact with yourself (from chapter two) and understand the basics of salsa dance and benefits of dance, with any lifestyle journey, it's important to take an honest assessment. It's easy for us to observe what is dragging other people down but often difficult for us to look at ourselves in the mirror and do the same honest observation. Start this part of the journey through the eyes of an outside observer, almost like a journalist writing an investigative report. Begin by looking at your lifestyle, patterns, dependencies and even addictions. From drinking too much alcohol, consuming drugs (including prescription drugs), to excessive eating, to gambling to unhealthy love relationships – there are all in the web of your lifestyle that can pull you down instead of raise you to new heights.

When my husband and I went through the lifestyle change, we had to honestly look at our relationships to alcohol, food and friendships. Our social activities primarily consisted of drinking and eating with friends. Although studies show some health benefits in moderate and regular consumption of red wine, the ongoing and regular consumption added many empty calories

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to our diet and created many unpleasant side effects. Alcohol disturbed our sleep patterns causing us to sleep much less. It also gave me allergy and sinus problems with many severe headaches and low energy the next day or in other words, the dreaded hangover.

Additionally, the drinking lifestyle caused us to eat much more. Wine and cheese went hand in hand, easily adding 400-800 extra calories to the day. One glass of red wine is roughly 125 calories. Cheeses, breads, crackers and other snacks can add up in a blink of the eye.

It is important to take an honest inventory of your lifestyle. This inventory shouldn't be viewed with blame, shame or guilt because everything in life is a journey and a learning experience. However, if you look at your life like an outside observer, do you notice areas that could warrant honest evaluation and redirection?

The word "addiction" can be loaded with many feelings of blame, shame and guilt but attempt to look outside of the emotional charges. An online source provided the life assessment list below related to drugs and alcohol. Remember that drugs also include prescription drugs. I added food, gambling and other sources of potential redirection of energy and focus.

According to Medic8.com^{vi} if you experience any of the following then you may have an addiction:

- Use drugs (alcohol/sex/gambling/food/smoking) to feel better or to have a good time
- Use drugs (alcohol/sex/gambling/food/smoking) to relieve stress
- Find that you cannot say no

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- Find that you think about drugs (alcohol/sex/gambling/food/smoking) all the time?
- Lie about your drugs (alcohol/sex/gambling/food/smoking) habit?
- Feel bad if you don't take drugs (alcohol/sex/gambling/food/smoking)
- Wake up in the mornings and want a drink or a cigarette
- Find that you can't stick to just one drink
- Drink until you are intoxicated
- Get cravings if you don't have a drink, cigarette or drugs (food)
- Make excuses about your habit
- Commit crime to pay for your habit
- Use more than one drug
- Have constant arguments about your habit

There is a high price to pay for addiction and dependencies in terms of your health, relationships, career and family life. My husband and I found ourselves using alcohol to feel more social and have a good time. With an honest assessment we discovered that we were often unable to stick to one drink despite our promises to stop after one. Alcohol began creating more anxiety in my life to the point that I have eliminated it completely. I believe we can develop unhealthy dependencies that may not be full-fledged addictions but the negative patterns need to be honestly viewed in terms of the negative impact to your health, relationships and safety, and redirected toward positive behaviors and habits.

Some people may find that they are unable to stop their unhealthy choices and may require much more help and support. I have a person in my life that I'm very proud of that has gone for help to overcome substance abuse. After many years of struggle and denial; now, day by day this person

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chooses to stay substance free. All the choices in your life start with you. The responsibility, the accountability and the choices are yours.

ACTION: Journal and write down areas for redirection.

Take some time to journal about areas of your life that may pull you down. Like a reporter writing an investigative report, look at your relationship with people, food, drugs, alcohol and cigarettes; be honest with yourself about how these patterns impact your life. Try to view these patterns like an outside observer who evaluates factually without placing judgment and gets to the core of the pattern.

ACTION: Reach out for help if needed.

If you honestly found dependencies and destructive patterns, first breathe. You may feel overwhelmed with emotion. Wrap your arms around yourself and give yourself a big hug. It's okay. Give yourself a pat on the back for being honest with the most important person in your life: YOU! Then talk to your doctor or a health advisor about getting help to overcome those areas. The strongest people get help and make necessary changes to better their lives. You are a strong person too.

Chapter 6:

You've got the power

Your thoughts are an important step in your journey

In addition to your physical lifestyle you should also understand and harness the power of your mind. Many have heard of the law of attraction and how thoughts can change the direction of your life. This doesn't mean that simply thinking you'll win the lottery will cause it to happen, but research shows the mind can be powerful.

Many of us are brought up with traditional beliefs that we are victims of life and a vengeful God will punish us if we sin. This thought pattern creates a world of control where we are victims without hope until we leave this physical body.

Consider the insights from scientist regarding the essence of physical cells and the observation that the physical isn't as real as we all believed. Scientists and physicists have observed that matter and electrons are not particles but waves of energy. For example, from the book *Butterflies Are Free to Fly*, by Stephen Davis^{vii}, scientist Jeffrey Satinover was quoted:

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Matter is not what we have long thought it to be. To the scientist, matter has always been thought of a sort of the ultimate in that which is static and predictable... We like to think of space as empty and matter as solid. But in fact, there is essentially nothing to matter whatsoever; it's completely insubstantial. Take a look at an atom. We think of it as a kind of hard ball. Then we say, 'Oh well no, not really... it's this little tiny point of really dense matter right at the center...' But then it turns out that that's not even right. Even the nucleus, which we think of as so dense, pops in and out of existence just as readily as the electrons do.

Why is this statement important? Because it shows at the smallest level even at the nucleus of an atom, it is empty, with no substantial matter. I'm not a scientist but this is mind-blowing to understand at the very smallest level of our cells that we always believed as solid and real, pop in and out of existence. The research shows to me the energetic level of our existence and helps frame the power of thoughts.

Quantum physics suggests that the power of thought can transform your brain and attract your thoughts into your life. This essentially is the law of attraction.

According to David Carnes' October, 2009 article, "Quantum Physics Law of Attraction,"^{viii} stated:

The law of attraction asserts that people can change objective reality simply by changing the way they think. Quantum physics asserts that the behavior of subatomic particles is determined by the act of observation by

a scientist. For this reason, many people claim that the law of attraction has a scientific basis.

Quantum physics is a mainstream theory of modern physics. It asserts that elementary physical entities such as quarks and photons behave either as waves or as particles depending on how they are measured, that it is fundamentally impossible to simultaneously measure the exact position and momentum of a subatomic particle/wave. Quantum physics also asserts that the movement of subatomic particles is random, and that energy is made up of discrete microscopic particle-waves ("quanta") bound together in an underlying unity throughout the universe. The most, well-accepted interpretation of quantum physics, the Copenhagen interpretation, asserts that the particular physical state of a particle (its position and momentum) comes into existence only at the moment that it is observed by the scientist.

Proponents of the law of attraction assert that "quanta" is equivalent to thought, and that the universal interconnectedness among quanta provides a mechanism that allows the power of thought to control events in a manner that previously would have been considered supernatural.

Additionally Dr. Bruce Lipton's book *The Biology of Belief*,^{ix} offers further insight into the effects of belief on our lives. "How we see life determines our behavior, and since perceptions can be wrong, it is more accurate to say that beliefs control biology – what you believe creates your life."

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These insights support the rationale of the law of attraction, which is powerful and transforming. Looking at the mind as the intention of energy to influence an event has a profound impact on observing and changing what you think.

Bringing all this back to your lifestyle change, observing something as simple as how you speak to yourself is very important. If you regularly have thoughts such as: "I'm fat. I'm ugly. I cannot do that. No one loves me. I hate myself." Stop now! Cancel these thoughts as they are as destructive as shooting a gun in the ceiling of your home. You cannot afford bullet holes all over your house nor can you afford the destruction of negative thinking in your life. Louise L. Hay said in her book, *The Power Is Within You*:^x

I want to discuss the power of our subconscious minds. Our subconscious minds make no judgments. The subconscious mind accepts everything we say and creates according to our beliefs. It always says yes. Our subconscious minds love us enough to give us what we declare. We have choice, though. If we choose these poverty beliefs and concepts, then it is assumed we want them. It will continue to give us these things until we are willing to change our thoughts and words and beliefs for the better.

Understanding that we have a choice in how we think, treat and care for ourselves gives you the power to uplift your life. Miraculous things can happen when changes come from within.

Also, if you have people in your life that are expressing to you similar negative messages, you may want to work on or revisit those relationships. Work on repairing the communication immediately to a positive level. Don't

be afraid to seek out help from a psychologist or counselor to aid you through this change. Surrounding yourself with positive people is very important.

Louise L. Hay also instructs how to do affirmations for releasing. In *The Power is Within You*^{xi}, she writes: "If there is something in your life that you really dislike, I have found one of the quickest ways to release it is to *bless it with love*. 'I bless you with love and I release you and let you go.' This works for people, situations, objects, and living quarters."

ACTION: Journal and observe your self-talk.

Without judgment, write down areas that you may find yourself being too hard on yourself. Notice areas and patterns to retrain your thinking.

ACTION: Create affirmations.

From the areas and patterns where you found negative self-talk, create new affirmations of positive reinforcement. Post affirmations on your mirror, in your desk drawer and other easy to access areas for you to repeat throughout the day.

Affirmations for consideration:

- I love myself.
- I reflect divine love.
- I attract only my highest and greatest good.
- I am fit, lean, toned and trim.

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- I am sexy!
- Every cell in my body is healthy.
- I easily and effortlessly spread love and kindness to others and in turn love and kindness is reflected to me.
- I look younger and more vibrant every day.
- I am happy and healthy.
- I easily and effortlessly choose healthy foods.
- I easily and effortlessly exercise my body with joy.
- I have all the time I need to accomplish everything I request, require and desire.
- I'm surrounded by loving, caring, fun and kind people.
- As I heal and improve, the world heals and improves. We are all connected.
- I see the good in others as well as the good in myself.

As the song goes, "I get by with a little help from my friends," any new journey should have the support of family and friends to ensure success.

Let your loved ones know of your plans and ask them for their support in helping you change your life. Even better, make it a group effort or find a partner to attend classes and work through the diet changes.

ACTION: Talk to your family or close friends.

Tell your loved ones about your lifestyle plans and motivations. Engage in their support and determine if they have interest to join the program with you.

Part 3:

Your Salsa Sexy intentions

There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

—Anaïs Nin

Chapter 7:

Set your Salsa Sexy goals

The next step in your Salsa Sexy lifestyle journey is to determine your goals. The results of the program will depend on you and will vary based on your activity level and how often you dance or exercise. As stated earlier in the book, Salsa Sexy is a lifestyle change. As with any new program, please consult your doctor to ensure you are ready for the commitment. It is important to work with your doctor to help set appropriate and attainable goals. The doctor visit can help you set a benchmark from where you started with weight, cholesterol levels, body mass index and blood pressure. A physical exam can help you understand any issues that you should watch for in your lifestyle change. You can use this information as a starting point for the positive changes that you will accomplish with your commitment to the program.

To help determine your goals, fill out the following information with the easy to use worksheets below.

To fill out the worksheets, you will need to:

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1. Record your current weight and date.
2. Measure and record your waste line and date.

Waist measuring instructions: Find your natural waist. An easy way to do this is to stand in front of the mirror and bend at your side. The crease that forms indicates your natural waistline, directly above the belly button and below the ribcage.

Then, stand up straight and relax your abdominal muscles. Wrap the measuring tape completely around your waist starting at the belly button on bare skin. Don't measure over clothes. Begin at the spot on the tape where the measure reads "0". Make sure the tape is level around your waistline; not too loose, not too tight.

3. Record your current clothing sizes.
4. Make an appointment to visit your physician for a full physical to determine any health constraints and review your goals before embarking on the program.
5. Journal about the time of your life that you felt most healthy, fit and happy. Why did you feel your best at this time? Take a few minutes to write about this time of your life.
6. Record your weight range and clothing size at your most fit and healthy time.

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7. Record at your most fit and healthy time how much time you dedicated to exercise and healthy eating.
8. Determine what time sucking activities do you do each day that you can redirect to your goals. Be honest here. We all have time and it is a choice to redirect our time to healthy pursuits.
 - a. For example, how many hours/minutes do you watch television per day?
 - b. How many hours/minutes per day do you surf the internet?
 - c. How many hours/minutes per day do you spend on social media sites?
 - d. How many hours/minutes per day do you talk on the phone?
 - e. How many unnecessary errands or routines do you follow such as stopping at the coffee shop on the way to work?

When you are honest with your routine, there is always some time that can be redirected.

If you have wracked your brain and still are saying, "I have no free time," stage two in time management is delegation. If you think you have no time because of work, family, chores, etc, now you have to get creative to delegate to free your time. For example:

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- a. Do you have children that can take on some chores? Developing a sense of family contribution and accountability will help the entire unit.
- b. Can you work from your home one or two days a week to free up commuting and get ready time?
- c. Can you pursue a job closer to home or with an employer that offers virtual work? Many employers offer work/life balance benefits.
- d. Can you arrange to leave the office on time at least three days a week? Most often the work will pile up whether we finish everything that day or leave it until tomorrow. Creating time boundaries will help you achieve your personal goals and probably make you a more productive employee in the long term.
- e. Can you hire a cleaning person once a month or every other month? House cleaning rates are very competitive and can often be tailored to your major needs.
- f. Can you trade childcare with friends, relatives or neighbors or hire a baby sitter more often? Childcare swapping will give you a free day and your friends a free day giving you time to pursue your diva and dynamo.
- g. Does your employer offer a vacation buy benefit that you can purchase additional time off to give you additional time?

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Now that you have completed the initial exercise, you can fill out the worksheets.

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Salsa Sexy Questionnaire Summary

	Weight	Waist measurements	Clothes size	Age
Today's Date				
Time you were most fit				
SS Goals				

	#1 Activity/time spent minutes/hours per day	#2 Activity/time spent minutes/hours per day	#3 Activity/time spent minutes/hours per day	TOTAL TIME AVAILABLE minutes/hours per day
Current time wasters				
Delegator time				
			Grand Total minutes/hours per day	

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Salsa Sexy Goal/Record Sheet- keep a copy of this in a visual location such as your bathroom mirror or refrigerator door. Websites such as <http://www.acaloriecalculator.com> can help you determine your goals.

	Weight	Waist measurements	Clothes size (optional)	Other
SS Goal				
Date/timeframe to reach SS goal:				
Goal time allocate for exercise per day:				
Goal calories per day:				
Goal pounds lost per week:				

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Measures- record at least three days a week to ensure your progress.

Date: Eg. Day 1 of Week 1	Date: Eg. Day 2 of Week 1	Date:
AM Weight:	AM Weight:	AM Weight:
Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:
Cal burned:	Cal burned:	Cal burned:
Total calories:	Total calories:	Total calories:

Date: Eg. Day 1 of Week 2	Date:	Date:
AM Weight:	AM Weight:	AM Weight:
Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:
Cal burned:	Cal burned:	Cal burned:
Total calories:	Total calories:	Total calories:

Date:	Date:	Date:
AM Weight:	AM Weight:	AM Weight:
Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:	Cal consumed:
Cal burned:	Cal burned:	Cal burned:
Total calories:	Total calories:	Total calories:

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Daily calorie worksheet- Record your daily intake. Include dressings, jellies, syrups, drinks.

Date:

Breakfast

	Item eaten	Approximate calories		<u>Daily Grand Total:</u>	Put total in your calories consumed worksheet
Food diary					
		Total			

AM Snack

	Item eaten	Approximate calories
Food diary		
		Total

Lunch

	Item eaten	Approximate calories
Food diary		
		Total

PM Snack

	Item eaten	Approximate calories
Food diary		
		Total

Dinner

	Item eaten	Approximate calories
Food diary		
		Total

Late Snack

	Item eaten	Approximate calories
Food diary		
		Total

Daily calories burned worksheet

Date:

Activity	Approximate calories burned		Daily Grand Total:	Put total in your calories burned measurement worksheet
Total				

Chapter 8:

Celebrate the journey toward the Salsa Sexy you!

Before you start recording your daily calories and once you have determined your goals, get ready to have a Salsa Sexy launch party! Invite your support group to help you celebrate your launch of your Salsa Sexy lifestyle. The attendees of this party will help you purge and rid yourself from products and temptations that will hold you back from capturing your diva or dynamo from within. Gather your fans of support from your network, family or friends. Play and boogie to salsa music; snack on healthy treats; and let the party begin!

This party is the time for celebration with many high fives, hoots and hollers of encouragement. As a center piece for the party, hang up a dress or pair of jeans that you'd like to fit into. Show the group the item and ask them to help you through encouragement and pushing you to keep on even when you have doubts. You can have your group bring their center piece items and goals as well if they are doing the program with you.

Create a game out of purging your pantry, refrigerator and freezer. Have one group tackle the refrigerator/freezer as the other group goes through the pantry. The group to clean out first all the diva and dynamo blocking

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items wins. A great prize could be a copy of this book! The more people that do the program with you, the easier it will be to stay the course.

If your group starts out apprehensive and outside of their comfort zone, I suggest taking three minutes for venting but you must set a timer for whine time. Once the bell rings and time is up, your team is done with negative thinking for the rest of the evening and hopefully thereafter.

Give the purge party house rules to the group before they come for the party. Post these rules at the party as well to remind your guests of the rules of engagement.

Example of party rules:

1. After the three minute whine session, there will be no negativity such as words of discouragement, sarcasm, put downs, etc.
2. The group will only consume healthy foods and drinks at the party. No alcoholic beverages, sugary foods, chips, sodas, juices, fried foods, processed foods.
 - a. If you want to offer food, provide items such as raw veggies, low calorie deli meats, Wasa® crackers, salad with balsamic vinaigrette.
 - b. Water with a splash of 100% cranberry or grapefruit juice can fill up wine glasses for a low calorie, healthy drink.
 - c. Alternatively, green tea can give a caffeine kick to the event with many health benefits.

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3. View this party like a sporting event. Cheer, holler, hoot, smile and give high fives. If you like you can provide party favors like pom poms, whistles and horns to create a sports-like atmosphere.
4. Everyone who is doing the program with you should share a portion of his or her goals. Whether you display a dress in a goal size or reveal the goal for the number of pounds to lose, putting goals out there help you keep and meet your goal.

Preparation for the purging: Get a box(es) for unopened, imperishable that you can donate and a garbage can for the opened and perishable items. Scan the pantry, refrigerator and freezer. Read this list or provide a copy for your group to look for in these categories to throw out:

1. Refined sugar foods: sodas, cookies, donuts, sugary cereals (high cal and high sugar content), pancake/waffles, candies, juices (although some fresh juices are healthy, best to avoid the high calorie in the beginning), ice creams and other desserts.
2. Salty packaged foods: potato chips, corn chips, pretzels, nuts (although nuts are healthy, nuts are high calorie and best to avoid at least early on), dips, buttered or high calorie popcorn, canned cheese spreads, etc. (If salty foods are your weakness, there are other low cal alternatives that you can choose).

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3. Processed foods: frozen foods like pizza, fried foods, waffles, pancakes.
4. High calorie sauces, dressings and butters: salad dressings, mayonnaise, butter, peanut butter, frying oils other than olive oil or grape seed oil and use oils sparingly.
5. White breads: such as rolls, pitas, loafs and other major simple carbohydrates.

ACTIONS: Get the party started.

Set your calendar for your launch party. Create the guest list and supplies list. Send out the invitations with the explanation of the party and the house rules. Make necessary purchases.

Chapter 9:

Daily reinforcements

Taking it one day at a time is important on your journey. The key word used throughout the book has been "journey." Any major change does not happen overnight. Our quick fix, pop a pill society creates unreasonable expectations and frankly makes us lazy to do the daily things that are required to stay healthy and vibrant. Goals are important but making the goals attainable, taking it day by day and working toward the long term is vital to keep in focus. If you get discouraged by not seeing change fast enough you could be self-sabotaging your progress to go back to your comfort zone of the old ways of behaving.

To counter this pitfall, developing a daily routine of positive reinforcement is mission critical. Start by keeping your list of affirmations close by your bed to read directly upon awakening. This will help reprogram any negative thought patterns that you may unconsciously think that could sabotage your day.

If you can sit quietly and breathe in a cross legged seated position and visualize the positive outcome of your day, which will help tremendously. Athletes regularly visualize their goals and you can do the same. See yourself maintaining positive thoughts, enjoying healthy foods, easily and effortlessly exercising.

Post your goal sheet on your refrigerator or other prominent area to keep it top of mind. If you are doing the program with a buddy, which is highly recommended, send your buddy a text of encouragement or give him or her a quick phone call.

Part 4:

You can be Salsa Sexy

And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count.
It's the life in your years.

—Abraham Lincoln

Chapter 10:

Salsa Sexy exercise plan

Depending on your weight loss goals, you can customize your Salsa Sexy workout schedule according to your target weight. Visiting websites such as <http://www.acaloriecalculator.com> can help you determine the number of calories per day you should burn.

Using dance as the method of burning calories can result in up to 400 calories burned per hour depending on the intensity. Sign up for a weekly salsa, foxtrot, swing, merengue or bachata dance lesson and practice on your own at home at least 30 minutes per day three times per week. Most dance studios offer social dances so students can practice outside of the classes. If you can participate in a dance social one additional time per week, you will see the maximum benefits.

Ideal dance workout schedule per week:

- 1 x per week salsa dance lesson for 1 hour (Approximately 200-400 calories depending on intensity)

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- 3x per week at home 30 minute practice (Approximately 100-200 calories depending intensity)
- 1x per week dance social or nightclub for 1 hour (Approximately 200-400 calories depending on intensity)
- **Approximate number of calories burned per week: 700-1400**

Yoga Practice

I also encourage doing a weekly yoga class or follow a DVD or doing Wii Fit yoga. Depending on factors like intensity, class time and weight an intense one hour yoga class may help you burn 300 to 500+ calories.

I'm a certified yoga instructor and have practiced yoga and meditation for the past 10 years. Yoga is the perfect supplement to your fitness regime because of the many health benefits.

Doing yoga asanas (body postures) will help keep your muscles flexible, long and strong. Strength training activities like yoga are very important to incorporate to ensure bones stay strong and muscles developed.

There is more to yoga than the physical practice. Most people identify yoga with the physical practice or asana. However, the practice of yoga actually has eight limbs: the yamas (restraints), niyamas (observances), asana (postures), pranayama (breathing), pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyani (meditation), and samadhi (enlightenment). The asana practice or the postures serve as the physical practice that gets your body prepared for meditation and concentration.

The many benefits of yoga practice include:

Flexibility

You don't have to bend like a pretzel to do yoga. People often say that they cannot do yoga because they are not flexible. We've all seen famous photos of masters of yoga doing various contortions. However, these multiple jointed, human pretzels are the exception versus the norm. Yoga is a practice to help you become more flexible as well as strong and lean.

According to Web MD's article, *The Health Benefits of Yoga*^{xii},

The series of yoga poses called asanas work by safely [stretching](#) your muscles. This releases the lactic acid that builds up with muscle use and causes stiffness, tension, pain, and [fatigue](#). In addition, yoga increases the range of motion in joints. It may also increase lubrication in the joints. The outcome is a sense of ease and fluidity throughout your body.

Yoga stretches not only your muscles but all of the soft tissues of your body. That includes ligaments, tendons, and the fascia sheath that surrounds your muscles. And no matter your level of yoga, you most likely will see benefits in a very short period of time. In one study, participants had up to 35% improvement in flexibility after only eight weeks of yoga. The greatest gains were in shoulder and trunk flexibility.

Strength

More vigorous styles of yoga like power yoga will help you improve muscle tone. But even less vigorous styles of yoga can provide strength and endurance benefits. Poses like Downward Dog, Upward Dog and Plank, build upper-body strength. I often tell my students that this becomes even more crucial as people age. The standing poses held for multiple breaths can help build strength in hamstrings, quadriceps and abdominal muscles. When practiced properly, nearly all poses build core strength in the abdominal muscles.

Posture

I recently received a physical exam and when I was measured, I was actually taller than before! I sincerely believe yoga helped my spine and posture to the point that I stretched out one-quarter of an inch taller. According to Web MD,

Most standing and sitting poses develop core strength. That's because you're counting on your deep abdominals to support and maintain each pose. With a stronger core, you're more likely to sit and stand "tall." Another benefit of yoga is the increased body awareness. This heightened awareness tells you more quickly when you're slouching or slumping so you can adjust your posture.

Breathing

Dancing will definitely help increase lung capacity but yoga also assists because of the deep, mindful breathing that takes place. Lung capacity can

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improve sports performance and endurance, which will ultimately help with dancing as well.

My yoga class and most forms of yoga focus on deepening and lengthening your breath. This stimulates the relaxation response, calming the nervous system. Additionally, yoga offers specific breathing techniques that are very useful for stress management.

Calm state

Yoga helps you balance your mind and body and makes you less stressed and more relaxed. Yoga asanas are actually preparation for meditation because the physical practice calms the constant "mind chatter" that often underlies stress and makes you able to achieve a meditative state.

According to Web MD,

Among yoga's anti-stress benefits are a host of biochemical responses. For example, there is a decrease in catecholamines, the hormones produced by the adrenal glands in response to stress. Lowering levels of hormone neurotransmitters -- dopamine, norepinephrine, and epinephrine -- creates a feeling of calm. Some research points to a boost in the hormone oxytocin. This is the so-called "trust" and "bonding" hormone that's associated with feeling relaxed and connected to others. That may be why so many romances start in the yoga studio.

Concentration and mood

Our fast pace, multi-tasking society makes it more difficult for us to focus. Because yoga helps calm the mind, I've heard students say that yoga has

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helped them focus and concentrate better. According to Web MD, the same is true with mood, "Nearly every yoga student will tell you they feel happier and more contented after class. Recently, researchers have begun exploring the effects of yoga on [depression](#), a benefit that may result from yoga's boosting oxygen levels to the brain. Yoga is even being studied as an adjunct therapy to relieve symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Heart benefits

More and more research shows the benefits of yoga on various medical conditions. Heart disease is one of the largest health problems our society faces and research shows wonderful benefits. According to Web MD,

Yoga has long been known to lower blood pressure and slow the heart rate. A slower heart rate can benefit people with [hypertension](#), heart disease, and [stroke](#). Yoga was a key component to the heart disease program designed by Dean Ornish, MD. This was the first program to partly reverse heart disease through lifestyle and diet rather than surgery. On a biochemical level, studies point to a possible anti-oxidant effect of yoga. And yoga has been associated with decreased [cholesterol](#) and triglyceride levels as well as a boost in immune system function.

Other benefits

Yoga provides many other surprising benefits for the mind and body. According to Web MD, "Some studies have suggested that yoga may have a positive effect on learning and memory. Other researchers have been studying whether yoga can slow the aging process, increase a person's

sense of self-acceptance, or improve energy levels.” Lastly, although it may be difficult to scientifically study but Web MD says, “yoga has been said to increase spiritual awareness.”

Also consider supplementing your dance and yoga schedule with other exercise like walking. Make moving as much as possible a part of your daily routine. If you have a pooch, walk the dog daily. If you live within walking distance to shops, do your errands on foot. Instead of circling the parking lot for the closest spot, park in the back and walk. Take the stairs in the building instead of the elevator. I even do squats when I brush my teeth! The more you make moving a part of your lifestyle, the more fit you’ll become and you won’t even realize you are working out.

Additionally, listen to your chosen dance while you are walking. Research shows that the music can help you burn more. According to the article, “ACE-sponsored Research: Exploring the Effects of Music on Exercise Intensity”^{xiii} quoted Costas Karageorghis, Ph.D., from London’s Brunel University School of Sport and Education, one of the world’s leading authorities on music and exercise: “Music is like is a legal drug for athletes. It can reduce the perception of effort significantly and increase endurance by as much as 15 percent.” The article shows the upbeat music can maximize your workout:

Over the past 20 years of research, Karageorghis has identified three primary things about music that could possibly influence exercise performance: 1) the tendency to move in time with synchronous sounds (e.g., tapping your toe in time with music or the beat of a drum); 2) the tendency of music to increase arousal (e.g., the desire

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to move rather than to sit); and 3) the tendency for music to distract the exerciser from discomfort that might be related to exercise.

Buoyed by Karageorghis' landmark research, Foster and John Porcari, Ph.D., have supervised more than half a dozen research studies on the effect of music on exercise intensity. As a whole, that body of research further supports the notion that synchronous music tends to drive exercise intensity (i.e., the faster the beat, the higher the intensity). Researchers also clearly identified the effect of increased arousal related to the tempo of music, thereby making intense exercise seem less stressful.

Salsa music is high energy and will help you move. Even if it is playing the music while you are cleaning the house, you'll find yourself moving faster with the rhythm and enjoying everyday tasks.

If you are unable to exercise at this level of frequency, then your calorie intake will need to decrease to compensate for the lack of calories burned. Remember it is a lifestyle change and moving is hugely important to improve your health and vitality. You'll find when you start moving to music like salsa that the music is so fun and uplifting, it doesn't feel like work at all!

Chapter 11:

Salsa Sexy food dos and don'ts

The salsa sexy meal options incorporate low calorie, fat burning foods that maximize your metabolism for weight loss. High calorie, fatty foods and heavy meats are difficult for the body to digest and metabolize causing you to lower your energy levels. Sugary foods give a temporary energy rush just to face an energy crash in a few short hours. This rollercoaster ride creates increased craving of unhealthy foods and the cycle of weight gain, low energy and stagnant metabolism.

NY Daily News ^{xiv} reported the must haves for your diet to boost metabolism. Including these foods will help you maximize your metabolism your Salsa Sexy meal plan.

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Metabolism boosting secrets

Milk and Yogurt

Super ingredient: Calcium

Foods like milk or yogurt, which contains **calcium**, performs like a metabolic trigger. According to NY Daily News, "A University of Tennessee study found that dieters who consumed 1,200 to 1,300 mg of calcium daily lost almost twice as much weight as dieters who ingested less calcium."

Oats and grains

Super ingredients: Fiber and complex carbohydrates

Whole grain cereal is a great source of both complex carbohydrates and fiber, which are needed to keep your metabolism up by keeping insulin levels low after a meal. Because insulin increases cause your body to think it's time to start storing fat, it is wise to eat foods that lower insulin levels.

Oats contain high amounts of fiber, which pumps up your metabolism. Also oatmeal doesn't create an insulin spike like bagels or other white breads because oatmeal breaks down slowly in your stomach.

NY Daily News said, "Oatmeal is typically eaten for breakfast, which is an important meal to consume for anyone who wants to burn calories. Eating this meal keeps insulin production down and revs up the daily calorie burn. When the U.S. Navy studied the eating habits and metabolisms of some of

its personnel, it found that eating breakfast helped raise the men's metabolisms by up to 10 percent."

Hot Peppers

Super ingredient: Capsaicin

All hot peppers like **Jalapenos** contain capsaicin. This is a chemical that gives peppers a pungent flavor and it also speeds up the heart rate and boosts the metabolism. Jalapenos are good for spicing up both meals and snacks. Eating small snacks helps the body maintain fuel and may help prevent afternoon slumps.

Habaneros are extremely hot chile peppers. According to NY Daily News, "A recent study from Laval University in Quebec found that men who consumed coffee and red pepper-packed snacks and meals burned almost 1,000 more calories a day than the control group, according to AOL Health."

Cayenne chiles are often ground into cayenne pepper, a typical ingredient in a spicy meal. According to NY Daily News, "One study found that eating just one spicy meal a day boosts metabolism by up to 25 percent, reports AOL Health. The calorie burn lasts for up to 3 hours after you stop eating."

Beverages

Super ingredients: EGCG and caffeine

Green tea, according to NY Daily News, contains a chemical called EGCG that causes the brain and nervous system to run faster and may help you burn more calories. EGCG works similar to caffeine except it doesn't cause your heart to beat faster like caffeine. Green tea offers benefits of metabolism-boosting without the heart-racing side effects.

Coffee contains caffeine, which helps speed up your heart rate and therefore helps you burn more calories. However, stay on the lookout for extra calories in a sugar and fat-rich blended coffee drink that can cancel out the heart-speeding benefit of caffeine in coffee. Consider using skim milk or almond milk and keep sweeteners to a minimum.

Meats and Poultry

Super ingredient: Protein

Pork provides a good source of protein. The body must work harder to digest protein than carbohydrates. However, make sure the pork is lean. Try grilled, lean pork chops seasoned with fresh herbs instead of ribs smothered in barbecue sauce.

Lean beef also helps boost metabolism because it's rich in protein. Like the pork recommendation, make sure the beef is lean. Avoid fattier cuts like T-

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bone steaks in favor of leaner cuts like top round. Additionally, if you desire a burger, substitute ground sirloin for higher-fat ground chuck.

Chicken has been found to be high in metabolism-boosting protein. NY Daily News said, "Danish researchers found that men who subbed protein for one fifth of their daily carbs increased the number of calories they burned each day by up to five percent, AOL Health reports."

Turkey is a great source of lean protein. Remove the skin before eating to minimize additional fat calories.

Fish

Super ingredient: Omega-3 fatty acids

Salmon contains Omega-3 fatty acids. NY Daily News said, "Omega-3 fatty acids can alter the levels of a hormone in your body called leptin, says AOL Health. Lower leptin levels are associated with a higher caloric burn. "

Tuna can also help reduce the level of the hormone leptin in the body. NY Daily News said, "Lower leptin levels are associated with faster metabolisms - at least in mice. University of Wisconsin researchers discovered that mice with low leptin levels have faster metabolisms and burn fat more efficiently than animals with higher leptin levels, reports AOL Health. "

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Sardines are also loaded with fish oil. NY Daily News found French research where men who replaced six grams of fat with six grams of fish oil lost an average of two pounds in just 12 weeks. For those who are not fish fans, fish-oil supplements are a great substitute.

Fruit and veggie calorie burners

You might be wondering if you can avoid fruits and vegetables after reading these top metabolism boosters. However, just because this list doesn't mention vegetables and fruits, it doesn't mean those should be eliminated. Fresh vegetables and fruits should be a large part of your meal plan. Certain fruits and veggies contain more nutrients per calorie than others, according to peertrainer.com^{xv}, "The absolute best vegetables to help speed up weight loss are green vegetables- collard greens, spinach, Swiss chard, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage. If you are in a Chinese restaurant, pay very close attention to the vegetables they serve. And get in the habit of eating them. "

The article continues, "Just like vegetables, not all fruit is created equally. You hear that certain fruits are 'anti-oxidant superfoods.' These fruits also will help you lose weight more quickly. Strawberries, raspberries and blueberries are at the top of the list when it comes to helping speed up weight loss. You might be worried about the calories in strawberries but you need to realize there are only 74 per cup and those are the calories you want. There are even fewer calories in raspberries."

According to nowloss.com^{xvi}, you'll maintain your weight much easier if you eat more raw fruits and veggies, and you'll also lose weight much faster by eating more raw fruits and veggies. The article stated: "Your body burns 16% more calories after you eat a meal that's mostly fruits & vegetables than if you ate a meal without any fruits or vegetables."

Additionally, Barbara Minton's article, "Increasing Fruits and Vegetables Leads to Permanent Weight Loss,"^{xvii} reported on a Consumer Reports National Research Center that asked their magazine subscribers about their lifetime weight history and their eating, dieting and exercising habits.

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An analysis of the data revealed six key behaviors shared by the always thin and successful losers (weight loss) groups. These behaviors were defined by *Consumer Reports* as correlating highly with a healthy body mass index (BMI). Leading the list was the eating of fruits and vegetables. 49% of the always thin and successful losers groups said they ate five or more servings a day of fruits and vegetables for at least five days out of a week.

What about fruits and vegetables allows people to achieve a healthy BMI? Fruits and vegetables are low in calories, high in volume, and high in critically important nutrients. They provide the feeling of satiety that goes with fullness. When the stomach is filled with high volume foods that are not high in calories, there is less room to pack in more calorie dense foods.

The article also provided a superstar nutrition list by color for choosing fruits and vegetables. Using Minton's list to help supplement your Salsa Sexy meal plan will put you on a healthy path.

Super greens: Green vegetables should become the staples of your daily vegetable intake. Dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, chard, turnip greens, mustard and collard greens, and deep green lettuces, are high in folate, a B vitamin that shows potential results in preventing heart disease. Greens contain wonderful detoxifying chlorophyll. Broccoli and Brussels sprouts contain sulforaphane, a potent phytochemical found in all cruciferous vegetables that has been found able to detoxify carcinogens before the toxins do damage to the body. Sulforaphane, contained in broccoli sprouts, is also a potent antioxidant with a life in the body of up to three days, largely

surpassing many other antioxidants in staying power..

Super reds: Red fruits and vegetables are bursting with lycopene, the carotenoid that offers high levels of protection against prostate cancer. Find lycopene in red bell peppers, watermelon, pink or red grapefruit, and tomatoes. Cooked tomatoes contain much greater levels of lycopene than tomatoes eaten raw. Red cabbage is full of vitamins and minerals. It is rich in Vitamins C and K, and has all the anti-cancer benefits of other cruciferous vegetables. Also include red beans that are one of the best sources of molybdenum and are loaded with protein.

Super oranges: Orange fruits and vegetables are high in beta carotene, notable for its ability to prevent cancers of the lung, esophagus and stomach. Super oranges lower risk of heart disease and boost the immune system to keep infections away and make sure cancers don't get started. Carrots, sweet potatoes, mangos, pumpkins and oranges are the main representatives in this group. Each offers a unique profile of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Sweet potatoes are extremely rich in carotenoids and can be eaten by people allergic to nightshade alkaloids.

Super purples: Grapes, blueberries, prunes, and eggplant are the main representatives of the purples. They are known cancer fighters. The anthocyanins providing their distinctive color also give these foods the ability to ward off heart disease by preventing clot formation. Lutein, a carotenoid found in blueberries, reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke and guards against age-related macular degeneration. Prunes are packed with antioxidants. Antioxidants lead

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the fight against aging.

Super whites: Potatoes, white beans, cauliflower, mushrooms, bananas, onions and garlic each uniquely offer different benefits. Potatoes offer more potassium than just about any other food. Bananas provide energy boosting natural sugars along with Vitamins B6 and C. White beans offer lots of fiber and high quality protein along with a broad spectrum of minerals. Mushrooms are good vegetable source of Vitamin D. Onions and garlic are well-known for their ability to fight cancer, heart disease, and increase the overall antioxidant level of the body.

Super browns: Beans and lentils dominate this category. These are foods with some of the highest levels of protein in the vegetable kingdom. Add some rice or corn and this protein is perfect for humans. Pintos and lentils are great sources of manganese, copper, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, potassium, and Vitamin B1. Their high fiber content keeps cholesterol at the appropriate levels.

Now that you have your shopping list of healthy, metabolism friendly foods to incorporate in your meals, here is a helpful reminder list of top foods to avoid.

Top foods to avoid:

Sugar

Sugar can overload the body and causes blood sugar levels to rise rapidly. Sugar can cause the body to go into storing mode causing it to store extra fat and burn fewer calories. To prevent this, you need to reduce your intake of refined sugars. This means cutting down, or even better, eliminating the candy, milk chocolate, cakes and cookies. For the persistent sweet tooth try eating some fruit. Unlike refined sugars, most fruits contain fructose which does not cause your blood sugar levels to rise.

Alcohol

Alcohol is full of sugar and calories which restrict your metabolic rate. Alcohol is also known to have a dehydrating effect; if you are not fully hydrated your metabolism does not work as effectively. Prevention Magazine said in the article, "Diet Blunders that Slow Metabolism,"^{xviii} "Skip the second cocktail. When you have a drink, you burn less fat, and more slowly than usual, because the alcohol is used as fuel instead. Knocking back the equivalent of about two martinis can reduce your body's fat-burning ability by up to 73%."

White bread

White bread has low nutritional value and is low in dietary fiber because the process removes the bran and germ from the wheat flour. White bread is bleached to remove any color, which destroys many of the vitamins in the wheat, additionally, it is full of sugar. When processing white bread your body burns very few calories and it also causes your blood sugar levels to rise. As outlined in the metabolic boosters section, whole grain should be substituted for white bread to boost your metabolic rate. Whole grain bread is harder to digest (so burns more calories), it also has a greater nutritional value and does not cause blood sugar levels to rise wildly.

Fried foods

Like white bread, fried foods offer little nutritional value and are too easy to digest. Remember foods that are harder to digest like raw vegetables burn more calories. Fried foods are also very high in calories and saturated fats. Saturated fat is a fat that is solid at room temperature and comes mainly from animals. Examples include butter, lard, meat fat, solid shortening, palm oil, and coconut oil. These fats tend to raise the level of cholesterol in the blood and also slow down your metabolic rate.

Processed foods

Processed foods include pre-prepared frozen and canned foods, chips and chocolate bars. Our fast-paced society made processed foods popular because of speed and convenience. However, a majority of processed foods lack nutritional value, contain dangerous trans fats and include chemical

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preservatives, which slow down your metabolic rate. For a healthy family time saver try cooking in large batches and freezing the leftovers.

Chapter 12:

Salsa Sexy meal options

Depending on your weight loss goals, you can customize meals according to your target calorie intake and your calorie burn. Visiting websites such as nutrition.about.com will help you determine how many calories you should consume per day based on your current weight, age, goals and activity level.

Typically, if you desire to lose weight, you will consume two thirds of the calories you are currently consuming. For example, if you are eating as much as 3,000 calories, you need to reduce your calorie intake to approximately 2,000 calories per day in order to see significant weight loss. In this example, eating 1,000 calories less per day can result in weight loss of two to three pounds per week. Below are meal options that my husband and I used to lose weight and we still use to maintain our weight. As always, ask your doctor or consult a nutritionist to see if the following meals and calories are right for you. The meal options are simply what Shahrouz and I followed and should not be substituted for medical or nutritional advice.

Make it Yourself Meal Options

Breakfast options: target 250-450 calories

- 1) Two hard boiled eggs with two Wasa® crackers (each 45 calories) and jam. Approximately 275 calories.

- 2) Two scrambled eggs, fried with ½ spoon of olive oil accompanied with two Wasa crackers (each 45 calories) and jam (low cal, 100% fruit jam). Fruit side. Approximately 325 -400 calories.

- 3) 1 ½ cup of Kashi® GoLean® high protein cereal with skim milk or almond milk (60 calories per cup) with ½ sliced banana. Approximately 325 calories.

- 4) Yoplait® fat-free yogurt, two Wasa crackers (each 45 calories) with jam (low cal, 100% fruit jam) and choice of one banana, or two slices of either watermelon or cantaloupe. Approximately 350 calories.

- 5) Assorted fruit smoothie with fat free milk or yogurt. Two Wasa crackers (each 45 calories) with jam. Approximately 250 calories.

We drank coffee or tea with any breakfast listed above. Empty calories in the morning usually come from cream in coffee, orange juice and other juices as well as butter. . We substituted almond milk or skim milk for cream in coffee. In the beginning, until we reached our target weight, we minimized juices due to their high calorie intake. Instead we ate the fruit itself. One glass of orange juice or 12 fl oz is about 200 calories; you'd need

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to walk one hour walk to burn that 200 calories of juice! If you substitute the glass of orange juice with one orange (typically 80 calories), you consume 120 calories less. We continued to take a high quality multivitamin. We found low calorie, natural jams and eliminate butters and butter substitutes.

Mid-morning snack: Target 100 calories ½ banana, one piece of fruit such as apple, pear, grapes. Green tea or hot water with lemon.

Lunch options: target 300-600 calories

- 1) Two Wasa crackers topped with low fat thin sliced turkey or chicken breast, pickle, tomato, onion, greens and mustard (no mayo!) accompanied with your choice of fruit such as an orange, a pear or apple. Approximately 320 calories.
- 2) Chicken and veggie soup with two slices of Wasa accompanied with a your choice of fruit.. Approximately 300 calories.
- 3) Two Wasa crackers with hummus, tomato, pickle accompanied with your choice of fruit.. Approximately 300 calories
- 4) Greek spinach salad with balsamic vinaigrette and slice of whole grain bread. Approximately 450 calories.

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- 5) Filet of any fish cooked on top of fire with green salad and dressing of olive oil and balsamic vinaigrette or lemon juice – add a slice of whole grain bread and your choice of fruit such as an orange, pear or apple. Approximately 350 calories.

- 6) Chicken wrap with cabbage and your choice of fruit. Approximately 400 calories.

Most of people eat their lunch outside in fast food restaurants. If you do so, select a restaurant that posts their calories on the menu. We highly recommend eating at Panera Bread® or Subway® restaurants because their food calories are clearly posted. To avoid adding unnecessary calories when you eat in restaurants, be sure to avoid following:

1. Soda or juices. 16 ounces of soda or fruit juice adds approximately 200 to 300 calories to your meal. Diet sodas are not recommended due to the unhealthy sugar substitutes. Water is the best option.

2. French fries. As discussed in the previous chapter, fried foods are not good for your diet. Did you know that an order of large fries from a fast food restaurant can add approximately 300-500 calories to your lunch? Wow!

3. Too much bread. Although whole grains are important in your diet, breads typically have high calorie content. Limit your bread consumption in a typical day to two slices or less.

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4. Deep fried foods in general. One spoon of vegetable oil has approximately 130 calories. Deep fried foods can have up to four or more tablespoons of oil.

Occasionally hamburgers are okay as long as they are cooked on top of fire, not in frying pan and are not eaten with soda and French fries.

Mid-afternoon snack options: Target 100 calories. Fruit as per above, low fat/low calorie plain yogurt with fresh berries. Raisins (1/4 cup) and green tea or herbal tea.

Empty calories in the afternoon usually come from sodas, juices, chips or candy to combat the afternoon lull of energy. Instead of turning to sugar or caffeine, try a glass of water with Emergen-C® vitamins for a boost. For strong sugar cravings a small serving of dried fruit or prunes.

Dinner options: Target 300-500 calories

1. Stir fry
2. Lentil soup
3. Spicy black bean soup with cayenne pepper
4. Spicy Thai chicken and veggies
5. Beef and broccoli with brown rice
6. Chicken or beef kabobs with veggies seasoned with cayenne pepper on top of brown basmati rice, (alternative to rice you can have a whole grain wrap). Approximately 600 calories.

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7. Fish and veggies
8. Any salad with slice of whole grain bread as long as the dressing is either a small amount of olive oil or better yet solo balsamic vinaigrette or lemon juice.

Heavy eating at night, especially eating late at night diet is a habit that best avoided. Dinner should ideally be the lightest meal consumed during the day. Ideally the largest meal should be breakfast rather than dinner. Especially a high protein breakfast will keep you satisfied longer and away from unhealthy snacking.

After dinner snack: Target 100 calories. Low calorie/no butter popcorn add season salt or cayenne pepper for favor. Or choose snacks from above lists. Drink chamomile tea to relax before bed.

Chapter 13:

Bravo!

Life is short, God's way of encouraging a bit of focus. –Robert Brault

Congratulations for taking these important steps in reinvigorating your life! As Robert Brault's quote reminds us that life is short so bravo to you for focusing on your life. Salsa Sexy is an adventurous journey. It's a day by day choice to allow the positive habits and practices to make you even better. Take a moment to extend yourself gratitude for taking the time to care for yourself body, mind and spirit. You deserve to live a healthy and joyful life.

My husband and I sincerely hope that this program will help you lose weight, have fun and live positively. It has changed our lives for the positive and if we can touch and inspire just one person to be happier and live better, then we will be truly thrilled. Continue to check out our website salsasexy.com's blog for daily information as well as business information to help you with your lifestyle change. Also give us feedback via our website (or Facebook and Twitter) with what is working or not working for you so we can continue to evolve the program.

Best wishes for a blessed adventure. We'll be dancing with you in spirit!

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