

Episode 3

Everything Counts

Hello. This is Rosie Bank, and I'll be your host for this episode of Health Matters Podcast. By now you can tell that I love everything health related. And it makes my world go round to talk with you what I feel are some of the most effective, yet often simple, steps you can take to feel way better sooner than you think.

I picked this topic, Everything Counts, because it is among my most trustworthy tools. I rely on this one every single day. If I ever catch myself thinking, oh this doesn't matter regarding something to do with my health, I catch myself. I reevaluate. I believe that with this one simple, yet profound, lesson, you can make some changes that are big, but by doing little things. I particularly love this one because I think it is powerful for people who are overwhelmed to begin to make their health a priority. Some of my clients and students have practically cried with doubt and frustration. As one high-powered CFO said to me, "I know something has to give. But I don't know where to start." He stated flatly that he could not continue poor health-related habits that had built up and left him feeling completely lost. We worked together for one year. He said that he hardly recognizes himself now looking back to when he began. And guess what he started with? Small baby steps. Really big changes come about by making small adjustments done consistently. Let me show you how.

Also, stay tuned for some freebies that I will be announcing later on in this program. I came up with a list of fifty little things you can do to give yourself more energy, less weight, more confidence around food, and less exhaustion.

Let's dig in.

Do you love how you look and feel? Or are you unhappy and frustrated with the state of your health and your body? Either way, what you experience every day comes as a result of countless little things you do or don't do. Telling yourself that the little things you do don't matter is one of the gravest mistakes to make on your journey to having more energy, feeling more alive, and to being closer to the shape and size you want. In fact, it is precisely those little things that add up to make the greatest impact.

During this podcast, I am going to lead you to consider two things:

1. Your health and your mindset are intricately connected.
2. Understanding the role of discipline and practice are key to your achieving your desired results.

Regarding your mindset, the state of your health is directly related to what you tell yourself. The conversation inside your head, between your ears, can either guide you or derail you from your goals to have more energy and vitality.

One of the most insidious little gremlins inside your head is a little voice that seduces you into thinking that one little error in judgement does not count. Another voice to listen to vigilantly are those that contain words that are unkind to yourself. I have already spoken to you on the first episode of this Health Matters podcast. I called it loving yourself first. To simplify this here, when you love yourself, you are more inclined to do loving things for yourself. Let's explore both of these forms of self-talk. The words you tell yourself are the building blocks of your mindset.

To ensure that you are aligned with your goals, I want to help you make sure that what you tell yourself will not sabotage your efforts. Consider this. Feeling way better in your body is the result of little things that add up. I'm going to use one example from my practice. Whether you can relate to this particular habit does not matter. You can apply this lesson to some of the ways you approach your pro-health choices.

One of my clients switched out his diet soda for purified water. That's just one thing. And I have seen this over and over. Let's say this is about you. By increasing your hydration and reducing the inflow of artificial sweeteners, your energy can climb up and your weight can climb down. Water helps your body metabolize fat and it increases the function of your joints. Being hydrated helps your blood deliver precious micronutrients to every cell in your body. Diet soda does promote any of these precious functions. It compromises them by confusing your body into thinking you have taken in sugar. This triggers an undesirable reaction in your pancreas and effect on your blood glucose. All this from one small yet mighty adjustment.

Imagine if you told yourself that diet soda doesn't matter. After all, it's free of calories! But don't fool yourself into thinking that zero calories means zero harm.

Let me remind you that I do not believe that you need to be perfect in order to make great strides in getting healthier, having more energy, and losing weight. I was recently visiting my 89 year old mom to celebrate her birthday. The food in her kitchen and what was served at her party were nowhere near the choices my husband and I make when we shop at the market and prepare meals at our home. But I kept my choices as good as I possibly could, given the circumstances. I chose not to eat most of what was served, and I made a quick trip to the local Trader Joes' to keep my bases covered. It was not the same as being home. And I knew not to panic, complain, or beat myself up. I make room for these temporary situations because I know that I will get myself back on track. I offer this to you as a workable strategy.

But I will say this: when you think ahead of the circumstances you will be in, I assure you that you will not be trapped by fast food options, or any other compromised choices that are avoidable with some pre-planning.

I'd say that planning ahead is among the most effective strategies you can employ. Think through your day so that you can make time to have genuinely healthy options. I challenge you to avoid categorically ending up with just coffee and a banana for breakfast, for example. There's too much sugar, too much spike in adrenaline, and not enough protein or fat. This incomplete breakfast will leave you feeling off your game within about 90 minutes. Maybe the plan ahead part is as simple as stopping at the market the night before to get some eggs that you can hard boil and have ready in the morning. Maybe it is something as simple as having some complete meal replacement powder on hand with a portable hand shaker that you can take out the door with you. The busier you are, the more you will benefit from this pre-planning. Then if one of those thought gremlins tries to convince you that there is no time to make healthy choices, you can rise strong.

Don't buy into junky thoughts. Don't accept those false beliefs that you made up and have acquired like habits. It works like this. Let's say that you get a balanced breakfast shake mix and have that along with your coffee and banana. Let's say that you begin to notice that you feel better in the morning. Fewer cravings and less crashing of your energy. When you feel better, you can reinforce your choices with some positive self-talk. Now you have begun a positive feedback loop. Take some positive action that actually give you something to rave about. Any favorable adjustment in your habits is worthy of some

self-encouragement. You will probably be pleased to hear this encouragement. It can effect favorably your subsequent decisions throughout the rest of the day.

One of my clients and I came up with an acronym, MITRD. This stands for Moving In The Right Direction. It means that you have pointed yourself toward better choices around food and drink. If you were sedentary before, you are now starting to move more than you were previously. If you let your stress go out of control, you are now spending more time relaxing, calming yourself, and unwinding. If you used to feel isolated and disconnected, you now make the effort to speak with friends and colleagues, and even do fun things with people whose company you enjoy. There are other components of becoming more well, but I'll use these to illustrate my point.

When you move in the right direction, your body and your energy level will give you feedback. An effective tool for you to use is to be mindful of what you tell yourself. Get behind your good intentions with positive self-talk. By making this journey more enjoyable you will get better results. In the previous episode in the Health Matters Podcast series, I gave you some specific suggestions for making positive adjustments in how you speak to yourself. The goal is to have what you tell yourself be aligned with whatever goals you have set for yourself. And just as importantly, to begin to eradicate negative, shaming, blaming, critical messages that stand between you and nurturing and loving your body.

Back to our main topic for this episode. Everything counts. Imagine your body like the sum of a mathematical equation. The positive behaviors add up like plusses, or benefits. The negatives add up too, like minuses, or deficits.

I came up with a list of some pro-health activities. Your list will be different than this one. Actually, I encourage you to have such a list. I think of my pro-health habits like a menu and I select from it throughout the day. Having a varied menu is great because you then have options. I love to exercise every day, but I don't always want to do the same thing. So, for me, having a varied fitness menu is great. If I only had one thing, and I didn't feel like doing that one thing on a given day, I'd be up against some resistance. Asking myself what I feel like doing today is one of my baseline practices. If moving your body is new to you, you may need only two items on your menu. Maybe it's take a walk or go for a bike ride. Having more than one option enables you to avoid being stuck without choices. Back to this list:

1. Thinking positive thoughts on purpose when you first wake up in the morning.
2. Taking your dog for a walk in the morning instead of just putting her outside.
3. Having a balanced and complete breakfast
4. Taking the stairs at work instead of the elevator
5. Replacing filtered water for soda
6. Eliminating caffeine after say, 2 PM
7. Adding more veggies to your meals
8. Increasing the quality of all of your meals and snacks
9. Refusing to overeat and stuff yourself.
10. Getting up from your seat during the day and moving around
11. Connecting with your spouse and swapping stories about your day.
12. Taking a quality supplement
13. Remembering to stretch and breathe
14. Remembering to be grateful and have a positive outlook
15. Doing things on purpose that help you relax and unwind
16. Going for a walk after work instead of having an alcoholic drink
17. Reaching out to a friend to ask for and to offer support

18. Going to bed at a reasonable and regular time each night

What I love about this list is that each item is incredibly simple. Basic in fact! I bet that you could execute on all or most of these if you set your mind to do so. And like I said, your list will definitely be different than this one. But the point is that these simple practices add up. I mentioned that your health is like a mathematical equation. If you review my list, or if you make your own, you will begin to see how your activities interact. For example, taking a walk instead of having a drink will help calm your nervous system, boost your energy, and increase the feel-good chemicals from your brain. (By the way, this is one reason why some form of movement is used effectively to help people get relief from symptoms related to depression.) In this improved state, it is easier to connect with your spouse or your roommate. It's also easier to avoid taking in too much food because you are in a more relaxed state after your move, sweat and breathe. Then you get to sleep better. Can you see how everything is connected, and everything counts?

If we were to hypothetically eliminate one item, say, for example, not reaching out to a friend to ask for and offer support, you might be more at risk to feel isolated. The feeling of isolation can be a trigger for self-destructive habits. Food helps medicate the feeling of being lonely. Put that one habit back into the menu and you are now more nourished. This is worth noting, as you continue to add practices like these throughout your day.

Here's another example. If you practice gratitude to replace a complaining or negative nature, your mood will be better and you might notice a lessening of a desire for sugar. The side-car to everything counts is that everything is connected.

These choices impact how you look, your outlook on life, your perceptions of yourself, your ability to connect with others, and how you perform at work.

I want to discuss with you the role of discipline and practice. Understanding this is key to your achieving your desired results.

Let's define discipline first.

Discipline is a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity. It's training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. Another definition for discipline that I found was self-control.

So, by extension, if we are disciplined, we are in control of certain conducts or activities. Similarly, our disciplines govern our conduct. Our disciplines correct or perfect our minds and our character. Yoga, for example, is a discipline. Eating nutrient-dense food and avoiding all forms of junk food is a discipline. If you successfully completed a huge project at work or home, it probably required you have discipline to see it through to the end.

Pardon me while I rant. But I swear, this word is sorely lacking in our culture. If you look around your environment, you will see people who appear never to have heard of the word discipline. The people in the US are among the fattest in the world. People complain about not being able to lose weight. Gee, do you think this might be related to what people eat? Or whether or not they exercise. As a health coach, I am filled with love and compassion for anyone's struggle to get over food cravings and addictions. I am incapable of judging anyone because of what I went through and because my own habits were so atrocious in the past. But let me say, I heartily embrace discipline as a core value. And I love to see others choosing this for themselves. Often it means the difference between fighting with ourselves

because we are so unhappy with our behavior, versus loving ourselves first and then doing loving things to get and stay as healthy as possible. If you are like how I used to be, and you eat enormous quantities of habit-forming sugary foods, try doing what I did to get myself squared away. I tried to become more disciplined. It was baby steps at first, but you already know that everything counts and everything is connected. MITRD, Move in the right direction is a brilliant strategy. My hope for you on this podcast is that you consider the value to you for being more disciplined. Be generous with yourself and count every baby step.

The other word I want to explore with you is practice. This is one of my favorite words. I found three useful meanings of this word.

1. Practice is the actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method as opposed to theories about such application or use. This means that we actually do a thing rather than just have theories about things. You may espouse the virtues of a so-called healthy diet. But do you practice it? You may talk about the need to reduce stress in your life, but do you actually do things to become calmer and more relaxed? The delta, or difference between what you say and what you practice, is where your own transformation lies.
2. Practice is the repeated exercise in or performance of an activity or skill so as to acquire or maintain proficiency in it. Get it? You do something over and over in order to get good at it. The reason why I wrote Health Matters as a yearlong program is because I know for certain that people can get started with an eating or exercise program. But those who can stick with it represent a smaller number. I wanted to encourage my readers as I encourage my clients. Practicing portion control will not change your weight and your health overnight. But the compound effect of **practicing** eating reasonable portions of food, in tandem with other things you are practicing, will have an astonishing effect on everything related to your body. Let's say that you want to learn how to cook at home. Maybe in the beginning the dishes you make are bland or overcooked. That's not the time to quit. That's the time to learn from your mistakes, and continue to practice so that the food you prepare tastes better. Oh, while we are on the subject, let me add this. A lot of great things happen while you practice and while you get better. I'm in favor of words like extraordinary, and excellent. Perfect and perfection are tricky. We often use the word casually, like, oh that's perfect! So there is no problem with the word. The only problem is if we trip over perfectionism while we are practicing. Getting better is so, so important. If you are a perfectionist, let me encourage you to put your focus on gradual improvements.
3. The last use of this great word practice is to carry out or perform (a particular activity, method, or custom) habitually or regularly. Hopefully I have inspired you to consider becoming more disciplined in your daily habits. Let's add this layer. Living a healthy lifestyle is a practice. It's more than something that you do. It's something that you live. I practice yoga even though I learned yoga back in the mid-1970's when I was very young. As recently as today I went in to my yoga room to practice. I still call it that. And guess what! I am still improving after all these years. I have had some unbelievable setbacks, in particular three orthopedic sports-related surgeries. After surgery, yoga is both extremely difficult as well as tremendously beneficial. I relied on all those decades of practicing in order to resume yoga when I could. After surgery, the yoga poses are VERY compromised because my body had undergone tremendous shock and trauma. And because I not only practice yoga, but I feel that yoga is part of who I am, I knew I would get better. Perfection was not an option. To this day, I practice eating healthy, balanced meals. I practice breathing and being grateful. I practice creating and nurturing loving relationships. I am

inviting you to practice being the person who you love and want to be with, in particular regarding how you take care of yourself.

You will do better some days than others. You will be more excited and confident some days and perhaps more challenged on others. You might go to visit your family across the country, like I did last week, and be overjoyed by your choices and how well you nourished your body. Or, you might come back and remind yourself to fire up your discipline and get back to practicing.

I might never meet you or speak with you in person. But I just had a giant surge of love for you because you have come this far with me and I know you are sincere. Take my love of your imperfection and internalize it. Know that if we had to be perfect, none of this would work.

Your health matters, and so do you.