

The 5 Day Lifestyle Changeround

by Argentina Leyva

Introduction

Welcome to my 5 Day Lifestyle Changeround! So many of the women I work with want to change their relationship with their body and with food – and that’s what this program is all about.

Diets don’t work. Why? Because when we embark on a diet our mind set is all wrong. We subconsciously see a diet as depriving ourselves of things we like – diets are the most common form of self-punishment in the Western world. It has to stop!

The 5 Day Lifestyle Changeround is all about changing the way we think about food and exercise so that we can have a healthier relationship with our bodies. By the end of the 5 days you’ll be able to see food in a different light and be able to better nourish both your body and your soul. But no deprivation – it’s time we started to be a little kinder to ourselves.

This program is a labor of love for me. I’ve taken everything I’ve learnt about self-image, exercise and nutrition and condensed it into an easy to follow 5 day program that will transform your life just as it has mine. I know all too well what it feels like to be unhappy with your body. For many years I was so uncomfortable in my own skin that I hid myself away from all the opportunities life has to offer. I had no confidence in myself at all.

I started gaining weight at 15 and by the age of 24 when I was living in America, I was up to 220lb. My weight gain was due to the American diet, being way too sedentary by studying all the time and not knowing anything about nutrition. I knew about diets and how to starve myself to lose weight, but nothing about having a healthy lifestyle - the secret to losing weight and keeping it off for good.

After I graduated, I started to learn about health and nutrition and soon became a healthy weight and I've stayed like that for twenty years – so believe me, this really does work! I gained a more positive, kinder relationship with myself and when I did, that was the moment I started to grab all the opportunities that came my way.

Throughout this program you'll gain the knowledge you need to become a healthier version of your beautiful self through practical advice, simple activities and inspiring words. You'll also see links to my very own female-only support network, [Daring Greatly Diva Network](#). If you haven't already, I'd encourage you to join so that you can share the support and love of hundreds of other women as you make these important changes to your life.

I'm so excited for the journey ahead of you!

Argentina

Day 1 – Make peace with the past.

*“You are an amazing woman with amazing power.
Believe this fundamental truth and you will be
invincible.” - Argentina*

If you're going to make lifestyle changes for the long-term, the first thing you need to do is to purposefully reconnect with yourself – and in particular the 'you' when your relationship with your body started to get unhealthy. Don't worry, this isn't about beating yourself up – quite the opposite! It's about seeing yourself through compassionate eyes and forgiving yourself for not taking good care of your body until now. It's time to make peace with the past and move forward!

You might have read my blog, “A letter to my younger self”. It's how I made peace with myself and all those years where I abused my body and didn't take good care of it. In case you missed it, here it is again.

Dear Argentina,

I know you don't feel like you fit in anywhere, but hang on in there – you will find your place in the world and it's wonderful! You'll get to travel across the globe and have friends in all four corners of the world. You're going to achieve more than you think is possible right now.

But what I really want you to know is this.

Being fat doesn't make you ugly or unlovable – that's just society and the media trying to dictate your worth based on your appearance. Don't let them! They're simply trying to make you buy into an impossible ideal so that you'll believe their advertisements and use their products. You are not fat. Yes, there is fat in your body, but that's very different, and it doesn't define you.

You have the power to change your body, change it to be healthy, not to please society or to be accepted or considered worthy, but because you're worth taking care of. You are worthy and deserving of love, respect and appreciation for who you are, not because of the way you look at this moment.

You will find that power. You'll learn all about health and nutrition so that you can make the right choices for you. You'll find confidence in yourself and you will learn to love yourself – I promise these things will happen.

Until then, try to love your body as it is. It's your most precious possession. Loving your body as it is right now is an act of courage and self-worth. When you decide to take that step, magic happens - you become the leading lady in your life.

And believe me, it's some life you have ahead of you.

With love and admiration for who you are now – and who you'll become,

Your older self

Writing that letter was such an emotional process for me. I let go of all the hate I used to feel for my former fat self and stopped beating myself up for all the unhealthy choices I had made. It was time to move on with my life, free from all that baggage – and that's what I want for you today.

Changeround Challenge

Take some beautiful notepaper and write a letter to your younger self – whenever it was that your relationship with food started to become unhealthy. Treat her with kindness, show her all the love that you wish you'd have felt back then. Acknowledge how she's feeling, make sure she knows she's been heard and to reassure her that you've got this covered, you're going to make the changes you need to make to start caring for your body. Make a commitment – both the you back then and yourself today – that this unhealthy relationship won't continue. It stops here!

Remember to share your thoughts with my [Daring Greatly Diva Network](#) where you can connect with me and hundreds of supportive women, ready to help you as you change your life for good!

DAY 2 – Reasons to Change

“By choosing healthy over skinny you are choosing self-love over self-judgment. You are beautiful!” — Steve Maraboli,

You’ve already made a commitment to yourself that you’re going to change things around and that’s a great first step – but now we need to make sure we can challenge all the justifications that will come into our mind when we want to fall back into old habits. That’s what today and tomorrow are all about.

I’ve heard so many women say that taking care of yourself by buying healthy food, or joining a gym or a sports club is too expensive. It’s not true! Believe me, eating healthy and having a healthy lifestyle is cheaper than paying medical bills. Just take a look at these stats.

- It costs on average \$13,700 per year in medical bills to treat diabetes (American Diabetes Association).
- A knee replacement costs around \$30,000 without insurance.
- Need treatment for heart disease? You’re looking at \$14,627 each year in medical bills (Medical Expenditure Panel Survey).
- The above diseases cost on average \$1166 per month in medical bills for one person.

- Eating organic and healthy food might increase your grocery expenses by about 20%, so if you spend \$300 on groceries now, switching to healthy food and organic, you will be spending \$60 more.
- Having 1 personal training session each week costs on average \$55.

If you think being healthy is expensive, consider what it will cost you to get sick. If obesity-related diseases cost us \$1166 per month on our health insurance, you can have two personal training sessions per week, have \$200 to spend on healthy food and still be nearly \$500 better off!

Other women I work with say that they don't have the time to cook healthy. I know we all have busy lives, but believe me you can make time to eat well. Yes, quality, nutritious meals don't just appear from nowhere - if only they did! – but all you need to do is to sit down and plan your meals and your shopping each week. Committing to just a few minutes of planning means that I can stay focused on taking the best care of my body for the entire week. Remember the old saying, if you fail to plan, you've planned to fail, so it's time to get organized!

Smoothies, protein shakes and salads all take very little time to prepare and slow cookers are a godsend when it comes to cooking – just throw all your ingredients in to the pot in the morning and 8 hours later your evening meal is ready to go! Stews, bakes and even roasts all work

brilliantly in a slow cooker and so if you haven't got one already, invest in one and a recipe book to enjoy home cooked meals with just a few minutes prep time.

It's also important to remember why you're embarking on this lifestyle change – because you're worth it! Believe me, *nothing* tastes as good as healthy feels and you deserve to feel good about yourself.

Changeround Challenge

List all the reasons you've come up with in the past to resist changing to a healthy lifestyle. Maybe you didn't think you had the time to prepare fresh, nutritious meals, or maybe it was the cost that stopped you. Perhaps it's about the pressure you feel from members of your family. These are your 'lifestyle myths'. Whatever your own myths, write them down and then figure out one way to challenge them. What's the truth of the situation? What can you tell yourself so that you don't buy into these myths anymore?

What myths do you buy into most often? How are you going to challenge them? Join the conversation at my [Daring Greatly Diva Network!](#)

DAY 3 – Your attitude to food.

“Junk food you’ve craved for an hour, or the body you’ve craved for a lifetime?” - Anon

Today you’re going to be working on what happens before you make unhealthy food choices. Maybe you open the cookie jar in times of stress, or reach for candy when you’re feeling lonely. Today is all about discovering why we make the food choices we do – and replacing unhealthy actions with ones that will nourish our body and soul.

I know all too well how easy it is to make the wrong food choices in an attempt to make ourselves feel better – and the #1 culprit is sugar.

Well, have you ever reached for a bowl of carrot sticks when you want to comfort eat?!

It’s no surprise we go for sugary treats. Dr Nicola Avena, neuroscientist, author and expert in the fields of nutrition, diet and addiction, says that when you eat something loaded with sugar, your taste buds, your gut and your brain all take notice. This activation of your reward system is not unlike how bodies process addictive substances such as alcohol or nicotine – and an overload of sugar spikes dopamine levels – a feel-good chemical in our brain - and leaves us craving for more. In fact research has suggested that sugar is 20% more addictive than cocaine!

You might think that you're addicted to food, but chances are that you're addicted to the sugar in food. Remove the sugar and you have got rid of 80% of the food that is making you unhealthy. Eliminating sugar from our diet can be tough but it's the step that will provide the most benefits to our health. Eating sugar is not only addictive, but every time you do so, the sugar triggers your pancreas to produce insulin which stores fat in your body. Overtime this can put a huge strain on this important organ - get rid of sugar and your pancreas will be forever grateful! With all the hidden sugar in the average American diet, it's no wonder that obesity and diabetes are such big problems.

When sugar holds such power over us, we need to replace it with things that make us feel just as good – and to do that we need to understand what our bodies and minds are telling us in the first place.

A lot of the day-to-day decisions we make about food are automatic – we've programmed ourselves to 'just do it'. Maybe you make yourself a coffee in the morning without thinking about it, or automatically reach for the cookie jar when you get home from work. We all have habits that we've developed over the years – but we can change them!

Changeround Challenge

Before every action we take, there's a thought – get to know and understand the thought and you can change the action that you take. Think about the last time you made an unhealthy food choice. What was happening before you made that choice? What were you thinking to yourself? This is your 'trigger thought'. Keep thinking back to all the unhealthy food choices that you've made until you've identified all the trigger thoughts that you've recently had. Now for the fun part! Make a list of all the nice things you could do for yourself that will nourish your body and soul instead of making unhealthy food choices. Take five minutes out to meditate on your breathing if your soaring stress levels were the cause, or if you want to reward yourself for something that you've done why not try and long soak in the bath or a DIY manicure instead? The choice is yours! Keep your list of positive activities with you at all times – and when you're tempted by the cookie jar, try one of your new rewards instead.

What new ways are you going to reward yourself with? Let me – and hundreds of other supportive women – know at [Daring Greatly Diva Network](#).

DAY 4 – Make exercise your friend.

“Losing a pound isn’t necessarily the reward. Being healthy and feeling good about yourself is the reward.”

– Nancy Peterson

A healthy body is 80% what you eat and 20% about the physical activity that you take – and remember, this program is all about a lifestyle change, not just weight loss, so we’re going to be looking at all of the benefits of moving more.

The National Health Service tells us that research shows us that exercise can reduce your risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50%. Not only that, but physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. In full, here are the stats - it's medically proven that people who do regular physical activity have:

- up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- a 30% lower risk of early death

- up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture
- a 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults)
- up to a 30% lower risk of depression
- up to a 30% lower risk of dementia

Exercise is a powerful thing – so what do you need to be doing to get the benefits?

Science recommends that to get the full range of health benefits from exercise, every adult should try to be active daily and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week. For those 150 minutes – just over 20 minutes per day – you need to be moving quick enough to raise your heart rate, breathe faster and feel warmer.

It's easier than you think to make activity part of everyday life, like walking or cycling instead of using the car to get around -but the more you do, the better, and making time for working out will make you even healthier. Vigorous activity – when you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit – will reap even more rewards with how great you feel.

Changeround Challenge

You don't need to join the gym and be a slave of workouts if that's not what makes you happy. Keeping your body healthy requires activity. Pick one you love so much, it becomes part of your daily life.

This week, keep a record of when you're active – what you're doing and for how long. Next week, aim to do it for a little longer or a little harder. If you notice any days when you're not managing to be active at all, figure out how you can build exercise into your day. You can choose to take the stairs instead of the elevator, or get off the bus a stop early and walk the rest of the way. Or go all out, tell your partner they're on dinner duty and book a training session at your local gym!

Make a resolution! What activity are you going to connect with?

Remember to share your goals at [Daring Greatly Diva Network!](#)

DAY 5 – Nutrition 101

“You are what you eat – so don’t be fast, cheap, easy or fake.” – Anon

If you’re following my 5 day program, then chances are that at some point in your life, you’ve made food your enemy – it’s not! Food is your best ally to health and happiness, you just need to understand it better so that you can use it to your advantage.

I’ve condensed everything I’ve learnt about nutrition into 10 basic nutrition principles. Learn these and you’re well on your way to changing your relationship with food forever.

10 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD NUTRITION.

1. The two elements that most make us sick are sugar and fat. Refined carbs, such as white bread do nothing for our bodies either!
2. If it comes in a box, a bag or a can, don’t eat it. These foods are full of sugar, fat, salt and preservatives. Healthy, fresh meals can be easy to prepare with just a little planning.
3. Do not eat fat-free foods. Fat has been replaced with sweeteners sugar and starch. The sugar and sweeteners have you craving for more and the caloric difference is usually minimal anyway!

4. Eat a rainbow of foods. If it's beige rather than colorful, don't eat it. Colorful foods are rich in vitamins and antioxidants. Bland, beige foods are full of the wrong kind of carbs, sugar or are fried.

5. Choose unrefined carbs - potatoes, corn, oatmeal, brown rice and quinoa but in moderation. Over half your plate should still be made up of fruit or vegetables. Unrefined carbs have had all the goodness stripped out of them and will do you no good – we're talking white pasta, pizza crusts, white bread and puddings.

6. Ready-to-drink protein shakes are your best friend for busy lives. They quickly kill cravings and prevent pigging out. Believe me – they're a life saver.

7. If you can't eat your vegetables, drink them. Smoothies and juices are the fastest, heartiest way to nourish your body.

8. Learn the caloric value of food:

- 1 gram of fat is equal to 9 calories
- 1 gram of carbs is equal to 4 calories
- 1 gram of protein is equal to 4 calories

It's a no brainer that we need to cut back on fat!

9. Protein makes you fuller for longer. Protein molecules are bigger than either carbs or fat so they take longer to digest. Add a small serving of

protein-rich foods to each meal and you'll avoid hunger cravings later on in the day.

10. The easiest way to avoid unhealthy food choices is to not have any in your cupboards! Never go grocery shopping when you're hungry but when you go out, enjoy your food guilt-free. Food is one of the pleasures of life. When you are at home, get back to your healthy routine.

Changeround Challenge

Following the 10 basic nutrition principles above, sort out your kitchen cupboards and get rid of any food that won't improve your health. Next, sit down and plan a week of meals that will provide you with the healthy lifestyle you want. That's it! A little discipline and tough self-love now will have you reaping the rewards of a healthy lifestyle for weeks and months to come.

I know you can do this!

How was your kitchen clear-out? Liberating or stressful? Let us know how you got on at [Daring Greatly Diva Network!](#)

Final words.

Over the past 5 days you've let go of all the negative thoughts you've ever had around food, changed your relationship with what you eat and redesigned your own personal reward system. You've gained knowledge on nutrition and committed to getting active and moving more. I bet you're feeling more positive already!

Remember, this is a lifestyle change, not a diet. To honour that, I want you to make a choice right now - do you want to be skinny or do you want to be happy and healthy? This isn't about getting skinny, although you can't help but lose weight if you follow the program. It's about changing your relationship with your body to a more positive, nurturing one – a relationship where you feed your body with what it needs to stay well and have you feeling incredible.

I'm so proud of you for committing to a healthier, happier you. Keep sticking with the program to be healthy - not to be skinny, to be loved, feel worthy or be accepted by anyone. You are enough – exactly as you are. You're now making your body your top priority and you've learnt how to take proper care of yourself - that is so powerful!

I wish you health, happiness and love on your continued journey,

Argentina.