

# Staying On Track

By Stu Yellin, WNB Pro Bodybuilder and Nutrition Coach



## It's All About Balance!

So many people embark upon a diet and training program with the intention of being “100% focused and 100% compliant, 100% of the time!” Of course if you’re suddenly making huge changes to your daily eating as well as adding a new exercise regimen, maintaining such a driven pace can quickly lead to burnout as you start to feel left out of what everyone else around you is doing. Luckily, unless your actual livelihood depends on your performance or physical appearance, finding a healthy balance is actually your best option for creating a sustainable lifestyle.



-“**Cheating**” Has Its Place- While veering away from a strict dietary regimen can provide both physical and mental benefits to an individual, it’s paramount to understand that such “cheating” must remain the *rarity* and not the norm. Many times a dieter will binge for one meal only to end up feeling guilty and then, feeling the day’s nutrition is already ruined, they’ll stay unrestricted and do even more to set themselves back than if they’d simply taken their binge in stride and gotten right back to the plan. The best course of action is to chalk it up to a case of ‘these things happen’, and get right back on track.

-**The 90% Rule** – This very common principle is used by many as a simple way to approach your daily, weekly, and monthly outlook on sticking to a healthy eating plan. Basically, so long as your *good* choices far outweigh your bad ones (within reason of course!) you’ll still be making progress in terms of the big picture. Be careful though, since this is *not* an excuse to go out and intentionally cheat 10% of the time. Instead it’s about focusing on doing the right thing much more often than not, without having a panic attack if the *occasional* mistake happens.

-**Weekdays / Weekends Approach** – This very effective approach was my personal preference in between contests (“the offseason”). Having a 9-5 job during the week usually means a fairly consistent daily routine. This can be a huge benefit when scheduling meals, preparing food ahead of time, and even avoiding sudden unplanned temptations or derailments. Of course loosening the reins a bit on weekends makes it that much easier to keep the more strict approach Mondays through Fridays. Just remember that loosening the reins isn’t an excuse to see how much damage you can do on a Saturday night!

## You Don't Need to Train Every Day!

This may sound like sacrilege to the most driven trainers out there, but more often than not, subjecting your body to strenuous training seven days a week, for weeks, even months on end, can actually be a bad thing.

**-Recovery as a consideration** – While everyone is different in terms of their genetic ability to tolerate physical stresses, we all have to take careful account of how quickly we run ourselves down. Factored into this concern is how supportive our dietary approach is to our daily stresses -this includes both training and non-training related issues. When you control and maximize the efficiency of your diet, typical sleeping patterns, and general methods of stress management (meditation, sports, hobbies, etc.), you'll be surprised at how well you can recover.

**-Motivation**- Even the most gung-ho enthusiast can get run down by repeating a task over and over without much variation. While the physical effects of excessive physical demands are fairly obvious, the mental ones should be considered as well. If you've got a case of "the blahs" when it's time to train, perhaps it's a sign that you should re-evaluate your program and see what's wrong.

**-Sustainability**- Any decent nutrition or training program should not only be well planned out in its immediate design (the specifics to do each day), but it should also take into account that any plan must be doable for an extended duration. It has to be the kind of plan that you can stick with for three months, six months, a year, etc. You should never feel like you're doing something less-than-optimal just because your program doesn't have you at the gym seven days a week.

## Earn Your Carbs

There's a saying in the nutrition world: There are *essential amino acids* (proteins), and *essential fatty acids* (fats), but there's no such thing as an essential carbohydrate.

Basically what it means is that, while your body may love carbs and regard them as its preferred fuel source, you can still get along just fine in the absence of available carbohydrates. As this particular macronutrient is double edged in its available uses, understand that you certainly don't need as much "fuel" on days you're just sitting on the couch watching TV compared to when you're heading to the gym for an intense training session.



Competitors and professional athletes may feel the need to account for every gram of food they're ingesting, but understanding just a few simple approaches can help the average trainer to get the most of their use of this energy source.

**-Concept of Being 'Depleted'** – This term is misunderstood and overused. The human body can store ingested carbohydrates as glycogen for future use. The possibility of actually burning through *all* of your glycogen within a single workout is just not going to happen. Athletes who actually engage in a process of intentional carbohydrate depletion require multiple days of specifically-designed activities coordinated with a special nutritional approach. For the beginner, a short basic workout most certainly does not give you reason to run out and gorge yourself on several pounds of pasta or junk food for fear

of being “carb depleted.” In fact, there are actually many occasions where it can benefit you to be running on half a tank of gas, so to speak.

**-Feed the Need** – One very smart approach is to tailor your nutrition specifically to the demands you place on your body each day. Walking on the beach with the kids and then some relaxing with the wife? You probably don’t need tons of carbs. Planning a Cross-fit marathon with some of your gym buddies? Better carb up my friend! A common sense approach and a little planning go a long way.

**-The Day is Long** – Sometimes, in interacting with co-workers, classmates, or old friends, we find ourselves in situations where we can’t always control our choices in food. Just remember that if one meal gets away from you, and end up eating foods more carb-heavy than you would’ve liked, simply adjust your choices for the remainder of the day. It all balances out in the end. (Remember, the 90% Rule!)

## Eating Shouldn’t Be Entertainment



Okay, barring the possibility of a special event out at a fancy restaurant, the line between the actual reason for ingesting food, and the time spent with others in social settings has blurred like never before. Whenever we make plans with friends or family, there’s always the inevitable topic of snacks. “Where you want to grab a quick bite?” “Who wants to bring what edible delight?” I’m sure you’ve heard, or experienced, the scenario of how people tend to eat more when in the company of others.

Obviously there are people who have genuine psychological issues that set them up to suffer more food-dependent obstacles than others. But for the majority of us, it seems that society and the media have conditioned this sort of behavior. The sooner you realize just what you’re doing, the sooner it becomes easier to differentiate between eating because you’re hungry and eating because you’re bored.

If you truly wish to accomplish your specific physique goals, you must view eating through a healthy lens. Once your usual thinking is simply to regard your diet as just one of several tools you can use to affect change, the easier it will be to resist that gooey looking chocolate cake that all of your co-workers are enjoying second helpings of. You can certainly allow yourself the occasional deviation from rigid dietary plans, but don’t let the act of eating take on unnecessary importance in your life. Ask yourself if any cookie could be so tasty that it trumps the amazing feeling you’ll get when you accomplish the goal you’ve spent months working to achieve. Puts things in a clearer perspective thinking like that doesn’t it?

Stu Yellin is a WNBF Professional Bodybuilder, nutrition coach, and contest prep coach. He has helped people from all walks of life, including Professional Athletes, competitive bodybuilders and figure contestants get into the best shape of their lives. For more information or to contact, go to [www.StuYellin.com](http://www.StuYellin.com).

