Blossom in 2023!

by Aimee Christie, Ph.D.

“No mud, no lotus” is a saying of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. It refers to the idea that being rooted in the muck of life helps us to blossom to our full potential. A cancer diagnosis and treatment surely involve some muck. Moments of pain, suffering, and existential challenges are opportunities to be kind to ourselves, remind ourselves that this is temporary, and to ask ourselves, “what next?” How do I want to grow from this?

Often, we realize that improving our diet, exercising more, and reducing stress are valuable changes we can make for ourselves and our families. These lifestyle factors are important for cancer risk reduction and equally important to optimize during and after cancer treatment to improve quality of life and clinical outcomes. The benefits of maintaining these healthy lifestyle changes can last a lifetime and improve all aspects of your life.

To make any New Year’s resolution last deep into the new year and through the whole year, start SMART! Make goals for yourself using the SMART framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-limited. For example, a SMART goal for healthy eating may be: Eat 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit every day for the next month. Start slow with baby steps; early success is key for motivation! Build on those changes over time. Ask yourself, “is this change something I can maintain over my lifetime?” This helps to turn these New Year resolutions into lifelong habits. Here are some additional tips to help you succeed.

- Add accountability: Let a spouse, friend, support group, or medical provider know your goal(s) and check in with them about your progress.
- Monitor your progress: Record the data! Be a scientist and track whether you’re meeting your goals. Use the feedback to adjust your goals to be more realistic if you are not meeting your goals or to set yourself more challenging goals.
- Reward your successes: Be your own cheerleader and find ways to congratulate and reward yourself for meeting your goals.
- Forgive yourself: Small setbacks, or “bad” days, are just opportunities to reflect on what did not work and plan for a more successful tomorrow.

Finally, as you learn how to work towards new goals and a healthier lifestyle, remember to practice self-compassion. Be kind to yourself, be in the present moment, and remember that you’re not alone. Let’s grow together!
Avocado Toast

**Ingredients:**
- 2 small, ripe avocado(s)
- 1 lime(s), juice + zest
- dash freshly-ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 thinly-sliced small radish(es)
- 2 tsp olive oil
- dash Kosher salt, to taste
- dash red pepper flakes
- 2 slice(s) of 100% whole-wheat bread, 3/4 inch thick

**Instructions:**
1. Mash avocados and lime juice with fork.
2. Grate lime zest into avocado mixture, carefully avoiding white pith.
3. Slice and toast bread.
4. Spread avocado puree on top of toasted bread.
5. Transfer to serving dish.
7. Drizzle olive oil and serve.

*Need a heartier meal? Top this with an egg - hard-boiled, poached, sunny side up - your call!*

*Variations: Substitute the olive oil for truffle oil.*

*Variations: Top with thinly sliced jicama instead of radishes!*

**How to Register for our virtual classes:**
1. Call Integrative Medicine Center at 713-794-4700
2. All classes are free
3. Complete e-update *liability waiver and telemedicine consent in MyChart at least 48 hours prior to scheduled class

**Class Descriptions:**

**Yoga for Health**: Features a gentle form of yoga including stretching, breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques.

**Connect & Reflect with Music**: An interactive and supportive music group, led by a Board-Certified Music Therapist, using music engagement and conversation to enhance well-being and encourage connectedness. No music experience is required.

**Yoga Nidra**: This is a guided meditation in the supine position to bring you into a state of deep rest. No prior experience with yoga or meditation is required.

**Healing Through Writing**: Using expressive writing as a tool to identify and process difficult emotions in a supportive environment.

**Avocado Toast**

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Serves:** 2

**Website:** [https://atthetable.mdanderson.org/recipe?id=707](https://atthetable.mdanderson.org/recipe?id=707)