

wellness+ *relationships*



FLIP IT AROUND

When it comes to romance, a bad relationship can make for downright unhappiness. But your relationship with food, exercise and work can be just as destructive. So, what are the danger signs and how do you turn a negative relationship into a positive one? We ask the experts.

WORDS LIZ McGRATH



YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Many of us turn to food when we're feeling stressed, anxious or upset.

"Food can be used to help deal with negative emotions or as an emotional crutch," dietitian Joel Feren, aka The Nutrition Guy, says.

Some of us restrict our food intake.

"Employing rigid food rules and restricting your diet unnecessarily, as well as obsessing about food and anxiety caused by food, are all significant red flags," Joel says.

An unhealthy relationship with food can snowball into an eating disorder, so it's important to see the signs and act early.

To help you turn things around, Joel has these tips:

REFRAME HOW YOU SEE FOOD

"Letting go of food anxieties can be difficult but try seeing things through a different lens. Food is so much more than a source of nutrition. It sparks joy, creates connection and is a source of love and memory."

LOVE YOUR BODY

"Focus on the amazing things your body can do rather than what it looks like."

DON'T DEMONISE FOODS

"Labelling a food bad and banning it for life can be unrealistic. Don't feel a failure if you have a treat. Think about everything in moderation."

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK

We can develop unhealthy relationships with our jobs in a number of ways, Kim Seeling Smith, an expert on the future of work, says.

"The first can come from a positive — you love your job and adore what you're doing and so you throw yourself in and burn out," the chief executive of Ignite Global explains.

"Then there's the negative — that can range from a boss who's unsupportive or bullying, to that feeling of just not being valued."

Kim recommends these simple strategies to help make a shift:

TAKE THE EMOTION OUT

"It's human nature to get to a point of time where you are just frustrated and want to make an emotional decision, but that won't help."

MAKE A LIST AND FIX WHAT YOU CAN

"Assess what you can and can't change and fix the things you're able to before you start to strategically explore your next move."

SET BOUNDARIES

Whether you stay in your existing job or move to a new one, it's vital to have boundaries between your work and home life. Kim advises, "Particularly in the pandemic, the lines between work and home life became very blurred. But to have a good relationship with work you need balance and that means dedicated downtime."

Your relationship with exercise

Moving your body should be a joy, not punishment, fitness professional Rocco Pascale says.

"If your thoughts are overtaken by training and you're exercising too much and punishing your body because of your daily food intake or what you think you look like, there's a problem," the recruitment manager at EFM Health Clubs and personal trainer says.

Rocco has these tips to help you reassess your relationship with exercise:

FIND THE WHY

"Look into a mirror and ask yourself why you're training so much. You need to be exercising for yourself and not for what you think others perceive of you."

MAINTAIN BALANCE

"Exercise is important, but so is life. Your rest days don't have to be spent lying on the couch. Try the beach, a hike or even a gentle bike ride."

NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL

"We're all looking for what works, whether it be weight training, HIIT or pilates, but we're all unique and so you should look for a solution that suits you individually. Do what feels good for you and enjoy it."

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— JOEL FEREN