



Let go of *perfect*

This has been the most unpredictable year of our lives, and it's time to recalibrate. Nutrition expert and meditation teacher Kimberly Snyder's healthy reset is *exactly* what we need right now.

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In March, when COVID-19 first swept the nation and stay-at-home orders ensued to flatten the curve, holistic health guru Kimberly Snyder found herself—like so many parents—struggling to stay on top of new work and family demands.

Just over seven months pregnant at the time, the New York Times bestselling author shifted into WFH mode and continued her full-time duties as one of Hollywood's top nutritionists (she's advised the likes of Reese Witherspoon and Drew Barrymore) and the founder of Solluna, a lifestyle company that showcases her feel-good programs and products. With her son Emerson's preschool closed due to the pandemic, Snyder also put pressure on

herself to maximize his learning. "I was trying to schedule all these activities and get all these arts and crafts supplies ... as if I'm the teacher," she says. "It was exhausting, and it was stressful ... It brought up this idea of hustling for self-worth."

Quarantine challenged many of us to confront our inner drive for perfection in one way or another. Perfect parenting, the ideal work/life balance, flawlessly coiffed hair and manicured nails: All of that had to go out the window. ➡

But for Snyder—a self-described “recovering perfectionist” who has made a career out of guiding others to embrace imperfection (notably in her most recent book, *Recipes for Your Perfectly Imperfect Life: Everyday Ways to Live and Eat for Health, Healing, and Happiness**)—the challenge went straight to the heart of her own wellness philosophy. “I too get sucked into this idea of ‘not enoughness,’” she says.

To get re-centered, Snyder fell back on the four cornerstones that underlie her approach to radiant health and beauty: food, body, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth. As she processed the stresses of self-isolation using these principles, she relaxed into the experience and opened to its opportunities.

With COVID-19 case numbers fluctuating across the country, the uncertainties of navigating life in a pandemic are far from over. Here, Snyder shares advice for how her four cornerstones can provide a foundation for thriving within life’s new (and unpredictable) normal: everything from stocking a social isolation-proof pantry to boosting your immunity, preserving your sanity, and—of course—letting go of “perfect.”

KEEP CALM AND STOCK UP

Access to healthy food is always a cornerstone of wellness, and especially so in these uncertain times, when even a trip to the grocery store can be fraught with anxiety. Snyder recommends stocking the pantry with a variety of spices, shelf-stable sprouted legumes like beans and lentils, and gluten-free whole grains like quinoa and millet for everyday cooking *and* for possible periods of self-isolation. She also advises filling your freezer with frozen fruit and veggies, nuts and seeds, and gluten-free sprouted bread and wraps made from brown rice or teff. This puts the basis for complete plant-based meals at your fingertips.

In the kitchen, Snyder—who trained as an Ayurvedic practitioner—is a champion of simplicity. “When we eat simple meals, we enjoy flavors more ... It’s easier to cook, and it’s way easier to digest” than fancier fare, she says. Plus, simple cooking is comforting when life’s complexities intensify. “I’m a big fan of one-pot meals like kitchari,” she says (an

Ayurvedic dish traditionally made with mung dal beans, rice, vegetables, and spices). Soups and smoothies also top her list of kid-friendly meals and snacks.

GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD

Eating well is one aspect of connecting to our bodies, but Snyder’s second cornerstone goes a step further. “Ayurveda says [that when] we get into the mind too much ... then we get really, really anxious and stressed,” notes Snyder. She recommends practices that help you ground into your body—such as self-massage with oil and warm baths—to balance a mind full of worries. Also, rather than doing the same exercise routine daily, she advises really listening to what your body is telling you. “Maybe your body needs to walk instead of doing some power spin class,” she says.

According to Snyder, one of the best ways to stay connected to your body is to begin each day with a body-centered morning routine. She recommends taking the time for meditation when you rise—before turning on your cell phone. If it’s a packed day, even five minutes will do. “It can be really simple: just breathing down into your belly [and] sitting with yourself,” she says. She also encourages drinking hot water with lemon before you drink coffee or eat breakfast. (Lemons are a natural source of citric acid, which helps protect liver function, thereby supporting your liver in its job of detoxification.) Follow that with a soil-based organism (SBO) probiotic supplement** to keep your digestion humming along smoothly and a fiber-filled, low-sugar green smoothie to start your metabolism on the right foot. 🌱

“Make it a practice to notice three things that you like about yourself.”

*Head to p. 34 for delish, kid-approved recipes from this cookbook!

**See p. 55 for more on these next-level probiotics.



AT-HOME **BEAUTY** WITH **KIMBERLY SNYDER**

These are Snyder's easy hacks for when you can't make it to the salon.

Hair: Condition with coconut oil to prevent breakage.

Skin: Whip up a DIY mask with nourishing ingredients like coconut yogurt and mango.

Nails: Eat plant foods rich in B vitamins, like nutritional yeast—they may boost nail strength.

This *dinacharya* (the Sanskrit word for daily routine) “puts us in an energetic place where we are going to be more focused, productive, [and] positive for the rest of the day,” she says. As a bonus, the SBO probiotic and the vitamin C in the lemon fortify your immunity.

FEEL ALL THE FEELS

Snyder notes that how we process our emotions is just as important to our immune health as any food or supplement we consume. She points to emerging research that suggests that our emotional and immunological responses are closely linked. While positive emotions are associated with lower levels of inflammatory markers in the body, negative emotions such as sadness and anger are associated with higher levels. And we know that over time, chronic inflammation can pave the way for a host of diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

But that doesn't mean you have to put on a happy face when the going gets tough. On the contrary, when we try to bury our feelings or distract ourselves from them by, say, binge-watching Netflix, “Then they actually become encrypted in the body,” says Snyder. She explains that an unprocessed negative emotion can be an ongoing stressor. “It's a sort of threat,” she says—one that your body responds to by activating your sympathetic nervous system, which in turn can impact everything from your digestion to your cardiovascular function.

Snyder recommends meditation to keep yourself emotionally centered, and in *Recipes for Your Perfectly Imperfect Life*, she offers “life detox” recipes for working through difficult feelings. She also believes we can retrain our minds to emphasize positive emotions over negative ones. For example, if you find yourself looking in the mirror and thinking

“Where do we
get our security?
It comes from
inside us.”





negatively about your appearance, “Make it a practice to notice three things that you *do* like about yourself,” she says. This not only brightens your outlook, but also keeps you from obsessing about your imperfections.

DIVE INTO DEEPER WATERS

Though the upheaval of daily life caused by the pandemic has stirred up difficult emotions, Snyder believes that shakeup also presents an opportunity—and perhaps even an imperative—to nurture our spiritual growth. “As a collective, we’ve put our security on the outside world,” she says, whether that’s our schools, workplaces, or social circles. “But because all the securities have been pulled out [during quarantine], then it’s like, ‘Where do we get our security?’ It comes from inside us.”

Her fourth cornerstone is about getting in touch with that inner strength: “When we connect with the formless parts of ourselves, we start to be more connected to the real us, the essence of who we are, which is so much deeper than the surface,” she says. A Kriya yogi, Snyder notes that from a yogic perspective, life is defined by impermanence. Things inevitably change and evolve, but what remains constant is our “perfectly imperfect” essence. According to Snyder, time in nature helps raise our spiritual awareness. When we walk in the forest or gaze at the moon, we witness nature’s wholeness even in its fluctuating seasons and cycles. ➡



WHY IS SNYDER SMITTEN WITH SOIL-BASED ORGANISM (SBO) PROBIOTICS?

Our prehistoric ancestors didn’t have water faucets to clean off vegetables, meaning they regularly ate a bit of soil. And way before kombucha bars, that soil was “actually the natural way that our microbiome would get restored on a regular basis,” says Snyder, because it was teeming with soil-based organisms (SBOs), many of which are beneficial—aka probiotic.

Studies have shown that certain SBOs may benefit gut health and immunity. SBOs are also extremely hardy: Research indicates they survive passage through stomach acid and multiply in the gut. Plus, SBOs are vegan!

When the demands of quarantine piled on, Snyder sought solace in her garden at her home in Topanga, just outside Los Angeles, which ended up serving as a natural classroom for her son. Instead of pushing him into scholastically focused Zoom sessions, she decided, "I'm going to teach him how to grow spinach!" Connecting to nature in this way reminded her that one silver lining of self-isolation was the chance to slow down and teach Emerson the value of being *present*—rather than perfect.

PRESS PAUSE

Nurturing your spirit requires taking time out of the busy-ness of life for self-reflection, whether through time in nature, yoga, breath work, or journaling. And that doesn't always come easily, including for Snyder. She recalls that not even the birth of Emerson in 2016 slowed her down much: Within three days of giving birth, she was already reviewing page proofs for the book *Radical Beauty: How to Transform Yourself from the Inside Out*, which she co-wrote with Deepak Chopra. Within weeks, she traveled for the book's pre-publication press tour.

But after giving birth to her second son, Moses, in late May of this year, Snyder decided to do things differently. She committed to the Ayurvedic practice of taking 40 days of postpartum rest before returning to her whirlwind work life. It served as a kind of self-imposed "quarantine" that allowed her to focus exclusively on rejuvenating herself and bonding with her baby, husband, and family as a whole. It was also a chance for Snyder to model for other new mothers that, "Hey, you can take this pause ... and you will emerge stronger," she says. "It's okay to take sacred rest."

That's as much a lesson for new and expectant moms as it is for all of us needing a time-out from the stresses of a pandemic-stricken world. @



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