Precision Nutrition

Life beyond Lean Eating

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CHAPTER 1: Revisiting critical lessons

As your coaches, we started this Lean Eating course with a few things in mind...

1. **We wanted you to S-T-R-E-T-C-H.** We wanted to get you out there to try new things – things you wouldn’t think are part of a “healthy, PN lifestyle” but, in fact, are.

2. **We wanted to show you what it takes to change your life** – which is what you have to do if you want to lose body fat, build muscle, and keep that fat off. A diet and training program isn’t enough. You need to adjust your priorities, your mindset, your kitchen, and sometimes, the rest of your life.

3. **We wanted you to be shocked.** We wanted you to read our assignments and think: *These guys are crazy! What does this have to do with nutrition?* The truth is that nutrition is about more than the food. Only those who are in great shape and have maintained that in the long run actually know this.

4. **We wanted you to commit to something – to do something 100% for six months.** For some of you, that’s normal. But most of you have never done this before. So we wanted you to step it up.

5. **We wanted to provide you with mentorship, support, and accountability.** Those who’ve been following along with the lessons clearly felt that’s exactly what they got.

None of these principles end here. They will live on as you walk forward in life.

But before looking to the future, let’s review some of the most critical lessons from the past six months of Lean Eating. We use these lessons regularly ourselves to stay grounded and focused.
Lesson 1: Slow down

Each day we have 24 hours to use. We might feel panicked with work, family, volunteering, eating and exercise demands. However, we have control over these situations. We can slow down and engage in the activities that align us closest to our values. Support groups that help to treat addictions and compulsions are on to something when they preach “one day at a time.”

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

• Show up.
• Focus on the present.
• Do your exercise for the day.
• Eat your nutritious food for the day.
• Be grateful for the process.
• Repeat.

The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to **live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.**

(Buddha)
Lesson 2: Your schedule doesn’t lie

With only 24 hours each day, the activities, commitments and people we incorporate into our schedules play a major role in who we become and how our lives turn out.

• If you schedule time at the bar after work – that’s what you value.
• If you schedule food preparation time on Sunday – that’s what you value.
• If you schedule time with family each day – that’s what you value.
• If you schedule physical activity each day – that’s what you value.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Take a minute to reflect on your schedule right now. (You can even try keeping a “time diary” for a few days.)

What occupies your time? Is that what you value? What we do is what we care about. Is it time to rearrange your schedule?

About half of leisure time is spent watching TV.
Lesson 3: Media fasting

When most people begin to evaluate their schedule, they might be uncomfortable with the activities occupying their time. Media tends to be one of the first “time suckers”. While media can provide enjoyment, education and release – it can suck time away from other important things.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Consider the various forms of media you consume. How do these influence your schedule, mindset, decisions, and spending habits?

If you reduced media time, what would you add back in? Set some specific goals with your time. If you aren’t “doing media,” what can you do? (You might want to check Lesson 2, above, and Lesson 4, below, for ideas.)
Lesson 4: Volunteering

An excessively self-centered lifestyle and perspective can harm physical, mental, and emotional health.

It’s great – essential, even – to focus on your new health goals. It’s not so great to exclude everything else and become obsessive and narcissistic. Yes, we want you to plan and do your eating and exercise. But we don’t want you to think about them so much that everything else is out of balance.

When we stay involved with a cause that we are passionate about and focus on helping those who haven’t had the best luck, it can put everything else in perspective. It also helps us stay “emotionally fit”. It’s hard to stress about our own inconsequential body changes when helping at a children’s hospital, an organic farm, or a food bank each week.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

If you’re depressed about a one pound body weight change or eating an extra slice of toast, ask yourself when you last helped somebody else… and how you can help them in future – starting today.

Pay it forward
Lesson 5: Changing your environment is easier than changing your thinking

The first few lessons ask you to change your thinking. One of the most effective ways to do this is by changing your environment. Changing your environment is like “forced” change. (In a good way.) It makes change easy by simply removing your means to not change.

- If you want to cut down on sitcoms, cut the cable. Or get rid of the TV altogether.
- If you want to volunteer, schedule something across the street at the school or dialysis center.
- If you want to eat more veggies – keep veggies in your house. And get a CSA (community supported agriculture) delivery.
- If you want to eat less take-out food – get less take-out food. Throw away those take-out menus that come in the mail so it’s harder to find the phone number for ordering.
- If you don’t want to be tempted by that bakery on your way home, find another route home.
- If you want to walk more, get a dog.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Think about how your environment supports (or stands in the way of) your fitness journey. Ask yourself what changes you can make, right now and in future, in order to change that environment so that it matches your goals and values.
Lesson 6: Fit versus Unfit

THINK OF SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO IS FIT AND HEALTHY.
• How do they live?
• Do they have an environment that assists in their goals and values?
• What do they do?

THINK OF SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO IS UNFIT AND UNHEALTHY.
• How do they live?
• What’s their environment like?
• What do they do?

What type of person are you? What type of person do you want to be?

FIT PEOPLE:
• live a fit lifestyle;
• hang around other fit people (and/or people who support them being fit);
• surround themselves with things, systems, and structures that make it easier to be fit; and
• do things and activities that help them pursue fitness.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE
Ask yourself: What are the characteristics of fit people and unfit people? What can I do in my life to live like a fit person?
Lesson 7: Working with family and internal dialogue

Behaviors are contagious. Many of us spend a great deal of time with family members. As much as we love them, sometimes family can be a barrier to success.

How do your family members shape your mindset and habits?
• Do they constantly bring around unhealthy foods you are trying to avoid?
• Do they push bigger portions?
• Do they only participate in sedentary activities?
• Do they make negative comments about leading a healthy lifestyle?

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Before questioning your discipline, question your family life. If you struggle with family issues, get creative in your problem solving. Figure out how you’re going to work with them so that everyone wins. The key is that everyone wins, and there is no food denial on your end.
Lesson 8: Food denial and rebounds

Denying ourselves certain foods isn’t necessarily the best strategy. Announcing to your mom or grandma that you will never partake in Thanksgiving pie again may freak them out. It may freak you out too.

For every diet, there is a binge. The more stringent, restrictive “food rules” you come up with, and the more rigidly you try to stick to them, the more likely you are to eventually binge. Paradoxically, trying to gain iron-fisted control usually results in losing control.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Before you decide to make major food changes, think about your daily eating patterns as well as long term “eating cycles”. What’s working? What’s not working? Do you ever deny yourself certain foods, only to make up for it later? Are you eating enough of the nutritious foods?
Lesson 9: The addition factor

Many people focus on what they “can’t” or “shouldn’t” eat when getting healthy. We focus on what you can and should eat.

Eating more nutritious foods is one of the most underrated aspects of nutrition. We tend to develop hyper-awareness of the foods we are trying to limit. When we focus on the stuff to avoid, that’s all we think about.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Instead of focusing on eating less junk, focus on eating more good stuff.

Instead of thinking about the stuff that doesn’t serve much of a nutritional purpose, try devoting brain power to all of the fresh, whole foods you’ll be consuming each day – vegetables, fruits, beans/lean proteins, nuts, seeds, whole grains, tea, and water.

Are you building in enough nutritious, satisfying whole food each day?

U.S. food consumption as a % of calories

PLANT FOOD:
Vegetables, Fruits, Legumes, Nuts & Seeds, Whole Grains
Fiber is only found in plant foods.

ANIMAL FOOD:
Meat, Dairy, Eggs, Fish, Seafood
Cholesterol is only found in animal foods. Animal foods are the PRIMARY source of saturated fat.

GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING:
Much easier to understand than the USDA food pyramid, with no food industry influence. Eat LESS from the animal and processed food groups and MORE whole foods from the plant food group. In general, foods from the animal and processed food group contribute to disease, while WHOLE foods from the plant group contribute to good health.

U.S. food consumption as a % of calories


Special thanks to Joel Fuhrman, MD, author of Eat to Live and Fast Metabolism Diet. Healthy Kids Right! Graphics by MichelleRinella.com © 2001. New York Coalition for Healthy School Food
Lesson 10: Good foods, bad foods

Before you start focusing on the healthy foods in Lesson 9, consider what makes a food healthy. What makes a food “good?” Remember, all food choices are on a spectrum from better to worse.

Decide if you can and should make a different choice.

• What foods do you consider “bad?” Could you find a way to make them more healthy or “good”?

• Is a certain food the best choice under given circumstances?

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

When deciding whether to eat a certain food, ask yourself the following questions:

• What’s the alternative?

• Is that alternative better or worse?

• Am I making the best choice possible right now? Could I make a better choice in future and if so, how?

Are you a “sugar zombie”?
Lesson 11: Listen to your body

When figuring out which foods are “good” or “bad”, knowing how the food works for you can help you make your decision.

- If your throat swells shut after eating kiwi, that’s a bad food for you.
- If you have extreme gas pains after eating kidney beans, that’s a bad food for you.
- If you feel like you swallowed cement after consuming cheese, that’s a bad food for you.
- If you turn into an all-consuming “sugar zombie” after having a sweet treat, that’s a bad food for you.

It’s not always what the expert says about the food, but what you say about the food.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

- Learn what foods you tend to overeat. Consider avoiding these.
- Learn what foods taste good to you and leave you feeling content, energetic, and healthy. Consider having more of these.
- Notice how your body and brain feel after eating. Pay attention.

Eat only until 80% full.
Lesson 12: I didn't wanna

So far all of these lessons have been fairly positive. Sounds good so far, right?

Well, keep in mind that sometimes we’ve just gotta do stuff we don’t want to do. Many of us learned this lesson early in life from our parents.

- We didn't wanna take out the trash – but we did.
- We didn't wanna do our homework – but we did.
- We didn't wanna finish our Brussels sprouts – but we did.
- We didn't wanna stop hitting our sibling with the Nerf bat – but we did.

Sometimes we need to do stuff we don’t want to do. This doesn’t change after elementary school – it carries all through life. Even if we like that stuff, we won’t always feel inspired by it.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Think about things you don’t always wanna do… but gotta. How does this apply to your fitness and nutrition decisions?
Lesson 13: Balancing life and looks

We think Lesson 12 is a good one. However, if our lives are dominated by stuff we “didn’t wanna” do, then it may be out of balance. Many of us tend to have high expectations for our bodies. While it’s good to set ambitious goals, we often underestimate the sacrifice necessary to achieve some of these expectations.

Your nutrition, exercise and lifestyle shouldn’t make you miserable forever. If you’ve been feeling the daily stress of getting lean for some time now, you may need to revise your approach or expectations.

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Ask yourself: Do your habits make you miserable? If so, why? Is it worth it?

Consider where you can create balance.
Lesson 14: The ongoing weight debate

Are you hyper-aware of how much you weigh? Can you tell us your body weight within 10 grams? That may not be good. Many of the life imbalances that come with health and body changes come from focusing too much on the bathroom scale.

Many people determine how they live for the day based on their morning weight measuring ritual. If you’re basing goals on a number or pursuing the wrong activities for your ideal body, it’s time to adjust your attitudes and actions.

It’s critical to find things you enjoy and make sure your goals are coming from a healthy place. A healthy weight is a by-product of a healthy, balanced lifestyle and mindset.

If you have all the healthy behaviors in place, the scale becomes just one more piece of information to help you understand how your body is changing. The number does not reflect how well you’re doing, nor does it tell the whole story when it comes to your body composition. What would happen if you didn’t have access to a scale?

HOW TO PUT THIS LESSON INTO PRACTICE

Consider how weight is tied into your goals and behaviors. Consider how weight shapes your mood. Ask yourself if this approach is working for you. Does it really get you what you want?
CHAPTER 2: The importance of developing one habit at a time

If we don’t take some action today it will never be enough to make progress. But when we worry about tomorrow, next month, and next year, that’s always too much to think about.

Doing one nutrition habit today? You will always be able to do that.

Over the past six months, you’ve been doing just one habit at a time. Indirectly, you became more aware of how you live; you learned a new way of life without revamping everything at once.

For example, focusing on eating until 80% full can make us aware of how much we eat, when we eat, what we eat, where we eat, whom we eat with, and how much other people are eating.

All this with just one habit.

The one day, one habit at a time thing works. You can see it in yourself and others around you.

What we end up doing each day has a lot to do with how we perceive the short term. If the short term task is daunting, we usually don’t do it. Think about big tasks like:

• cleaning the entire house
• doing all of last year’s taxes
• revamping your entire eating routine
• exercising each day for 90 minutes
• starting a major work/school project
• never eating dessert again
• never drinking alcohol again
Those are really intimidating, because they’re all major changes.

Compare that to:

• cleaning one room in the house
• doing 2 pages of the tax form
• eating 2 more servings of fruits and vegetables today
• lifting weights for 20 minutes today
• doing a one page outline of the work/school project
• not eating dessert tonight
• not drinking alcohol tonight

Not quite as bad.

We love the idea of big, sweeping solutions – the instant life makeover. But when has that ever really worked for you in the long term? What were you doing on January 2nd after your ambitious resolutions? What about January 20th? Or November 1st?

Think about what’s working right now. Do more of that. We don’t save for retirement with one major deposit – it’s built up over time with small steps.

You have experience with this now. Keep doing it. Find simple manageable tasks that you can accomplish. While we took two weeks with each habit, you can allow yourself as long as you need… as long as you do a little something every day.

What to focus on next

We encourage clients to focus on whatever they feel passionate about. Picking something can be tough, so let’s highlight a few options.

OPTION 1: PERFORMANCE

At this point, now that fat loss is going strong (or you have no more fat to lose), consider adding a fitness/performance goal to your list. Ideally, once you have reached your desired body composition, you will shift your focus from what your body looks like towards what it can do.

You can always care about your looks and body comp, of course — but you can’t lose fat forever. It’s important now to re-assess what will be meaningful, significant, and valuable to you in the next several months.

• Is it a new activity?
• Trying something that scares you?
• Doing something with a loved one?
• Tackling a new challenge?
• Getting as healthy as you possibly can?

DOING is really cool – nothing makes us feel more satisfied or elated than overcoming a challenge, or meeting a performance goal.
Whether it’s learning and taking on a new sport, or working to get better at the one you do now, the pride you’ll feel in accomplishing a new level in your sport will trump most body composition achievements. When you’re training hard for performance – completely focused on how hard, fast, explosive or skilled you can be – you might even forget about what you look like doing it.

In order to come up with a new habit to focus on, think about:

• What excites you?
• What is fun?
• What scares or challenges you physically?
• What makes you feel engaged in life and the world/people around you?
• What makes you feel connected to and proud of your own body?
• What do you think is valuable and important in life?
• What makes you feel comfortable and confident in your own skin?
• What makes you feel strong, fast, powerful, skilled, capable – or just able to handle life?

There you’ll find your answers.

OPTION 2: REHABBING INJURIES

Ever procrastinated about taking care of an injury? That’s what we thought.

• The shoulder hurts when pressing – and we just forget about it.
• The knee hurts when walking – and we just forget about it.
• The elbow hurts when gripping – and we just forget about it.

Maybe now is a good time to develop a habit related to your injury rehab. See the sports medicine doctor. Get the physical therapy you need. Focusing on this habit will enhance your overall wellness in the future.

When we suspect an injury, none of us are too excited about seeing a doc. Right? We have to schedule the appointment. We have to pay for the appointment. And we are likely going through all of this to receive some negative news about our body. That doesn’t sound like a good time. But consider the alternative: Decades with altered mechanics. Decades of exercise substitutions. Decades of feeling sub-optimal.

OPTION 3: JUST HANG OUT

If you want, now that you’ve undergone a fairly rigorous six months of eating and exercise, you can simply “settle” for a while. Sit with things. Focus on the habit of contentment. Flexibility. Sleep. Volunteering. Maintaining. Or something else that rejuvenates you. Get used to your new body.

Maintenance is as much a skill as losing, and that takes practice as well. If you were hoping to diet down to your ideal weight, then quit working on it, you’re in for a surprise. Just like you don’t brush your teeth once and then forget about it, research shows that staying at a healthy weight requires regular effort, exercise, and a long-term focus.

Working on “maintenance” is pretty ambiguous. While everyone takes a different
approach, successful maintainers have a few common features:

• they have some kind of structure with healthy eating and living – a routine
• they have social support for this, e.g. fit friends
• they make nutrition and fitness a priority
• they see the benefits to better health and fitness
• they put in the time to make it happen, and don’t see it as “work” any more than they see having a shower as “work” – it’s just what you do
• they’re more or less consistent
• they’re aware of their bodies and make a point of caring for them – they don’t see their bodies as a byproduct of existence or an annoyance but rather a fundamentally important part of life
• they don’t see an “end point”; they understand that this project is for life
• many seek to improve over time, forever – we’re always finding new insights about how to live better (but it’s not a preoccupation, it just happens)
• if they get off track, they correct, “clean slate”, and get back on track as soon as possible

Any of these can be built as a habit.

Maintenance goals aren’t quite as rigid as gaining muscle or losing body fat. You aren’t stretching and challenging your body to a new set point. You’re simply trying to control what you’ve achieved.

Most of your nutritional journey (95+% of it) will be spent in a maintenance phase. So it’s important to get good at it.

It’s actually quite simple: stick with the same principles of nutrition and just work a little bit in reverse to find where your body wants to be.

Make one small change at a time. Take little steps with things like adding back in calories, as well as foods you may have been restricting in your attempt to achieve fat loss.

For example, if the last change you made to get fat loss going was sneaking out the last meal of the day, you might try adding it back in every other night (or nights when you’re hungry). Go with that for 2-3 weeks, keep everything else the same, and see how your body responds.

Or if you’ve scaled back your intake in general and are still eating to 80% full, you might pick one or two meals in the day to eat a little more – closer to 90-100% full. Breakfast and the post-workout meal is a good place to start as that’s when the body does well with extra calories.

The foundation of your nutrition stays the same. You simply continue to make small changes, cycling the meals and days where you are more flexible with the strategies, until you find the place where your body is happy to just hang out. At that point, your body will make adjustments on its own.

The body compensates for slight variations in food intake, energy output, sleep habits, etc. Thus small deviations from the norm are unlikely to stall your maintenance.
However, if we consistently deviate outside of this “wiggle room,” the body will not be able to compensate. This means change (e.g., over-eating and storing more body fat).

To maintain a lean and fit body, listen to its physical cues (rather than passing psychological desires or wants). While we’ve long preached the importance of observing cues from your body, now is the most critical time for this habit. Tune in and listen.

• Are you hungry?
• Fatigued?
• Sore?
• Full?
• Energetic?

Adjust your behaviors accordingly. Don’t beat yourself up for not following an “expert generated guideline.” Do what feels right. You have the know-how. Trust yourself.

**OPTION 4: GAINING MUSCLE**

If you want to gain muscle mass, then adjust your exercise and nutrition systematically.

Check in with your resistance training first.

• Are you doing at least 4 hours per week?
• Is it intense?
• Are you constantly lifting more weight and pushing the limits?
• Are you consistent with workouts, meaning no missed training for at least 6 months?

If you are meeting all of your resistance training goals, and still not making progress, then check in with your nutrition. When lean mass gain is the goal, just adding a few hundred calories over maintenance is all you need to stimulate growth and build lean tissue. Take it slow. Simply adding a small portion of food to your overall intake each day is a good place to start. Whether you’re hungry or not, just add it.

Ideally, start by adding more food to your post-workout meal. This can be as simple as adding a sweet potato, a bowl of beans, a protein shake, a handful of nuts, a piece of fruit, etc. Or you can add a small amount of carbs in with your recovery drink. Add in some beneficial calories when your muscles will soak them up.

Also, don’t forget about your body type. If you are an intermediate/advanced eater, eating for your body type will help optimize results. Check out *All About Eating for your Body Type* for more.
OPTION 5: LOSING FAT

We've given you all of the strategies you need to lose body fat. We hope you've had success at decreasing body fat by incorporating lessons and habits from Lean Eating. If so, keep at it. If not, just keep the process simple and systematic.

If you are currently meeting fat loss goals, just keep doing what you're doing. Keep in mind that one or two weeks with slow results doesn't mean you are stalled and doomed. Look at the overall trends in your progress. But if many weeks go by and nothing is changing, then check in with exercise first.

- Are you doing at least 5 hours per week?
- Is it intense?
- Are you consistent?
- Are you active during the day?
- Do you walk and use the stairs?

If you are consistently meeting all of your exercise goals, then consider whether you’re over-eating food when you aren't hungry. It doesn't matter if you are over-eating at breakfast, over-eating after workouts, over-eating fast food, over-eating collards, or over-eating lentils. If you are eating when you aren't hungry, you'll probably have trouble making progress with fat loss.

If you are only eating when you are hungry, and doing this consistently without good results, then try deducting a small portion of food from your overall intake each day. Do this regardless of whether you’re hungry. Just deduct it. Ideally, don't eliminate food from post-workout feedings; rather, aim to eliminate some food later in the day (before bed), or from an unnecessary snack.

Consider the various lessons provided in this course related to losing body fat. You now know how to:

- lose body fat
- listen to your body
- challenge your body
- use outcomes based decision making
- enlist help
- get out of your comfort zone
- fast
- eat a vegan diet
- carb cycle
- exercise intensely
- choose supplements
- match up behaviors and expectations
As you well know, meeting physique/health goals is much more than just knowing the calorie content of cashews, following a meal plan or going on a “diet.” It’s about knowing what works for you, day in and day out.

**Deviations**

Sometimes we may deviate from our routine. We slip up. We have some personal family demands. We travel. We have other commitments.

One of the best ways to think about staying on track with eating and exercise is with a golf analogy. We mentioned this analogy in one of the initial lessons. When playing golf, it’s not about being able to hit the ball straight down the fairway, 300 yards, and then chip or 1 putt every time. Well, maybe it is if you’re on the pro tour.

For the rest of us, it’s about damage control. Just hit the darned ball. Move it forward. Keep it out of the woods, the sand, and the water. And keep the same thing going with each hole. Ideally, if we do hit a terrible shot, we don’t let that totally wreck our game.

But this is the ideal. What really happens? Many people will get caught in a sand trap and score an 8 on one hole. Then, instead of minimizing damage on the next hole, they fall apart for the rest of the game.

Successful golfers take a new line of thinking – they minimize the damage and maintain an overall good score. This means being able to climb out of the sand traps and start fresh on the next hole. Take one hole at a time.

That’s what we’re asking you to do. If you get caught in a sand trap (miss a workout, have a bad meal, etc) don’t ruin the rest of your game (life) by falling apart. Just get centered, whack that ball out of the trap, and pull it together for the rest of your match.

Regardless of whether you want to gain, lose or find a balance, continuing with simple habits will help you get there.
CHAPTER 3: Defining goals

Months ago, when you started Lean Eating, you had specific goals in mind – and specific reasons for wanting to achieve them.

By now you can see there is never an end point to our journeys. There is always a next step.

You’ve opened many doors that you didn’t even know existed when you started. So to help you decide what new goals fit the new you, here’s a little guide.

Costs & benefits

First, ask yourself: What are the costs/benefits of particular choices?

On the one hand, as the Lean Eating habits become more seamless in your life, it’ll be easier (relatively) to get leaner without much effort – certainly a lot easier than it’d be for the person you were six months ago.

On the other hand, past a certain point of leanness, it does require more attention and precision. You may decide this level of attention and precision is OK for you now... or it may be OK for you in six months... or never.

What is realistic?

Understand that you have unique advantages and limitations.

Don’t sell yourself short. But don’t set unrealistic targets either.

Also understand that whatever you accomplish, you won’t magically be someone different. Your body will be your body. Look for inspiration from people like you, and not like you.

When looking for inspiration and role models, look to real people who make you want to pursue feeling good, and achieving meaningful things... not images of imaginary people that make you feel bad, or make you want to pursue joyless, existentially vacuous, empty things.

Don’t get caught up in “leaner at any cost” or “leaner is always better”. (Remember learning that 1 drink can be fun but 20 isn’t necessarily 20 times better?)
Be open to change
Be aware that what you are willing/able to do will change over time.
Life changes us.

The schedule of change
Change often happens on its own time.
You can’t force a plant to grow; you can’t force development that is meant to be organic. All you can do is provide the conditions for optimal growth to occur.
Sometimes you will want to move forward aggressively. Sometimes slowly. Sometimes not at all. That’s OK.
However, it is important that you continue to lay the groundwork for change. Just like you can’t expect the plant to do all its growing in the last day, you can’t expect yourself to grow all at once, or without cumulative care and attention.

Try it... you might surprise yourself
In some ways, for some people, it is useful to try to get leaner, because then you get a sense of what you’re willing to do, and how much it takes to do it. It may be less than you think, or it may not be that big a deal once you get the hang of it.
Then you’re not left wondering “Could I...?” Rather, the decision to maintain a certain level of body fat becomes an active, purposeful choice rather than “Oh well, I guess I could never do that.” Once you know you COULD do it, but don’t WANT to, that’s different.
Whatever you choose will be a weighing of the cost-benefit ratio. Just be sure that you understand all the possibilities and what you’re actually capable of before you cut off a certain avenue.

Consider how far you’ve come and where you want to go
With all of the aforementioned information in mind, think about the following:

SHIFT YOUR GOAL MINDSET TO DOING AND BEING.
• You can’t expect never-ending progress with body composition. Assess what will be meaningful, significant, and valuable to you in the next several months and set new goals – based on what you might want to do, or what you want to maintain.
• Consider adding a performance-oriented goal, and look at what behavior-based goals will help you keep the results you worked hard to achieve.
CONSIDER THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOUR GOALS.

- To decide if your goal is a good fit for the new you, ask the following questions:
- What are the costs/benefits of this goal?
- Is this goal, and the timeline to achieve realistic for my abilities and limitations?
- What am I willing to do or change?
- Aim to understand what certain goals mean and what you’re actually capable of before you set out to achieve it.

STAY FOCUSED ON WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT.

- Focus on what’s meaningful and significant in your life and your goals will define themselves.

Now, check out the diagram on the following page. Take a minute to fill it out.

For each circle, ask yourself two questions:
1. What do I want to happen here in this timeframe?
2. What do I need to do in this circle to make that happen?
After filling out the goal setting diagram, think about these following questions:

What “pleasure” will you get if you do get your goals?
What “pain” will you get if you don’t get your goals?
What “pain” will you get if you do get your goals?
What “pleasure” will you get if you don’t get your goals?

After that, identify 3 results or indicators that will tell you whether you’re getting closer to your goals.

Indicator #1:
Indicator #2:
Indicator #3:

To be clear, don’t post your goal again. Instead, tell us what will indicate that you’re getting closer. For example, your goal might be to “lose 20 lb of fat.” But the 20 lb loss isn’t an indicator of progress.

Indicators might be:

• Pants fitting better.
• Friends are commenting on how healthy you look.
• You’re acknowledging hunger and cravings.
• You’re feeling better when you look in the mirror.
• You’re less winded when climbing the stairs.
• Not compulsively eating.

**Bottom line**

As you define your goals, don’t overlook the most important aspects of this process. Always ask yourself the following:

• Am I enjoying my workouts?
• Am I getting enough sleep?
• Am I eating mostly healthy, whole foods?
• Am I drinking plenty of water?
• Am I being reasonable with my portions?
• Am I having fun?
CHAPTER 4: How PN can help…still

It’s been a great 6 months, hasn’t it? Best of luck. Have a nice life. See ya.

Wait a minute. We couldn’t do that.

While the following might be on the verge of sounding creepy, we actually consider you a close friend. Gosh, even an extended family member. We care about you, your health and your success. So, here are a few ways that PN is around to continue helping you.

1. Stick to an exercise plan

Just as you have been for the past six months, continue to follow a progressive training program. Whether you choose one of the PN Exercise Plans, repeat the LE workouts, or find another program to follow, best results come when you:

- Exercise for at least 5 hours per week
- Include resistance training sessions
- Include a combination of higher and lower intensity exercise sessions
- Monitor your effort and aim to increase the intensity and/or duration of exercise each week
- Do stuff you will actually stick with

If you want a lean, strong, and healthy body, make training something you do nearly every day.

2. Use the Member Zone

A community rich with support and learning awaits you in the PN Member Zone. By starting your own Member Log, you can continue to post daily progress updates and enlist support from the community. Just as in the Lean Eating forums, the Member Zone is the place to ask questions and interact with your fellow Lean Eating friends, PN coaches and community members.

And for your daily dose of motivation, make sure you’re subscribed to our PN updates. You’ll keep up to date on newsletters and blogs from the PN team and get strategies for continued progress.
3. Track your progress

Continue to measure your progress with frequent assessments of both objective and subjective indicators. Similar to the Lean Eating measurement days, the Results Tracker allows you to input and track trends in your body composition – so you can see when a strategy is working and when it isn’t.

Beyond body composition, regularly evaluate whether your habits are leading to progress towards your goals. When they are, you know to keep doing what you’re doing. When they aren’t, consider what needs to change and take steps to make it happen.

If, despite these tips, you lose a little momentum, the Clean Slate Policy still applies.

4. Lean Eating

Don’t forget, you always have an open invitation to join us in Lean Eating Coaching again. The support, guidance and structure can be extremely helpful when building new habits. Plus, sometimes it’s just nice to have habits, workouts and lessons set up for you along with coaching guidance.

In the end, don’t ever feel like you must go about your health and fitness voyage alone. We have your back.

5. Other ways we can help

Spezzatino is an online magazine that covers one topic at a time, with unique perspectives. All proceeds go to charity (The Healthy Food Bank). Maybe you’d want to contribute or read about some new ideas on eating.
CHAPTER 5: Your never ending story

How to unclog your toilet:

Do you know how to unclog a toilet? Probably. Do you know exactly how toilets flush and how they work? Probably not. You don't need to.

Do you know how to turn on the lights in your bedroom? Probably. Do you know exactly how electricity works? Probably not. You don't need to.

Do you know how to eat healthy and exercise to meet your body goals? Probably. Do you know everything about nutritional science and the biomechanics of exercise? Probably not. You don't need to.

The knowledge trap is one of the most common blunders Lean Eaters make. That is, they feel like their biggest obstacle moving forward is a lack of knowledge.

But more knowledge doesn’t necessarily lead to more execution. We just need to know how to execute the basics.

Now, we don't want to discourage you from gaining more knowledge. It can be useful. Yet sometimes people focus so much on gaining more knowledge that they forget to actually execute the basics that they already know.

Think of it as the illusion of knowledge. We think that if we know more, we'll change. It's fun to learn some stuff about biochemistry and exercise science, but you don't need it to succeed.

We’ve only just begun

Fitness is a life-long effort. Maintaining progress and/or making continued progress is gonna take some work.

Every day, every decision plays a part in your journey of being lean and healthy. Each day makes up a piece of the puzzle.

But that’s not so daunting. As you now know, you don’t have to be miserable throughout. Instead, you learn to enjoy it. And if you enjoy it, why would you ever want the process to “end”?
The mistakes to avoid

Most times, when people reach a physique/health goal, they regress to old habits or become “Mr./Mrs. I-know-everything-about-fat-loss.” And before they know it, they’re on the fast track to “fat-land.”

Why does this happen? There are a couple of possible reasons.

REASON 1: SOME PEOPLE LOSE BODY FAT AND SIMPLY DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT.

In essence they’re two trick ponies.

Trick #1: Strict dieting.

Trick #2: Fat gaining.

And that’s it. Fortunately, after this course, that doesn’t describe any of you. Whatever your reasons for maintaining, it’s usually related to what motivates you. So it’s time to learn the motivating forces in your life.

REASON 2: ENGAGING IN REBOUND EATING BEHAVIORS.

Maybe people get so strict in their fat loss regimen that afterwards they attack junk food with reckless abandon. Fortunately, having spent six months transforming your habits and life, you know that super-strict isn’t necessary in the long run. And you also know that instead of satisfying your cravings with junk foods, you can do so with options completely unrelated to food.

Our crystal ball

We’ve been through this process of coaching people through habit change, lifestyle change, and then body change many times.

So let us take out our crystal ball and forecast some areas that you might stumble. Others have stumbled here in the past, but if you adjust your mindset and anticipate these obstacles, you’ll have no problems.

We’ve listed 16 potential problems below. Forewarned is forearmed! Armed with this knowledge, you might stumble, but you won’t fall.

1: STARTING ON THE INSIDE... THEN WORKING OUT?

No matter how you got to the land of maintenance, congratulations. Now is the time to become someone for whom body fat control is no longer a major issue. No longer a part-time job. To stay lean, you shouldn’t have to obsess about it during all waking hours.

Being lean for life goes far beyond protein grams, gym time and grocery shopping habits. It starts inside. You know… your identity. Your new body has no chance of staying lean and healthy without the support of your heart, mind and soul. Laugh now, but this is what successful people do, whether they admit it or not.
Fat loss in itself is kind of like winning the lottery. It’s great, but many lottery winners, like those who lose fat, will wake up one day at their original starting point wondering what the heck happened.

What happens is that the newly wealthy aren’t always able to develop the attitudes, knowledge, and/or awareness needed to uphold their riches. Same goes for the suddenly lean.

Attitude and awareness are far more significant than knowledge. With the right attitude and awareness you’ll get the knowledge you need. So you need to build this FIRST. The habits come later.

2: SATISFACTION WITH RESULTS

Remember the I Want Faster Progress lesson? It’s about pursuing “faster results.” Or, better described, the difference between behaviors and outcomes.

We asked you to think about the following questions:

• How would faster results change your current behaviors?
• How would faster results change your current habits?

Just like we should be honest even when nobody is looking, sometimes we must execute the healthy habits with only minimally visible changes. Consider whether you would rather enjoy the process and have slower results or despise the process and have fast results (that probably won’t be sustainable).

We should also acknowledge that possibly, we’ll never be perfectly happy with our physiques. It’s important to enjoy previous accomplishments and let future body changes fall into place. If you begin to love what you are doing, you’ll find yourself focusing less on the final outcome.

When you are doing the healthy behaviors, consistently, you will have results. Patience is key. Give less power to the scale. There are laws of nature you’re working with that cannot be rushed or cheated. This is a life-long project. There’s no reason to hurry.

3: THE FOODS THAT WORK FOR YOU

By now, you should know the foods whose taste you like, and the foods that support your goals. You probably also know the foods that you tend to overeat and abuse.

So be smart. Don’t fool yourself any longer and regret it later on. Get rid of those trigger foods. Embrace the foods you enjoy and help the cause. Not an option, not a problem.

4: KNOW HOW YOU WORK

What makes you frustrated, angry or aggravated – enough to DO SOMETHING about it?

Whatever it is, it’s usually what you’re motivated to do. Learn the motivating forces in your life.

Do you get frustrated with being out of shape? Let that motivate you. Does it aggravate you when meals aren’t planned ahead of time? Use it to your advantage. Are you ever angry about people not eating enough veggies? Take that anger and hit the farmer’s market; go on a consumer rampage in the kale section.
Also, know how you best succeed. Do you thrive in a competitive environment? Then how about getting a training partner or entering a body transformation contest with some friends?

Do you work best when your meal plan is written for the week? Or do you prefer spontaneity with food choices?

If you start a strict diet, do you rebound and feast? If so, recognize it.

Know what strategies work and which don't. Stick with those that work. Get rid of the rest.

5. BEING AWARE OF YOUR TENDENCIES

When you have a career that isn't challenging and a stressful social/family life, do you skip exercise and/or overeat? Acknowledge that.

Steer clear of those situations and set yourself up for success. We know that emotional eating, or our “head hunger,” is insatiable. Trying to fill it will only result in more bodyfat, lack of self-control and poor health.

6. EATING WITHOUT GUILT

Remember how we discussed hunger and fullness cues over the past six months? That’s what will help you to feel safe between meals.

Remember the specific diet days and fasting day we did? That helped you realize hunger isn’t so bad. You can now sit with the feeling of not being completely full.

Expect it. These feelings are often ignored in chronic dieters and those who restrict eating. It’s okay to be full and it’s okay to be hungry. Tune in.

Many people who’ve recently lost body fat tend to get Spartan with their hunger and restriction. That won’t help you now – it will likely lead to over-consumption later on.

7. EATING FOR HEALTH

If you made significant progress, the scale, skinfold calipers and tape measure likely won’t be changing much at this point in your journey (unless you pursue further physique goals).

Learn to enjoy the long-term benefits of a healthy lifestyle. What’s that? Boring you say? Plaque free arteries and a cancer free colon isn’t boring when it counts. Trust us – you don’t want the “excitement” of a heart attack.

By now, you should be someone who eats right and respects their health. That’s it. Why define yourself as anything else?

8. EATING FOR ENJOYMENT

Breaking news – food is a big part of life. While losing fat can require you to consider food only as a “fuel” source, it no longer has to be that way (all the time).

Find those healthy foods that you enjoy eating regularly. Your food should taste good and be satisfying; it should also give you energy and keep you lean and healthy.

Try new recipes. Savour the complex tastes of real foods. Don’t deprive yourself and rely on fake “diet foods.” Enjoy eating.
9. DEVELOPING YOUR OWN EATING RULES

You don't need more rules and extreme regimentation. You need flexibility and good day-to-day decision making.

Simply expand on the Lean Eating tools and the knowledge you’ve gained. The PN foundation will allow you to harness new concepts from your brain and put them into action.

If you need a refresher from time to time, simply break out the PN binder and re-read it.

10. NUTRITION AND EXERCISE ARE NOT ALWAYS GOING TO BE FUN AND FRESH

Remember the I Didn't Wanna lesson from above?

Come to expect ebbs and flows with eating and exercise. Each day doesn't always go as planned and you won't always feel like king/queen of the gym/kitchen.

That's OK. Make routine and structure a positive factor in training and nutrition. Enjoy the challenge of exercise and nutrition. Consider it a daily test. Thrive. Overcome. Be aggressive. Don't let the “rationalization fairy” win.

11. DO YOU BELIEVE IN EVOLUTION?

Allow your food and exercise choices to evolve. Just because four hours of weight training each week worked for you in 2004 doesn't mean you have to do it forever.

Just because you ate 3.4 ounces of tilapia every 2.5 hours back in 2004 to tighten your glutes and look good in a tank top doesn't mean you can never switch your strategy, focus and habits.

Maybe you used to get motivated exclusively by attaining a tight waistline, but now you get enthusiastic about gardening and buying more local food. Goals change. Let them. Continue to be healthy and active. Evolve if necessary.

12. PRIORITIES

We've talked about this. A lot.

If you don't prioritize yourself, your self will suffer. Remember that. If you have a tough stretch with eating and exercise, look at where your priorities currently reside.

It's OK if your priorities are elsewhere for a while. If so, just be happy in maintenance mode. When we get into trouble is when we crave a better body but don't prioritize. We just feel guilty all the time and that makes us worse, not better.

13. SUCCESS IS WHAT YOU SAY IT IS

If success to you next Wednesday means “not eating three donuts in the office breakroom,” and you follow through with it, then guess what? You've succeeded.

If success next year is to “attain XX% body fat,” then let that guide you.

Don't let mom, dad, grandma, your trainer, a fitness magazine, or the nightly news tell you what success is.

YOU define it. Define the behaviors that will achieve it. Do those behaviors. Then be happy that you did. Rinse and repeat.
14. HABIT SWAPPING

Congratulations. If you've followed along with the coaching lessons, your habits have been swapped.

There's a “21 day” rule of thumb for establishing new habits and you've eclipsed that!

But it won't stay that way unless you “sharpen the saw.” In other words, you have to keep practicing the new habits or they'll dull. Other habits – probably unwanted ones – will take their place without you even realizing it.

What happens if those habits do get dull? Easy: Get back on track. Quickly. Sharpen that saw again. And remember our aforementioned golf analogy.

15. BE YOUR OWN PARENT

This is really about setting minimum standards. You may want to try this with both exercise and nutrition.

With exercise, try to establish a schedule and minimize interrupting influences. Maybe your optimal amount of exercise each week is six hours.

That's fine, but what is your absolute minimum – the amount below which you will never allow yourself to fall? Set it. This is the level that can still be accomplished when “disaster” strikes.

Disasters could include things like work, illness, family events, games, parties, volunteering, church and the District 47 shuffleboard championships.

Same for nutrition. What level of nutritional adherence will you not drop below? Maybe you'll allow a holiday family gathering of relaxed eating. But a full week? Maybe not.

Set that minimum. It's just like being your own parent. Set the guidelines. If “life happens,” reach your minimum. You can always get back to your maximum later.

16. SUPPORT

This is likely going to determine your success and failure. Your social network determines how you live.

Eating nutritious foods, exercising, and sleeping properly started to seem normal over the past six months because you had daily interaction from countless other people on the forums who were doing the same things.

If you spend each day with people who eat crappy food, don't exercise, and stay up late watching re-runs of Family Feud, that's what will become the new “norm.”

Continue to choose the right mentors and support circle. Always.
Moving forward

The lessons and assignments we provided you aren’t a one-time deal. They offer critical insights about the behaviors that lead to life-long leanness, and strategies for accomplishing those behaviours. If you like where the lessons got you today, continue to practice them.

This isn’t the end of the Lean Eating lifestyle. It’s the beginning. You can take the lessons you’ve learned and the friends you’ve earned with you, into the next phase of your Lean Eating journey. We hope these lessons, and the idea that coaches and peers will always be here for you in the Lean Eating programs and in the PN Member Zone, have alleviated any fears you had.

We don’t leave people hanging. We’ll continue to provide you with coaching, information, manuals, guidelines, ideas, feedback, audio, video and a world-wide support system that keeps growing. Take advantage!