
Toward Macrobiotic Living

From *Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics*

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There are as many ways to learn macrobiotics as there are people. In talking to people over the years, I have heard of many different approaches. Some want to change quickly, others take their time and ease into it more gradually. Some want to learn all they can about macrobiotic principles and increase their understanding and enjoyment of life as much as possible using those principles. Others are content to follow a macrobiotic dietary approach and enjoy more limited benefits. Some will be moved to begin a macrobiotic lifestyle the minute they read or hear a fair presentation of it. Others wait until they have cancer or some other major disease. Some people love the idea of being self-reliant. Others will never feel comfortable being in charge or control of their own destiny—they are happier paying for and accepting the advice of others, be they macrobiotic counselors, alternative health advisors, or medical doctors.

In my opinion, the biggest mistake in macrobiotic education is giving knowledge to people rather than teaching them how to think. From an early age, most people are taught to believe others rather than to trust in their own judgment. Giving knowledge in the form of lists of things to eat or do and things not to eat or do is fine for a beginning but in the long run creates slaves instead of free persons who can think for themselves. It is your life and it depends on your decisions. Thus, improving your judgment is most important.

This does not mean that you shouldn't accept the advice and help of others when it is needed. A macrobiotic lifestyle is learning from life. It includes doctors and other professionals, books and nature, family and friends, successes and failures, sickness and health, and on and on. Each person is a part of the totality of life and experiences only a part of life; life is bigger than any one person's perception of it. It is bigger than any theory

of it, including macrobiotics.

Macrobiotics is a study of life—the natural laws of change. But like any expression of life, it is only a partial picture. Using a macrobiotic approach to life as a tool, you can begin to see more of the total picture—it becomes clearer, more focused. The whole picture is there all the time but your view of it changes as your ability to focus—your judgment—increases or decreases. More clarity comes from increasing your judgment, which comes from a greater understanding of the natural laws of change, which in turn comes from eating well and living in harmony with the natural order of life. Blindly following a prescribed set of rules is not the goal of macrobiotics. Instead, the goal is to live a happy and healthy life in which you freely make your own decisions and gladly accept the consequences of those decisions. You always will need books and other people to give you guidance and to answer your questions, but after a while you need to begin to rely more on your own judgment and to answer your own questions.

The suggestions offered here are based on my experience in talking with many people over many years about beginning a macrobiotic approach to life. There are many roads to the final destination, but the idea and willingness to begin must come from you. How to begin and how to travel is outlined here, but the decision to travel, the speed at which you go, and the direction are totally up to you.

- Be prepared to change. Macrobiotics is a philosophy of change that leads to the oneness or unification of all things. Many thinkers in many centuries have taught change. When you begin macrobiotic practice, you will change. You can control the rate of change by the rate

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at which you make dietary and lifestyle changes. If you are inspired to change all at once, go for it—just do it. If you prefer a slower transition, this is okay also. In either case, being prepared for and open to change will ease the transition. A healthy life includes both constancy and change.

- Gain a working knowledge of the concepts and principles behind macrobiotics. Reread and study the chapters on yin and yang and healing as you proceed. You will find that your understanding of the principles changes, even though they are constant.

- Be realistic about the results that can be reasonably expected. In order to gain a wider appeal for macrobiotics, some authors have made it sound very easy to gain fantastic results. This book attempts to provide enough information so that there are not many unexpected changes. Many people drop out of macrobiotic living because of unrealistic expectations.

- Develop a plan. There are many books on how to develop a plan for changing different kinds of behavior. While these may be helpful, people often spend more time in planning than in doing. Still, there are several areas of plan development that are worth considering.

- Breaking the large overall goal up into smaller ones can be useful to get started. Set attainable goals, a time limit for reaching the goal, and a reward that you will give yourself for making progress toward or reaching the goal.

- Knowing yourself, your strengths, weaknesses, and present condition allows you to honestly evaluate your chances of success and helps you set reasonable goals.

- Knowing the resources available to help you reach your goals is probably the most helpful. For example, in addition to your own personal resources, there are macrobiotic counselors, support persons, study centers, camps and conferences, books, magazines, directories, natural food stores, mail order suppliers, family, friends, and so on. (See the Resources section.) Having a support person to whom you report your process can be helpful. Knowing others who are working toward similar goals can be very valuable; you can share experiences and understandings.

- Establish helpful everyday habits. Here is a list of habits that can be valuable.

- Exercise. At the very least, give yourself five to ten minutes a day of stretching and organized movement that

includes breathing deeply.

- Chew well. One of the best exercises is chewing food. If you feel sick, try to double the amount of chewing for each mouthful.

- Reflect. Give yourself five to ten minutes time each day to reflect on the day, relationships, and yin and yang. And listen to nature each day as much as possible.

- Eat sensibly. Eat a grain-centered diet without being overly rigid or fanatic (unless your condition demands it). Your daily diet is most important; an occasional deviation can be refreshing and easily tolerated.

- Write. Write in a personal journal every day. Writing about what happened and your reactions to what happened is enough. Or write to family and friends about your experiences.

- Read. Reading inspiring and supportive literature, even one page a day, is very helpful.

- Check-up. Pay attention to your condition every day, especially after the initial discharge period, by checking your urine, feces, and body for warning signals of imbalance.

- Create. Choose a hobby that allows you to express yourself, such as playing music, writing poetry or novels, painting, drawing, acting, and so on. Or, be creative in thinking of ways to help others or yourself.

- Contemplate oneness. For at least one moment every day stop and view life from the perspective of oneness. From this view, no person is better than any other person, or any other thing for that matter. Every one and every thing is connected. Most people spend too much time looking at what separates us rather than at what unites us.

These are some ideas for developing a macrobiotic approach to living. I sincerely hope that you will find these suggestions useful and that you will develop your own lists and your own plan. You can and should be the director of your own life. Always ask questions and answer them yourself to gain a deeper understanding of oneness. This is the macrobiotic way.

As your natural judging ability and instinct increases, you will be able to live a more healthy and happy life. Then, you can go beyond beginning macrobiotics and become eternally peaceful and infinitely free. It is the understanding of the natural order of all things, the oneness of all things, and the changeability of all things that allows you to live a life that is truly happy, healthy, and free.