GRP

GUT REBALANCING PROTOCOL

Module 2

DIGESTIVE DOMINOES Handbook

"Digestion relies on HOW you eat"

DIGESTIVE DOMINOES

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"There is more to life than increasing its speed."

- Mahatma Gandhi

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest MYTHS is that digestion is just what goes on behind the scenes after a meal as something we have no control or influence over.

The TRUTH is that YOU are in control of all the basics to support optimal digestion.

Digestion – which includes absorption and assimilation of ALL macro and micronutrients – relies on a series of feedback signals that travel back and forth from the brain to the digestive tract; so each phase of digestion triggers the next, while also preparing various parts of the body for it.

So, very much like dominoes: when the first tile is toppled, it topples the second, which topples the third, etc., resulting in all the tiles falling.

And that's why we call it "Digestive Dominoes" ©

To optimize digestion and restore function of your Gut Microbiome, it's not enough that we just explain it to you. You need to IMPLEMENT these strategies. All it takes is equal parts WILLINGNESS, PRACTICE and COMMITMENT, so you can experience over time how important and effective it is... can you do that, for YOU?

BACK

DEDICATED MEAL SPACES

An essential part of your Digestive Dominoes is having DEDICATED MEAL SPACES (at home, at work). This is a non-negotiable.

AT HOME...

Where do you eat? Inside? Outside? What do these areas look like? Are they cluttered? Are they inviting? Is there a TV or devices around?

Eating areas need to be not just 'calm', but 'calming'. They need to be inviting and free from clutter or distractions (such as a mobile device). It can be a gorgeous table in a soaring room, or a simple chair near a quiet, corner windowsill. It doesn't matter.

What does matter is that such a space becomes your shrine, to what is going to become your dedication; your devotion to healthy eating and digestive *practices*.

So, when you sit down to eat it should cultivate a sense of calm, with your focus on the experience before you NOW: of eating and, further, an appreciation of the foods in front of you.

It's important to establish the behaviours that cultivate a strong connection with your own nourishment... and that's why you need a space to commune with yourself ...and to connect with anyone you may be eating with.

AT WORK...

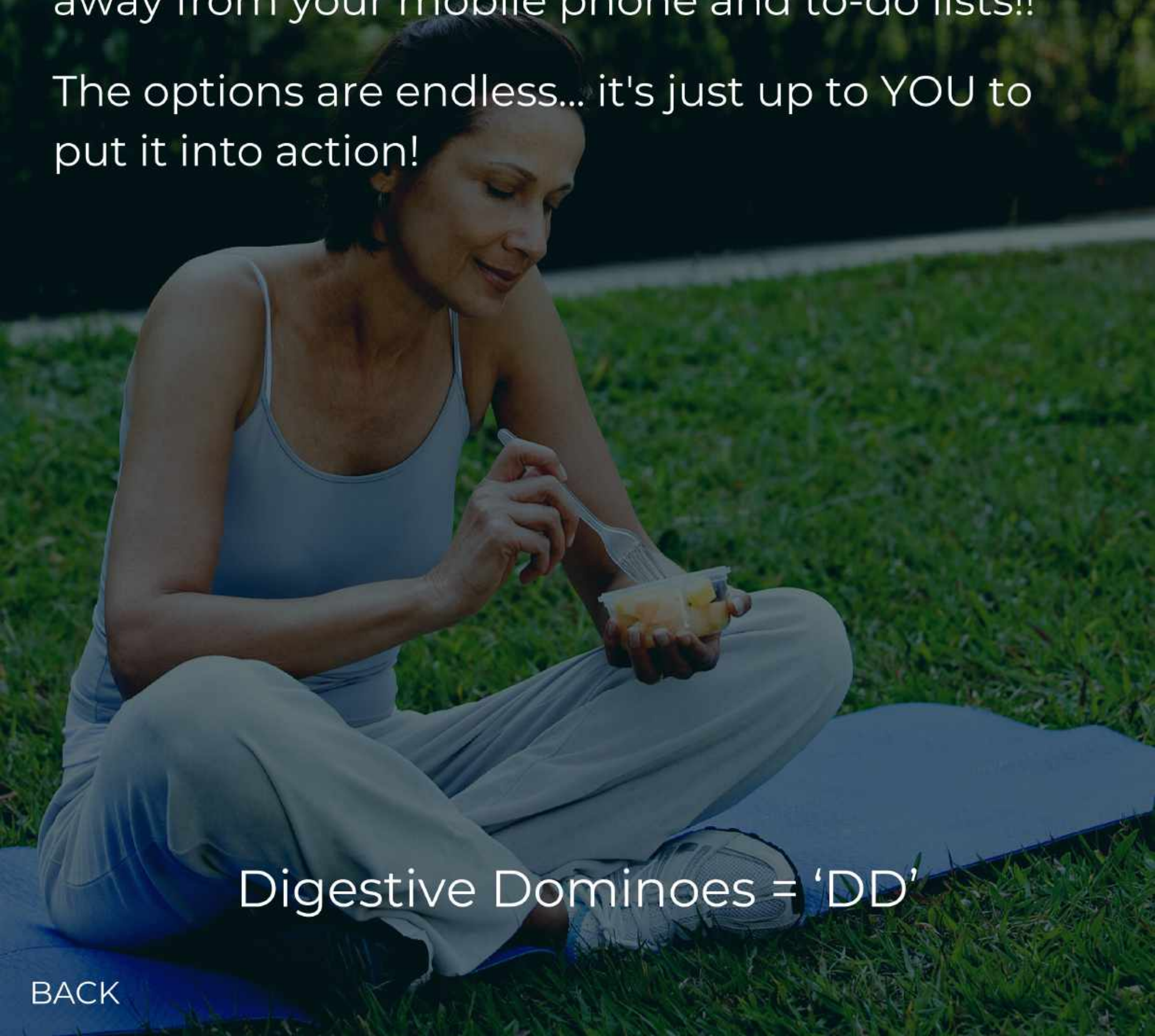
Where do you eat? Inside? At your desk? Shared lunchroom area? Outside?

Eating at your desk is NO LONGER an option for you... so you'll need to explore what options you have to create a 'time out' area for snack and meal times.

- What inviting spots can you find to eat while at work?
- Who can join you for a relaxing lunch, dedicated to food appreciation and connection?

Imagine having a dedicated time that you are away from your mobile phone and to-do lists!!

The options are endless... it's just up to YOU to put it into action!



DD'S AT EVERY MEAL/SNACK

You are going to spend your MEAL and SNACK times relaxing and focusing on HOW and WHAT you are eating.

You will start to see your 'eating' times as your chance to relax and nurture yourself.

Just a heads up... it is not unusual to feel 'discomfort' when doing your Digestive Dominoes at first - and perhaps for some time, as you teach yourself to adjust to it - depending heavily also on how you are currently used to spending your eating time.

Discomfort goes hand-in-hand with change. Discomfort is exactly what makes change the challenge it is for most of us.

But *how much better* to experience discomfort from the challenge of positive change that is making you healthier, than from the discomfort of increasing unwellness... right?

This may seem counterintuitive at first, but one of the best ways to start becoming comfortable is to sit with and actively notice your discomfort, to get curious about it, rather than trying to fight it.

Use your 'discomfort' as a source of motivation. Motivation to keep going until you become comfortable, because you will - providing you stick to it and internalise what you are doing.

Think of it like this...

If you are lifting weights and get a sharp pain somewhere in your body, it is a sign that something is wrong... however, if you have moderate muscle ache afterwards, it is actually a signal you're getting in shape, isn't it?

So understand that feeling discomfort while doing your Digestive Dominoes means you're getting in good 'digestive' shape!!

And so, to enable your Microbiome to rebalance itself, and for you to thereby achieve OPTIMAL health, you are required to practice EACH Digestive Domino in this handbook at *every* snack and meal.

It takes, on average, 5-10 mins to eat a snack, and 15-20 mins to eat a meal. So, for 2 snacks and 3 meals a day, that equates to just 80-mins a day.

In any waking day, *surely* you can you take that small amount of time to ensure mealtime is YOUR time? For your digestion? For your health?

...Anyway, it's not an option, you HAVE to do it while on the GRP!!

And we're confident that, once you finish the GRP, you will WANT to do it forever... because the results speak for themselves: it just feels SO good.

EAT WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS

So how do you eat without distractions?

It's simple...

Do NOT... eat while using or viewing an electronic device, scrolling social media, or reading a book or magazine etc. Basically... anything digital or printed.

Do NOT... drive or otherwise eat on the run, as some multi-tasking 'efficiency' exercise, nor eat while performing any other duty or task.

Do NOT... look at or use ANY electronic device (phone/laptop/computer). Turn these devices to 'do not disturb' or off while eating, leave them in another room, or eat in another room.

Do NOT... watch TV or streaming services (Netflix, YouTube etc) You can watch these any time later.

Just a note... sitting with others (even a Zoom/FaceTime dinner with friends or loved ones), chatting with family/colleagues or feeding kids WHILE you eat is NOT a distraction - it's LIFE...and it's VERY GOOD for you!

WIND DOWN PRIOR TO EATING

Easier said than done, right? Work is busy, kids are hungry, rushing to get dinner on the table? So much to do - almost ALL the time, right?!?

But we can't stress enough (excuse the pun) how important it is to take a moment to WIND DOWN before you eat, so that your Digestive system can prepare itself to do its job effectively.

When you start a meal while rushed, worried, overthinking, frustrated etc. and then continue in that fashion while eating, your body's stress response will override the proper, smooth, function of your digestive system to tend to what your nervous system sees as a "threat".

Activation of the stress response by even such simple things as worry - results in the release of Corticotrophin-releasing hormone, cortisol and other stress hormones.

These work together as part of your survival mechanism, redirecting blood flow from the digestive tract to the brain and large muscles. This means that your digestive process is suppressed when you experience stress.

So the simple rule of here thumb is, *"if you're not going to DO something about it right now, then you can also put it out of your mind for long enough to savour a meal that will give you the nourishment and peace of mind that will help you when it IS time to act."*

What is the NEGATIVE FALLOUT when your digestion is suppressed?

- Reduced stomach acid and gastric secretions.
- Reduced absorption of nutrients.
- Less nutrients for Microbiome.
- Lower energy availability.
- Slow down of metabolism.
- Indigestion, bloating and/or flatulence (gas).
- Alteration in gut motility resulting in Diarrhea, Constipation, or alternating movements.
- Increases urinary excretion of minerals and electrolytes.
- Appetite suppression.
- Increased intestinal permeability.
- Release of proinflammatory metabolites.
- Irritation of the mucus lining of your gut.

Unfortunately (for you)... the body then mounts an inflammatory response, due to the irritation of your gut lining, which becomes an 'internal stressor' and further initiates the 'stress response' ... a vicious cycle that creates DYSBIOSIS and a further imbalance in your Gut Microbiome and your overall wellbeing, at every level.

Science is clear...

"Stress has the ability to alter the functional physiology of the intestine. Many inflammatory diseases, such as Crohn's disease and other ulcerative-based diseases of the GI tract, are associated with stress. It has been suggested that (left untreated) even childhood stress can lead to these diseases in adulthood. Irritable bowel syndrome, which is a disease with an inflammatory origin, is highly related to stress"

One of the VERY best strategies to immediately down-regulate the Sympathetic Cluster ('fight or flight') of your Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) and up-regulate the Parasympathetic Cluster ('rest and digest') of your ANS is RESONANT BREATHING.

It's simple...

- Have your meal/snack in front of you, ready to eat.
- ⛔STOP⛔
- Take 3 DEEP BREATHS... inhale to the count of 6 and slowly exhale to the count of 8 (through our nose)
- Take a moment to be thankful for the food you have in front of you. Be thankful to ALL the people that led to this meal e.g. farmers, wholesalers, retailers and even YOU!

JUST this simple act prior to EVERY meal and snack - that will take you LESS than 1-minute will send a message to the brain to 'calm down and relax' thus activating your digestive system to work efficiently and effectively.

It helps you to cultivate a heartwarming sense of gratitude for and belonging to the amazing, interconnected world you live in.

Another effective strategy, to do with your partner, family or friends - at the beginning of a meal - to create a calm vibe, is to give everyone at the table the opportunity to tell everyone a HIGHLIGHT from their day.

Meal times are a perfect opportunity to learn more about each other, to nurture and strengthen our relationships.

Ensure first, that all mobile devices (including yours) are set to silent (or airplane mode) and are placed far away from your eating space.

Other topics for meal times are...

- Achievements from the past week.
- Planning upcoming holidays.
- Sport updates.
- Telling a joke.
- ‘What if?’ scenarios, (eg., “What if you were a superhero, what would your power be and what would you do?”)
- If you could be a character from any book, who would you be and why?

The list is endless! (and if you have one you’d like to share, please post in the GRP Hub!)

LOOK AND SMELL

IMMEDIATELY after you have taken 1-min to wind down, take JUST 30-seconds to LOOK at your meal or snack and SMELL the beautiful aromas.

Whether by yourself, with friends or family, or eating out... this is SO SIMPLE to do.

Why LOOK and SMELL?

Because... it is an essential trigger that begins the process of digestion with the production of saliva containing 2 enzymes - *Salivary amylase* to break down carbohydrates and *Lingual lipase* to initiate the first stage of fat digestion.

These enzymes also kill off bacteria and allow enough liquid to carry the bacteria to the stomach where it is killed by digestive juices. This domino starts the production of digestive juices in the stomach and enzymes in the pancreas, through a feedback loop with the brain.

Make it a ritual to say, out loud or in your head, what you can see on your plate.

- What colours can you see?
- Name the colours.
- Is it mainly brown and white? Or colourful with red, green, yellow, purple etc.
- What aromas are there?
- Can you smell various spices?
- Can you feel saliva building up in your mouth?

The act of LOOKING and SMELLING also gives you an opportunity to appreciate what you have in front of you, the time it took to prepare and thanks to all that have contributed to the food you have in front of you.

BACK

EMPTY YOUR HANDS

When you put your cutlery down between mouthfuls, the focus becomes about what you are doing -- chewing and tasting -- rather than getting ready for the next mouthful.

Therefore you MUST empty your hands, ie., put your eating utensils (knife/fork/spoon/ chopsticks etc) down between EACH MOUTHFUL, at every single meal/snack - and DON'T pick anything else up (device, magazine, etc.)

Holding onto cutlery makes it too easy to put food into your mouth before you have even swallowed the previous mouthful, or even while you are still chewing. Nothing is more indicative of unconscious eating than this 'shovelling' type habit.

Do NOT pick up your cutlery until your mouth is completely empty.

While your cutlery is down draw your attention to chewing. Your stomach NEEDS YOUR help to break down food with the mechanical action of chewing.

Concentrate on the food in your mouth, what is it doing? Is it just on one side, both sides? What is your tongue doing? Do you chew at the back, towards the front? Does it taste different when you first place it in your mouth to when you swallow it?

Bring your awareness deeply to what is happening - you will be amazed whne you do.

When eating your snacks - i.e. your fruit and nuts or other optional snack - it is unlikely you will be using cutlery however, the same 'domino' applies.

Instead of putting your cutlery down you will put the 'SNACK' down i.e. you will emty your hands.

E.g. If you're eating an apple... take a bite then put it down. Once your mouth is empty from the last mouthful, then pick up the apple again and take a bite.

This may seem unnatural, but doesn't everything new seem that way at first...? Remember, you are learning something new - and doing it the only way you truly can:

BY DOING IT.

If it is your nuts or smaller pieces of fruit like grapes, blueberries, or mandarin slices... then eat just one small piece at a time and thoroughly chew and enjoy. When your mouth is empty, pick up the next piece.

A great way to keep on track is to ask those your regularly eat with i.e. your partner, family or friends to help monitor you - and let you know when you're not on track... that is, asking you to bring your awareness back to eating.

Or make it a 'dinner time' game where everyone joins-in and watches each other. Trust us (kids especially) love to tell you when you're no longer on-task!

BACK

EAT SLOWLY

It takes about 20-minutes for the stomach's stretch and nutrient receptors to signal the brain to taper off feelings of hunger.

Stretch and nutrient receptors signal the brain to start decreasing the (hunger) hormone *Ghrelin*.

However, more so, eating slowly provides you with the time to chew your food properly.

Chewing breaks food down into smaller molecules, which means that when it enters the stomach, the gastric juices have a larger surface area to act on and enzymes can break down food.

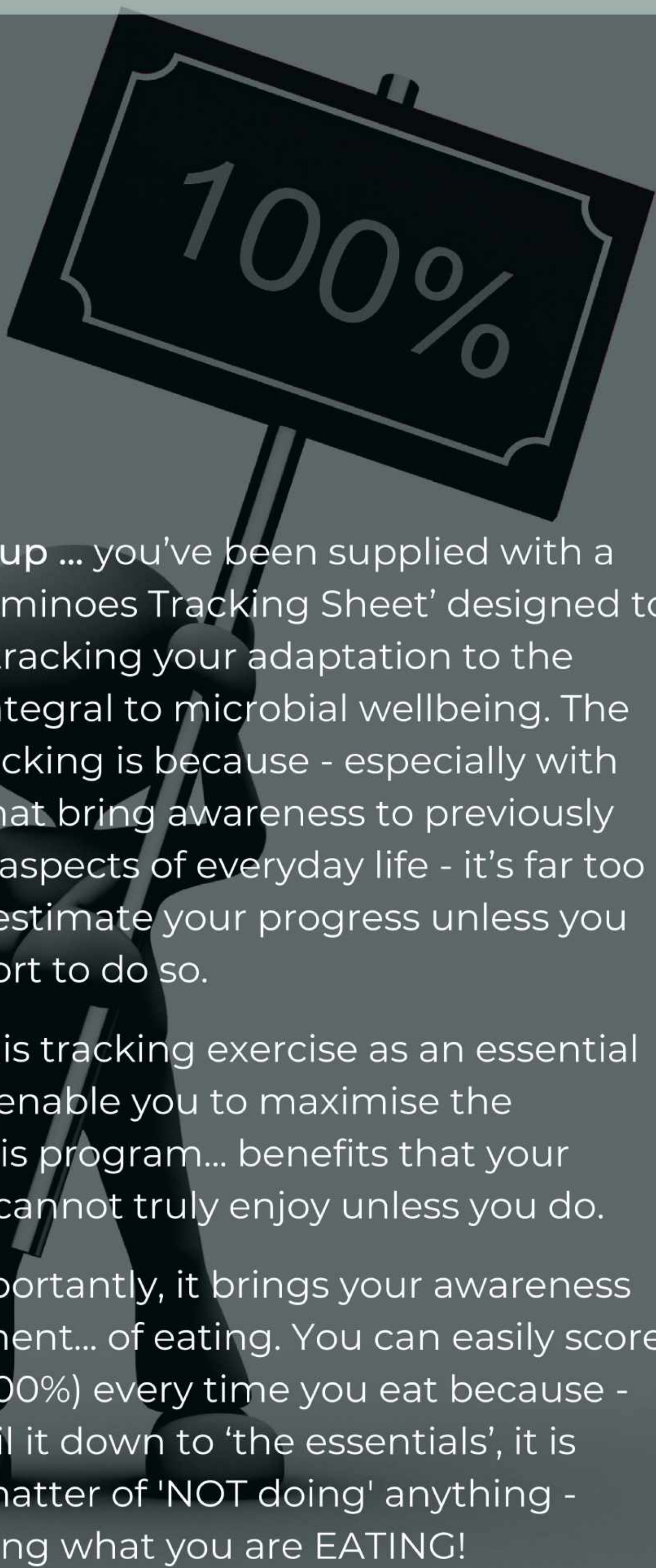
When you...

- Eat without distractions...
- Wind downprior to eating...
- Look and smell your food...
- Empty your hands between mouthfuls...

Then EATING SLOWLY is a no-brainer!

BACK

TRACKING YOUR BEHAVIOUR



NOW...

Just a heads up ... you've been supplied with a 'Digestive Dominoes Tracking Sheet' designed to assist you in tracking your adaptation to the behaviours integral to microbial wellbeing. The reason for tracking is because - especially with behaviours that bring awareness to previously unconscious aspects of everyday life - it's far too easy to over-estimate your progress unless you make the effort to do so.

So think of this tracking exercise as an essential tool that will enable you to maximise the benefits of this program... benefits that your microbiome cannot truly enjoy unless you do.

But most importantly, it brings your awareness into the moment... of eating. You can easily score a 5 out of 5 (100%) every time you eat because - when you boil it down to 'the essentials', it is really just a matter of 'NOT doing' anything - except enjoying what you are EATING!

BACK

AFTERWORD...

The Digestive Dominoes outlined in this handbook form a set of key principles, fundamental to helping you bring attention to and retrain both your attitudes and behaviours around food and eating.

This has become especially important in our times, with our very modern focus on "MORE, BETTER, FASTER!" that emphasizes and "making the most" of every moment of the day...while ironically at the same time telling us all to watch our "work-life balance".

You can't always be DOING.

For optimum health you need to structure your schedule to include adequate time for BEING.

Digestive Dominoes is a critical part of your new toolkit that will help you to achieve that.

BACK

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Creators, Authors, Designers, Publishers:

Woodman, N., | Nutritional Medicine & Gut Health Practitioner | Naturopath
www.nataliewoodman.com

Bazeley, G.M. | Behavioural Health Practitioner | Counsellor
www.michaelbazeley.com

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