Five Best Things About a Fresh Start

My husband calls me the Queen of Starting Over. One thing for sure, we all need a fresh start sometimes. The Bible even says we should approach each new day with a fresh outlook on what God can do. Here are five reasons I am proud to be the Queen of Starting Over:

1. **It beats the alternative.** The alternative of a fresh start would be a stale stuck. Do you really want things to stay status quo? For things to change you have to change something. And that will never happen if you don’t start afresh.

2. **You are smarter this time.** It’s true. Every session of FP4H, even though I may not reach all of my goals, I am smarter. God’s word is making me wise beyond my years. Why not keep going?

3. **It’s an opportunity to get it right from the beginning.** I teach cardio fitness routines choreographer to contemporary Christian music. Sometimes I miss the first few beats and it throws me off for the whole song. It’s embarrassing at times, but I swallow my pride and start the song over and start fresh. It makes a big difference on the way I finish.

4. **You will be a good example and witness for Christ.** Can you imagine what my family would think if I just gave up on my FP4H commitments? I would become a terrible stumbling block to my grown kids. They know that my FP4H class is important and that I make that a priority. The same is true with eating well and exercising. And I share with everyone who will listen how Christ is the answer to weight loss. I want to be a part of weight-loss evangelism.

5. **Maybe this time it will happen, if you don’t give up.** This is an actual email I received this week from one who has been in FP4H for three years and this time it finally happened:

   Dear Vicki, Galatians 6:9, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” has made it’s way into my heart. This verse really spoke to me this session. I think I am finally getting it. During this session, I have lost weight every week except one. That has never happened before. What has helped me when I get discouraged or down with myself is reflecting on how our Lord has been working on me, peeling back the layers one at a time, helping me to become aware, and begining the healing process. I am seeing it is not a quick fix but a life long journey. I am so glad I did not quit. I can see our Lord walking with me and helping me with discipline (which is painful) and staying with me. At one time, the minute I had my first bite of food in the morning I hungered for food all day long. My Lord has taken that hunger away from me. I now know with all my heart that nothing in this world, people or things, can give you what you need. Only our Lord can. Without Him I would be lost. He is encouraging me. I can hear His voice saying “this is the way-I will not leave you.” I will not give up no matter what the scales say, because I can see how He is working on me from the inside. I do not want to go back to where I
was before. Having patience with the process and ourselves can be hard. But I can have patience with myself when I can see God working on me one small step at a time. Our Lord is so good to us. He is so faithful. We need to do our part. I am a work in progress and I will not give up until He calls me home! Thank you.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 3:9). Don’t miss out on the new things He has for you this fall. Sign up now and make a fresh start!

I’m right with you.

Vicki Heath…………………………………..….vicki.heath@fp4h.com

NEW IN THE ONLINE STORE!

Visit www.FirstPlace4Health and click “Accessories” to see these and other great products. Check out our new Cooking Success Bundle and Fitness Success Bundle while you’re there!
When inspecting produce, use your senses. Ask yourself how the item smells, how it feels, and whether it looks appealing. These are good indicators of its freshness. Check out these tips for finding the fresh pick in your fruits and vegetables.

**FRESH FRUIT**
The flesh should be firm, but give a little. If your plums, berries, or nectarines are rock hard, they're not ripe. Citrus fruits that are too firm are likely dry on the inside. Heaviness can indicate how juicy a fruit or melon is, especially with oranges, lemons, watermelon, and cantaloupe.

Give the fruit a sniff. You should pick up a light aroma from it. A strong aroma can indicate over-ripeness, and if the fruit smells a bit sour or stinky, you're probably holding an apple or bag of grapes that's past its prime. A light, sweet smell is a good indicator that your fruit is fresh and ripe. Smell is particularly important when it comes to melons and pineapple, which can smell very strongly when past their prime, so the lighter and sweeter the better.

- **Apples** - When shopping for apples, look for firm fruit that has a rich color. Apples will keep in the refrigerator crisper for up to a month.
- **Blueberries** - Examine the container. If it's stained or leaking, chances are the berries are beginning to spoil. Blueberries freeze very well, but don't wash them beforehand. Spread them on a cookie sheet, place in the freezer until solid and then transfer to a freezer-safe container.
- **Cantaloupes** - These should have a sweet smell and they should have a little bit of give at the end. Store in the fridge for a week. Cut melons will keep for a few days.
- **Cherries** - The best are plump and dark red, with fresh stems. Cherries should be refrigerated and eaten within a few days of purchase.
- **Grapefruit** - Heavy, firm grapefruit are the super juicy ones. Grapefruit can keep in the fridge for two weeks. Check out the broiled grapefruit recipe in this issue.
- **Oranges** - The heavier the fruit for its size, the juicier it's likely to be. Avoid oranges with thick, coarse or spongy skin. Oranges will keep in the fridge for a few weeks.
- **Peaches** - Tree-ripened peaches taste best of all. Don’t buy more than you plan to use in a couple of days.
- **Strawberries** - Look for firm strawberries with the cap stem still attached. Don’t wash too vigorously, just rinse under running water before using. You can also freeze them (unwashed) to use later.
FRESH VEGGIES
Some of the same rules for fruit apply to vegetables. Pay attention to the surface of the vegetable and make sure it's consistent, evenly colored, and firm all the way around. With most vegetables like cucumbers, peppers, onions, and potatoes, you want them to be as firm as possible. Even the gentle give you look for in fruit, can indicate over-ripeness in vegetables. Softness in specific areas is generally an indicator of slow rotting or bruising, even if you don't see anything obvious that would indicate spoilage.

- **Asparagus** - Look for smooth, dark-green spears and closed tips. Use within a day or two of purchase. Store in the fridge with the cut ends of the spears submerged in a pitcher of water.
- **Bell peppers** - Red peppers are riper, sweeter versions of the green, and both contain a number of disease-fighting chemicals. Look for smooth, heavy peppers, and don't be afraid to shake one. If you hear seeds rattling, the pepper is past its prime.
- **Broccoli** - Look for bright, compact heads; avoid those that look bruised. The clusters should be dark green or green with a purplish cast. The buds should not be open.
- **Cabbage** - Choose cabbage with a dense, heavy head and with red or green leaves. Cabbage will keep for a couple of weeks in the fridge.
- **Carrots** - Look for firm carrots with a rich orange color; avoid those with soft or flabby roots. Store carrots in the veggie bin, where they'll last for a few weeks. Slightly limp carrots are fine for soup or stew.
- **Cauliflower** - Look for compact heads and don't worry about green, leafy bits throughout the bunch. Avoid heads that are discolored or blemished. Look for cauliflower that still has its green outside leaves. Store cauliflower in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper, where it will last for up to a week.
- **Corn** - Look for corn with green, moist-looking husks; avoid brownish husks. When you peel back the husks, the kernels should be plump. If you apply slight pressure to a kernel with your fingernail, juice should squirt out; this is a sign of freshness.
- **Cucumbers** - Select hard cucumbers; avoid those that appear yellowish or have squishy ends. Cucumbers will last for a week in the fridge.
- **Mushrooms** - Before buying mushrooms, look at the underside to make sure the gills (the row of tissue located under the caps) aren't open, a sign that the mushrooms are past their prime. Raw mushrooms don't freeze well, so cook them first.
- **Potatoes** - Store potatoes in a cool, dry place. If you use a plastic bag, poke holes in it so air can circulate. Baking potatoes are good baked or mashed. Red-skinned potatoes make great hash browns.
- **Spinach** - Fresh spinach has healthy-looking, dark-green leaves; avoid those that are wilted and discolored. Get rid of sandy residue by soaking then gently rinsing in cold water. If you're making a salad, wash only the amount of spinach you plan to use.

Lisa Lewis is the Chief Operating Officer for First Place 4 Health. Lisa is author of *Healthy Happy Cooking* released in December 2016, a speaker, group leader, chef at spa and wellness weeks and provided recipes for 13 First Place 4 Health Bible studies.
Refreshing Time Away ~ Helen Baratta

When I took time off to get away in the past, I would get off track. The enemy would try and persuade me to take a vacation from my healthy habits. I’ve even heard of people afraid to take time off for fear they will lose control. Bah! The enemy is mean and will do whatever he can to sidetrack us. Consider the following FEAR fighting steps to stay on track as you embrace your time off.

**FORESIGHT**: Anticipate the obstacles. Where are you staying? What food options will be available? How often in your day will you be able to work in physical activity? Who will be the biggest challenge? What types of healthy snacks will you bring? How will you drink your eight glasses of water while you are traveling? Planning ahead reduces the stress of staying on track.

**EXERCISE**: Walking may be the only activity you can squeeze out of a day filled with travel. I pack my tennis shoes in a cloth bag to protect my clothes in my suit case. If my day is filled with sitting, I do my best to walk whenever there is a break. No place to move? Walk in place. One time when I was on a long flight, I stood in the airplane aisle and marched in place, raising my knees higher with each step. Healthy people do some type of physical activity every day, even on vacation.

**AVOID**: The temptation to splurge will present itself numerous times when we are away from our normal environments. Sometimes our traveling companions might try to guilt us into joining them. Set the trend, be the first to order with a healthy choice. Ask to share a dessert with several people or split your favorite entrée. I use the one-bite strategy. One French fry, one bite of the juicy hamburger, or one fork full of creamy dessert will satisfy my desire and keep me on track. My husband, Vince, is accustom to my request, “May I have one bite.” Make it your goal to maintain your weight while on vacation.

**REST**: God rested and so should you. Mark 6:31 records Jesus saying to the apostles, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” Schedule a few hours in quiet reflection with God. Shut off the technology, put down the book, and stop talking. Find a quiet place to sit and be still with Jesus. When we allow God’s rest to penetrate our soul, we are refreshed.

Vacations can be a wonderful time to spend time with family and friends making memories together. Practicing maintenance on vacation gives you a jumpstart on a long term healthy habit. We don’t experience the dread of the scale when we return. I hope these tips will help you stay on track on your next vacation. Do you have an idea of your own you’d like to share? Email me at helen.baratta@fp4h.com or post a suggestion on our Facebook page, facebook.com/firstplace4health/

Helen Baratta…………………………………………helen.baratta@fp4h.com

Helen Baratta is an author, speaker, coach, group leader, triathlete and nationally certified fitness instructor. She serves as Director of Development for First Place 4 Health. Her new book *Restored! Embracing Weight Loss God’s Way* will be released later this year.
But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. HEBREWS 3:13

One of the aspects I enjoy the most about a First Place 4 Health Wellness Week is being secluded and shielded from the world for seven days. The absence of electronic devices and newspapers, having freedom to enjoy or decline programmed activities, and seeing the openness of attendees and the authenticity of the staff all combine to encourage me with its atmosphere of love and sincere concern. It is in this setting, among like-minded people, that my broken heart (broken over concern for a fractured family relationship) was healed, my spirit refreshed and my mind renewed. When I arrived at Wellness Week, I wasn’t aware of the need buried deep in the crevices of my heart. But words spoken during the outdoor worship service pricked my heart, and I confided my pain to the one who spoke. She prayed passionately with me and later sent another sweet sister to counsel with me. God gave that woman words that chipped away my need to “fix” things that I could not fix and helped me realize there was nothing more I could do about the relationship. She spoke truth and brought me out of my hurtful state into a place where I could grow and be used by God in a mighty way.

These two precious sisters-in-Christ heard my heart-cry and reached out to break apart the hardened layers of hurt that could have distracted me from focusing on God’s love for me.

**Action Item:** Do you need encouragement over a broken relationship? Has your heart hardened toward God? Ask God to send someone into your life to help you find relief.

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for Christian friends who have a heart for You. Bless them as they serve You through their willingness to give of themselves to help others mend. Allow me to become more like You, so that I can be used to scatter seeds of encouragement into the lives of those who are needy.

June Chapko
San Antonio, TX

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“I WAS OBESE. THERE, I’VE SAID IT ~ Success Story

It took me 46 years to admit this. Everyone could see my fat, but I hid from mirrors, cameras and anything that might have revealed the truth of my situation. I was far from Hollywood’s ideal, ultrathin woman. Yet I rationalized: What is the harm of being the big woman anyway? Who doesn’t like a big paycheck, big car, big house, big-screen TV? In our modern world, bigger is better, right?

One day in 2004, I was flying to New York City for an important client visit, when I found myself unable to wriggle and squirm into the airplane seat. I thought it was some kind of trick on the part of the airline industry. Were they making the seats smaller? Did they shrink the size of the seatbelts? At a dress size 3X, the belt couldn’t reach the clasp across my lap. Embarrassed, I asked the flight attendant to quietly slip me a seatbelt extender.

Up until this “get real” moment on the airplane, I had consistently fallen short and failed at the battle of the bulge. While I couldn’t seem to regularly maintain a healthy weight, I had enjoyed many short-term successes. My weight chart looked like the Dow Jones: up, down, up, up, down, up, up, down and always back up no matter what I tried.

Finally, at the age of 35, no longer able to hide from myself that I was obese, I gave up and moved onto other priorities in life. Aside from this struggle, I had a lot to be thankful for, including a wonderful husband, Vince, who loves me just as I am, fat or thin. His career as a contract engineer had us relocating all over the country, and with each impending move, I lost weight then gained it back after we settled in a new location. It was fun to reinvent our lives with each relocation, but this issue of being overweight followed me wherever we went. In spite of being loved and supported by Vince and other friends and family members, I felt powerless. Like so many others who struggle with weight, I tried everything: starvation in college, Weight Watchers before my wedding, diet pills after my first child, and Weight Watchers again after my second child when the scale tipped over 200 pounds.

I struggled with the disciplines of Weight Watchers. I felt dejected when I attended meetings in which my weight went up on the scale, not down. I would avoid the scale for weeks, only to be filled with dread, then heartbroken when I finally stepped onto it and saw a number that I would swear would be the highest I’d ever weigh. I’d return to my medical doctor from time to time, but the drugs he prescribed worked only as long as I took them. (Yes, I am part of the Fen-Phen disaster.) I have lost 40 to 50 pounds so many times that totally, I’ve probably dropped a staggering 450 pounds (the size of three people). I’ve honestly lost track. Each time I’d get frustrated, quit and the weight would return with a few added pounds.

Eventually, I began to feel the physical effects of carrying extra weight. The more I ate, the more my lower body screamed in pain. My feet ached. My ankles and knees became enlarged and swollen. In response, I limited my physical activity to prevent the pain that was certain to follow. It became a vicious downward spiral. One day, thinking that I could have a little fun, I strained a leg muscle bowling duckpins with Vince and my sons. For weeks, I favored my left leg. Eventually, I could no longer walk.

The physical therapist discovered that my leg muscles had tightened in the wrong places and pulled my kneecap out of place. It took three months to strengthen my leg enough that I could walk without a limp. Physical therapy three times

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each week resulted in stronger muscles and a bonus weight loss. It was, of course, temporary. The pounds crept back on and once again, my screaming knee pain got my attention. By now, since I’d been on this roller coaster for 30 years, I couldn’t help but notice that every time I lost weight through diet and exercise, my “norm” was to gain back more. So I reasoned that I was better off doing nothing, rather than repeatedly failing at this seemingly never-ending fight.

Clearly, something was missing and I was filling it with food. After three decades of struggle, I was convinced that there was no hope for me. I didn’t understand back then that a lack of hope is a spiritual predicament, not an emotional or psychological one. I know now that for those who believe in Christ, He is the hope of the world, a higher power to whom those with faith turn for strength. The Bible verse “By myself I can do nothing” speaks to this. With Christ, everything is possible. But I wasn’t a woman of faith in my younger adult years. I’d spent my twenties and thirties refusing to acknowledge God after I walked away from Him at age 14 when my parents divorced. I spent years trying to numb the fond memories of Sunday School, Bible camp and life with Jesus when I was a child and pre-teen. Even in my rebellion, the Lord continued to pursue me with relentless love. I wasn’t yet ready to accept God’s love, or even to love myself in a way that honors God.

In 1998, we moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, joined “Steelers Nation” and made new friends. One friend, Jane, invited me to church. I refused. Was I still mad at God about my parent’s divorce? Could there be something at church that would fill the void I knew was there? Jane didn’t give up. After two years and numerous invitations, I finally agreed to join her at church. It was an eye-opening experience to say the least. During the service that day, I rediscovered the immense love that I felt as an 11-year-old girl in a Baptist church where I first met and accepted Jesus. I realized what I had been missing: a relationship with Christ. I knew from my experiences with Jesus as a little girl that He loves everyone—even me—no matter our size, shape, state of mind, or what we have or have not done in our past.

I know now that being overweight is a physical problem with a spiritual solution. First, I learned to trust God. God accepted and loved me exactly as I was, yet cared for me and did not allow me to remain hopeless. In 2006, God brought First Place 4 Health into my life. As I learned a new way to place Christ first, my love for the Lord expanded. I learned to listen for and obey His promptings to get to the root of what was causing my weight issue. Every time that God helped me remove a scarred layer from my past, I embraced a new layer of trust in His plan for my life. I crawled, then walked and finally ran free from a life of obesity to one of health and hope, which has given me the strength to accomplish the goals and dreams He had planned for my life. I reached my goal in 2010 and each passing year since then has resulted in learning something new about myself. I’m not going to mislead anyone by saying that my life became perfect and easy and wonderful. Just like everyone else, I’ve had my share of challenges, but food is no longer my solution to coping with them.

Have you tried everything else? Are you working someone else’s plan or your own plan? Or maybe, like me, you’ve given up and “no plan” is your plan. I wrote about my journey in the book, Restored! Embracing Weight Loss God’s Way to help others understand that there certainly is a “plan” for your life—God’s plan.

Upcoming Events

Delaware Wellness Rally
August 5, 2017
Georgetown, DE

Wellness Workshop – South Carolina
August 26, 2017
Six Mile, SC

Wisconsin Wellness Workshop
September 23, 2017
Algoma, WI

Southern California Wellness Workshop
October 7, 2017
Bakersfield, CA

Wellness Week
October 12-18, 2017
Round Top, TX

Northern California Wellness Workshop
October 28, 2017
Location TBD

Fun & Fitness 4 Life Weekend
January 19-21, 2018
Northeast, MD

Restore: Experiencing Freedom from Food Strongholds
April 15-17, 2018
Northeast, MD

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Interested in hosting a FP4H event in your area? Contact Helen Baratta at helen.baratta@fp4h.com to find out how.

Online classes starting soon!
Broiled Grapefruit

Serves 2

1 large grapefruit
2 tsp. brown sugar
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
Drizzle of honey


NUTRITION: 206 Calories, 0g Fat, 0mg Cholesterol, 88mg Sodium, 1474mg Potassium, 45g Carbohydrates, 4.6g Protein

TRACKER: 1 Fruit

Pumpkin Spice Breakfast Cookie

2 cups whole-wheat flour
1 cup old fashioned oats
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
¼ tsp. salt
1 15-oz. can pumpkin
½ cup coconut oil
½ cup applesauce
1 cup brown sugar
1 large egg
½ cup roasted, salted pumpkin seeds
½ cup dried cranberries

Line cookie sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Whisk together whole-wheat flour, old-fashioned oats, baking soda, pumpkin pie spice, and salt. At medium speed, beat pumpkin, coconut oil, brown sugar, and egg until well combined; gradually beat in flour mixture, then pumpkin seeds and cranberries. Scoop onto lined cookie sheet to form 16 mounds, spaced 2 inches apart; flatten into disks. Bake at 350° F for 20 to 25 minutes or until dark brown on bottoms. Cool on wire rack.

FOR LATER: Cooled cookies can be wrapped in plastic and stored at room temperature up to two days or frozen up to 2 weeks. Reheat in toaster until crisp. Serves 16

NUTRITION: 85 calories; 8g fat (37.8% calories from fat); 4g protein; 26g carbohydrate; 3g dietary fiber; 13mg cholesterol; 122mg sodium.

TRACKER: 1 oz.-eq. grain
TOMATO AND CUCUMBER SALAD WITH FETA

DRESSING:
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
½ tsp. sugar
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tbsp. fresh dill, minced
½ tsp. dried oregano
½ tsp. garlic salt
freshly ground black pepper, to taste

SALAD:
1 lb. cherry tomatoes, cut in half
1 lb. cucumbers (approximately 2 large or 4 small), diced
½ cup Kalamata olives, drained, pitted, and chopped
2 cups spinach
½ cup feta cheese, crumbled

For the dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together all dressing ingredients until thoroughly blended.
For the salad: In a large bowl, combine all salad ingredients. Toss with dressing until everything is evenly coated. Cover salad and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, removing from the refrigerator at least 30 minutes before serving. Serves 4.

NUTRITION: 289 calories; 26g fat (78.1% calories from fat); 4g protein; 12g carbohydrates; 2g dietary fiber; 17mg cholesterol; 948mg sodium.

TRACKER: ½ oz.- eq. meat, 1½ cups vegetable, 1 tsp. healthy oil

Veggie slaw

1 12-oz. package broccoli slaw
1 red delicious apple, chopped
1 green onion, chopped
½ cup cider vinegar
¼ cup apple juice
1/3 cup sugar
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper

Combine first three ingredients in large bowl. In another bowl, combine remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour over slaw mixture and toss. Serves 6.

NUTRITION: 79 calories; 1g fat (6.5% calories from fat); trace protein; 20g carbohydrates; 1g dietary fiber; 2mg cholesterol; 94mg sodium.

TRACKER: ¼ cup fruit, ½ cup vegetable