

Affordable health

Business



“ AnApplea day keeps the doctor away!” This common cliché is indeed an accurate representation of the impact of healthy food on the body, mind, and soul.

Healthy food is defined as natural, unprocessed produce that is grown without the use of pesticides, or synthetic fertilizers, or sewage sludge, or genetically modified organisms, or food additives or ionizing radiation. It is important to understand the definition of healthy food in order to incorporate nutrition into everyday life. It is not that society misunderstands nutrition; rather, society is challenged to integrate a healthy diet into daily life due to the ludicrously high prices of nutritious food in grocery stores. A study conducted atHarvardSchool of Public Health in 2013 found that consuming a healthy diet that was rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, and nuts, costs approximately \$1.

50 more per day per person than the cost of eating an unhealthy diet consisting of processed foods and refined grains. If a family of four were to follow a nutritious diet for an entire year, an extra \$2, 200 per year would be spent on grocery shopping (Dwyer). Many families in the United States and around the world cannot afford the additional \$2, 200 to supply nutritious food for their family. Should nutrition be a luxury? People should not be forced to sacrifice health because of a tight budget; everyone deserves the opportunity to nourish the body and brain. It is essential for healthy food to cost less than unhealthy food in order to maximize life expectancy, brain power, and quality of life. First and foremost, healthy food nourishes the body in a way that increases the longevity of life.

Inorganic foods are grown with the use of pesticides and other harmful enhancements that increase the chances of acquiring many illnesses; the two most significant health concerns that are directly related to inorganic foods are heart disease and obesity. Consider this: It is a beautiful day, the family is packed tight in the car, and a wailing child in the backseat suddenly demands a stop for food. Under these circumstances, how could one resist a McDonald's cheeseburger and french fries? While difficult, all should resist the temptation because fast food products, such as McDonald's cheeseburgers, contain excessive amounts of cholesterol. High cholesterol levels in the body are one of the primary causes of heart disease, which is the leading cause of death for American men and women. There are three hundred nineteen million people living in the United States, and approximately eighty such million adults have at least one form of heart disease: one fourth of the American population (Heart).

This statistic can be drastically decreased by simply choosing meals and snacks that contain lower cholesterol levels. Likewise, the likelihood of obesity increases when poor diet choices are made. A common misunderstanding about obesity is that it is caused only by the quantity of calories consumed when in fact, the quality of calories has a large impact on the body as well (Food). As described in the fast food restaurant scenario, it is clear that people blatantly disregard proper nutrition for cheap, easily-accessible food. Would not an ideal world have inexpensive, nutritious food that is readily available? By lowering the price of organic food and striving for an ideal environment, lives will be extended and saved.

In addition, healthy food enriches intellectual strength. There is a direct correlation between nutrition and the brain, as food fuels the brain. Dr. Eva Selhub, an expert and physician in the fields of stress, resilience, and mind-body medicine from Harvard Health, compared the brain to an expensive car. Similar to an expensive car, the human brain functions best when supplied with premium fuel.

High-quality foods comprised of vitamins, fiber, and protein nourish the brain, while diets comprised of large amounts of refined sugar worsen the body's regulation of insulin and promote inflammation and oxidative stress (Selhub). Why settle for mediocre brainpower when it is possible to obtain maximum intelligence, reasoning, wisdom, and judgment by simply choosing an apple over a Snickers bar? Lack of money drives the average population to this poor decision. The price of apples at Giant Eagle has escalated to approximately \$4.50 per pound, while the price of Snickers candy bars is only \$4.20 per pound. Remember, a pound of apples is equivalent to only three medium sized apples, while a pound of Snickers candy bars is equivalent to eight king-sized bars.

From a financial standpoint, it is clear that the ratio of items purchased to amount of money spent is smaller for the Snickers candy bars. While at the moment buying the Snickers bars may seem like a smarter purchase, in the long run, when considering mental health, purchasing the apples is the better purchase. It is difficult to decide between a financially intelligent and personally/mentally intelligent purchase; therefore, life should be made easier on consumers by making the personally beneficial purchase the financially beneficial purchase as well! Not only does nutritious food increase
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life expectancy and brain power, it improves overall quality of life. According to a 2008 study published in the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, diets that lack important nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and omega-3 fatty acids, contribute to depression (Brown). The Indian Journal of Psychiatry discovered these vital nutrients are necessary for a reduction in depression symptoms, especially amino acids as they “ are converted to neurotransmitters which in turn alleviate depression and other mental health problems” (Understanding). An extremely important amino acid found in the human body is tryptophan.

Tryptophan” plays a role in restful sleep and a stable mood,” and is found in protein foods including soy products (Robbins). Unfortunately, soy products are costly. For example, one half gallon of soy milk exceeds one half gallon of cow’s milk by 79% at Whole Foods Market. It is essential to lower prices in order to nourish the soul. A reduction in the price of healthy food equals healthy, happy humans. On the other hand, some may argue that producers and merchants will lose business if the price of food is lowered.

Although economic setbacks are a legitimate concern, as no one desires to lose their job or business, they are unrealistic. In fact, quite the opposite will occur; business will boost by implementing a cost reduction in healthy foods. Currently, many are forced away from nutritious low-calorie foods because of price towards inexpensive foods with excessive empty calories. Dr. Andrew Drewnowski, a director of the Nutritional Science Program at the University of Washington, states, “ If you have \$3 to feed yourself, your choices gravitate toward foods which give you the most calories per dollar” (Parker-

Pope). If buyers did not need to steer away from healthy foods due to budget, more healthy products would sell.

Merchant revenues would actually increase as volume would outweigh the price differential. Money is not at risk, as many assume, but health is at risk. Be it an apple, banana, kale, or vegetable medley, it is crucial to incorporate fresh produce into daily intake. Lowering prices of nutritious food in order to incorporate fresh produce in daily diet will help the public increase the longevity of life, mental productivity, and quality of life. To all store owners: reconsider the high prices that force buyers to purchase and eat unhealthy foods. Even a small decrease in price can have a large effect on families, and the entire community. To all consumers: take control of health and its many benefits! While shopping, ask grocers why healthy products cost more than processed products. Additionally, encourage the grocers to make a change in healthy food prices. Consumers need to initiate change to prompt merchants to implement change. In order for a successful change, society needs all hands on deck—everyone must take accountability for affordable health!