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FITNESS & HEALTH

The Warrior Woman Way!

Training, eating and living for the
40+ woman!

Or, how to sculpt the body of your dreams, at ANY age!

By Karen McCoy



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Redefining the 40+ Woman!

Many women are told that after a certain age, their body stops growing, their metabolism slows down, their ability to build new muscle is not there, or shifting hormones are the reason they feel and look the way they do.



I've never been one to fall into conventional thinking, in fact, if the general population believes it to be a certain way, that's my cue that I'm going to prove them wrong! At over 50 years of age, I have made the best gains of my life, and it gets better every year. And with every competition I continue to learn and grow. I'll never stop competing, it's simply the best *beauty plan* I know of!

Many women think that I'm one of the 'gifted ones'. I can honestly tell you that I simply am NOT! I am a hard gainer, I am not aesthetic (balanced...I have a high, blocky waist, too-long legs and arms for my body), I have a big curve in my spine that throws one hip (and leg) about 1 1/2 inches higher than the other and makes squats and all leg work very hard! I have uneven muscle distribution on my body (I have more muscle on the entire left side of my body). I have an average metabolism, I

had little sports background to draw from and I was terrified to stand up in front of a crowd, let alone on stage in front of hundreds with an itchy-bitsy bikini! LOL! And I'm 55 years old! Oh yeah, and I'm natural...always have been.

This is not about winning, it's about the journey. It's about striving for excellence, and feeling proud of yourself. It's about showing others what is possible if you put your mind to it. It's about knowing we are worth it. It's about being a **Warrior Woman**! And it's about never, being lulled into complacency, never making excuses, never settling for second best, and never, ever giving up!"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ka".

My Story

Thirty years ago, I found that lifting weights connected me to my inner power and help lift me out of a chaotic childhood marked by addiction, depression and poor health.

I competed for the first time in 1991, 2 weeks before my 30th birthday in bodybuilding, and won the Alberta Provincials Overall. I continued to train on and off for about 10 years, then, due to extremely poor health and learning of my son's chronic and degenerative disease, I slipped into depression and suffered a myriad of health problems for the next 8 years.



Determined to get my health back, I went on a journey of all things metaphysical, and with the help of allopathic and alternative practitioners, I pieced my health back together, ever so slowly, including my broken spirit. From there, I ventured back into the gym to try to train my body back to its once-healthy state. It was a long, painful process in which I lost faith thousands of times...but I persevered.

After turning 50, all things in my life seemed to converge for the better...my son's health was stable, and my body was (finally) out of pain for the first time in nearly 10 years. So I decided I wanted to step back on stage again, at the tender age of 52!

I was able to get in the best shape of my life, and I stepped back on stage, proving two things to myself and other women on their journey: you *can* improve and get stronger and more shapely as you age, and you *can* reclaim your life.

Today, I create and run several on-line health and wellness programs to women everywhere, including my popular 10-Week Best Shape of Your Life Challenge and the 12-Week Advanced Best Shape of Your Life Challenge, which are transforming women's bodies and lives! My quest has always been to help women to get healthy, fit and strong on all levels – physically, mentally, and spiritually. I also wrote a book – **One Rep at a Time** – that chronicles my journey from health to illness and back again, and I lecture on the main tools I used - simple tools, really, that are accessible to us all in order to reclaim our health and our power! These teachings are sewn throughout all my programs, as you cannot teach physical health without addressing mental and emotional health and wellness also.

My life's work is to help women to reclaim their bodies, spirits and lives and to access their inner power. And we must always strive for more. Because we are worth it!

Training and the Warrior Woman

So many times I hear women say that they want to return to the days of youth: having good health, a lean body (or if they never had one, to have one now, at 40+), a strong metabolism and loads of energy. But many women say that life seems to have slipped on by, and they now find themselves battling with calories, and a body that's changing with every passing year.

They're hit with 'middle-age spread' and all the things that come with it: muffin tops, junk in the trunk (a big butt), bat wings (saggy triceps), dimply skin (cellulite) and all other body-parts morphing into a saggy, loose mess. I am here to tell you that you CAN turn back the clock. How much is partly up to you and partly up to Mother Nature. But you MUST START NOW!



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Here's the deal: *there is a point of no return.* Got that? Read it again....now, what do I mean by that? There is a point where you simply will NOT be able to make any significant gains to your physique. Where is that point? Well, you don't know until you get there, and then it's too late! So start now!

In my view, women can make awesome gains by starting in their 40's or 50's, and the body can certainly regain shape and tone (how much is different for everyone). But I have seen amazing progress (even in myself, when I went back to serious training at 51, after being away from it for years! So let's get started, ladies!

WHEN You Start is Important

In my industry, I have witnessed tons of fitness gals and competitors of all ages who have trained and nourished their bodies like athletes, but WHEN they started always shows up. All the top IFBB pros in my sport of physique transformation and competition, be it Figure, Physique, Fitness, Bikini or Bodybuilding, all started with an athletic background at a fairly young age.

There's no doubt that the sooner you embark on an exercise regime, the better the results. And the more dedicated the better...I'm not just talking about hiking and biking and all those other lovely things that I refer to as *activities*, NOT exercise (please, I'm not saying that they're not worthy! But they are not structured activity done to build and strengthen the entire body on a set schedule, month after month, year after year. We are talking building muscle and changing our physique, yes? That's what the Warrior Woman does!).

I'm often asked how I got in such good shape at my age, when the truth is, I started lifting in my 20's, and continued lifting in my 30's, my 40's (although I did take a lot of that decade off), and now into my 50's. So the cumulative effects of my lifestyle has carried me through, and continues to, for as long as I keep it up. So in effect, I 'got in shape' in my 20's, and then just improved on it with a focus on progressing and getting better (we'll talk about this more later!).

The difference in women who have maintained a fitness regime since a young age (think Monica Brant and Erin Stern, track stars, Ava Cowan the gymnast, Rachel McLish the professional dancer, Cory Everson, the pentathlete) and those who



come into fitness at a later age is evident. It's hard to turn back ALL the hands of time, which is evident in the many older women now going into figure and physique competitions in their 40's and 50's, and who just started on this fitness track. But their progress is clearly evident!

This 'Bucket List' approach to fitness (heading into show for the first time in later years) is fine, and I'd much rather see women getting fit at this later age than not at all, but sometimes these women are unhappy with the results, having compared themselves to the IFBB pros (who are much younger, and who grace all the Internet training sites and fitness mags, so we are deluged with these visuals every day). We simply cannot compare ourselves to them. It is unrealistic and harmful!

Differences in age and training do apply: for the late-comer to physique transformation, the skin may not be as tight, the cellulite might not fully come off the body, the musculature is not as pronounced, the frame may be in dysfunction (at our age, we may have uneven hips, lower back issues, knee problems, shoulder dysfunction, which can alter our training and the final product, and how we show on stage...I know, I have one hip rotated up high and in, causing an imbalance in the muscles in my legs and left and right glute). But this is the extreme. Not every older woman wants to train or look like a physique competitor. There is progress with ANY fitness lifestyle, provided you are consistent in your training (minimum 3 days a week of heavier weights, and little cardio!) and feeding yourself well!



A Word about Stage Competitions

While we're on the subject, let's talk a bit more about gals in competition. It's all the rage these days, women flocking to the stage to embark on a journey toward optimum health and leanness....but is this a reality?

The sad truth is that while us competitors may look good on stage day, it doesn't last long. Usually in a few weeks' time, we've smoothed out, and even the most die-hard competitor who thinks 'this time it

won't happen to me' or the weight doesn't creep on much, it always catches up with us. It has to: the body simply can't live in that state forever (the exceptions are gals on drugs, or who binge eat, or who have blessed genetics – and there aren't many of them – who CAN maintain.

The key is to maintain a workable halfway point, where we can continue to progress in our training and physique goals while staying *somewhat* lean and always healthy. Problem is, metabolic damage, eating disorders and wonky metabolisms are becoming all too common in women of all ages, due to this sudden interest in competing. And it seems that some women put their faith in coaches who are there for the one-day event, and not to promote or support a long-term healthy lifestyle in these women! So buyer beware!

I love that so many women of all ages are interested in this sport, but it IS a sport, and it takes years of dedicated gym time, attention to food, and high quality coaching to get there.

Problem is, the 'new fitness-as-a-fad industry' as I call it, doesn't promote the athleticism of the sport, rather, it's all about the 'look' and this drive for 'getting a 6-pack' or 'aiming for 15% bodyfat all year round. I see women cutting out training programs from a fitness magazine because they want *that* body like the female pro shown (guaranteed, that photo was taken close to competition time, and guaranteed she doesn't do that program anyway, and she likely didn't write it either!)



It's buyer beware, but the illusion and promise of tight glutes and awesome abs that you walk around with 24/7 is catapulting the masses into a near hysteria of competition fever. We need to keep our heads about us. Not only, that, to live at 17% bodyfat, especially as an older athlete, is unrealistic and takes a TON of compromises. I don't know about you, but at my age, I want to live a life as well! Bring on the wine and family gathering...balance and living life to the fullest is key here! Or at least it is for me and my clients!

A Word about GENETICS

Ah yes, genetics. In my day, there was the age old struggle of 'don't let your genetics define you, if you train hard enough, you CAN become a champ', and the 'you've gotta have the genetics to get there', arguments. (Ava Cowan, right, one of the best physique athletes around. She admits she had genetics on her side...boy, did she!)

I've spent literally years on these two opposing viewpoints, and I have come to the conclusion that both are right, in their own way: you CAN out-train and progress in a not-so-genetically-gifted body (I'm living proof), but great genetics are great genetics and you are either born with them or not. Period. We make the most of what we have.

So, what does all this mean? Does it mean we don't bother, because we won't get the body we envisioned? Does it mean we've missed the boat? Is it all for naught?

No, not at all! It means we have to be realistic and recognize that we CAN make amazing gains, but it may not be what we see in the magazines (and most of those women are way younger than us anyway!). It means we assess, and reassess along the way, and we focus on striving from improvement and progressing in our training, eating knowledge, and life!

There is so much we can improve upon! But if you hold yourself up to the level of a Nicole Wilkins or Rachel McLish or other awesome athletes and competitors, you may be sorely disappointed. If perfection is your game, then you may need to find another game, or better yet, change your mindset!

That's the key (and this has been a hard one for me to learn,



especially because I have been in this game for longer than almost all the women out there who are still training at this level, and competing, but genetically, I often get overlooked on stage because I don't have 'the look': wide capped shoulders, teensy tiny waist, high, small glutes. I'm the opposite in all aspects! SO I've had to redefine my success away from the unattainable perfect V-taper body, which I tried for years to get, but genetically it's just not there...sure, I've altered my physique to get closer every year and that is exciting, but when I step on stage, there are more and more women with better genetics coming into the sport every year and they end up trumping me! Oh well!

So now, I redefine my success by three things: My ability to train and recover at an awesome level (especially for my tender age of 55), to eat extremely well, with generous portions and NO denial of whole food groups (and I LOVE doing so), and to continue to see positive changes in my physique every year. Oh yeah, and I love the fact that I can be a forerunner of sorts to older women everywhere.

We CAN do this! We CAN make changes to our physiques as we age, and that's exciting to me! We CAN become a **Warrior Woman!**

For Warrior Women, it's all about the WEIGHTS!

So the Warrior Woman trains in order to better herself, period. It's about building STRENGTH, in all ways – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually – and there is no better way to build physical strength, agility, flexibility (yes, flexibility!), balance and coordination than with weights. And when we gather our mind into focussing on lifting that weight, and asserting our steely will over that weight, there is something so invigorating about this. It connects us to our POWER!



We can literally reclaim ourselves in a world where we are often taken out of our Power. THIS is the secret aspect of using weight training above all other exercise philosophies. Like I always say, we're not cardio Queens, or Bootcamp Babes, we are Weight training Warriors!



Sure, we do add in plyometric, Olympic lifts, sprint cardio and we sprinkle into our training what I call 'Warrior Woman Moves' that combine strength with a Zen-like focus, where body AND mind combine to make the lift...so we're building our Inner world, our inner focus as well!. THIS is key to the *Warrior Woman Way!*

What about Cardio?

Oh yeas, let's talk cardio. I often get attacked because of my apparent lack of support for cardio, but I'm not NOT in support of cardio. But I do teach that endless bouts of cardio are useless, and they are counter productive to changing our shape and building a strong metabolism (in fact, cardio, done in correctly, and too often, will cause us to INCREASE our fat stores, DROP shapely muscle (take a look at a marathon runner's body...NO muscle in the upper body, and little in the legs. Sure, they're defined, but they are NOT big, and often not shapely) and we will LOWER our metabolism. Not only that, if we continually do hours of cardio every week, then if we stop, we start gaining again because we have taught our bodies that we HAVE TO keep doing this much cardio to keep the fat at bay! We've created a metabolic monster!



The key is to do our cardio AFTER weights (yep, if we are using it for fat loss, which is why most of us are doing it!), and in short bursts, of low and high intensity. And shake it up! If you've only ever used the elliptical, try the stairmaster (the lease

effective is the treadmill, science has proven this time and time again. Better to get out and RUN).

The body needs to be kept off guard if it's going to continue to lose weight. You DO NOT want your body to become efficient at anything, particularly cardio, because this means that it has learned to 'preserve energy' which in our language means preserving calories. How does it do this? By lowering your metabolism. That's one of the reasons older women eat less and less calories but seemingly still hold onto weight, because they've slowed their metabolism with cardio.

Cardio also rips the muscle off the body, and nay physique gal knows that our metabolism is in our muscle, so the more muscle, even 5 pounds, raises our metabolism 24/7 (unlike cardio that raises our metabolism for only 2-4 hours after the cardio session is done).

I always say that if you only have 20 minutes to spare, always choose weights. Cardio has a short window of fat loss potential, and without proper strength training included in your routine

(and we're talking specific, hard training, not just 'dabbling in weights' after your cardio session...remember, weights FIRST, then cardio!), you won't boost your long-term metabolism potential. (Tanya L, from my Challengers Program, in week 8, down 10 pounds and 11 inches! "I love that I'm allowed to eat potatoes and white rice...who knew? And I'm eating more than ever. Love this Warrior Woman lifestyle, Karen!")



See, as we age, Father Time naturally starts dropping the muscle off our bodies, usually around the age of 35. By the time we hit 50, if we haven't been doing progressive, consistent, hard weight training we can lose up to 35% of our muscle mass. And remember, our muscle is not only our metabolism (so our metabolism slips with time, yet, not due to aging but due to muscle loss), it is our SHAPE. So we get saggy glutes, loose arms, fat on our abs.

I ran for years. That's what we did 20 or 30 years ago, but I noticed that I wasn't changing my shape much. Sure, I was smaller, but it was a smaller, looser me! (And running, in particular, causes faster skin sagging, due to the pounding nature of the sport, it draws the skin down, especially the efface, where the skin is thin anyway, and the butt, because it holds the fat, and the fat gets slammed against the skin with every step, stretching it out more! LOL!).

Then I upped my weight training and made that my focus...wow! In 6 months, I saw incredible changes, so I stuck with it. I gave up running, and I'm glad I did, to save my knees and lower back!



If you like running, great, and if you're working on running marathon, then naturally you will major in running and probably minor in weights...because your GOAL is your chosen sport of running. I am talking to the

Warrior Woman here that wants to change her physique and rev her metabolism and not cause any more age-or sport-related damage to her body. To each her own!

So if 'No Cardio', Then What?

I didn't really say 'no' to all cardio, just the long drawn out type. Yawn....

MET Training is what we use in our Warrior Woman Workouts. It's *Metabolic Enhancement Training* and It can take many forms, but basic principles apply: fast, explosive movements with weight resistance, either from your own body weight, or better, yet, by using weights.

So that is where we will intersperse in our workouts some higher rep, lighter weights (but not too light!) to push through time and space as fast as possible, and move onto the next (kinda like circuit training, but not how it was taught years ago, or how some gyms STILL teach it).

MET is hard, and creates an oxygen debt like no other. But most importantly, due to using weights, it spares muscle and strips off fat (if you're not using weights, you can't keep the muscle on your body, because your muscles aren't being engaged to any degree, not enough to spare muscle anyway. Hence the muscle-loss that comes from cardio-alone lifestyles, or in those that merely 'dabble' in weights).

SPRINT, Don't RUN!

Take a look at the different bodies (below): Both are ideally suited for their sport: the marathoner is lean, with little muscle on his body. That's because the nature of cardio HAS to strip it off because it's heavy, and taxing to the body that is in constant motion and having to move that weight through long distance...it's too much! Remember, the body wants to be efficient, to conserve energy (calories, fat), and to remove any obstacles in its way (heavy, shapely, metabolically strong muscle).

The Sprinter, however, is POWERING through his run! He is a short distance guy, his aim is to go as fast as possible, so his arms, legs, and glutes are powering as hard as possible, and this requires strength in the form of MUSCLE. So the Sprinter is actually building and maintaining muscle in his training. This is exactly what his body needs to do to maintain his chosen sport of POWER sprints.

Define What you WANT



And keep in mind that the sprinter has awesome glutes (that's my favourite part of watching the Olympics: marvelling at the awesome glutes of the sprinters. Just ask my hubby...he always rolls his eyes at this one!). You simply don't get awesome glutes as a regular runner, because your leg is not lifting very high (you need at least a 90 degree lift in your leg to

activate the glutes...think about walking up the stairs one at a time or taking 2-3 steps at a time...your knee has to go up high, at least to hip level, which activates those lovely glutes of yours! That's why multiple-stair stair running is so good for the glutes, as is sprinting uphill!).

So neither the marathoner nor the sprinter is wrong in their training, but *it all depends on what you want*. Most women who come to me are not wanting to run a marathon (or they'd go to a running specialist). They want tight, full muscles, great shape and lovely, high, firm glutes, right? And these sprinters rarely work their abs...they are just there by nature of their explosive sport! How awesome is that?

A Final Word about Running....

Another note: The bodyfat on the average distance runner is ALWAYS higher than the Sprinter, because the body will conserve the fat on the marathoner's body (remember, fat is fuel, to be used in times of longer runs because fat is stored energy, it conserves it because you're putting it through yet another bout of long cardio! So the long distance runner's body would prefer to drop the heavy muscle FIRST, so in a way, the runner's body starts to *cannibalize* its muscle in the process!).

The Sprinter's body *saves* muscle and will always use fat first, so most sprinters are in single-digit or lower double digit numbers, whereas I've had a lot of distance runners measure on average 25-30% bodyfat, although they can appear thin and weigh little. Remember, weight has nothing to do with bodyfat! Nothing! In fact, marathoner (or swimmer, or any athlete whose sport is based on endurance first) can be shocked at the level of



bodyfat, and assume the bodyfat machine is incorrect (I have had this happen many times in my years of doing bodyfat readings on endurance athletes.

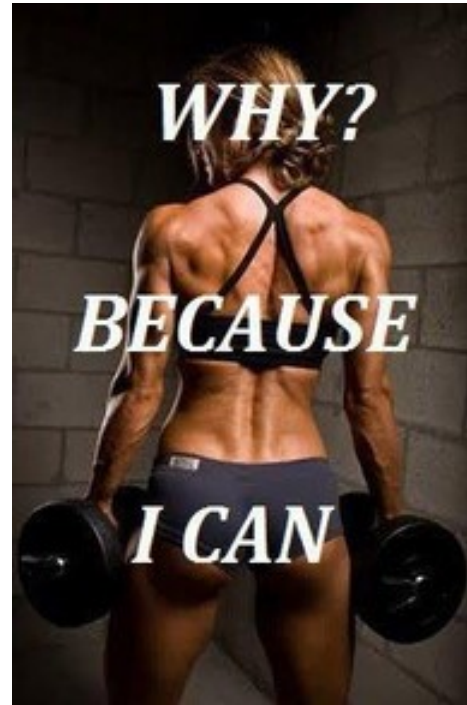
I can always see their higher-than-average bodyfat reading coming down the pipe before it even displays itself, because I can tell by looking at their physiques. Again, not right or wrong, depending on your goals, but most women coming to me are doing so because they want to alter their physiques, get shape and tone back. But asking a cardio queen to give up cardio (or at least lessen it...to give it



up all at once will only cause fast weight gain...you have to de-cardio yourself slowly!) is like telling a fish to not breathe water...it is SO tough! This is where we have to re-teach her what's real and right, and change how she thinks! Not always easy!

So I always ask women who want to do it all: have a great running time and create an awesome, shapely body, or who want to tighten and tone, and shift their physique in some way visually and strength and function-wise. This can ONLY be done by majoring in weights. Sure you can minor in other things, but you have to choose. You can't have it both ways. Aerobic (cardio) and anaerobic (weights) training use different systems, and have different requirements, and so a different result is attained, but visually and functionally.

So decide what you want. For us Warrior Women, we choose to SPRINT to the finish line of our lives!



The Warrior Woman Sees Food as FUEL

“My metabolism just shut off” is a common refrain I hear from a lot of women, but I am here to tell you that this simply is NOT true. What’s happened has been a collection of changes to your lifestyle that have created a perfect storm of sorts, one where fat is more easily stored, and food has become something to control or constrain.

To the *Warrior Woman*, food is *fuel*. This does NOT mean we look at it strictly as that which is good for us, because to do so would take the fun out of eating, right? Everyone enjoys a lovely pastry or a glass of wine once in awhile. So the *Warrior Woman* chooses her foods freely, with intuition, flexibility and a keen knowledge of her own body. But what exactly does this mean?



These days, there is no shortage of diet or eating plans. There’s Paleo, low-carb, high protein, flexible eating, ketosis, If it Fits Your Macro’s, Intermittent Fasting...and no doubt by the time you finish reading this, the Internet will be flooded with the next best diet plan on the planet (or protein powder, juice, sports supplement, fat loss herb etc), and everyone will be flocking to it. Lately, many people are on the ‘clean eating’ bandwagon, but what exactly does that mean? More on this in a bit...

Here’s my two measuring tools I use to know when NOT to adopt a diet plan (or anything else, for that matter, including a fitness routine!): 1), if everyone else is ‘into’ it (a sure sign that it’s marketing hype) and 2), if it has a label (I am paleo / pescatorian, vegan / low-carber....etc).

So having said all this, how are we supposed to eat, exactly? As nature intended. So, look to your cultural background (eat like your ancestors. OK, so some of us are blends, but there is a predominant culture in there somewhere...if you’re a bit of Scottish, Irish and English, well, you’re in the Northern European part. Got it?). That should make up the majority of your food choices. Your DNA and chromosomes have

adopted to this cultural blend tens of thousands of years ago, and while you may have moved away from this primitive lifestyle, your DNA and cells take a long time to shift....another few thousand years, at least! So eating like your ancestors is still deeply embedded in your cultural genome.

Eat in Season!

So, wherever you live, eat what is growing in your fields (but remember, your cultural genome comes first!). Not sure what seasonal stuff to eat? What is growing *naturally* in your area? Go visit the farmer's fields to be sure. In Canada, we have quite a fluctuating growing season, so we would oscillate back and forth between light fruity fare in the summer and warming root veggies and meats in the winter because that's where we live, in a very varied country with varied seasons. In the tropics, not so much.

Eat Warming Foods!

In winter time, it is best to eat warm foods. Break down that hard, cold cellulose outer lining with steaming so you can better digest ALL the nutrients. There are some raw food pundits that eat raw food at all costs, but the cost is a weakened immune system and poor digestive fires. Yes, there is 100% of all nutrients in raw foods, but only about 50% is available in its raw state. When you steam, you may lose about 20% of the nutrients, but now you can absorb 100% of them. See where I'm going with this? And that goes for cold water and drinks...room temp. in winter please! (I never do shakes in the winter!).



And finally, *put away the salads in winter*...again, raw stuff just doesn't work well for your constitution (oh, it's sooo hard for women to give this one up, we've been taught wrong for years!). And put away the tropical fruits in winter, please! (Some low glycemic berries and such are ok, but no bananas, pineapple, cherries, mango...you know, the sweet ones!) These are simply a sugar hit that you don't need and the gut bacteria gets all messed up when you throw sweet fruits into the tummy in winter time. (And by the way, if you have weight issues, fruit is off the table. Never

mind trying to argue that they are good for you. Veggies hold more nutrients, way more, than fruits anyway, and you won't be short on nutrients without your fruit. So argument over.)

And what about clean eating? Ah yes, this storm came through the masses about 10 years ago and here's what I say. It's alright as long as you clearly define what clean eating is.

It is NOT eating a specific way – with certain food groups only – it's about eating non-medicated and non-pesticide meats and foods. It means eating whole, real foods as nature intended. So no processed foods. Here's a hint: if you don't find it like that in nature, don't eat it (sure, bread can be nice and filled with whole grains and other healthy bits, but you don't find a slice of bread lying around in the fields, right? There is processing that has to happen to get it onto your plate. So eater beware).



So clean eating to a so-called paleo (here we go with labels again) or a fish-only eater is going to look different from each other, but the general rule is *clean, real foods*.

I always like to use this little analogy: if you're going through the supermarket, pretend that your great grandmother is sitting on your shoulder. Would she recognize what a yogurt tube is, or scalloped potatoes in a box?

So the **Warrior Woman** eats in an earthy, primitive way, close to the earth foods that are clean and real. She eats in season, and honours her individual cultural makeup. And she feeds her own tastes: she eats with intuition and flexibility and enjoyment in mind! So for me, I'm not gluten intolerant (and really, I think many people aren't, I think it's the chemicals and processing and the genetically modified versions of foods we once knew that is causing the tummy distress.

Think you can't digest meat? Perhaps it's the dozens of hormones and antibiotics in there that are the *real* issue!), so I enjoy wraps and the occasional organic breads. I'm also not dairy intolerant, so I enjoy organic yogurt and such. Why would I take that off my menu? Because everyone else is? Remember, that's a sure-fire reason for me NOT to do so! (But I do say no to all milk because it is pasteurized and filled with hormones and such. I occasionally drink raw milk, it's lovely and immune building and the lactose is chewed up by the ever-present enzymes hiding in there, as they should be. When you pasteurize it (boil and chemical-ize it), you're taking all that way! No wonder there is so much gluten intolerance these days. Our milk is a distant shadow of its former self!



Are you getting the idea here? Every *Warrior Woman I work with* eats differently, but with basic Warrior Woman philosophies intact – whole, real foods that are in season, clean, and according to a cultural make-up. Simple, really.

And yes, we enjoy our treats. Why not? We are here to enjoy and revel in our lovely foods, even if it means a chocolate chip cookie of sorts, or a warm cinnamon bun once in a while. But guaranteed, the healthier you get and the more informed you are, the more in control you feel, and the more rooted your eating is in intuition and with personal preferences in mind, the more you won't want to stray that much.

Add in a solid, consistent exercise program, and you won't stray that much. You simply won't want to ruin all your efforts by eating lousy anymore. A 'cheat meal' (oh boy, another label!) or a treat every so often (and that means 1-2 times a week, no more or it's really no longer a treat, it's now a lifestyle!) feeds the **Warrior Woman's** spirit and soul!

Say NO to the Food Guide!

In Canada, we have the Canada Food Guide, in the U.S. it's the Food Pyramid. Both are shams. Do yourself a favour and throw them away, ok? They are not serving us! They are built and marketed by food politics and food interest groups (think Nestle's, Kellogg's...) and NOT based on the scientific and nutritional needs of the body!



We Don't live in Denial!

As Warrior Women, we never live in denial...we choose to see it differently. Nor are we OCD, having to ensure we are perfect with our food counts, sets, reps etc. We simply do the work! We strive for excellence, NOT perfection!

See, when I go to a buffet, I see junk. When others go, they see an endless supply of eat-whatever-you-want-for a set-price which, apparently, is many people's highlights. Personally, I don't see this as interesting, I'd feel lousy if I did so, and I certainly wouldn't be bragging about it.

If I am in a place where there is only a buffet, I always start with my anchor: fill it with 3-4 ounces of clean animal sourced protein (like a chicken breast or something...no processed sliced meats!), then fill in with a little starch (is there pasta salad or some yams or something?), then a heaping plate of soft veggies or salad with dressing (got to have that lovely fat, or often I bring my own healthy Omega 3 Dressing...I carry it with me everywhere!). I leave the breads and stuff behind, because it will fill me too much, I'll feel groggy, and I want room to eat the rest of the lovely bounty I've collected on my plate. It's not always easy, but I've got it down to a science.

And here's the deal-maker: if there is absolutely nothing worth eating, I usually eat something. Better to have some food in your tummy than none, because you'll binge later, or I may pull out a protein bar from my glove compartment in my car (I'm really not into protein bars or sports drinks... again, another marketing hype gone crazy! Do you find a protein bar or

sports drink lying around in the farmer's field? Nope!).

Generally, I can pick my way through even the most challenging dinner spread. But I'm not going to say no to the food offerings and sit on the sidelines by myself, looking like a clean eating idiot. We are here to eat and live in community and that should be our first priority. We'll get over one bad meal, but we won't ever regain the opportunity to 'break bread' with friends.

So Warrior Women, eat with flexibility, intuition and joy! Don't label it, or if you have to, label it the Warrior Woman Way, and when they ask you exactly what it entails, just shrug your shoulders and say, "well, it's different for everyone." That'll start their heads a-spinning! J

What the App?

Many people use apps these days, and there's nothing really wrong with them... for a while. But the Warrior Woman eventually turns to her inner world and her own intuition to manage her food. So use them for a bit, but don't pray at the app altar. It won't allow you to learn and use food in its real context, and they're not succinct anyway (they over or under score the amounts of calories, big time!).

What apps do is make mathematicians out of us all, and boils everything down to a mathematical formula of a set number of calories and macro percentages that we are supposed to eat every day, but it simply doesn't work that way.



There are also fitness apps a-plenty! Where is the knowledge, experience, individualized program? Where are the progressions? Where does the motivation and inspiration come from (the two main ingredients for success!). Where are the teachings on intensity? IN summary, where is the real coaching?



See, I hope by now you understand that eating and training well is not just about *information*, in fact, information is nothing without leadership, experience, sports science....we are in an info world, and info is king for many people, but it will not get you anywhere! There are many how-to-tune-your-own-car videos and articles, but how many of us would trust ourselves to do this? And this is a one-off process....what about building your body year after year? I think you know where I'm going with this. If you like apps, and that is your joy, then go for it. But you will be in with the 'masses' again, the average gym-goers. I trust you don't want to be one of them!



I encourage all my women to *put pen to paper*, if only for a while, to learn the value of food...then let it go. This is the only way to really learn to eat intuitively, to learn to eyeball portions, and to fully take control.

If we rely on plugging numbers into an app, then we put our power into technology, and this doesn't serve the body. And our genetics, age, ph balance, sodium potassium levels, etc vary wildly from person to person, and from week to week, so thinking you will look like that model or competitor if you follow her percentages or caloric intake is insane.



This is taking women further from themselves, and further from the truth. (It always amazes me when women head to the treadmill, and plug in their stats and it comes out with a nice round number that says how many calories they have burned in a certain time frame....are you kidding me? How does it know? It doesn't!

This is **MARKETING** and no machine in the world can know this! We are only fooling ourselves! It's better to use a machine (if you must) and be at a certain level of intensity...is the fat coming off? Good, then that's where you need to be at...for now! This too will change!

We are not robots here, and unfortunately, our fitness and health industry makes us think otherwise. Live outside the box. Learn to trust yourself. Learn about YOU! Yes, it takes time, and all my Warrior Women know this, but they get it, they really, really get it, and it's freeing and empowering to watch!

Biofeedback is Your Friend

The most important thing is learning, assessing, applying, reassessing...the **biofeedback loop**, which is what I use with all my clients, and they learn to eventually use it on themselves. We are NOT a mathematical formula and cannot be crowbarred into set numbers. We are living. Moving, breathing expressions of our life, activities and



yes, food. We need to step back into our POWER and be the driver of our own life, and recognize that our bodies and its cells are in a constant state of ebbs and flows, and to honour this! THIS is where the Warrior Woman lives!

And one more thing: please don't go low-carb! This is a tool us competitors use short term for a certain look, and then we're done! And the ketosis diet, or skipping breakfast (as in Intermittent fasting), are you kidding me? All paths lead to possible diabetes down the road, and lowered metabolism, and intolerance to both calories and carbs as you age, so you get caught in the fox hole without a way out. These are fads!



If you want to cut your starchy carbs for a day, only do so if you have a low-volume or non-training day. That's how it's done, and that's the body's wisdom because it doesn't need that many starches or calories because it's not being called upon to work! But if you want to transform your physique, lose weight, up your metabolism and tone and tighten and if you want to create sexy, shapely muscle, you NEED carbs. OK? Are we clear? (We go into this in length in my Challenges and my other online programs.)



And hydrate! Never mind the calculations, just aim for a minimum of 2 liters, 3 is better, and not with food (or you dilute those lovely digestive enzymes that weaken with age anyways). It's one of the best energizing tricks around, and besides, it helps you to lose weight (the liver, where all fat gets broken down and metabolized, needs water to do so), and it plumps out your skin too! Bonus!

Flexing our Spiritual Muscles

I've learned the hard way that you simply cannot build health without attending to the spiritual (I'm not talking religion here, I'm talking living with an open, loving heart, and always moving forward in your dreams and goals.) My son's health challenges taught me this, as well as my own health issues (I suffered from chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia for years).



What saved me, always, was tending to my inner world. Sure, good eating and a good exercise routine will take you far, but pretty soon the organism will break down, or you will quit moving forward because some challenge will knock the wind out of you.

We need to learn that no matter what the challenge, or how dark it may seem, there is always a way out. You may find yourself having to find a new normal, but hey ,that's life too. Nobody said life would be fair, or that it would unfold as you thought it would. The mature woman knows this!

We must learn to live with the ebbs and flows of life, and when it's good, we move into it and take it by storm! And when it's bad, we hunker down and wait for it to pass, and we do the best we can.

Sometimes life is not to be won in big steps, sometimes it's to *be endured*, in small steps, and sometimes the road seems very tough indeed. It is US

who puts unreal expectations or 'should' on things, which only sets us up for perceived failure. If you are always moving forward, even if it's crawling on your belly at times (and I know this one, I've had many instances of this with my son's health challenges), it's still moving forward.

Somewhere along the line, amidst all the craziness and abuse in my childhood, amidst the days of drugs and alcohol (serious addiction, not just 20-something partying!), and the co-dependent relationships, I always had an inner stubbornness, a never-give-up attitude. I still have that today. And this is my Power Source. What's yours? Can you name it? Say it out loud.



I call these our **Power Words** that we learn to use in our training and our lives (there really is no separation between the two anyway). Pick 5 words that define you...loving, strong, accepting, grateful, smart...these are mine (for this week anyway, I change them when I feel the need!).

When you're in the gym, say these words quietly under your breath. THIS brings the Spiritual into all that you do, and connects you to your power. Imagine if we were all saying such loving ,powerful words to ourselves as we go about our days, rather than the thousands of useless thoughts, and the recriminating thoughts we often have, or going over our to-so lists of things that leave us exhausted! How you talk to yourself is how you feel about yourself.

Change your story, change your life, I always say. Are you a victim or a Powerful Warrior Woman? The choice is yours! (And yes, you ARE a Powerful Warrior Woman! She's in there, I promise!)

The desire for the spiritual touch...THIS is what unites us all, the desire to touch the Spiritual in us and others. In all my programs, I make sure we address the spiritual from many angles, and I hope that whatever place you are in, wherever you are training or living, you are doing the same. We simply must grow our Spiritual muscles if we are to live a full, rich life. Know that the only real truth is the one that lies deep within you. Learn to tap into and trust your Inner Self.

Dare to be Different!

To really be successful in our health and wellness journey, we must learn to *live a different way in our heads*. DON'T follow convention. BEWARE the marketing ploys around foods, diets, supplements, or workout programs. QUESTION EVERYTHING!

The **Warrior Woman** runs her own world, in her own way! And it serves her very, very well!

(Me and the late Robert Kennedy, right, founder of Oxygen Magazine. My mentor for many years).



Stay Strong...!

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10-Week Best Shape of Your Life Challenge: This is where most women start, on this comprehensive and extremely popular training and eating program for women of all ages. We run three times a year only, starting in January, April and September.

12-Week Advanced Best Shape Challenge: For the *serious* woman wanting serious results! You must have completed the 10-Week Challenge.

Monthly Healthy Living Program: My popular group online maintenance program, for women everywhere. We're 150+ strong, and in 5 countries,. It's affordable, easy and it works! Flexible, full on! Monthly workout, nutrition, coaching calls, audios, videos, interviews and more!

BLISS 8-Week Bodylife Program: A self directed downloadable program that you can use at home or at the gym! A great starter program!

Warrior Woman 'POWER –UP!' Program: Individualized eating, training and lifestyle program at the HIGHEST LEVEL! Created and led by Karen every step of the way! Live your BEST LIFE!

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING....

"As a bestselling health author and nutrition and fitness professional...I would not hesitate to hire Karen McCoy, as she is one of the best trainers in the business – bar none! As a man, hiring Karen is not an option, so if you're woman and you want to get in the best shape of your life for the rest of your life, look no further – Karen is your expert of choice!"
– *Brad King, fitness expert, best-selling author, motivational speaker.*

"I finished the 10 week challenge at the end of 2014 and I cannot say enough about the program and Karen's training technique and knowledge of the industry. I'm now onto the 12 week advanced one starting this Friday with Karen and cannot wait to see what is next ...the challenge, for me, was about toning, sculpting and learning more about weight training. I'm 48 and I honestly never believed that my body could change at my age...it has!! Seriously, you're worth it!!" – *Sue Hodgson, North Saanich, BC*

"Your monthly Healthy Living Program is exactly what I needed with regards to change in routines, diet, knowledge, tidbits. You have set up an excellent program that looks at all aspects of health, thank you! And thank you for being my Coach for my first ever show. It was simply amazing!" - *Aaron Price*

"I love your monthly program....every month I look forward to a new workout and I love that excitement. I may miss the odd workout, but I never miss too many. I am much more aware of my body and how it works. The awareness and connection to my body I totally attribute to being on the HLP. I want to thank you for the HLP. I believe I have been able to better get through some difficult times with more grace because of it." - *Kim Warwick.*

"I only just found this program two months ago and I can't imagine living without it. I've been telling all of my friends about it...I am really hoping that I can get some on them to join and to develop a California contingent! That would be so awesome!" – *Amy Rodriguez, California*

"Karen, you are a fantastic trainer. You truly care about your Warrior Women. The thing I love most about you is you keep it real, and you don't make silly promises. 50 is NOT the new 30, but 50 can still look and feel great! I have learned so much while being a monthly HLP member!" – *Connie Burrus, Texas*

For more lovely success stories, please [CLICK HERE!](#)