

Seven Letters

Letter #6

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Note that each of the Seven Letters Will Have Its Own Table of Contents.
Letters (and Contents) Will Be Consolidated into a Book When All Seven Have Been Distributed.

Birds Do It, Bees Do It . . . Why Can't I?

Ouch.

EEEEyaooww.

OOOooooohhh.

These are not the random typings of a child. They are in fact moans and groans. Here comes another . . .

YYYYeeeeiiiiiiiooww.

Am I injured? No. Am I being subjected to some medieval torture ritual? No. So what's with the guttural groaning?

I'm writing another article about eating.

EEEeieaaayaooooch!

It isn't that it's painful to write the piece. It's just reminiscent of Ground Hog Day, the movie where Bill Murray relives the same day over and over and over again.

The thought of addressing the "eating" topic in writing yet again brings pangs of familiarity, pangs of the tangible sting I feel each time someone throws one of the following statements across my path.

"Humans were not meant to eat carbs."

"You can't digest more than 30 grams of protein at once."

"If you want to build muscle you need 2.7 grams of protein per kg of body weight."

"My energy is low. I need vitamins."

"Our soil doesn't have any nutrients."

"My doctor said take calcium."

"Colorless alcohol like vodka has less calories than darker alcohol."

"I skip breakfast and have two cups of coffee before lunch time to speed metabolism"

These, and tens of thousands of statements like them, fly around society like manic little spirits run out of control, but these statements are more harmful than innocuous little spirits (I base that only on watching old Casper cartoons). They cause belief shifts. They initiate confusion.

The utterings I referred to are flawed as stand-alone statements and not a one of them is in and of itself going to prove positively life altering. While there may be truths related to each statement, the sentences themselves reek of misinformation and/or omission of complete truth.

Flawed statements:

“Humans were not meant to eat carbs.”

“You can't digest more than 30 grams of protein at once.”

“If you want to build muscle you need 2.7 grams of protein per kg of body weight.”

“My energy is low. I need vitamins.”

We know not what humans were intended to eat, but as omnivores we seem to have sustained life quite well ingesting carbohydrates.

While there may be limits to how much protein we can utilize for protein synthesis in a single sitting, bodybuilders ingesting 80 gram protein meals and cigar smoking moguls tearing into prime rib and lobster tail clearly evidence mankind can digest protein ingested in ample servings, at times beyond 30 grams.

Protein need for muscle growth varies wildly with individuality, overall intake, stress levels, and metabolic uniqueness, and vitamins, being void of calories, are NOT energy sources.

These few sentences should dismiss some of the earlier ones as inaccuracies. A few more thoughts will put all of the aforementioned inaccuracies to rest.

Flawed statements:

“Our soil doesn't have any nutrients.”

“My doctor said take calcium.”

While supplement advocates will have the typical knee jerk reaction to my expressing, “if the soil were void of nutrients, a tomato would not be a tomato,” and “calcium is component of bone but is NOT going to supply bone density without a host of other factors,” I dismiss every one of the above stated assertions as mistruths or expressions resulting from limited education.

Need I address the two remaining ones, the search for a better source of alcohol (alcohol being a simple sugar yielding 7 calories per gram, almost twice that of table sugar) or a link between skipping meals and enhancing metabolism? Nah, you can handle those on your own.

Although I've tossed away eight common statements minutes after beginning this brief journey back into supportive eating, there is a statement that I guarantee can radically alter an individual's body in a thrillingly positive way.

“Always strive to eat better than you have been eating and you'll begin a process of ongoing improvement.”

That's a wonderful statement (in fact, I'm glad I made it). Everyone who has found success with my 21 Day Journey To Excellence has found that statement insightful and powerful. While the simple statement has power, it comes with a massive challenge.

The confusion over "better" reigns supreme. "Eating better" is undoubtedly beneficial, but, as evidenced by the eight flawed statements, societal confusion in the realm of nutrition abounds. Clarity as to what "eat better" means remains elusive.

Birds born in nests (as opposed to breeder's cages) somehow know what to eat. A few regurgitated worms from mom and the nutrition puzzle is answered.



Bees born in hives (as opposed to boxes in bee farms) somehow find their way to flowers. There isn't a massive market for books on bee nutrition.

We aren't likely to find tiny little shops with displays of the following titles:

- *"Don't eat the Yellow Flowers"* by Buzz Wingman
- *"Pollen Dangers"* by Wee Stinger
- *"The Nectar Dilemma"* by Swat Meoff

Bees don't need instruction. They just know.

We, as a population, don't know what to eat because we live in a society of abundance, and each entity bringing edibles to market wants to capture your attention. Cookie sellers want you believe cookies are going to serve you well. Meat sellers are going to persuade the masses to enjoy meats, and they'll do all they can to position their wares as healthy if at all possible.

If all the packaged edibles in your neighborhood grocery store were all as valuable to our bodies as pollen may be to the support of a thriving bee colony, we'd eat without regret, we'd enjoy meals without consequences, and we'd be surrounded by fit, healthy, nutritionally sound people. Spend 5 minutes in a mall or an airport noticing bodies and you'll get a sense the edibles capturing our population's attention are limited in their value at best.

I began this letter with an assortment of moans. I explained them as being the result of the repeated coverage of a tired subject. I'm guessing I've written thousands of pieces on supportive eating, and the reality is, one should have been sufficient. As a species we haven't evolved in the 25 years I've been writing. What "worked" 25 years ago "works" today to ensure energy, optimal metabolic function, and a healthful and valuable body composition.

Why, then, wouldn't I just refer you to an old article?

I could, but there are two moving dynamics that continue to prompt the "what should I eat," "how much should I eat," and "how should I eat" questions, even among those who stumbled upon the answers before.

1. The informational landscape shifts radically
2. Food processing and manufacture evolve at 100,000 times the speed of human evolution

It's important to understand the difference between the informational landscape shifting and reality shifting. Reality in terms of what nourishes you is precisely the same as it was when my Grandma Tillie made chicken soup for her grandchildren. She put in carrots, celery, and chicken. She didn't open a can. She went to the butcher shop and to the grocery store, then she returned to her kitchen and she turned foods into meals.

In the one-hundred-and-one years she was with us, Grandma Tillie never opened a web browser. She probably read pages from one or two cookbooks, but not more than that. She received her nutritional information from her mother, her sisters, her neighbors, and her friends. Was she limited? I don't think so. She understood how to make breakfast, lunch, and dinner. She prepared meals for the entire extended family on every holiday. She raised a large family and maintained responsibility for lots and lots of people being nourished with lots and lots of meals.

The same nutrients that allowed Grandma Tillie to win the 1926 Miss World Bodybuilding Competition OK, I'm kidding. The same nutrients that allowed her to keep herself and her family in optimal health are available in foods today. It's just harder to sort through the information and the advertising, through the packaging and the claims, to determine what the best choices are.

I will not attempt to address every book, every website, every TV show, or every course teaching "new nutrition." That would be an impossible feat for anyone as the information pours faster than the audience can receive.

I will not attempt to explain every nuance of 21st century food processing, as its far too extensive and along the way you'll be so filled with disgust and nausea you might opt to move to the Himalayas and eat only what you grow and nurture. I will not attempt to explain the foods of every ethnicity or the fruits of every rain forest. I'll just unconfused those people seeking health and fitness by untangling some mistruths and replacing them with nutritional clarity.

My intention is to write most of this so it could have been read by Grandma Tillie fifty years ago and have held true. I will mention a few things that didn't exist in households in 1950, such as hydrogenated fats, supplements sold as anti-oxidants, and fast food (referring to quick serve operations on every street and avenue), but if I do my job well, this will serve as a Letter for the Ages, a general eating overview that could have found its way through generations.

If you're about to dismiss this because you believe I'm preparing you for ancient outdated principles, stay with me. I assure you, what I'm about to share isn't old science.

It's human nutrition.



Understanding Nutrients is a First Step

While there are some scientists and lunatics (not intended to be any hint of an association) who may believe far into the future we'll be able to survive and thrive on mineral compounds in the air we breathe and feasts of sea vegetables, if you trust that our species has not adapted to finding maximum performance from air and seaweed, you'll also trust that the basic constructs of any human nutrition curriculum rest upon a recognition of food as a compilation of nutrients. The basics, therefore, although I've addressed them in previous letters, bear repeating.

Proteins (4 calories per gram) are bundles of amino acids, the molecular compounds that serve as the material from which we build new healthy cells.

Carbohydrates (4 calories per gram) supply us with a readily available source of fuel.

Fats (9 calories per gram) not only offer fuel, but also serve vital roles both in metabolism and structure.

These nutrients, proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, are the three macronutrients, the larger considerations in our meals, the nutrients that supply calories.

Snnnnore.

Boring.

Heard it before.

I know, I know, I know, I know . . . but if you're trying to calculate glycemic index, attempting to decipher formulas based on ratios (i.e. 40:30:30), or trying to put foods into "good" or "bad" categories without understanding the basic snore-inducing necessary stuff, you're moving through a winding maze without a map.

Foods are made of nutrients, and ultimately, nutrients are what nourish and fuel you. The goal would of course be to come close to understanding what foods and what eating strategy would be optimal for you.

While the discussion of what, specifically, is “optimal” opens up many doors for debate, I feel the evidence is pretty close to indisputable (I never close a door completely as I’ve witnessed shifts in science based on revelations of new evidence) to allow me to make the following clarifying statements when making selections related to proteins, fats, and carbohydrates:

1. The highest quality proteins will be found in natural foods raised in a natural environment (i.e. free range meats, natural grains, eggs borne from chickens fed organically), consumed as lean (without much saturated fat) components of complete meals.
2. Hydrogenated fats have no biological value and have been accurately indicted as purveyors of cellular damage.
3. With natural food choices including cold water fresh caught fish and organic produce, we can get “nutrient complete” meals complete with essential fats.
4. Refined, bleached, and processed carbohydrates are limited in nutrient value and contribute to conditions which may lead to adiposity (fat accumulation) and are not comparable, except in caloric content, to carbohydrate foods found in nature.

Three more facts should provide you a sound basis for designing your own nutrition program, one that fits into your life, one that provides you materials for growth and adequate fuel, and one that you can handle relatively simply.

1. Metabolism, the sum total of all endocrine activity leading to anabolism, catabolism, and energy production can be defined quite simply as “the speed with which your body burns food.”
2. There is a caloric cost to digesting food, referred to in academic circles as TEF, the Thermic Effect of Food. Eating meals that cause the body to work harder in the act of digestion results in greater caloric burn than the consumption of meals that require relatively little digestive energy (as opposite extremes, fats are simple, in terms of “work,” for the body to digest; proteins, conversely, are quite thermic).
3. The more processed a food is when it meets your tongue, the more likely it is to have limited nutrient value. Bleaching grain, processing wheat, and refining sugar remove not only some of the thermic property but also a significant volume of micronutrient content. The closer a food is to “natural” the better.

So, with a foundation of information, let's come up with some governing truths and ideals. Rather than tips or rules, let's call these guidelines:

1. Recognize that meals are opportunities to fuel and to obtain raw material for building tissue, thus, ideally each meal would contain a mix of protein and protein sparing macronutrients (good fats and natural carbohydrates) selected from natural sources.
2. Eating frequently (every 3 – 3 ½ hours) is in line with our bodies' natural wants (consider an infant's appetite) and is optimal for revving metabolism (remember, metabolism is “the speed with which your body burns food. Eating frequent supportive meals allows you to condition the digestive and endocrine systems. In essence, you're training the food burning machine to burn through meals frequently and efficiently, otherwise known as boosting metabolism).
3. As an ideal, incorporating a lean protein (protein low in fat), a starchy carbohydrate (slow release energy), and a fibrous carbohydrate (a fruit or vegetable) supports energy, body composition, and metabolism.

If you begin to think of every meal as an opportunity to optimize body composition, metabolism, and short and long term energy production, the idea of frequent consumption of supportive meals makes sense, and that's a huge step in helping people find comfort with a nutritional discipline.

Nothing I've said thus far is an absolute, but the guidelines combined with the thought process beginning with, “I get it – it makes sense” provides you a strong foundation for eating well.

Regardless of whether your anti-carb friend wants to banish the potato, or the guru next door insists you should never eat anything that lives on the sea bottom, if you're making natural choices, getting a wide variety of fresh produce, and eating frequent combinations of lean proteins and natural carbohydrates, you're ahead of the bulk (no pun intended) of our population.

In summation, as everyone who has ever been to one of my Breakthroughs seminars has had drilled into his or her head by yours truly, “Supportive nutrition is a strategy designed to support metabolism, to provide ongoing energy, and to optimize body composition and health. I've used as the cornerstone of supportive eating the quest for a meal containing visually equal portions of lean protein, starchy carb, and fibrous carbohydrate from a variety of natural sources.”

Restated, “Lean protein, starchy carb, fibrous carb every 3 – 3 ½ hours.”

If you're not yet there, if you vehemently question the guidelines, if something I've said goes completely against the grain of your previous understanding, I'll urge you not to abandon this information in quest of “tips.” Don't look for the one thing you “just” have to do. Get to “I understand” first, and then you can improve things, using “tips” if you prefer for ongoing experimentation.

I've seen "tip victims" wind up sick, fat, and miserable, and rather than seeking out understanding, they are on an endless mission to find the "tip" that will save them.

"Take L-carnitine to burn fat." That's an impotent tip, yet I've heard it many times (note, I didn't say "important," I said impotent).

"Just don't eat after 5 PM." That's a nonsensical tip unless you retire for the evening and hit the pillow for an 8 hour stretch beginning at 5:15.

"Get all your carbs in one meal." That's a ridiculous tip, delivered in a handful of diet books, that can compromise energy, slow metabolism, and lead to a slow and continued accumulation of bodyfat.

Of all of the commonly disseminated tips, one that appears most scientifically sound, one that has lingered since the onset of my nutritional education, and one that may be responsible for luring tens of thousands of people back into flawed diet programs is, "it's a simple equation of calories in vs. calories out so eat less and move more."

The theory upon which the tip was born is an accurate theory. "One pound of fat is made up of 3500 calories." Believing the calorie equation is simple facilitates the mathematical "tip."

"If you burn an additional 500 calories a day through exercise, or cut back on 500 calories a day nutritionally, you lose a pound of fat a week."

The math works, but the equation comes with the false assumption that your body responds to all calories equally. Clearly, if you were to consume 2000 calories per day for a full year, and those calories were made up of balanced servings of lean proteins, complex natural carbohydrates, in vitamin and mineral rich meals containing ample essential fats, your body would look and feel quite differently than it would if you were to consume those same 2000 calories daily from Doritos tortilla chips or Kit Kats.

Your body is complex, thus fueling it has complexity. Food labels, advertisements, supplements ads, and diet programs add confusion to complexity. You won't find your nutrition program bringing you blissful reward if you accumulate tips. If you're led to believe that "just" making a single change is all you need to find nutritional paradise, you're falling into a trap.

While "eat less and move more" may be the skeleton of a strategy that works for many, caloric deprivation can lead to metabolic slowdown and random exercising in a calorie deprived state can catabolize muscle." Replace, "eat less and move more" with "eat better and exercise adequately in line with your goals," and you're on a far better course, a course that again requires an understanding of "better."

Better asks you to choose balanced thermic meals. Better asks you to make the most natural choices possible. Better asks you to recognize that meals are fuel and you want to fuel adequately with ample frequency relying on meals that cause the body to work.

Remember, "Lean protein, starchy carb, fibrous carb every 3 – 3 ½ hours."

Don't shoot for magic. Don't lean toward radical. Get to understanding first.

Meals are made up of nutrients, and thus far my attempt has been to help you understand the vital role the nutrients play and to provide you a foundation so you can begin to eat without questioning whether the foods on your plate are angelic or evil.

If you buy in to much or all of the information I've shared thus far, you have solid footing. With solid footing there are other elements we can discuss, elements that add to clarity and simplicity, two wonderful traits for anyone hoping to enjoy meals and enjoy outcomes.

If you're ready to move on, allow me to ask you a question. Are you hungry? (at this point you pause and tune your mind in to your stomach, seeking out the feeling of nutritional want, and if you have to take time to consider the question, you're not hungry)

Hunger is a signal, a signal that can be regulated and once regulated, demands to be respected. We refer to the general condition of the recurring hunger signal as "your appetite."

How's your Appetite?

In parts of Africa the words "I'm starving" have serious ramifications. Starvation is a state where the absence of nutrients causes the body to cannibalize its own tissue, a state where the body minimizes activity to preserve whatever energy it can find, and at an extreme case, the halting of vital bodily functions.



I wrote this on an airplane. Less than an hour before I broke out my laptop, I was sitting at Gate B7 at Fort Lauderdale airport waiting for my Jet Blue flight to Boston to board, and I heard a loud talker (I'm sure you know what I mean) say to her friend in an amplified voice, "I'm starving." It wasn't enough to say it once. She apparently had a need to let everyone in the boarding area know of her plight. "I'm really really starving." I looked to see if life saving activity was warranted. She didn't appear to be anywhere near death. She, in fact, appeared very much alive and robust. I'm always careful not to make random assumptions, but in this case I believe it was safe to assume she really meant, "my appetite has my attention. I'm well fed, very much alive, but something in my brain is saying "Snickers.""

I did notice her on the plane eating chocolate chip cookies. If my assumption was incorrect, and she was in fact starving, those cookies saved her life, but if my assumption was on the money, she was simply responding to an appetite that she hasn't learned to gain control over.

Take Charge

I find it empowering when I share the following statement with new clients and customers.”

“You are not a victim of your metabolism. You are its creator.”

That’s a wake-up call for most. Once they understand their habits contribute to their metabolism, and they recognize that changes in activity can bring them the metabolism they envy in others, a new sense of possibility emerges.

I can make the same statement in reference to appetite. “You need not be victimized by your appetite. You can design it!”

Most people have habitualized themselves into finding sustenance with small breakfast, modest lunch, mid-day snack, substantial dinner. Their appetite develops accordingly. Pancreatic hormones and neurotransmitters learn to kick up specific activity responsive to the times you provide habitual fuel.

Someone who “never” eats breakfast is rarely if ever hungry upon waking.



Someone who has a candy bar at 3:00 as a pick-me-up each day knows exactly when it’s 3:00 by the grumbling in his or her belly.

If you fuel your morning with coffee, your afternoon with fast food, and you have become evening pals with the pizza delivery guy, your internal clock knows precisely when to remind you to place your pizza order.

We all spent the first six months of our lives asking for nourishment every three hours or so. If we’ve wandered far from that intuitive connection between food and need, we can get back there, but first we must take responsibility.

We must recognize that it has far less to do with circumstance, far less to do with willpower, than it does with reprogramming, teaching the body to send out different signals, and then teaching the conscious mind to recognize them as requests for nutrients.

Provide the right programming and the requests come in for good nutrients.

Provide the right programming and the requests come in for supportive meals.



Trust Your Innate Power

Let's go back to the earlier statement I took pride in.

**“Always strive to eat better than you have been eating
and you'll begin a process of ongoing improvement.”**

Trust, as I'm aware, must be earned. I'm not asking you to trust me, I'm asking you to trust the innate inner working of your very own human machine, to trust that fueling the body as it was designed to be fueled will restore the default settings, will stimulate appetite supportive of eating better.

The premise of a “meal” every 3 – 3 ½ hours seems alien to someone who has committed to the American standard of 3 meals, two of which are lesser and dinner which often borders on gluttonous. The first reaction is almost always, “I don't get hungry every 3 hours.” My response is always the same. “I know.”

I know, not because I have any clairvoyant ability, but simply because standard American eating creates standard American appetite. Worse than the habit of the ritualistic smallest, small, big meal pattern is the evening onset of cravings, cravings often fulfilled by snack foods, pizza, or ice cream.

Eating habits dictate appetite and until you decide to take control of your eating habits, your appetite will remain as it is and has been. The first step to creating a supportive appetite is the conscious decision to eat . . . frequently . . . supportive meals.

It isn't easy at first. Old habits die hard and the remnants of the appetite you want to replace are tied to your endocrine system and neural pathways. In other words, you're going to need some stick-to-it-iveness until your inner workings respond to the reprogramming.

Most people are shocked by how radically the appetite shift is once frequent supportive meals become habitual. Within 10 – 12 days, you'll find you no longer need to look at the clock. You just know when three hours have passed. Your stomach knows. Your brain knows. Your mouth knows. Your salivary glands know. Your taste buds know. They all become allies in driving you to continue the new pattern of supportive eating.

As in any pursuit, there are obstacles. There are the people around you who are used to your present habits (“Mom, why are you eating at 3:00?”). There are the foods you habitually keep in your pantry and fridge. And then . . . there's the arch nemesis of supportive eating, the destroyer of control, the all-powerful temptress . . . the compound I devoted an entire letter to discussing. Yes, it's time to come back to that delicious monstrous powder that calls us from every bakery, candy store, and smoothie shop . . . sugar.

Sugar – a very brief revisit

I won't go into a long detailed information about sugar, but if you need a refresher, go back and read Letter #3, a letter I titled, Sugar, Insulin, Serotonin: Monsters and Masters in the Quest for Balance. I will, however, remind you that when you ingest simple sugar, refined carbohydrates, or a meal that is predominant in starch or sugar, you elevate blood sugar and stimulate an insulin response. The pancreas strives to maintain blood sugar levels and insulin is its mechanism for removing excess sugar from the bloodstream. The insulin spike results in residual low blood sugar and in an attempt to drive you to restore sugar levels, your brain stimulates appetite, specifically for sugar.

Much of the challenge is eliminated when you begin to identify sugars. Foods labeled "low carb" or presenting a "net" carb value are typically sweetened with sugar alcohols. Sugar alcohols are sugars and do spike insulin levels.

Alcohol, as mentioned earlier, is a simple sugar and does spike insulin levels.

Fruit juices consumed alone can spike blood sugar and insulin as much or more than a glass of sugared cola.

Sugar is everywhere we turn, sugar is tempting, sugar is addicting, and sugar is the great saboteur of those who fail to understand nutrition and take charge of their appetite.

Sugar is not evil. It provides energy, a sensation of pleasure, and allows us to celebrate events and achievements with a treat here and there, but when you come to terms with the incredible fact that we consume as a population near 170 pounds of sugar per capita, you realize we as a population are out of control. That doesn't mean you have to be.

Ingestion of supportive meals every 3 – 3 ½ hours provides a slow release of glucose (blood sugar) minimizes or eliminates diet-induced sugar cravings, and allows for stable energy and ongoing fat release. The challenge for many is the transition from being a victim of sugar cravings to being well fueled, and that transition can present a few rough days.

Get through those days. They're worth it. You are NOT a sugar addict, at least not as a genetic determinant of who you are and who you shall be. If you crave sugar you've created the cravings, and supportive eating is the key to a "cure" for your perceived addiction.

The frequent supportive meals that allow for optimal metabolic response and control of appetite are going to be free from simple sugars.

Who's right, who's wrong?

I had an interesting run-in with two committed exercisers, two women in their mid-30's who share the exercise habit but differ radically in their nutritional ideals. What they found baffling was that even with their polar extreme nutritional ideologies, they both felt they couldn't develop "tone." They were disheartened and open to changes in their exercise routines, but I suspected they really came to me for validation. Each wanted to prove that her way was "right."



Melinda was proud of eating three vegetarian meals a day. She'd get protein from nuts, nut butters, and vegetable sources.

Dana boasted six high protein meals per day. She insisted Melinda's proteins were "incomplete" proteins.

Everyone seems to be looking for "right or wrong." I'm often obliged to come back to the word complex. While an understanding of supportive eating can and should be simple, the systems of the body related to converting food into fuel and tissue is far more complex than most of us could ever fully comprehend. Appreciating the complexity of human metabolism and grasping the simplicity of making nutritional adjustments allows anyone with desire to accept a small bit of education is a must in order to execute strategies for change.

In attempting to answer the question, "is three vegetarian meals adequate to develop a lean body and gain desired reward from an exercise regimen?" I'll use an analogy, a question that addresses a different topic but correlates in concept to the point I'd like to make.

Here's the analogous question:

Is someone who has \$5,000 in the bank financially secure?

It's an impossible question to answer without more information. What investments do they have? Do they own a home? How much equity is in that home? What is their income? What are their spending requirements? Spending habits? Obligations? Finances can be complex, but simple strategies, such as saving 10% of your income or living within a sensible budget allow simple application of principles ensuring a positive outcome. In order to correlate financial condition with security for the long term, we'd have to go through a process of discovery.

The same process would have to take place to answer the question "is someone who eats six high protein meals a day supportively fueled?"

How much protein in each of the meals? What is the individual's metabolic requirement? What protein sparing nutrients are ingested with the protein? How many calories are consumed in a day? What is happening, over time, to body composition?

Melinda and Dana didn't like my answer at first. It required too much thought. It required open-mindedness and responsibility on both of their parts. When the dust settled, they both understood with crystal clear resolve, they had to make changes in their actions if they were going to make changes in their outcomes.

Melinda added in a few meal replacement shakes, a fruit and yogurt meal, and a breakfast with egg whites.

Dana integrated a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and a few grains into her eating program.

The nutritional changes took about 4 weeks and almost magically both women found new results from their exercise regimens. While their nutritional programs were nowhere near identical, they now shared important similarities. Both women ingested calories sufficient to maintain lean body mass. They both combined proteins for tissue synthesis with protein sparing nutrients. They both ate frequently. When the shifts were complete, both women were actually consuming significantly more food and losing body fat. Best of all, both expressed that their energy levels were at an all time high, their moods were also heightened, and . . . every three hours their stomachs and brains sent out the signal that was easily understood. EAT!

So Far We Know:

We need not seek nutritional perfection.

We simply need to live by the premise that if we strive to eat better than we have been eating, we'll begin a process of ongoing improvement.

Foods are made of nutrients, and nutrients are what nourish and fuel you.

The macronutrients, proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, are the caloric components of meals. Proteins provide material for tissue synthesis, maintenance, and growth and carbohydrates and fats provide energy.

Carbs and fats may be considered "protein sparing" as if they are inadequate, proteins will be metabolized as fuel limiting the pool of amino acids for cellular growth and repair.

Metabolism is the speed with which your body burns fuel. Eating every 3 – 3 ½ hours, in line with our bodies' natural wants, is optimal for revving metabolism.

As an ideal, incorporating a lean protein, a starchy carbohydrate, and a fibrous carbohydrate in meals free from simple sugar supports energy, body composition, and metabolism.

Fiber

We hear the word fiber, and we know it's important, but when I ask people "why" they often refer to older people and colon issues.



Let's forget the older people part and let's recognize that fiber intake is a vital concern for everyone, young, ancient, or anywhere in between.

In order to begin to understand the value of fiber, let's appreciate that the entire intestinal tract is the extended transport site where those nutrients we consume get absorbed for utilization. If we want optimal benefit from our meals, we can think of fiber as an instrument in keeping the intestinal environment ideal for finding ultimate benefit in the meals we eat. Nutritional intake is only as valuable as the willingness and ability of the body to absorb ingested nutrients. Fiber contributes significantly to maintaining a fully functional intestinal tract.

We know that fiber is found in bran cereal and Metamucil, but as we're coming to understand the value of nutrients, let's make sure we understand, there's more to the fiber piece of the puzzle than a bowl of cereal or a canister of Metamucil.

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that passes through the digestive tract virtually unchanged. It is found ONLY in plant foods and insoluble fiber is the external skeleton of plants, the outer layers.

Fiber's benefit begins in the mouth, as it requires thorough chewing. It adds to the thermic effect of a meal and also contributes to the stomach's sense of satiety, a sense that transfers up to the brain, a sense that is necessary to prevent overeating.

Fiber slows the absorption of glucose, so it helps to lessen the likelihood of a dramatic insulin spike and in that it acts as an aid in stabilizing blood sugar.

It moves foods through the intestinal tract so enzymes can break down nutrients and the body can absorb its constituents. Although the colon does not secrete digestive enzymes, it handles the final phase of food digestion and the "good bacteria" in the colon act upon the fiber to ferment it. This creates organic acids which help to feed and nourish the colon lining. The organic acids produced also serve as fuel for the liver and the cleansing systems of the body. In a previous letter I introduced the importance of recognizing how susceptible we are to environmental toxins. It's worth noting, toxins have a tendency to accumulate and grow in the colon and keeping the colonic environment properly balanced in pH and friendly bacteria keeps the body efficient at ridding itself of harmful and disease-causing toxins.

In quest, therefore, of using the valuable nutrients we ingest, a sugar free all bran cereal has its place as a component of a supportive breakfast. It initiates the digestive process with adequate fiber. Oats, flaxseeds (and other seeds), nuts, and psyllium husks are sources of fiber.

Throughout this letter I've been discussing supportive meals and I've provided a framework.

A supportive meal includes a lean protein, a starchy carbohydrate . . . and . . . a FIBROUS carbohydrate.

Remember, that *fibrous carb* is a key component. As a general rule, supportive meals are only fully supportive if they contain beans, fruits, or vegetables.



We can break fiber into two types, insoluble, which cannot be dissolved in water and remains intact for a cleansing and laxative effect, and soluble, which is made up of polysaccharides. Soluble fiber binds with liquid and fatty acids to form a gel. This gel slows gastric emptying time, prolonging the release of sugars. Because of its binding property it also plays a role in managing healthy cholesterol levels.

We find generous amounts of insoluble fiber in apples, oranges, carrots, beans, peas, and barley.

You're now getting a sense this is really important. Why do so many people consider it an issue for "older people?" Because as we age, the ramifications of neglecting fiber become apparent, and in an overfed and undernourished population, the ramifications, expressed as disease, become in many cases prevalent.

It's important to realize, disease is a continuum, and there is significant evidence to support the idea that diverticulosis, digestive disease, colon cancer, and heart disease can be prevented by ensuring adequate nutrition, including adequate fiber, in your 30's, 20's, and even in the childhood and teen years.

As an added note, the micronutrients, the vitamins and minerals we need for optimal metabolism, energy, immune function, and physical integrity, are found in abundance (even with the depletion of commercialized over-farmed pesticide treated soil) in those colorful fruits and vegetables we want to add as meal components. Organic choices of course significantly add to the micronutrient value of these essential fibrous carbohydrates we want to place on our plates and into our mouths each time we "fuel up."

Key Minerals

In the previous letter, Letter #5, I discussed the electrolytes (minerals) and their role in recovery. You understand that vitamins and minerals are micronutrients necessary for metabolism and health. The body has the ability to manufacture fats, amino acids, and glucose, but it cannot manufacture even a single mineral. We need minerals in varied amounts. I won't turn this into a primer outlining each and every mineral (remember, we appreciate complexity but seek simplicity) but omitting a discussion on minerals would leave this letter incomplete.

Minerals are present in not only bones and teeth, but in every tissue, every nerve cell, and every bodily fluid. They act as catalysts for muscular contraction, nervous system transmission, reflex responses, absorption of food, utilization of macronutrients, and virtually every human biological process.

You're of course familiar with calcium, sodium, magnesium, and potassium, you have probably been exposed to articles or advertisements touting the importance of chromium, zinc, and iron. Remember, while you can obtain these inorganic compounds supplementally, they are components of foods.

At this point you understand how important it is to make the most natural food selections possible, to ensure adequate intake to meet metabolic demand, and to ingest a wide variety of foods within the realm of lean protein, starchy carb, fibrous carb. By failing to get adequate supply of any vital mineral, by increasing demand through exercise and failing to nutritionally account for increased demand, or by gradually impairing nutrient absorption, you run the risk of health and functional compromises.

This is not a pitch for supplementation, although it will be the next topic I address, albeit briefly, but rather a repeated emphasis upon the importance of supportive eating as outlined herein. Attempting to build food by supplementing with pills and capsules containing copper, phosphorus, silica, iodine, selenium, manganese, etc is an attempt at mastering the complexity of nutrition. Learning to eat supportively and adding a few supplements is the simple way to get your nutrition program in line with your need.



Supplementation

If you've been with me for any length of time, you understand that supplements are additions to a supportive eating program and are not solutions. There are, however, supplements that can contribute to optimal health and performance and ongoing research has legitimized the value of quite a few.

This is not intended to be a thorough exploration of the supplement options, but rather mention of the few I personally find valuable and/or intriguing. It is by no means a complete list, and under given circumstances there are other supplements worth considering (i.e. Echinacea, golden seal, and astragalus to boost immune function when bacterial or viral invaders hit), but if you remember that a supportive eating program is built around food and supplements are "the extra," you'll understand why the last thing I'd want to do is sway your attention away from eating and get you all wrapped up in the allure of over-hyped supplements.

While earlier I disputed the indictment of our soil as being void of nutrients, I'll acknowledge the soil producing most of our food supply is depleted. I'll also acknowledge that farm raised meats and fish are not as nutritionally valuable as our ancestral hunting and fishing prizes. I know it's now common practice to consider vitamin/mineral compounds as "insurance" to avoid deficiency, but I honestly believe "the basics" are more integral to a supportive eating program than the term "insurance" suggests. Don't mistake this as a contradiction. Supportive nutrition relies upon food and the best food choices possible. Supplements are "the extra." Even with that said, there are parts of "the extra" that add to optimization of basic energy production and recovery needs, and then there are those that may bring additional benefit.

Knowing that exercise increases nutrient need, you'll understand why the following few supplements have become integral in my own supportive eating program, not instead of any foods, but as supplements to supportive meals. I'll simply list them here since I've addressed them in previous letters.

- B-Complex
- Vitamin C
- Creatine Mononhydrate
- EFA's (fish oil / omega 3's)
- Multi-Mineral Formula
- Meal Replacement Formula (EAT!)
- Post-Exercise Recovery formula (RELOAD!)

Then there are those that merit mention beyond the basics. Here are a few:

NAC – N-Acetyl Cysteine, in my estimation, has demonstrated remarkable properties and I've personally added it to my short list of preferred supplements. Do you need it? No. You cannot possibly be deficient in it as there isn't any need, so my praise of this compound is not a blanket recommendation. With that said, I find it worth investigating and considering. NAC comes with strong anti-oxidant properties (I addressed the importance of scavenging free radicals to control oxidative damage in Letter #5). It is a precursor of L-Glutathione which may be the mac daddy of all antioxidants. Glutathione is a part of DNA synthesis, DNA repair, protein synthesis, cellular recovery, and plays a vital role in stimulating the filtering properties of the liver. Glutathione has been shown to activate enzymes and assist in the filtering of toxins and carcinogens. Glutathione, taken in supplement form, has limited ability to cross cell membranes, but supplementation with NAC boosts production of glutathione. If you explore the NAC research you'll find exciting promise in the areas of brain inflammation and cognitive decline, reduction in cancer risk, and value in ridding the body of toxic heavy metals. For exercisers, I believe anything that limits inflammation, aids in cellular repair, contributes to immune function, assists in optimizing nutrient absorption, and scavenges free radicals bears consideration.

Alpha Lipoic Acid (ALA) – ALA also contributes to increasing glutathione levels, and seems to be able to regenerate oxidized Vitamin C and other anti-oxidants, thus it contributes to protection from the potential damage of free radicals. Another unique property of ALA is its ability to increase glucose storage in muscle tissue and NOT in adipose tissue. This can lead to greater performance, increased muscle activity and growth, greater support of lean body mass, and a further reduction in the likelihood of fat storage

CoQ10 – Co-enzymes are assistants to enzyme activity. Coenzyme Q10 helps in the conversion of nutrients into energy, the most critical element in metabolism. CoQ10 is prevalent in the mitochondria of cells, the mitochondria being the power center. ATP is fuel at a cellular level and CoQ10 contributes to refilling ATP stores allowing the cell power centers to generate more energy output. This intriguing coenzyme also has antioxidant properties and both its energy contribution and its ability to scavenge purveyors of cellular damage make it important to optimizing circulatory function and liver function. While I wouldn't call it a fat burner, its role in converting fuel to energy and its activity in the mitochondria of cells might very well contribute to greater fat metabolism (the mitochondria, in addition to being the power center, is the cellular location where fat is burned).

Acetyl L-Carnitine – Acetyl L-carnitine occurs naturally in animal products, but it might be valuable to add a gram or two supplementally. It has demonstrated neuroprotective properties, has been used as part of a treatment protocol for cognitive disease, and may contribute to alertness and focus without any stimulant effect. It also seems to enhance testosterone production and has been used to assist bodybuilders in minimizing radical drops in testosterone levels when coming off a steroid cycle. ALC has also found merit being used in kicking up sperm activity to assist with fertility concerns.

Glucosamine Sulfate and Chondroitin – these two compounds have been linked for their well documented value in minimizing damage from connective tissue microtrauma and for maintaining the structural framework of joints. Their combined application in arthritis has led to some misunderstanding. The sudden emergence of these compounds as over the counter joint pain aids created a false expectation of instant relief. These compounds are not pain relievers, but are rather building blocks of connective tissue. In cases of inflammation and trauma, these compounds aid in tissue repair and their effects manifest over time. Don't expect a glucosamine/chondroitin compound to "work" in a day, but give the body time, building material, and adequate downtime and the combination has proven value. Research seems to indicate that glucosamine sulfate also stimulates production of synovial fluid, a joint "lubricant," helping restore mobility to joints while aiding in healing. For exercisers, I believe there's significant protective value in supplementing with glucosamine and chondroitin.

That's all. I know when I do seminars and entertain questions from radio show listeners there are always more questions about supplements than anything else. That isn't the result of supplement secrets, nor is it the result of amazing new discoveries in research. That's the result of advertising, marketing, and aggressive promotion of whatever compound will "sell," regardless of its ability to meet claims.

You have enough in this single letter to make simple yet significant changes in your nutrition program, and when partnered with the information you gathered from the previous five letters (one more to come), there isn't "need" for more information on supplements. Feel free to explore, to test, to learn, and to question, but don't make the mistake of thinking you "need" more information on supplements before you can begin improving your body.

Note: I know many medical, fitness, and nutritional professionals receive and read these letters. If you fall into one of those categories, I'm appreciative and thankful for your interest. While I always welcome feedback, I'll ask that you refrain from sending me opinions related to the need for specific supplements I failed to mention here. I'll publicly state that I will not affiliate with any network marketing company pushing supplements as their primary focus, nor will I aggressively push any supplement as a solution or cure. I do review to the best of my ability legitimate research, I do rely on a handful of biochemists and nutritional experts to help me understand new discoveries, and while I have a comprehensive understanding of basic nutrition, I do not pretend to be a supplement expert. I'm aware many people are aggressive in their promotion of supplements. I am not one of them. On any given day I receive a few dozen "pitches" for amazing new supplements. I ask that you do not add to the overwhelm in my email box or mailbox. If you do have specific information or opinions, void of a sales agenda, related to anything I've shared in any of the Seven Letters, such information is always embraced and invited, but the "xyz supplement is great" pitches will likely be ignored. Thanks for understanding this paragraph, and for understanding the reason I felt it important to include it.

Before I sign off and prepare to get you the final of the Seven Letters, I want to share a handful of food options.

A Few Ideas That Add “I Can” To Supportive Eating

This letter concludes by sharing a few recipe / meal preparation ideas. This is a tiny sampling, but hopefully enough to help anyone accept the thought, “I can do this.” For more extensive recipes, options for ordering in restaurants, shopping lists, and more, consider my book, EAT! Supportive Nutrition for The Body You Love, available at www.philkaplan.com

As anyone who has read EAT! knows, I’m as close to being a gourmet cook as Will Ferrel is to winning the Shakespearean actor of the year award or the Donkey from Shrek is to being elected President. I’ve exploded hard boiled eggs, burned anything that can burn in a toaster oven, and wound up ordering pizza after attempting to cook a fail proof meal to impress a date. That suggests that if I can prepare something, if I can make meals that taste good and fit into a supportive eating program, anyone can. I’ll share a few examples of simple meals I’ve learned to make, meals that support my taste buds, my appetite, and my fitness program.

A “Better Than The Diner Makes” Breakfast

I typically work out first thing in the morning. When I’m in town I know the spots that can make a supportive egg white omelet. When I travel, I typically find a breakfast joint or diner and suffer the oil they use to cook their omelets regardless of my requests, or worse yet, suffer the dried out tasteless omelets I wind up being served in cities and towns where they’re confused by my request to take the yellow out of the egg.

I often cook wild caught cold water salmon as it takes me 8 – 12 minutes in the oven and with only a bit of lemon juice I enjoy the taste. I intentionally make more than I’d going to eat in a single meal, so I have some left over. I break it into chunks, store it in the fridge, and look forward to making my specialty omelet, simple to make, warming to my taste buds. If I had to give it a name, I’d call it a salmon and hummus omelet. There’s not an ounce of creativity in that name, as that’s precisely what it is.

Ingredients:

- Egg Whites (from eggs or from the container)
- Green Onions
- Wild Caught Salmon (cooked, chunked, and refrigerated)
- Hummus

Coat a non-stick pan with olive oil and wipe it out with a paper towel to leave a very light film. Pour in the egg whites (I use six). When the eggs are just becoming solid, line the center of the omelet with chunks of salmon and a generous handful of green onions. As the eggs solidify, fold the sides in toward the center, flip it over and continue cooking for one minute. Using a spatula, lift the omelet onto a plate and spread a teaspoon of hummus on top. It’s even better with roasted red peppers. Serve with half of a fresh mango or a few slices of pineapple. Also try it with a side of oatmeal with a handful of frozen blueberries mixed in.

Breakfast to Go

If I don't have the time to eat at home, I'll cook up a mix of ingredients, wrap them in a tortilla, wrap it up in foil, and take breakfast with me.

Ingredients:

- Egg whites
- Frozen hash browns
- Chopped onions and peppers
- Black beans
- A teaspoon of fresh guacamole or a slice of avocado
- A gluten-free tortilla

After adding a light film of olive oil to a frying pan, I'll put in a handful of frozen hash browns, about 1/8 cup of water, and I'll cover the pan over low heat until the potatoes are soft. I'll add in chopped onions and a mix of red, yellow, orange, and green peppers, mix it into the potatoes, and cook for about 2 minutes. I'll then pour in the egg whites, drop in some black beans, and scramble. I'll lay a tortilla out on a piece of foil and I'll pour the scrambled mixture onto the tortilla. I'll add the guacamole or slice of avocado. I'll roll the tortilla up, roll the newly made burrito in foil, and it joins me in my car so I can eat it when I'm ready. At times I'll add some fresh salsa for some added spice.

A Simple Seafood Fiesta

I was actually surprised by how easy this was to make. It won't win any awards but I like it.

Ingredients:

- Frozen Wild Scallops
- Frozen Shrimp
- Orange and Yellow Bell Peppers
- Onions
- Organic Chicken Broth
- Brown Rice

Thaw Shrimp and Scallops. Boil the brown rice in chicken broth (instead of water). It typically takes 45 minutes to cook the rice. As the rice is cooking, set the oven to Broil. Spread out thawed shrimp and scallop on a broiler pan, place chopped peppers and onions among the seafood, spice with black pepper, garlic, and other spices, and drizzle a squeezed lemon over the seafood and veggies. Broil for 4 – 6 minutes, turn over the shrimp and scallops and broil and additional 4 minutes. Remove cooked shrimp and scallop preparation from the oven and mix into the cooked brown rice. Add in any additional spices or flavorings (I've actually mixed in mango salsa and while that might sound odd, it tasted great).

The Salad Bar in the Fridge

I used to go to Philadelphia often, and across the street from the building that housed the radio station I'd frequent as a guest (Q102), there was a salad restaurant. The name escapes me but it was a great place to get a supportive meal. They had 30 or 40 options you'd choose, they'd mix them into a huge silver bowl, add in whatever dressing you requested, and go to town chopping and mixing. Now these establishments are everywhere, from mall food courts to franchised shops. The premise is simple. You choose the ingredients, make it as healthy and supportive as you'd like, and enjoy a mix of nutrients that make up a meal.

All it takes for you to install one of these restaurants in your kitchen is a bit of weekly preparation, perhaps 20 minutes tops. Break out 8 plastic containers with lids, a chopping board and a knife, and load your fridge with "ingredients."

Every Sunday evening spend 20 minutes preparing your weekly selection of the following ingredients in a series of containers and you can customize your own supportive salad in minutes all week long.

- Grilled chicken breast
- Sliced turkey breast
- Chopped hard boiled egg (four whites to one yolk)
- Tuna
- Cooked salmon in chunks
- Cooked shrimp
- Organic celery, carrots, red cabbage mix
- Sliced cucumber
- Organic broccoli
- Mushrooms
- Mango
- Pine Nuts
- Walnuts
- Dried Berries
- Arugula, Romaine Lettuce, and/or Spinach
- Chopped Green Onions
- Mixed Peppers



Mix your salads with a small amount of olive oil or a balsamic vinaigrette, and enjoy.

The Anytime Meatloaf

Ingredients:

- Cooked brown rice (cooked in organic chicken broth)
- Ground turkey breast
- The whites of two eggs
- A tablespoon of barbecue sauce
- Chopped mushrooms
- Chopped / minced broccoli
- Minced carrots
- Chopped garlic
- Chopped zucchini
- Fresh herbs (parsley, cilantro, etc.)

I have a juicer that collect the leftover pulp in a container. I'll at times juice carrots, celery, and romaine lettuce and use the pulp as an added ingredient. After chopping the veggies, I'll take a package of extra lean ground turkey (ground turkey breast meat), dump it into a big bowl, dump in two egg whites, mix in about ½ cup of cooked brown rice, and then add all of the remaining ingredients. I'll reach right in and mix the ingredients thoroughly with my fingers, I'll remove my hands, allow an expression that sounds like “yuck” to leak out, and then I'll wash my hands.

I shovel (with a fork) the mixture into a rectangular baking pan, or at times I'll simply wrap it in foil shaping it before putting it in the oven, and then I'll put it in a preheated oven and bake I at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes. Done. Because it contains brown rice and fibrous carbs, for a day or two left over pieces taken with me in my cooler can serve as complete meals.

I'll admit, not being a chef, I don't love the act of chopping, cutting, and mixing, but I can handle it twice per week to prepare meals such as this one. I'll now also admit, I found a shortcut for this recipe.

In the frozen foods section of my supermarket I found Amy's Vegetable and Rice Bowl:



The ingredients are organic brown rice, tofu and vegetables in a delectable sesame tahini sauce.

I prepare this in the microwave in 4-5 minutes, mix it with the ground turkey breast, and make the meatloaf without having to cut or chop anything.

Epilogue: Witnessing the mind war

I wrote this letter during a brief trip to Massachusetts. I visited the Berkshires (and look forward to going back), but flew into and out of Logan Airport in Boston. I told you about the starving loud talker I witnessed on the way to Boston.

I was just putting the finishing touches on this letter, sitting at Logan airport at 6 AM waiting for my flight home to board, and a 30-ish woman and her very tired husband sat down next to me. We were sitting directly across from a Dunkin Donuts and there was a line near 12 people deep.

I couldn't help but eavesdrop. The couple next to me had a conversation in which she appeared to be the only verbal participant. He nodded and yawned, and he might have grunted once or twice, but the only complete vocalizations that emerged were from her mouth. I didn't tune in to the conversation from the very onset, but I tuned in to the following:

I shouldn't.

But they look so good.

(Keep in mind, she's the only one talking)

I'm so fat. Aren't I getting fat?

The husband shrugged . . . risky but perhaps wiser than answering. She didn't even notice the shrug. She went on . . .

One muffin won't make me fatter. I'll probably end up more motivated to workout when I get home.

Is it better to have nothing or have a muffin? I could just have coffee. What's better, just coffee, or coffee and a muffin?

Shrug number two was accompanied by a yawn.

I'm gonna get a muffin. No, I'll just get coffee. I don't need the muffin. You want anything?

The husband shook his head from side to side, but I honestly don't even think she looked at him. She stood up to get her coffee. He yawned and closed his eyes.

She came back with coffee . . . and a muffin. He opened his eyes again, but they were fighting to close.

I introduced myself, told her what I do, explained that I was writing a piece on nutrition and that I couldn't help overhearing her mention her workout. The husband seemed to wake up a bit when I asked her for her email address. I explained further and he went back to yawning.

The woman started asking questions. I guess I should have expected it. There was now someone else in the conversation.

“How much cardio should I do?”

“If I take a Pilates class is that enough?”

I think I might have shrugged. Are shrugs contagious?

I gave her brief answers and promised her I'd send her all Seven of the Letters as I closed up my laptop and heard the flight attendant call, “all passengers, all rows.”

Kati's receiving this. The rest is addressed to Kati.

Kati, I want you to understand, while the muffin was probably delicious, in the future, you can calm the seas between the battling warships in your head. What do I mean warships? Well, if you've read this entire letter you understand that you can be in control of your appetite. I had an egg white omelet at Wolfgang Puck's just a few hundred yards from the Dunkin Donuts. It tasted great, met the demands of my appetite, and even as I smelled the muffins, I felt satiated. As your stomach was empty, your pancreas starting kicking up some activity, and between the sensory lure and the signals sent to your brain the “eat the muffin” ship came in.

Another ship deep in your brain was already present. It was the “workout and get lean” ship. The two ships collided and went to war as evidenced by the dialogue you had with your husband (sort of). It's an unnecessary war.

With an understanding of supportive eating, and a balance between exercise, eating, and downtime, your gain control over your appetite. Granted, waking up at 4:30 AM to catch a flight may not be typical, and there are those times a ship filled with cravings may show up, but in that case just welcome it, and decide rationally, is it better to walk a hundred yards or so and get an omelet, or is it OK to enjoy the muffin and not worry about it because it was a welcome indulgence which you had control over. With conscious control you suffer far less guilt. I look forward to your feedback, I'm sure accompanied by surprise (not rage I hope) that you were a feature of my Seven Letters.

My hope is, you're now thankful for the muffin as it gave you access to clarity. Were it not for the muffin, you wouldn't be reading this right now.

My secondary hope is that your husband was tired because he was up late and had to get up to catch an early flight. If he's exhausted from being party to the ongoing battle between your warships, eat supportively and allow him to contribute to conversations every now and then.

(Smile Kati, it's all in good fun).

Six letters down, one to go. Until the next one . . . Be Better!