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the Truth revealed

You pay them to whip you into shape, but do health professionals really follow their own advice outside office hours? And how realistic is this for you?

Soft-sand runs, 5am meditation sessions, wheatgrass shots ... fitness and beauty experts take an evangelical approach to wellness. But are they like this 24/7? And how does one muster the same dedication? We asked the professionals what they do on a daily basis, then asked for the real-life version.

The yogaholic

Expert: Duncan Peak (www.powerliving.com.au) was mentored by Baron Baptiste and has taught power yoga to the Waratahs, blink-182 and Cirque du Soleil members, among others.

The diehard's day: "I wake at 5.30am, meditate for 30 minutes and do some gentle stretching. Next is 90 minutes of asana practice or a surf. I don't eat two hours before yoga. Breakfast is hot lemon and ginger tea, followed by fresh juice, fruit, sourdough toast, an avocado and sometimes muesli. My meals are never more than two handfuls of food; it gives me more energy. Next I'll teach power yoga — 10 to 12 classes a week — which brings my body into balance and has healed many injuries. Lunch is salad with vegies or brown rice, seaweed and tofu; dinner is similar. Sunday is my day off; I'll enjoy an occasional drink with friends, and just be a 'normal guy'."

And the real person's version: "Find a class you enjoy, be it a dynamic style like power yoga, to a more relaxing style like Satyananda. Once you're a regular, try starting your day with 15-20 minutes of postures, followed by some meditation. If you want more of a cardio workout, vinyasa or flowing styles such as ashtanga and power will do the trick. Try taking a friend or partner along with you, and go two or three times a week. And definitely develop a home practice. Simply attend classes until you get the basics and then get up 30 minutes earlier than you need to and start the day with some sun salutes. You won't miss the sleep; you'll be energised."

Potential speed humps

- Like any exercise, yoga can become addictive. People become so yogic that they lose touch with themselves. Keep it fun.
- Don't compete with others or want to have the best poses — yoga isn't competitive.

The nutrition nut

Expert: Susie Burrell (www.susieburrell.com.au) is a dietitian and nutritionist who has worked with Olympic athletes and NRL teams as well as appearing on TV shows such as *Australia's Next Top Model*, *The Biggest Loser* and *Fresh TV*.

The diehard's day: "I start the day with a green tea to rehydrate and kick-start my metabolism. I follow this with either an egg on really dense grain bread, or if I'm in a hurry, a skim-milk mocha and a piece of fruit. Mid-morning is green tea or skim-milk coffee. I usually have the biggest meal at lunchtime: plenty of salad with salmon or chicken and some flatbread. Another green tea after lunch, as it helps to cut off the after-lunch sugar cravings. As I usually train in the afternoon, I rarely eat anything before that. Dinner during the week is a heap of vegetables, soup or salad with fish, chicken or red meat. I finish with a cup of tea and a biscuit or row of dark rum-and-raisin chocolate."

And the real person's version: "Planning is key. Set aside time each week to shop. Keep protein-rich snack food on standby — think thick yoghurt, nut bars, protein bars and cheese and crackers, which will keep you much fuller than more processed low-fat muffins, muesli bars and biscuits. Try to stay strict during the week, with no alcohol and lighter meals prepared at home. This leaves you free to indulge a little more on weekends."

Potential speed humps

- Extra kilojoules slip in with the wine and nibbles such as cheese and crackers, dips and chips.
- Pressures at work to indulge in cakes and biscuits.
- Starving yourself during the day; overeating at night.
- Not keeping protein-rich snacks such as nut bars with you at all times.

The fitness fanatic

Expert: Dean Piazza is a celebrity trainer, Fitness NSW Trainer of the Year and expert online personal trainer at www.getfit.com.au.

The diehard's day: "I wake at 5am and have a coffee before going to the gym. I train my first client at 6am then eat breakfast of muesli with skim milk and yoghurt. I snack on yoghurt, fruit and nuts. Lunch is usually a chicken sandwich or rice and

vegies; dinner might be Thai with fish or beef and salad. I do my own training six days a week, as this keeps me motivated, fit and able to try new workouts I can pass on to clients. I mix up outdoor and indoor work, training for 30-45 minutes each session. I throw in swimming, bike riding and running to keep my body-fat levels down and fitness levels up. I include weights for upper-body strength, for 30 minutes, two or three days per week, and also do two sessions of Pilates or stretching each week."

And the real person's version: "Plan weekly exercise. If trying to lose weight, try for three cardio sessions and two weight sessions each week, focusing on the muscle groups you want to tone. Good fuel an hour before a workout is a protein drink, a glass of milk, coffee, a honey sandwich or a banana. However, training on an empty stomach helps burn fat faster and teaches your body to burn fat as the main source of fuel. Conversely, training on a full stomach trains your metabolism to burn carbs as your body's main source of fuel. Go for exercises that work the most muscles in the least amount of time, i.e. work big muscle groups such as the chest, back, glutes and thighs. Do as much incidental exercise as possible; everything helps."

Potential speed humps

- Don't go too hard too early; most people get excited about their new regimen, which can lead to overtraining, exhaustion, mood swings, sickness and injury.
- For the first month, don't set any weight-loss goals, so you won't be disappointed.

The skin guru

Expert: Dr Mei-Heng Tan (www.skinsavvy.com.au) is a specialist cosmetic dermatologist who spent the past nine years working at the Orentreich Medical Group in New York, alongside the original developers of Clinique.

The diehard's day: "I wake at 7am and cleanse with a gentle pH-balanced cleanser, Cetaphil. Then I apply an oil-free, SPF 30+ sunscreen and oil-free, non-comedogenic makeup. I have oatmeal, antioxidant-rich fruit such as blueberries, and coffee for breakfast. I drink plenty of water, exercise and eat vegies, protein or sashimi, which all promote good skin. I don't get facials; I use a prescription cream called Zorac, which is souped-up Retin-A. It increases turnover of skin, promotes new collagen formation, decreases micro-wrinkles, and improves pigmentation. I use it for one to two weeks every few months as it's very strong and can cause peeling."

And the real person's version: "Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen daily. This is especially crucial if using products with glycolic acid, Retin-A or those who have regular peel or laser treatments. For a

healthy glow, apply a weekly mask with glycolic or salicylic acid and lots of antioxidants. Look for products with active constituents retinyl palmitate or retinyl propionate [vitamin A]. If you want drastic skin results, consider Fraxel and Thermage, which stimulate the skin's internal collagen production, giving improved skin tone, clarity and radiance. Those with acne should use a mild cleanser with salicylic acid and consider a course of Smoothbeam treatments, which will clear the skin fast and prevent scarring."

Potential speed humps:

- Smoking: it makes skin tired, sallow and wrinkled.
- Sun. If you must tan, always make sure it's fake.

Mr Meditation

Expert: Gary Gorrow (www.subtlescience.com) teaches vedic knowledge and the art of meditation on a transcendental level. He has trained and taught globally.

The diehard's day: "I wake prior to the sun, about 5am, and walk, swim, surf or do some yoga. I then do 20 minutes of meditation, which I do again before dinner. I'm vegetarian and eat corresponding to my body type. A typical breakfast involves yoghurt, fresh fruit and nuts, muesli or gluten-free toast with banana, honey and tahini. Lunch is my biggest meal: rice, vegetables, pasta, lentils or soup. However, I don't eat until I'm 'full'. Lunch is best taken between midday and 1pm: this is when 'agni' or digestion is at its peak, ensuring optimal digestion and nourishment. Dinner is always lighter than lunch and eaten between 6pm and 8pm as it's unwise to go to bed on a full stomach."

And the real person's version: "Pay attention to the signals your body gives in a certain activity. If you overeat, observe how your body feels — discomfort. If you oversleep, observe the heavy feeling in the body — more discomfort. You'll identify unhealthy habits, behaviours and ways of thinking, and release them. Actively seek to lessen stress, the greatest inhibitor to happiness and human potential and the cause of 90 per cent of all illness. Meditation is the most effective way to eliminate stress. Unfortunately, it's a subtle science that we can't teach ourselves or learn via a book or the internet, so seek out personal instruction. It'll save you years of struggle and maximise the benefits. I teach vedic meditation [transcendental meditation], an effortless procedure practised for 20 minutes twice daily. It reduces stress, brings a clear, creative mind, better health and increased happiness."

Potential speed humps

- Don't listen to those who try to tell you that meditation is difficult or takes years to master — they're practising an ineffective technique. ■

By Zoë Foster