

Addition and Subtraction

How to use this card:

Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on Addition and Subtraction:

Concept 10: Addition and Subtraction

Good health is achieved by adding what the body needs to have and subtracting what the body needs to not have.

Health challenges at the biological level boil down to two simple functions: addition and subtraction. In simplest terms, addiction, or any disease, is a combination of not having enough of something that's required for good health (deficiency) and having too much of something that is bad for health (toxicity). Whether the reasons are genetic or acquired, good biological health rests on having enough of what builds healthy cells and not having too much of what destroys cells. The task for people who are earnest about making diet and lifestyle changes for the sake of better health is to subtract the things that are making them toxic and add the things that will restore their brains and bodies to health.

Sonja's Story: Addition, Subtraction (and Substitution)

I knew that it was not a good thing that my middle son's favorite meal was chicken tenders and French fries. Although I had been yearning to feed my family better for years, the commercial pressure and peer pressure for fast food were more than I could fight. About six years ago I joined a CSA, or food co-op, for one summer and jumped right in. Unfortunately, it was too drastic a transition for my family. We had no problems using common produce like lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers. But my experiments with unfamiliar vegetables (collard greens, kohlrabi, parsnips, kale) drew vociferous complaints. Without any other inspiration or support, it was too difficult to battle four people's resentment and complaints about dinner armed only with my own enthusiasm. So I let my membership in the CSA expire.

A few years later I still had not given up my desire to improve the family's nutrition, but now my husband was having some issue. He had caught the health bug and was exercising every day and talking about eating healthier. By sheer chance, a friend mentioned her Suppers group and asked if I would be interested in trying it.

I went to a Monday lunch meeting and was inspired by people who care about nutrition, experiment with recipes, and taste the creations. Now I go home on Mondays fired up with motivation and armed with ideas, information, recipes, and techniques.

I love the Suppers concept of nutritional harm reduction. It lets me take small steps toward better health without guilt for not being perfect, and it gives me positive reinforcement for what I can manage to do. I like to think of nutritional harm reduction as consisting of three parts: addition, subtraction, and substitution. For subtraction, so far I have removed three ingredients from our diet – trans fats, high fructose corn syrup, and artificial colors. Right now that is the line in the sand that I have drawn for my family. For addition, I am adding more fruits and vegetables to our diet, especially more raw vegetable dishes. My kids love a raw shredded-beet salad that I learned to make at Suppers. For the substitution part, I am trying to substitute some whole-wheat flour for white flour whenever I bake, and throwing in some ground flax seed and raw nuts. Instead of buying huge bakery muffins, I bake [Casey's almond flour muffins](#) (page 112 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles) with the kids.

Suppers is a journey that I am thoroughly enjoying. All the people in our Suppers group are at different points in their journey, and I learn so much at each meeting from everyone else's experiences and knowledge. It is cathartic to talk about my stumbles and hear others' stories about their struggles. I am so motivated on Suppers Mondays that I go home and cook healthful meals for several days. By Thursday or Friday, however, take-out pizza or frozen dinners are back on the menu. My family's taste for convenient fatty, sweet, and salty foods is not going to go away, but we are headed in a better direction. Instead of beating myself up while we're eating pizza on Friday, I smile and enjoy it, knowing Monday is just around the corner.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Addition and Subtraction.

What might you like to add to your life and what might you like to subtract for the sake of leading a healthier life?

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- What have you observed is motivating for you or a loved one to make healthy changes?
- Discuss whose cooperation you would need to make additions and subtractions?
- In your mind, what are the most important items to reduce or eliminate from your diet?
- What can your Suppers friends do to support your experiments with addition and subtraction?
- Discuss how you will know when you have selected additions and subtractions that are beneficial for you; how will you feel?

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations

- Do a thought experiment: contemplate adding healthy foods and subtracting the ones you suspect are not healthy for you. Are you better at addition or subtraction?
- Select one change to make in the following week and share it with the group.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members related to this concept.
 - For people whose eating is out of control, read [Rose's story](#), page 155 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on www.TheSuppersPrograms.org.
 - For people with inflammation, read [Polly's story](#), page 160 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on the Suppers website.
 - For parents: read [Lena and Todd's story](#), page 162 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on www.TheSuppersPrograms.org.
- Arrange with a Suppers friend to stay in touch between meetings and share on your experiments with addition and subtraction.