

# IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EAT, BUT **HYGGE** YOU EAT THAT ENABLES BETTER **HEALTH**

According to the [Better Nutrition Commandments](#) better nutrition should be doable in your life, meet your where you're at, be based on who you are etc. Net, net, better nutrition should feel comfortable, even cozy. What if better nutrition could feel as good as cuddling under a soft blanket, or a Sunday morning relaxing, or a pajama party with your bestie? As it turns out, there's a lot about better nutrition that doesn't fit into a nutrient category but equally impacts if your body works better ...or not.

We often look to the Scandinavians as examples of better health. We (especially us nutrition folks) then often credit what they eat with enabling that better health. I mean who doesn't get better health from choosing rye and seed bread, small oily fish, fermented dairy and vegetables more often, right?! Indeed there's merit in their food choices (especially what they choose not to eat), but maybe there's more to it?

The Danish/Norwegian special sauce for better health may just be an inedible one!

## **HYGGE (PRONOUNCED HOO-GUH)** –

the Danish/Norwegian word for a quality or act of getting comfortable, adding more cozy into your life, as a means to be content more often – is getting a lot of attention these days. Danes credit Hygge with helping them get and keep better health despite long dark days and cold dark nights. Let's take a lesson from their playbook and see what Getting Cozy, Danish Style can do for our better health.

## **HERE'S HOW HYGGE IS A BETTER HEALTH ENABLER:**

1. Better digestion enables better health. Yeah, I am a broken record stuck on this one. But that's because it's absolutely true. You know what enables better digestion? If you said magnesium, you get a high five and some chocolate from me. But why magnesium? Because it is Mother Nature's muscle relaxant. It turns off our stress response, and in doing so, invites our bodies to function better. When we get cozy: like take a bath, or take time to curl up under a blanket, or even when we drink our coffee or tea from a mug that we love versus the paper container and plastic lid so we can grab-run-sip, we invite our bodies to relax better too. Those hygge is a better digestion enabler.





2. Better breathing enables better health. So much so that leading docs like Dr Andrew Weil teach patients with high blood pressure a breathing practice (4-7-8 repeated 10X) as a first line intervention before medication. With hygge we breathe better. When we take time to have a plant or roses in our home or office to make it feel more cozy, we enable time to smell the roses (inhale for 4 seconds), and then it becomes so much easier to also take time to remark on their beauty (hold breath for 7 seconds) then exhale (out our mouth for 8 seconds).
3. Better sensual stimulation enables better health. We eat with our eyes first, or we should more often. Now I am the first to admit that some of my meals and especially my smoothies are so not pretty to most (I happen to like some of the mustard meets vomit colors), but I love my dishes, and I love the **GOTS-certified** (that's Global Organic Textile Standard) kitchen towels I found in New Orleans use to clean up my messes – seeing them makes me really happy. So when we make things more visually appealing, and when we make things more acoustically comfortable (sometimes that's music, other times that's real silence or the sound of the ocean) we take the pressure off of our taste buds to get and give us all the satisfaction our multiple senses crave.

2. Practice better nutrient balance. The Scandinavian food choices are nutrient balanced more often. Sure you can cozy up to a mug of coffee but before you add sugar, consider the value of enjoying a piece of whole grain and seed bread with some butter or nut butter on top. The results will speak for themselves – better energy, better fitting clothes, better health from better nutrition (better be delicious!) more often.
3. Enjoy the cold, and then warm up better. They are cold for a long time there, but they embrace it – getting outside to play, and live in the cold is likely so much easier when you have the recent memory of a warm fire, a sauna, a hot bath, a cup of cocoa, soup or a glass of wine. So don't let the cold be an excuse to keep you from getting outside, let it be an excuse to come inside and hygge your way warm.
4. Make everyday moments, better moments, more often. Hygge reminds us there are daily opportunities to turn any moment into a better moment. Try using dishes for the takeout you brought home or ordered, or using your tea set for your own private tea party before anyone wakes up, or inviting friends over and asking them to bring flowers or candles instead of dessert or wine so you entertain all your senses.

This week, explore what Hygge can do for you. Assess your life for where you already hygge, keep what's working, and act better not perfect (i.e. hygge) more often. And then share your hygge moments with me – send me an email, share a photo, tag me on social media with #HyggeAKA or #BetterNotPerfect

## SO HOW CAN YOU HYGGE?

1. Embrace better not perfect. There's nothing more un-Hygge than perfection even though many photos of Scandinavian homes or meals look perfect to us, they focus on living better not perfect more often. Yes you can make your food look beautiful (per #3 above) but if its making you perfectly stressed, to do so, reevaluate and discover how hygge-happy acting better not perfect more often can feel.



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membership

better not perfect.  
more often.

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