**WHAT’S THE DEAL WITH CALORIES?**

Counting kilocalories (calories) can be very intimidating for someone who is new to tracking their calorie intake. It does not have to be stressful, it should be the complete opposite! As you learn more about nutrition, it can be one of the most effective ways to become more confident in yourself, your food choices, and to help you reach your fitness goals!

A calorie is a basic unit of measurement. It appears in the food we eat as it provides energy so that our bodies can function and be healthy! Different foods provide different energy levels. The 3 macronutrients include a carbohydrate, a protein and a fat.

**Knowing your calorie target is the first step**

Each individual has a different daily recommended caloric intake based on their age, activity level and weight. But worrying about just one number can be overwhelming. It might be easier to first understand what your body needs and does not need. The dietary guidelines for Americans recommends that your diet be split among the 3 macronutrient groups.

* 10%-35% Protein
* 45%-65% Carbohydrates
* 20-35% Fat

Using the guidelines above, a 200 pound person who takes in 2000 calories per day might consume 150g of protein, 200g of carbohydrates, and 67g of fat (based off a 30% protein, 40% carbohydrate, and 30% fat diet). Each macronutrient has a specific number of calories per gram that is associated with it—protein and carbohydrates have 4 calories per gram and fat has 9 calories per gram. Knowing and understanding these values can get confusing, but don’t worry. There are useful food tracking apps, like Myfitnesspal, that can be helpful to understand and to visualize your daily food and water intake. Counting calories, or at least understanding them, can improve your relationship with food for the long haul.

**Stay Calm & be confident in your choices**

Rome wasn’t built in a day and neither are healthy habits. They are a conscious and intentional series of changes taken one day at a time. Allow yourself some grace as you move toward a healthier you.

Count everything, don’t leave that pack of M&Ms out, and most importantly do not judge yourself for eating that pack. Allow yourself some treats but continue to fuel your body with a variety of yummy, colorful foods.

You do not have to overwhelm yourself and start everything all at once! Slow down and take one step at a time. Small steps every day can lead to big results.

You must figure out what works for your body to help you become successful. You are learning a lifestyle.