

NUTRITIONIST OF THE YEAR | BRITISH COLUMBIA

## MINDFULLY MASTERING STRESS & NUTRITION



**AN INTERVIEW WITH NICOLE PORTER  
(NICOLE PORTER WELLNESS)**

Nicole Porter is a stress coach and wellness educator based in Vancouver. Through her extensive professional training, such as being a registered holistic nutritionist, registered nutritional therapist and healthy weight loss coach, her company Nicole Porter Wellness provides workplace wellness programmes, private and group coaching, and online courses. These courses, designed to help busy, stressed out professionals, centre on mindfulness-based stress reduction and behaviour change, allowing participants to mindfully master the top 10 habits required for optimal health, mind-set and performance.

### How do you help your clients understand the connection between food, stress and illness?

The connection is actually quite simple, but first, it requires clients to shift how they think about 'stress'. Most people can relate to daily stresses, such as tight deadlines, credit card bills, issues with children or a spouse, and now, a global pandemic. Without a doubt, these are legitimate stressors which can upset balance in the body. However, we also expose our bodies to nutritional stress, which can also upset the balance that our body is seeking.



Nutritional stress includes habits such as dehydration, consuming excessive sugar, skipping meals, overeating, mindless eating, or not eating an appropriately balanced diet of fat, protein, and carbohydrates. Therefore, the connection between food, stress and illness is that food is intended to fuel the cells in our bodies and brains, but if we have a poor diet, we are also putting nutritional stress on those cells, forcing them to work harder to regain balance. When chronic, these emotional, mental, physical, nutritional, psychological and physiological stresses can lead to illness.

### You mainly work with business professionals, what are the main triggers (HABITS) you find that have caused them to become stressed and unhealthy?

Although we all live different lives in different bodies, we all tend to repeat the same habits. Because of this, I created a stress and wellness management framework that helps busy professionals master the top 10 unhealthy habits they tend to repeat on a regular basis. These 10 habits include dehydration and poor nutrition, lack of sleep, excessive screen time, imbalanced exercise programmes, poor breathing, over-thinking, multi-tasking, lack of social support, negative mind-set, and a feeling that some aspect(s) of life is out of control.



All of these habits can put stress on the body and brain, chronically overloading the nervous system, imbalancing hormones and negatively affecting any system in the body. Since chronic stress can prevent optimal physical and mental health, these stressors can contribute to issues such as weight gain, anxiety, sugar cravings, sleep issues, digestive problems and other more serious illnesses.

### What lifestyle changes do you recommend to your clients to get them on the right track to a healthy mind and body?

Whether someone is taking one of my online courses, a seminar or workshop, or a private or group programme, the recommendations I give always lead back to the top 10 habits framework, which is built on two core pillars: nutrition and mindfulness.

Nutrition is of the utmost importance because what we eat and drink fuels our brains and bodies so we have the energy to think, breathe, make decisions, work, and stay alive. The other pillar, mindfulness, which is the act of being present and aware, has more physical and mental benefits than people know. It's a way of training the brain to focus, to be productive and to be kind to ourselves and others. This also offers us a much needed chance to get in tune with our bodies, listening to the signs it gives us, trusting our innate intuitive sense, and then adjusting accordingly.



### How do your personal experiences in the past, with dieting and exercise, inspire your work today?

My entire business is based on trying to keep people from making the same mistakes I did. I made mistakes with dieting, calorie counting, exercise, sleep, stress, and not understanding the benefits of mindfulness from an earlier age. I have no doubt that the extremes I went to caused me issues, such as migraines.

Unfortunately, we still live in a dieting society, with people going to extremes to lose weight, gain energy, look younger, and so on. Such extremes can lead to serious health issues. So, I made a commitment to share my knowledge, experiences and struggles. Combined with my education and training, I hope to inform my clients as much as possible, so that they too can effectively make their own health decisions and live incredible lives.



**You offer seminars and group workshops as well as private sessions, what are the added advantages of being in a group for a process like this?**

There are three key benefits to joining a group coaching programme or attending a seminar or workshop with friends or colleagues:

- ▶ Firstly, you can hold each other accountable. Sometimes you'll need others for encouragement, and sometimes, they'll need you. Having a group to support and motivate you can increase your odds of success.
- ▶ Secondly, your group will ask questions that you may not have considered, allowing you to be empowered with even more knowledge.
- ▶ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, group sessions create social connection. A lack of social support is one of the top 10 stressors addressed in my programmes. Not having a supportive, quality network can add stress to a person's life, and therefore affect their health. You'll be reminded that you're not alone in your health journey, a realisation that is often a catalyst for success.

**How do your online courses differ from your private coaching programmes?**

Online courses include the same education, videos, weekly challenges, daily emails, and additional resources as the private coaching programmes, but they are more affordable because they don't include private sessions. The main difference is that you won't have a coach holding you accountable. However, if you're someone who feels they can do this for themselves and doesn't want to commit to a weekly coaching session, online courses are the perfect way to get your health on track and save money. We also offer the option to add individual coaching sessions along the way, if it is needed.

If on the other hand you're struggling to reach your personal goals, you know you need some accountability, and/or you're tired of not getting results on your own, then a private coaching programme can be a real game changer.

**What are your long-term goals for the company?**

Although my long-term goals extend beyond the current business model of workplace wellness, coaching and online courses, the core value will always be education. Nicole Porter Wellness will continue to be associated with businesses, media, and other wellness brands and coaches that support the mission to empower individuals with the knowledge they need to confidently make informed decisions about their health.

On the community and charitable front, I'm aiming for Nicole Porter Wellness to be more involved in ensuring less fortunate parents and children receive proper knowledge about nutrition and wellness. I'm passionate about this because no matter where you're from or how much money you have, you should never be denied any opportunity to have a healthy body and mind that has the potential to do great things.



**Is there anything else you'd like to add?**

I will leave you with three key points:

- 1 Get your advice from experts, not search engines. There is a lot of misleading information and marketing out there, which can do more harm than good.
- 2 All calories are not created equal. You don't need to be a nutritionist to imagine why 1,000 calories of kale is not the same as 1,000 calories of chocolate cake. Always eat to fuel your body.
- 3 Listen to your body. Our bodies are constantly giving us signs when something feels right or when something is off. As often as possible, pause, take a few deep breaths and remember how it feels to be connected to your body. Repeat often.

**NICOLE  
PORTER**  
WELLNESS

Nicole Porter Wellness has been awarded Nutritionist of the Year by the Canada Prestige Awards 2021. The judges were particularly impressed with Nicole's candid and personal approach to her company, using her own experiences to create effective programmes to help people avoid making her own past mistakes. Coupled with her dedication and drive to educate people from all walks of life on healthy living and nutrition, Nicole Porter Wellness stands out as a welcoming, open and honest company. For more information, please visit [www.nicoleporterwellness.com](http://www.nicoleporterwellness.com).