

# Intermittent Fasting Your Way to Greater Health and Mental Clarity

*Nikki Young Interviews Mike O'Donnell*



*Mike O'Donnell is a personal trainer and online health and fitness coach/writer. Mike started the IF Life site back in 2007 because he wanted to share what he believed to be the simple truths about health and fitness people needed to know about, and were not getting through mainstream media. He also combined with another popular online writer Scott Kustes to form Fitness Spotlight, another popular online health and fitness blog. Today Mike continues to help people online find an enjoyable and freeing lifestyle with eating and exercise.*

**Mike, you provide a lot of valuable information on your site as well as on many forums, discussing nutrition, health, well-being and of course, Intermittent Fasting (IF). You have also just recently launched your long awaited newest coaching program many of your followers have been holding on for called The IF Life 2.0. What information are you providing within this program?**

Long ago I started my first website/blog called the IF Life in hopes of helping people break free from the dogma of obsessive all day eating habits that are seen most everywhere in mainstream media. I was never one who wanted to eat all day every 2-3 hours, and knew there had to be another way (for myself and my training clients with busy lifestyles).

So along came this crazy concept of "IF" that went against everything I had "heard" about how to eat, yet fit exactly into how I just naturally "wanted" to eat. Many years have gone by and I still don't eat all day long, but "somehow" (note some slight sarcasm there) my metabolism is just as strong and I am leaner than I was in college many moons ago.

I found no loss of performance for sports or other fitness activities, and more importantly I am not a slave to eating non-stop. I look back into my 20s and realize how obsessed I was with eating and working out. Now in my late 30s I find so much freedom in being able to naturally listen to my body and am much healthier for it.

The IF Life 2.0 is all about helping people to break free and eat how you want to, while listening to your body, and ditching the constant obsessing over food so you can just be able to enjoy life (oh and lose weight while feel great doing it!).

**How does Intermittent Fasting relate to us today from the IF of our hunter gatherer ancestors lifestyle when food was not always available - as it is to most of us today?**

Eating long ago was not a schedule set by any clock, nor were there any 24hr Quicki-Marts to pick up a snack from. Eating was based on seasonal and regional availability. What that meant, is that food availability varied. This could also be known through using the terms "feast and famine". The body is a smart organic machine that is built for one main thing, survival. In fact it is so smart that when the body is stressed it can respond and get stronger from it (also known as hormesis). A perfect example of this is exercise, where one stresses/breaks down the muscles and will get stronger/bigger muscles from it.

The key being of course that these stressors are not excessive in amount or length, as there is a point where results will go in the opposite direction. However that programming is still

inside of us today. So in times of no/low food, the body can actually respond in a positive manner and get stronger because of it (to be able to survive the next time that stress comes along). In terms of food and eating, this means that it will improve the glucose based metabolism (blood sugar regulation) that the body depends on to live. Being able to use small and brief stressors nowadays (intermittent fasts) we can also provide a brief stress and see benefits from it.

This is how IF today can be a powerful tool for our health and also weight loss efforts. Many diseases nowadays are as a result of a malfunctioning glucose metabolism (namely insulin issues), and just show that maybe we should go back to reading the owner's manual for our body about eating as how it was written so long ago.

### **What are the top benefits associated around implementing an IF lifestyle?**

Not being obsessed/focused/stressed about eating all the time, still being able to lose weight/fat, improved performance in a fasted state, more mental clarity, more daily energy, reduced inflammation, and it can save you money (as you are not mindlessly eating all day long and buying food/snacks where ever you go).

### **Often when people hear about fasting and the benefits they will implement the idea but still eat poor food sources which are nutritionally deprived. What are some of the major consequences for people when they go about doing this and what nutritional advice do you recommend someone implement before considering fasting?**

I always like to use the line, as it is simple to remember, that IFOC (patend pending) does not work. IFOC stands for Intermittent Fasting On Crap. What that means, is fasting is not a pass just to binge eat later on less than ideal foods.

This is not smart and not the goal. Eating "real foods" is and should always be a top priority for health reasons (vitamins, minerals, balance of fatty acids, and reducing exposure to rancid fats/chemicals). I try and remind folks that skinny people can also get heart disease and cancer, so it is not always just about losing weight. This is why I like pointing people also to the Paleo Diet, as it helps people to focus on getting back to "real foods" once again.

No one says you have to be 100% perfect with your eating choices, as that is the reason diets fail (they make people feel deprived). However using IF can also help people "reset" their natural cravings, and then be able to make healthier food choices as a result of it down the road. Just to wrap up, IFOC does not work.

### **As IF can vary and isn't necessarily put down to a specific number of hours on specific days routinely, what would be the best strategy for someone starting out with IF, and what are the greatest indicators that the IF they are implementing and their dietary choices are working for them, and when to know when they are not?**

People should start off slow and see how they respond. I've seen too many people dive into IF head first full-bore and just burn out on it. This could also be due to other lifestyle factors that need to be addressed as well.

If one is experiencing more anxiety, depression, loss of energy/fatigue/strength, muscle loss, or more stubborn fat gain...these are all signs of an overstressed lifestyle as a whole. I would rather people focus on using IF slow from the start, but also be aware of other stress factors

in their life including exercise, mental stress, and sleep. Keeping the "Intermittent" part in "IF" is a good mental reminder. Balance is key to long term success with IF, as I have seen many people "burn out" first in order to learn that lesson.

### **Is it common for someone to experience major hunger cravings a few days/weeks into IF?**

Hunger is a daily programmed response for many. So if you disrupt your routine daily eating habits you could have more "hunger" initially. Although is it really hunger or just your body expecting food at the same time everyday? Increased hunger may be more a factor when first starting off, but many do adapt and it lessens. Listening to your body is important, as "true" hunger could be your body's way of also letting you know to eat more calories (as starving yourself with IF is not the goal, nor smart). I usually drink water or tea/coffee, and then eat when I really sense "true" hunger. Bingeing is something to avoid, but if it happens to any of us the key is to just shake it off and learn from it. If you are bingeing on meat and veggies you probably don't have much to worry about, but if you are diving headfirst into a dozen donuts after every fast then you need to have a talk with yourself.

### **Working as a personal trainer and health coach, what are some of the greatest improvements you have seen in your clients who have implemented an IF approach?**

Weight loss is of course the main goal for most of my clients, but also just being able to stop obsessing over food is a top additional benefit. Dieting/losing weight should not be a full time obsession. People can eat right, use "smart" exercise to enhance results and then should just go live life as they see fit. Spending hours a day inside a gym or packing food to carry around each morning is not my idea of fun living. I'd rather go play outside, and then enjoy meals with friends later.

#### ***Your Free Report on the IF Revolution***

*Find out how every day people are discovering the truth about weight loss myths, the bodies metabolism and a solution to a stress free way to eat and lose weight.*

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