

Mixed messages need balance

When I moved back into my apartment last month, I found in my kitchen seven cartons of ice cream, a case of Diet Coke, bologna, pre-packaged Jello, and a half-empty pizza box. I hardly recognized the place.

You might have been delighted at all the food, but I went into a state of shock.

We have, perhaps, a strange sort of health at the East Wing, the apartment I call home. Apparently the sub-letters didn't know about it.

At the East Wing, we ooh and ahh over fresh hummus and steamed rice. We pay attention to which fruits are in season and which grocery stores have good produce. We drink juice, or sometimes Kool-Aid, instead of pop. We don't, for the most part, eat meat. We meander through the trails in Antelope Park for entertainment.

But we've also been known to spend nights leaned back in the chairs around our kitchen table, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes by the carton. None of us ever set foot in the Rec Center. And we appreciate a freshly-drawn pitcher of beer at O'Rourke's just as much as a ripe melon.

So what if the only tennis shoes I own are Chuckie Taylors? I ride my bike to campus — if only to avoid the hike from the parking lot.

And I'm the first to admit that, even if I turn up my nose at Twinkies, I don't mind spending Friday night baking a homemade chocolate cake.

I'm fully aware that it doesn't do me much good to avoid TV, when instead I sit around the Coffee House drinking 25-cent refills all night. And I know I shouldn't ever eat M&Ms for dinner, even if that's the only junk food I eat all week.

But are my habits so strange?

I doubt it. I don't think I'm alone in my schizophrenia about health. In fact, I'd venture to say it's the



Bret Gottschall/DN

American way.

Why else would there be "health" clubs in Lincoln that have bars? Why else would I see bikers smoking? ("It evens out," they shrug.) And why else would people eat entire boxes of fat-free cookies in one sitting? Or order cheesecake for dessert after munching on a salad with low-calorie dressing?

That's what I wanted to figure out, through this supplement. What are people doing for their health? Why?

What I decided for myself, however, its that — for most of us — our apparent schizophrenia evens out in a thing called balance.

Everyone gets bombarded with a billion messages: Do this, don't do this, don't EVER do that. Jogging on that trail is bad for your knees. Those shoes are bad for your feet. Don't brush your teeth with that toothbrush.

Even sun, water and air — the essentials for life — aren't necessarily good for you anymore. The sun gives you skin cancer. Check your water for contamination. Don't go

outside until you check the ozone level.

All the while, buff people in cigarette ads are playing volleyball in tank tops.

What's a girl to do? All that anyone can do. Find a balance.

Find a way to take care of yourself that makes you feel good, mentally and physically.

Maybe that's working out seven days a week.

And maybe that's taking the stairs to your second-floor bedroom.

Back at the East Wing, things are back to normal. Everybody quit smoking, and this time it seems a bit more permanent. A pot of lentils is soaking on the stove top. Somebody ate all the hummus.

And there's just one carton of ice cream in the freezer. Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia. I haven't eaten much of it. And it has fruit, so it can't be too unhealthy.

Right?

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