

A Better Life with Nutritional Therapy

By Emma Hall

IT is often said that food is one of the most emotive subjects for parents. From the moment one enters the world anxious parents are posed with the conundrum of whether to feed their newborn infant with formula or breast milk. Thereafter they scrutinise the baby's milk intake and weight gain. This initial phase gives way to the complexities of weaning and the struggle to convince your child to eat vegetables. So begins one's journey with food, the early footprints establishing food habits for the future and needless-to-say the inevitable bad habits which are more than likely to contribute to health problems in later life.

Jess Keane from Cappoquin, County Waterford is currently completing a post graduate degree in Nutritional Therapy, using nutrition to help kick start your health and help you to achieve your optimum wellbeing. Nutritional Therapists are not commonplace, with only a few dotted around Dublin and Cork. However, with a degree in Bio-Chemistry and several years spent working as a chef, her decision to settle on a career as a Nutritional Therapist was, as she describes 'a light bulb moment' when several seemingly unconnected areas of her life suddenly came together. Whilst all around us we hear of people losing their jobs or struggling to hold on to them it is encouraging that someone else is laying down new roots and in something that could be beneficial to so many of us.

It is late evening and Jessica has met me at my cottage to tell me about her new venture. "Would you like anything to eat", I offer a little nervously. All around me I am surrounded by the spoils of a

children's party including some neon coloured biscuits, which by the look of them must have a deficit when it comes to nutritional value. "Water with lemon", she replies very graciously. I reach for the fruit bowl, which at a glance I can tell has seen better days. "Actually water would be great", she says.

Although Jess enjoys eating healthily and always has, she is certainly no warrior, and I later realise not someone to make you feel self conscious about the contents of your fridge. For many of us there is a guilt associated with our diet. We all feel we could eat a little bit better, cook a bit more, resist chocolate bars, grow our own vegetables and so on. I wonder therefore if the opportunity to have a consultation with a nutritional therapist may seem a little daunting. The opposite turns out to be true. "People are constantly coming up to me to discuss health problems and what they might do to get themselves back on track." Guilt is forgotten in the enthusiasm to confess, particularly Jess believes in instances where pills have not worked and people are still searching for answers. "That is not to say I believe nutritional therapy should be at the exclusion of conventional medicine. The two can often work best when used together."

A consultation is one and a half hours long to establish medical history, your day-to-day diet, any allergies you have, foods that suit you and those that don't. From this comprehensive examination Jess creates an entirely personalised meal plan, which is very definitely not a diet. "Diet is a word I don't like to associate with my work. It implies something painful that screams 'Don't Eat That' resulting in the contents of your fridge



Jess Keane from Cappoquin.

being all but removed. Instead what I hope to do is change people's attitudes towards food, introducing them to new foods so that their fridges can still be packed with delicious and tasty things." After the consultation and meal plan there is a follow up meeting six weeks later to fine-tune the meal plan for the future.

"Nutritional Therapy is often misunderstood", Jess tells me "as only being about weight management. It's much broader as nutrition can support any number of conditions from digestive complaints to high cholesterol, diabetes type 2, osteoporosis, arthritis and Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome". As eating habits are formed from childhood it is not surprising that Jess intends to specialise in Nutritional Therapy for children, a group experiencing an increase in food allergies, eczema, Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder.

Jess is wholly committed to her work and having suffered with depression and bad skin during her late teens has experienced the benefits of what it means to eat the right foods for you. "Within weeks I felt as if a fog had lifted from my head and with this came a new

self confidence." You can have the opportunity to catch up with Jess next week, when she will be at The Boathouse, Cappoquin to give a talk on 'Food for the Brain'. During the talk Jess will give ideas for all ages on how you can change your eating habits to improve memory, concentration, and confidence helping to put the days of lost keys and exam nerves behind you. Afterwards there will be the opportunity to enjoy lunch cooked by Jess and feel the effects of a better diet.

The event will be in aid of the Bishops' Appeal, which aims to foster world development through education, medicine and agricultural projects and to provide emergency funds. The Rt. Rev. Michael Burrows, Bishop of Cashel and Ossory will play the organ in every church in his diocese to raise funds for this appeal. On 9th September he will be in Dungarvan, Cappoquin and Lismore.

Food for the Brain, a talk by nutritional therapist Jess Keane at The Boathouse, Cappoquin, followed by lunch. Cost €15 in aid of the Bishops' Appeal. Booking essential. Contact Susie Wingfield on 058-54952 / 087-2030763.