

PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CREATING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES IN TEEN JUDOKAS

USING JUDO VALUES



Editorial Board

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Project Description

This Practical Guide was developed within the Erasmus+ KA2 project “Judo as a Trigger to Shape Youth Pro-Health and Pro-Social Attitudes” (Judo & Health).

The project focuses on promoting healthy lifestyles, well-being, and social responsibility among young people through the educational values of judo.

Judo & Health addresses adolescents who practice judo not only as a sport, but as a way of personal development. The project emphasizes that success in sport should never come at the expense of health. Instead, it promotes a balanced, sustainable approach to physical activity, nutrition, recovery, mental well-being, and social engagement.

This guide translates judo philosophy into practical everyday actions, supporting young people, coaches, parents, and communities in building lifelong healthy habits, on and off the tatami.



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FOREWORD

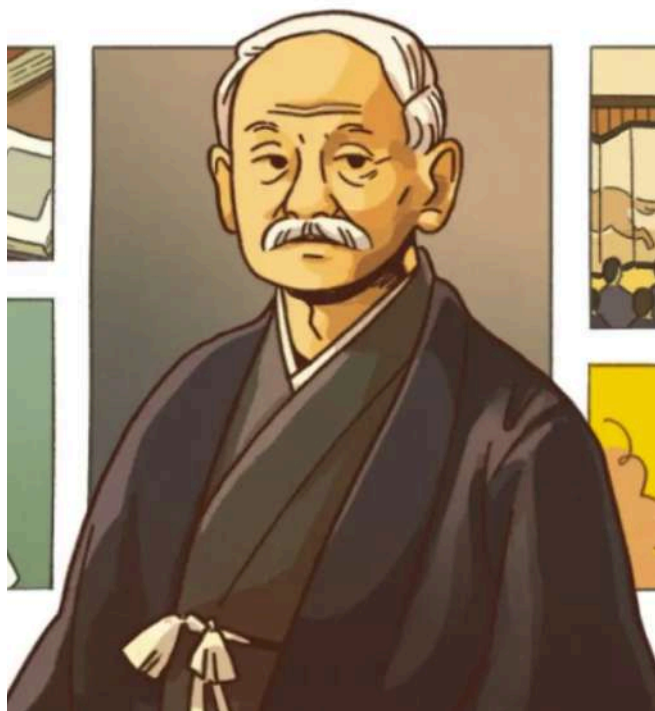
Judo is often described as “*more than a sport*”. It is an educational system that shapes the body, the mind, and the character. However, in modern sport, training alone is often expected to carry too much responsibility. Health, well-being, and personal development cannot be built solely during a few hours of weekly practice on the tatami.

Why Health Must Be Addressed Beyond Training

Training improves performance, but **health is built 24 hours a day**. Sleep, nutrition, hydration, stress management, recovery, and daily habits determine whether training strengthens the athlete or slowly leads to overload, fatigue, or injury. Ignoring these areas can undermine even the best coaching programs.

A young judoka should never have to choose between sporting progress and long-term health. Sustainable development requires awareness of what happens **before training, after training, and on rest days**. This guide addresses those often overlooked elements that shape both athletic performance and quality of life.

Judo as a Lifelong Educational System



Judo, created by Jigoro Kano, was never intended to be only about winning matches. Its core principles, **Seiryoku Zen'yō** (maximum efficiency) and **Jita Kyōei** (mutual benefit), teach young people how to act wisely, responsibly, and respectfully.

These principles apply not only to throws and techniques, but also to:

- taking care of one's body,
- managing emotions and stress,
- cooperating with others,
- developing discipline, patience, and perseverance.

Picture 1: Doodle from Google of the Dr. Jigoro Kano / Google

When judo values are integrated into daily life, training becomes a tool for education, and health becomes a natural outcome, not a burden.

The Idea of 24/7 Responsibility for Health

The **24/7 approach** presented in this guide promotes the idea that health is not a short-term project or a seasonal goal. It is a **continuous process** shaped by everyday decisions.

This does not mean perfection. It means awareness.

Small choices, how we sleep, eat, breathe, recover, move, and think, accumulate over time. Just as in judo, progress comes from consistency, respect for the process, and learning from experience.

By taking responsibility for health **around the clock**, young people develop autonomy, resilience, and balance. They learn that true strength is not only visible in competition, but also in the ability to care for oneself and others throughout life.

This guide invites you to see health not as an obligation, but as a **path**, one that reflects the true spirit of judo.



Part I - Foundations

CHAPTER 1 Why Health Matters Beyond the Tatami

Judo training develops strength, coordination, discipline, and mental resilience. However, the hours spent on the tatami represent only a small part of a young person's life. What happens outside training, at school, at home, during rest, meals, and sleep, has an equally powerful impact on performance, health, and personal development.

Modern youth face increasing challenges: long hours of sitting, screen exposure, irregular meals, sleep deprivation, and constant psychological pressure. Even highly motivated athletes are not immune to these influences. For this reason, health education must extend beyond training sessions and competitions.



1.1 Training Is Only One Piece of the Puzzle

A judoka may train several times a week, but the body adapts and regenerates **outside** of training. Muscles grow stronger during recovery, not during exertion. The nervous system stabilizes during rest, not during stress. Mental clarity improves when sleep, nutrition, and emotional balance are respected.

Without proper recovery, hydration, nutrition, and mental regulation:

- performance stagnates or declines,
- injury risk increases,
- motivation decreases,
- concentration and emotional control suffer.

Training cannot compensate for chronic fatigue, poor sleep, or unhealthy habits. Health must therefore be treated as a **system**, not a single activity.

1.2 The Lifestyle of Young Judokas Today

Young athletes often combine:

- intensive training,
- school responsibilities,

- exams and academic pressure,
- social expectations,
- digital overload.

This combination can easily lead to:

- persistent tiredness,
- irritability,
- sleep disturbances,
- weakened immunity,
- decreased enjoyment of sport.

Many of these problems are not caused by training itself, but by a lack of balance between effort and recovery. Addressing lifestyle factors is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of maturity and responsibility.

1.3 Judo Values as a Foundation for Health

Judo offers a unique ethical and educational framework that naturally supports a healthy lifestyle. Judo philosophy is a comprehensive system that combines physical, moral, and intellectual development, promoting harmony, respect, and the pursuit of perfection. Judo is not limited to fighting techniques. It places great emphasis on character development, discipline, respect (for the opponent, the coach, and the discipline itself), and self-improvement—improving both techniques and oneself. As you can see, judo philosophy applies not only on the mat but also in everyday life, teaching how to cope with difficult situations and build positive relationships.

The word Judo is translated as a gentle way, a gentle method of achieving victory ("ju"—soft, gentle, easy to adapt; "do"—way, method of application). Judo philosophy, created by Jigoro Kano, is based on the idea of maximum efficiency with minimal effort, with an emphasis on developing character and skills, both physical and moral. The philosophy of Judo is built on two core principles:

Seiryoku Zen'yō (Maximum effectiveness with minimum effort – the best use of energy, meaning to act with efficiency and intelligence rather than with wasted force)

This principle encourages using energy wisely. Applied to health, it means:

- training smart, not excessively,
- recovering properly,
- choosing nutrition that fuels rather than burdens the body,
- avoiding unnecessary stress.

Jita Kyōei (Mutual good and benefit: growing together, not at the expense of others)

Health is not an individual matter only. It affects training partners, teams, families, and communities. A healthy athlete is more supportive, focused, and reliable. Taking care of oneself is also a form of respect for others.

Through judo, young people learn that true strength includes self-control, balance, and awareness.

1.4 Health as an Educational Process

Health is not a fixed state, it is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and improved. Just like judo techniques, healthy habits require:

- repetition,
- patience,
- feedback,
- gradual progression.

Mistakes are part of learning. Skipped meals, poor sleep, or stressful periods are not failures, but signals that adjustments are needed. Education, not punishment, leads to long-term change.

By learning how their bodies and minds function, young judokas gain:

- greater self-awareness,
- better emotional regulation,
- higher resistance to stress,
- long-term well-being.



Picture 2: Generated with Canva AI

1.5 From Short-Term Performance to Long-Term Development

The goal of youth sport should not be only immediate success, medals, or rankings. True success means:

- staying healthy into adulthood,
- enjoying movement for life,
- developing confidence and resilience,

- maintaining a positive relationship with one's body.

A judoka who learns to care for health early builds a foundation not only for sport, but for education, work, and relationships later in life.

1.6 The Role of This Guide

This Practical Guide was created to support young judokas, coaches, parents, and educators in understanding that **health is a 24/7 responsibility**. It provides practical tools, simple explanations, and everyday strategies that complement judo training without overwhelming the athlete.

The following chapters will explore:

- nutrition and hydration,
- physical activity beyond judo,
- rest and recovery,
- mental well-being and stress management,
- self-observation and lifestyle awareness,
- encouraging healthy habits in others.

Health does not begin and end on the tatami. It begins with awareness and grows with every conscious choice.

CHAPTER 2 Importance of Physical development



Judo training provides a strong foundation for physical development. It improves strength, coordination, balance, flexibility, and mental focus. However, even regular judo practice does not fully replace the need for varied daily movement. The human body is designed to move in different ways throughout the day, not only during structured training sessions.

For young judokas, physical activity beyond judo is not about doing more training, but about supporting health, recovery, and long term development.

2.1 Why Movement Outside Training Is Important

Most judo sessions last between one and two hours. The remaining time of the day is often spent sitting at school, studying, using digital devices, or resting passively. Long periods of inactivity can negatively affect posture, mobility, circulation, and concentration, even in physically active athletes.

Regular light movement during the day helps the body recover from training loads. It improves blood flow, reduces muscle stiffness, supports joint health, and stabilizes the nervous system. Mentally, it helps release tension, improve mood, and restore focus.

Physical activity outside training also reduces the risk of overuse injuries by balancing muscular development and promoting natural movement patterns that are not always emphasized in judo.

2.2 Movement as Part of Everyday Life

Healthy movement does not require special equipment, a gym, or high intensity effort. In fact, everyday activities often provide exactly the type of movement the body needs between training sessions.

Walking, cycling, climbing stairs, playing outdoors, or doing light household tasks all contribute to physical well being. These activities support cardiovascular health and mobility without adding excessive strain to the body.

For young judokas, it is important to understand that being active does not always mean training. Movement can be simple, relaxed, and enjoyable. This mindset helps prevent burnout and builds a positive relationship with physical activity.

2.3 Supporting Recovery Through Gentle Activity

After intense training or competition, the body benefits from active recovery rather than complete inactivity. Gentle movement helps reduce muscle soreness and stiffness while maintaining mobility.

Examples of supportive activity include easy walks, light stretching, mobility exercises, relaxed cycling, or playful movement. These activities should feel comfortable and restorative, not demanding.

In judo, learning when to apply force and when to relax is essential. The same principle applies to physical activity outside training. Knowing when to slow down is a sign of awareness, not weakness.

2.4 Developing Body Awareness

Movement outside judo is an opportunity to develop better body awareness. Without the pressure of performance or competition, young athletes can focus on how their body feels, how they breathe, and how tension or fatigue appears.

This awareness helps judokas recognize early signs of overload, poor recovery, or stress. It also improves coordination and balance, which directly supports judo performance.

Simple practices such as mindful walking, slow stretching, or breathing combined with movement can strengthen the connection between body and mind.

2.5 Balancing Activity and Rest

More activity is not always better. One of the most important skills for young athletes is learning how to balance effort and recovery. Too much activity, even if it seems healthy, can lead to chronic fatigue and decreased motivation. Rest days and lighter days are essential parts of development. On these days, movement should be gentle and refreshing, not structured or demanding. The goal is to support recovery while maintaining a natural level of daily activity. Listening to the body and adjusting activity levels accordingly is a habit that supports health far beyond sport.

2.6 Long Term Benefits of an Active Lifestyle

By integrating movement naturally into daily life, young judokas develop habits that last beyond their competitive years. They learn that physical activity is not only about sport performance, but about feeling good, staying healthy, and maintaining independence.

This approach supports lifelong well being, reduces the risk of lifestyle related health problems, and strengthens the educational role of judo as a system that prepares young people for life, not only for competition.

Physical activity beyond judo is not an additional burden. It is a quiet, supportive partner that helps the body recover, the mind relax, and the athlete grow in a balanced and sustainable way.



Picture 3: taken from <https://pexels.com>

Part II - The Body: Fuel, Movement & Recovery

CHAPTER 3 Nutrition and Hydration as Daily Foundations of Health

Nutrition and hydration are not accessories to training, they are fundamental elements of health and performance. For young judokas, what and how they eat and drink every day influences energy levels, concentration, recovery, mood, and long term development. Good nutrition does not mean strict rules or perfection, but consistency, awareness, and balance.

3.1 Food as Fuel and Recovery

The body needs energy to train, learn, and grow. Training sessions consume physical and mental resources, and food is the primary way to restore them. Without sufficient and appropriate nutrition, even the best training plans lose effectiveness.

For young athletes, food serves several purposes at the same time. It provides energy for movement, supports muscle repair, strengthens the immune system, and contributes to emotional stability. Irregular meals, skipping breakfast, or relying heavily on highly processed foods can lead to fluctuations in energy and focus, as well as slower recovery after training.

Nutrition should be seen as a daily habit that supports both performance and well being, not as a short term strategy linked only to competitions.

3.2 Regularity Over Perfection

Many young judokas believe that nutrition must be complicated or strict to be effective. In reality, regularity is far more important than perfection. Eating at consistent times and ensuring that meals are balanced has a stronger impact than occasional attempts to follow extreme diets.

A stable daily rhythm of meals helps regulate blood sugar levels, improves concentration at school, and reduces unnecessary cravings. This stability also supports emotional balance and decision making, both on and off the tatami.

Mistakes and irregular days will happen. What matters is returning to healthy habits without guilt or frustration. In judo, falling is part of learning, and the same principle applies to nutrition.

3.3 Understanding Hunger and Satiety

Learning to recognize hunger and fullness is an important skill, especially for young people who are still growing. Eating too little can reduce energy and delay recovery, while eating without awareness can lead to discomfort and fatigue.

Encouraging young judokas to eat attentively helps them develop a healthier relationship with food. This includes eating without distractions when possible, chewing slowly, and noticing how different foods affect energy and mood.

This awareness supports self regulation, a core value in judo and an essential life skill.

3.4 Hydration as a Daily Habit

Picture 4: Generated with Canva AI

Hydration is often underestimated, yet even mild dehydration can negatively affect physical and mental performance. Concentration, coordination, reaction time, and mood are all sensitive to fluid levels.

Young athletes should be encouraged to drink regularly throughout the day, not only during training. Thirst is often a late signal, so building the habit of regular drinking is more effective than reacting to thirst alone.



Water should be the main source of hydration. Sugary drinks can increase energy briefly but often lead to rapid drops in concentration and unnecessary calorie intake. Developing the habit of choosing water supports both health and long term performance.

3.5 Nutrition, Growth, and Development

Unlike adult athletes, young judokas are still growing. Their nutritional needs support not only training but also bone development, hormonal balance, and cognitive growth. For this reason, restrictive eating patterns and extreme dietary approaches are particularly risky.

Health oriented nutrition focuses on variety and adequacy rather than restriction. A diverse diet supports the body's changing needs and reduces the risk of deficiencies. This approach aligns with the judo principle of balance and respect for the body.

3.6 The Educational Role of Coaches and Families

Young athletes rarely make food choices in isolation. Coaches, parents, and caregivers play an important role in shaping attitudes toward nutrition and hydration. The goal is not control, but guidance and example.

Open conversations, shared meals, and practical education help young judokas understand why nutrition matters. When adults model balanced and relaxed attitudes toward food, young athletes are more likely to adopt sustainable habits.

3.7 Nutrition as a Lifelong Skill

Learning how to eat and drink well is a skill that extends far beyond sport. It affects academic performance, emotional resilience, and long term health. By integrating basic nutritional awareness into judo education, we support the development of responsible, self aware individuals.

Nutrition and hydration are daily expressions of respect for one's body. Just like judo techniques, they improve through practice, patience, and consistency.

3.8 We need a healthy diet

What we eat and drink affects not only our weight, but above all our energy levels, concentration, sleep quality, immunity, and recovery. A good diet doesn't have to mean restriction—its key features are balance, regularity, and simplicity.

The most important elements of a healthy diet:

- Vegetables and fruits as the base of daily meals—a source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- Whole grains—stabilize energy levels and provide fiber.
- Healthy fats—fish, nuts, olive oil, avocado.
- Protein from animal and/or plant sources—critical for tissue regeneration and building.
- Vitamins and minerals: vit. B, vit. C, vit. D, potassium, magnesium. Vitamins B, C, and D, as well as potassium and magnesium, are crucial for health: B vitamins support metabolism and energy, vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant, and vitamin D is essential for healthy bones and immunity. Potassium and magnesium support muscle, nerve, and heart function, and magnesium also improves vitamin D absorption.

B Vitamins. Metabolic Support: Participates in metabolism, helping convert food into energy.

Nervous System Function: Improves thinking and concentration. Skin, Hair, and Nail Health: Has a positive impact on their condition.

Vitamin C. Antioxidant Action: Protects cells from damage caused by free radicals. Immune Support: Strengthens the immune system. Improves Iron Absorption: Increases the absorption of iron from food. Note: Leave at least 2 hours between vitamin C and vitamin B12, as vitamin C may reduce its absorption, according to Tran Möller's.

Vitamin D. Bone and Teeth Health: Responsible for the proper absorption of calcium and phosphorus. Immune System Support: Plays a role in regulating the immune response. Muscle Support: Supports proper muscle function. Absorption: Vitamin D is fat-soluble, so it is best taken with a meal containing fat (e.g., after lunch). Synergism with Magnesium: Magnesium is essential for the activation of vitamin D.

Potassium. Muscle Function: Is crucial for the proper contraction and function of muscles, including the heart muscle. Fluid Balance: Helps maintain proper hydration. Nerve Conduction: Plays a role in the transmission of nerve impulses.

Magnesium. Muscle and Nervous System Function: Improves muscle and nerve function and helps prevent cramps. Antioxidant Action: Protects cells from oxidative stress. Cardiac Support: Supports the proper functioning of the heart. Vitamin absorption: Works with vitamin D and B6, supporting their action and absorption.

Good Food for Most People

The Erasmus+ project JUDO & HEALTH aims to help you get on the right track with your eating and drinking habits. Unfortunately, it's not possible to say or write that this works for everyone, as some people are born with disabilities or develop illnesses during life. However, a good diet can be maintained regardless of your condition.

Our food consists of two energy sources and one building block. The energy sources are sugars/carbohydrates and fats of various kinds. The building block is protein, which builds most things in our bodies. In addition, we need a lot of vitamins and minerals, which are mixed into our diet. The only thing lacking in sufficient quantity in a vegan diet is vitamin B12, but it's easy to take as a supplement (it's very important to get this vitamin).

What is the problem with our new Western dishes and eating habits?

The biggest problem is that we eat and drink too much sugar of various kinds, and often the sugar is hidden in the food we eat. When insulin levels are high, the body prioritizes using glucose as fuel instead of fat. This means fat burning decreases. Excess glucose that isn't used immediately is first stored as glycogen, and when glycogen stores are full, the excess is converted to fat and stored in fat tissue. The combination of fat

and fast carbohydrates can therefore lead to the fat you eat not being burned but instead stored, because insulin “shuts off” fat burning temporarily.

Insulin is a hormone that plays a central role in the body’s metabolism, especially regarding blood sugar and fat burning. Fast carbohydrates (like sugar and white bread) are quickly broken down into glucose, leading to a rapid increase in blood sugar. The body responds by releasing insulin from the pancreas to transport glucose from the blood into the cells, where it’s used as energy or stored. This is a natural and necessary process—insulin is crucial for regulating blood sugar and energy storage. The problem arises when insulin levels are chronically high, for example, due to over consumption of fast carbohydrates, which can contribute to weight gain and insulin resistance over time. A balanced diet with carbohydrates, fiber, protein, and healthy fats helps keep blood sugar and insulin at an even level.

Can we do something about this ourselves?

Yes, absolutely. We start by learning how and what to eat and drink. When we wake up in the morning, the body releases stress hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and growth hormone. These hormones signal the liver to release glucose into the blood to provide energy for the start of the day, even before we eat breakfast. This is a natural process that happens to everyone.

To avoid blood sugar spiking right away in the morning (and staying high all day), it’s smart to eat breakfast in a certain order:

- Start with vegetables and slow carbohydrates—like bell pepper, tomato, cucumber, broccoli, oatmeal, or whole grain bread.
- Add protein—like eggs, chicken, fish, or meat. This helps keep blood sugar stable.
- Drink water, tea, or coffee (for older teens)—not juice or sweetened drinks, as they raise blood sugar quickly.
- Finish with fruit that needs to be chewed—e.g., an apple or an orange. Chewing fruit means the sugar is absorbed more slowly than if you drink it.

What are carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are sugars of various kinds, such as glucose, sucrose, grape sugar, etc.

Even the starch in vegetables, grains like flour, pasta, potatoes, beans, seeds, and more is converted into sugar.

Glycemic Index (GI) is a way to measure how quickly food raises blood sugar after you eat it. To find out if a food has a high or low GI value, you can search online if you want to know more.

A good thing to know is that if you cook potatoes one day and cool them to eat the next day, the starch becomes resistant and is not absorbed by the intestine as much, resulting in a lower GI. It holds onto its sugar further down in the intestine and feeds gut bacteria, which is very good because we need our intestines healthy. The same works for pasta—cooking cool for the next day is good! This is called resistant starch!

Inflammation in the intestines is not good, nor anywhere else. They are causes of several types of cancer, heart disease, joint diseases, and now Alzheimer's disease is referred to as Type 3 Diabetes.

Examples of carbohydrates with low GI (slow carbohydrates)

These carbohydrates should be chosen first.

They break down slowly → even energy and stable blood sugar:

Whole grain products:

- Oatmeal
- Whole grain bread
- Whole grain pasta
- Quinoa
- Bulgur

Legumes:

- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Black beans
- Green peas

Vegetables (non-starchy):

- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Bell pepper
- Tomato
- Cucumber

Fruit with low GI:

- Apple
- Pear
- Orange
- Strawberries
- Cherries



Picture 5: Generated with Canva AI

Carbohydrates with high GI (fast carbohydrates)

These carbohydrates should be eaten less often.

They break down quickly → blood sugar rises rapidly:

White grain products:

- White bread
- White rice
- Regular pasta
- Cornflakes
- Sweetened cereals

Starchy vegetables:

- Mashed potatoes
- Baked potatoes
- French fries

Sweet foods and drinks:

- Candy
- Soda
- Juice
- Ice cream
- Cakes and buns

Fruit with high GI:

- Watermelon
- Pineapple
- Mango
- Dried fruit (e.g., raisins)



Picture 6: Generated with Canva AI

Fats!

Fats are found in many foods: oils, butter, meat, fish, poultry, nuts, seeds, avocado, olives.

There are three types of fat in our food:

- Saturated fat, e.g., butter, cheese, cream, meat, coconut oil.
- Monounsaturated fat, e.g., olive oil, avocado, nuts, and canola oil.
- Polyunsaturated fat, like omega-3 and omega-6, found in fatty fish, vegetable oils, nuts, and seeds.

We need all these fats for our bodies to function well.

Proteins!

Proteins are the body's building blocks—like Lego pieces that build everything important in the body. They help build muscles, skin, hair, and cells. They are needed for the body to make hormones and enzymes

(which control how the body works). They are also important for the immune system, which protects you from getting sick.

Proteins are found in meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, beans, and seeds of various kinds, but also in seaweed. They are also found in eggs and dairy products.

Proteins consist of amino acids, about 20 different ones that the body assembles into proteins for various uses. Nine of these amino acids (essential amino acids) cannot be produced by the body and must be obtained through food.

Drinks and fluid balance

The first drink we should have if we manage our diet is pure water. Tasty drinks that are sweetened or juices should be consumed sparingly as they raise blood sugar. You know what happens then: the body releases insulin—a hormone that helps handle the sugar. At the same time, the body stops burning fat—because it focuses on handling the sugar first.

When you train hard, work physically, or are out on a hot day, the body sweats to stay cool. But with sweat, you lose not only water you also lose salt, sugar, and important substances the body needs to function.

What should we drink during a workout?

Water is always most important—fill your bottle and drink regularly.

If you sweat a lot, you can mix water with a rehydration solution containing:

- Salt—to help the body retain fluid.
- A little sugar—for quick energy.
- **Vitamins and minerals**—to help muscles and the body feel good. Vitamins protect us from inflammations and contain antioxidants that protect us from free radicals that leak out to the body after an injury or disease. Vitamin C is one of those vitamins but several more substances contain antioxidants. Google to see what you eat that contains antioxidants.

Drinking too much is not good for other reasons. In our case, with judo clothes on, you can easily lose several kilos during a hot training session. To find out how much fluid the body loses during a workout, you can try weighing yourself before and after the session. Example: If you weigh two kilos less after training, you have sweated out about two liters of fluid.

What applies to weight loss in sports?

In the last period before a weigh-in, it may be necessary to lose a few kilos before stepping on the scale.

Carbohydrates are cut down significantly, as is fat in the food, but protein intake is increased, focusing on lean protein: chicken, tuna mixed with egg whites, and other low-fat meat products. Beans, lentils, and seeds can contain more protein than meat but are unfortunately much higher in fat, so they are avoided during these days for weight reduction.

You can easily feel a bit dizzy during such a process, and that's because the body starts producing ketones as an energy source instead of glucose/sugar.

As soon as the weigh-in is done, you can refuel your body with your regular diet, but eat it in several small portions and also restore fluid balance slowly so as not to upset the stomach and intestines (since you're going to compete after this).

Taking a sauna or training in sweat suits is also an option for temporarily losing weight.

It's normal for teenagers to grow into different weight classes, sometimes quickly to the next, but the next after that can take longer. This usually stabilizes in the later teens.

Judo is a sport with weight classes, so it's important to think about how you lose weight—if you need to at all.

It's much better to make small changes over a longer period than to try to lose weight quickly just before a competition.

Rapid weight loss can make you feel tired, stressed, or down—and that's not good for your body or mood.

If you're already close to your competition weight a few days before, you avoid stressing about food, fluids, or training at the last minute.

You can focus on feeling good, training smart, and sleeping well—so you're alert and ready when it's time to compete.

Tips for young athletes

- Always talk to your coach, parents, or school nurse if you're thinking about weight and diet.
- The body grows and develops—so it's extra important to eat well and enough.
- Competition should be fun and challenging—not stressful!
- Supplements in the form of proteins, minerals, and vitamins are of course allowed if you feel you're not getting enough when you want to build a good physique. Food proteins can be expensive, so a scoop of protein powder every day helps meet this need at a lower cost.
- The food we eat should never be replaced by supplements, which should only be taken as extra help if needed, as only you know.

Energy drinks are addictive and should be avoided. They can be very dangerous!

“Take care of your body but don't be too tough on yourself, everybody makes mistakes and eat/drink something that is not the absolute right to do. You are strong enough to decide how you want to look with a little more or less weight, no one else.” Love yourself and others!

3.9 Eating in the correct order

The correct order of eating the food we consume is important.

Breakfast/Morning: Mainly protein such as eggs, meat, fish, chicken, and other protein-rich foods. The reason is that our bodies, already when we wake up, have loaded up our blood sugar, so we do not need to eat anything sweet or bread before lunch.

So, no sweet drinks, juices, or similar in the morning—just drink a little water if necessary.



[Scan the QR code to see picture of breakfasts](#)

Lunch: Start with a salad to help the intestines absorb vitamins and minerals, but also to prevent fast sugars from entering the bloodstream too quickly.

After this, it is time again for:

1. The proteins and
2. The fat in the dish, and last but not least,
3. The carbohydrates in the form of fiber-rich bread, pasta, potatoes, rice...

After this, you can have an apple or an orange if you chew it yourself.

Dressings and sauces are absolutely allowed as long as you do not overconsume them.

Dinner: Similar to lunch regarding the order of ingredients—salad first, then protein and fat, with carbohydrates last.



[Scan the QR code to see picture of lunch/dinner menus](#)

Snacks can be eaten when we cannot always keep the right meal times, and young people require more and larger portions during the second half of puberty. But please: eat good food, not junk that is prefabricated. Spices and sauces vary regionally across our countries, so use what you like. This advice is personal, and you choose which ingredients you prefer. Eat and drink what you enjoy, but avoid things that contain a lot of fast sugars. Check the GI table online.



[Scan the QR code to see picture of snacks](#)

Food with Nitrate forms Nitric Oxide in the stomach. Nitric Oxide is good for cardiovascular health and physical performance. This is the reason why Popeye (the cartoon figure) has such big forearms. Kale, black cabbage, spinach, and other deeply green vegetables contain nitrate. The winner in this competition is still the beetroot, which contains the highest concentration of nitrate. The safest and easiest way to get this is to

drink beetroot juice after training, about 15 cl/day after you have eaten your lunch or dinner or another meal.

If you have prepared these products, they should be cooled before storage if not eaten immediately. Otherwise, they are easily attacked by bacteria.

Many athletes use this method to quickly replenish nutrients in the body after a workout.

Meal recommendations during the day:

Breakfast: When in normal life you should eat mostly protein, salads and low GI bread with cheese which contains fat and protein. The protein can be prepared the days before, like making an omelet with toppings of chicken, meatballs, tuna fish or what you have left from days before. Bread should have less than 50% carbohydrates and lots of fiber to achieve a low GI. When fasting or losing weight quickly or if you are diabetic skip the bread. Natural Yoghurt should be without processed sweeteners or fruits for flavor. Blueberries and Raspberries can be used fresh or frozen.

Do not drink any sweet drinks or eat any fruits before Lunch.

Drink water, tea or coffee.

Lunch and Dinner: These meals can be eaten under the same principle. Always start with a salad of mixed vegetables seasoned with vinegar/oil.

The main dish should be eaten with protein first and the starch like potato, rice, pasta with sauce last. Sometimes with some berrys/fruit after.

The best way to control weight is to lower blood sugar.

Why again: When blood sugar is normal the insulin level is low and the body takes care of it and burns fat. If blood sugar is high, the insulin stops burning fat and concentrates to take care of the sugar/glucose that enters the bloodstream. Just like about 200 years ago, diabetes type 2 did hardly exist.

Snacks between meals are allowed when you burn more calories, but you have to follow the recommendations when and what you eat.

CHAPTER 4 Physical Activity Beyond Judo Training

Judo training develops strength, technique, discipline, and mental resilience. However, long term athletic development and overall health require more than time spent on the tatami alone. Complementary physical activities play a crucial role in creating balanced, resilient, and adaptable judokas.

Physical activity beyond judo training supports injury prevention, enhances coordination and versatility, improves general fitness, and helps maintain motivation and joy in movement. It also contributes to mental freshness, allowing athletes to return to judo training more focused and engaged.

4.1 Why Complementary Activities Matter



Judo is a complex sport that places high demands on the body, particularly on joints, grip strength, core stability, and the nervous system. Repeating similar movement patterns without sufficient variation may increase the risk of overload and overuse injuries.

Complementary activities provide diversity of movement, stimulate different muscle groups, and develop general athletic abilities that directly support judo performance. They also help young athletes discover enjoyment in movement outside competitive pressure, reinforcing lifelong physical activity habits. *Picture 4: Generated with Canva AI*

Picture 7: Generated with Canva AI

From an educational perspective, versatility in movement reflects one of judo's core principles, maximum efficiency through intelligent use of energy. A well rounded athlete moves better, recovers faster, and adapts more easily.

4.2 Strength, Conditioning, Coordination, and Mobility

Strength training outside judo training builds a foundation for safe and effective performance. Bodyweight exercises, resistance bands, kettlebells, TRX systems, and medicine balls help develop functional strength, joint stability, and postural control. The focus should remain on proper technique, gradual progression, and balanced development rather than maximal load.

Conditioning activities improve cardiovascular fitness and energy management. Interval training, shuttle runs, hill running, swimming, cycling, rowing, and brisk walking support endurance without excessive stress on joints. Both low intensity and interval based activities are valuable when appropriately planned.

Coordination and balance training enhance body awareness, reaction speed, and control of movement. Activities such as balance boards, slackline exercises, ball handling, juggling, agility ladders, and reaction drills improve neural efficiency and movement precision, which are essential in judo.

Mobility and flexibility should be addressed daily. Regular mobility work supports joint health, posture, and movement quality. Particular attention should be given to hips, ankles, spine, and shoulders, as these areas are heavily involved in judo techniques.

4.3 Ball Sports, Racket Sports, and Outdoor Activities

Ball sports offer excellent complementary training for judokas. Basketball, football, dodgeball, volleyball, handball, and similar activities improve spatial orientation, decision making speed, reaction ability, peripheral vision, jumping power, and team communication. They also reintroduce playfulness and spontaneity into physical activity.

Racket sports such as badminton, table tennis, and speedminton develop hand eye coordination, reaction speed, timing, and movement economy. These skills translate directly into grip fighting, defensive reactions, and tactical awareness in judo.

Outdoor and special sports activities add further diversity. Climbing and bouldering enhance grip strength and whole body coordination. Paddleboarding improves balance and core stability. Inline skating and parkour based movement courses support agility and dynamic control when practiced safely and progressively.

These activities should be adapted to age, experience, and safety considerations, with enjoyment and exploration prioritized over performance outcomes.

4.4 Sample Weekly Activity Plan

A balanced weekly structure allows judokas to benefit from complementary activities without interfering with judo training or recovery.

A typical week may include strength training combined with mobility work, coordination games or ball sports, interval conditioning with stretching, racket sports or light fitness sessions, and at least one outdoor or low intensity endurance activity. One full recovery focused day should always be included.

The exact structure should remain flexible and responsive to the athlete's training load, school demands, and individual needs.

4.5 The 24/7 protocol

This manual presents a methodology for non-training preparation of judokas based on the 24/7 protocol. The aim is to develop physical and mental resilience, support regeneration, promote the athlete's versatility and improve their ability to enter *the* so-called *sports zone* – a state of maximum performance, concentration and inner stability.

The protocol combines elements **of fitness, wellness** and **stillness** so that judokas can develop their skills not only during training on the tatami, but also **through their everyday lifestyle**.

It has the following objectives:

- To improve the mental and physical preparedness of young judokas.
- Optimise regeneration, adaptation to stress and sleep patterns.
- Strengthen the ability to concentrate, relax and manage stress.
- Enable more frequent entry into *flow* during training, competitions and everyday life.
- Develop versatility through complementary sports and physical activities.
- Teach athletes self-regulation and the ability to monitor their own bodily processes.

And the following procedure:

1. Selection of participants

- Approximately 20 athletes with potential (equal representation of genders).

2. Initial diagnostics

- **MAX PULSE**

Measurement of physical and mental stress, heart rate variability (HRV), vascular elasticity and nervous system adaptation.

- **EEG MUSE**

Assessment of the ability to relax, concentrate and switch off internal dialogue.

The diagnostics serve primarily as **an educational tool** — athletes understand how their bodies and nervous systems work.

3. Introduction to activities

- Introductory training in fitness/wellness/stillness methods
- practical exercises and technique training

4. Coaching

- group and individual work with athletes (mental training, physical preparation, balance of load and regeneration)

5. Creation of personal 24/7 protocols

- personal daily routines
- private training and recovery diaries

6. Final diagnostics

1. repeated MAX PULSE and EEG MUSE measurements

7. Outputs

- final report, recommendations, methodology for coaches and parents

The structure of this protocol is based on:

Pre-sleep protocol

- Light evening meal and adequate hydration.
- Cleansing of the respiratory tract (e.g. NONI pot).
- Elimination of blue light (glasses, display mode).
- Mindful relaxation stretching.
- Zen meditation.
- Progressive muscle relaxation.
- Breathing techniques for optimising sleep (box breathing, 4-6-8).
- Techniques for managing stress and insomnia.
- Warm shower with brief cooling of the feet.
- Journaling – a brief record of the day.
- Audio meditation (theta/delta waves).

Additional compensation (2–3 times a week):

- relaxation of the shoulders, hips and lumbar spine
- mobilisation of the thoracic spine
- activation of the gluteal muscles mini bands
- gentle evening yoga

Morning (after sleep) protocol

- Short mobilisation stretching.
- Controlled breathing exercises.
- Hardening in the shower (10–30 seconds).

- Foot acupressure.
- Zen meditation with visualisation and affirmations.
- Light hygiene – expose yourself to morning light.
- Dry skin brushing.
- Short HIIT activator (3–5 minutes).

Morning activation – recommended block:

- 20 seconds of squats
- 20 seconds of mountain climbers
- 20 jumping jacks
- mobility: cat/cow + thoracic rotation

Daily protocol (fully expanded)

The daily protocol combines **mental, regenerative and physical activities** that together support the stable development of young judokas.

Regenerative and mindful activities during the day

- Mindful eating and mindful walking
- short breathing exercises between school and training
- eye exercises (changing focus, peripheral vision)
- sauna, whirlpool, swimming
- lymphatic self-therapy and self-massage
- working with a training diary
- power naps (10–20 min)
- neurovisual training (reactions, field of vision)
- rhythmic exercises (music, drumming)
- WOOP method (planning and motivation)
- creative activities

4.6 Physical preparation of judokas outside of Judo training

A) Strength training (2–3 times a week)

Bodyweight strength exercises

- Push-ups 3×12–20
- Squats 3×20
- Forward/backward lunges 3×12 on each leg
- Jump squats 3×10

- Plank 3×40–60 s
- Side plank 3×30 s/side
- Glute bridge 3×15–20
- Bird-dog 3×10/side
- Hyperextension 3×15

With equipment

- Resistance bands (shoulders, shoulder blades, hips)
- Kettlebell – goblet squat, deadlift, swing
- TRX – pull-ups, lunges, core stabilisation
- Medicine ball – throws, rotations, bounces

B) Athletic conditioning (2–3 times a week)

Interval fitness

- 20/40 s running/walking × 10
- 30/30 intervals
- Shuttle run (5–10–5 m)
- Fartlek
- Hill runs

Low-intensity fitness

- Swimming
- Cycling
- Brisk walking
- Rowing machine

Speed training

- 10–15 m sprints
- Agility ladder
- Reaction starts to sound, light, touch

C) Coordination and balance (3–5 times a week)

- Slackline – guided step
- Balance board – weight transfer, squats
- Bosu – stabilisation exercises
- Dribbling with two balls

- Juggling
- Reaction work with balls
- Flow bag / aqua bag – dynamic rotations and changes of direction

D) Mobility and flexibility (10–15 minutes every day)

Hips

- 90–90 stretch
- Pigeon pose
- Cossack squat

Ankles

- Mobility against the wall
- Walking on tiptoes/heels

Spine

- Cat/cow
- Rotation while lying down
- "Open book"

Shoulders

- Rotators with rubber band
- Chest opening
- Overhead exercises

E) Ball sports (1–2 times a week)

Ball sports strengthen coordination, decision-making speed, peripheral vision, dynamics and the joy of movement.

E1. Basketball

- Changes of direction
- footwork and jumping power
- spatial orientation
- excellent complementary activity for judokas

E2. Dodgeball

- quick reactions
- evasive manoeuvres
- whole-body coordination

E3. Football / mini football

- core stability

- lower limb dynamics
- team communication

E4. Volleyball

- Overhead work → strengthening the shoulders
- reaction movements
- jumping power

E5. Handball / Frisbee

- torso rotation
- accuracy and timing

F) Racket sports (once a week) - Develops eye speed, reaction time and economy of movement.

- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Speedminton

G) Special sports activities

- Climbing / bouldering
- Paddleboarding
- In-line skating
- Parkour courses (without risky elements)

H) Regenerative exercise (5–10 minutes every day)

- Foam rolling
- Self-massage
- Breathing regeneration
- Relaxation yoga
- Short walk

I) Recommended weekly schedule of activities

Day	Activity
Monday	Strength training + mobility
Tuesday	Ball sports / coordination games
Wednesday	Interval conditioning + mobility
Thursday	Racket sports / light fitness training

Day	Activity
Friday	Strength training + reaction training
Saturday	Swimming / cycling / outdoor activity
Sunday	Recovery + breathing + yoga

J) Recovery and special techniques beyond the 24/7 protocol

- Cryotherapy
- Breathing methods (Wim Hof, Buteyko)
- Floating
- Digital detox
- Biofeedback / HRV training
- Working with a mental coach

The 24/7 protocol methodology combines modern regeneration procedures, supplementary physical training and mental training.

It provides judokas with a comprehensive system that:

- supports regeneration and injury prevention,
- strengthens mental resilience and concentration,
- improves sleep quality and daily performance,
- enables more frequent entry into a state *of flow*,
- supports long-term sustainable athletic development.

CHAPTER 5 Rest, Recovery, and Regeneration

The body does not develop during training itself, but during the periods of rest that follow. Recovery is not an optional addition to training, it is the biological foundation of adaptation, health, and long term performance. Without adequate recovery, even the best training programs and nutrition strategies lose their effectiveness.

For young judokas in particular, recovery is essential for growth, learning, emotional stability, and injury prevention.

5.1 Why Recovery Is Where Development Happens

Training places stress on muscles, joints, and the nervous system. Recovery allows the body to repair tissues, rebuild energy reserves, and strengthen adaptive capacity. When recovery is insufficient, fatigue accumulates, concentration decreases, and the risk of injury and illness increases.

In modern life, recovery is often compromised by academic pressure, screen exposure, irregular schedules, and chronic stress. Learning to rest properly is therefore a key educational objective, not a sign of weakness.

Rest supports not only physical regeneration, but also mental clarity, emotional balance, and motivation.

5.2 Sleep: Quantity, Quality, and Routines

Sleep is the most powerful recovery tool available. For adolescents and young athletes, seven to nine hours of sleep per night are essential. Sleep deprivation increases stress hormone levels, impairs learning, slows reaction time, and disrupts metabolic and immune functions.

Sleep quality matters as much as sleep duration. Regular bedtimes, reduced screen exposure in the evening, calming routines, and proper sleep environments support deeper and more restorative sleep. Evening relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, light stretching, journaling, or meditation help the nervous system transition into rest.



Healthy sleep habits should be viewed as part of training responsibility.

Picture 8: Generated with Canva AI

5.3 Passive and Active Recovery

Recovery can be passive or active, and both forms are valuable. Passive recovery includes sleep, naps, lying down, and calm walks. These activities reduce overall load and allow the nervous system to reset.

Active recovery involves gentle movement such as light stretching, mobility exercises, foam rolling, breathing work, relaxation yoga, or short walks. These practices promote circulation, reduce muscle tension, and support mental relaxation without adding training stress.

Choosing the appropriate form depends on fatigue level, training intensity, and individual response.

5.4 Regenerative Tools and Techniques

Simple regenerative tools can be integrated into daily routines. Conscious breathing helps regulate the nervous system and reduce stress. Stretching and mobility exercises maintain joint health and muscle elasticity. Foam rolling and self massage support muscle relaxation and body awareness.

Additional methods such as sauna, swimming, contrast showers, or mindfulness practices can further support regeneration when used appropriately and consistently.

The key principle is regularity, short daily practices are more effective than occasional intensive recovery sessions.

5.5 Overtraining and Warning Signs

Insufficient recovery may lead to overtraining or chronic overload. Warning signs include persistent fatigue, sleep disturbances, irritability, loss of motivation, frequent illnesses, declining performance, prolonged muscle soreness, and emotional instability.

Learning to recognize these signs early allows timely adjustments to training, rest, and daily routines. Open communication between athletes, coaches, and parents is essential in preventing long term health consequences.

5.6 Testimonial: Italian Youth Experience

After approximately sixteen to seventeen days of improved rest routines, young judokas involved in the Italian experience reported noticeable benefits. Academic performance improved, attention during judo training increased, and training sessions felt easier to manage. Athletes who previously slept less reported feeling more energetic and ready during the day. Some participants observed improvements in their judo performance, while others reported feeling more stable and balanced overall. For many, rest gradually became a daily habit rather than a conscious effort.

5.7 Recovery Self Check: Am I Really Recovering?

Regular self reflection supports responsible recovery. Useful questions include whether sleep is sufficient and regular, whether fatigue persists despite rest, whether motivation remains stable, whether training feels manageable, and whether mood and concentration are balanced.

Honest answers help guide adjustments and reinforce the idea that recovery is an active part of training, not an afterthought.

Part III - Building a healthy lifestyle step by step

CHAPTER 6 Let's start with the basics – check your health, observe other people - how to recognize people who need help?

Health begins with knowledge of your own body. Regular preventative checkups are key to early detection of problems and effective disease prevention. Diagnostic tests allow you to easily monitor your body's health. What should you pay particular attention to?

1. Basic blood tests: a complete blood count can indicate iron deficiency, infections, or immune system disorders, glucose levels can detect the risk of diabetes, and a lipid profile will provide information about the health of your circulatory system. This data can help detect abnormalities at an early stage.

2. Allergies, even milder ones (seasonal rhinitis, food allergies, contact dermatitis), can significantly reduce quality of life. Chronic symptoms, such as a constant runny nose, watery eyes, skin problems (rashes, itching, hives), abdominal pain, digestive problems, and fatigue, can impede daily functioning, work, study, and sleep. Knowing the allergen can help you avoid it or implement appropriate treatment, leading to symptom resolution and a significant improvement in quality of life.

3. Vitamin D. Deficiencies of this vitamin are common, especially in the fall and winter, and their consequences can be serious – from weakened immunity and fatigue to serious health problems. Testing your vitamin D levels allows you to implement appropriate supplementation and maintain your overall health.

4. Circulatory system health. From the simplest tests, such as blood pressure, to complex imaging studies – recommended for active individuals (athletes).

5. Hormonal tests. Hormones affect every bodily function – from metabolism and mood to energy management. Thyroid problems, such as hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism, can significantly reduce your quality of life. It's worth checking your levels, especially if you experience chronic fatigue, weight problems, or mood swings.

6. Consultation with a doctor. Test results alone aren't everything – their proper interpretation by a specialist is crucial. Your doctor will help you understand what your results mean, identify areas for

improvement, and suggest appropriate actions, such as dietary changes, physical activity, or possible supplementation. Regular checkups are the best way to better understand your body's needs and prevent health problems. It's a small effort that can yield huge benefits – both now and in the future.

For **optimal health**, it's also important to:

- nurture social relationships – maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends and engaging in social activities;
- personal development – learning new things, setting goals, and striving to achieve them;
- work-life balance – establishing boundaries between work and leisure, finding time for rest and recovery.

6.1 How to recognize people who need help changing their lifestyle?

People who need help with lifestyle changes often display both physical and emotional warning signs. These signs may be subtle at first, but they become increasingly apparent over time. Noticing these signs in someone close to you is the first step. It's important to approach the issue with empathy and care. Offering support, discussing your discomfort, and, if necessary, suggesting professional help (doctor, dietitian, psychologist) can be key to initiating positive change.

Here are the **main signs** to look out for.

Physical Signals:

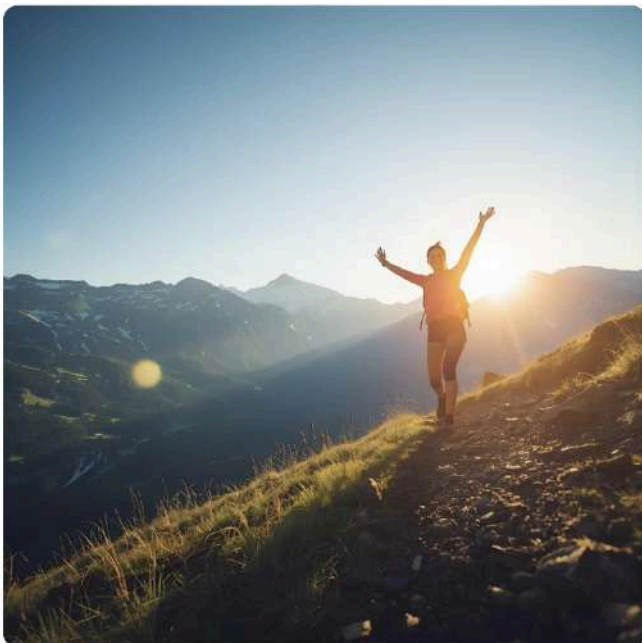
- Weight Issues: Being significantly overweight or obese, as well as being underweight, often results from unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity.
- Persistent fatigue and lack of energy: A person may complain of constant fatigue despite adequate sleep. This may be due to nutritional deficiencies, lack of exercise, or sleep problems. •
- Sleep problems: Difficulty falling asleep, frequent nighttime awakenings, or excessive daytime sleepiness.
- Visible health problems: frequent ailments such as headaches, digestive problems, high blood pressure, or established chronic diseases – related to lifestyle.
- Physical inactivity: sedentary lifestyle, avoiding any type of exercise, spending most of the time sitting.
- Substance abuse: smoking, excessive alcohol or other psychoactive substance consumption, constant overeating or mood-boosting with sweets/food.

Emotional and behavioral signs:

- Sudden changes in behavior: isolation from family and friends, loss of interest in previous passions and hobbies.
- Mood swings: extreme and sudden mood swings, irritability, anxiety, apathy, or symptoms of depression.
- Constant feelings of overwhelm or stress: the person may have difficulty coping with daily challenges, leading to chronic stress.
- Lack of motivation: feelings of hopelessness, lack of purpose in life, or a belief that change is impossible.

CHAPTER 7 How to implement a healthy lifestyle?

7.1 Step-by-step plan: lifestyle analysis, habit journal, working with values, satisfaction scale, building body awareness. Teamwork, Shu-Ha-Ri.



Picture 9: Generated with Canva AI

Implementing a healthy lifestyle isn't a one-time decision, but a process. It requires self-awareness, consistency, planning, and flexibility. It's a journey worth treating like training—gradually building fitness, clear goals, and good habits. Inspiration can come from both psychological science and the tradition of Eastern martial arts, in which working on the body and mind is part of a single system.

The following **step-by-step plan guides** you through key areas that will make change real, lasting, and aligned with your individual values.

FIRST STEP: Lifestyle Analysis

1.1. Why analyze your lifestyle?

You can't change what you don't understand. Analysis is the foundation – a thorough review of your daily activities, habits, and emotional responses. It helps you see what your day is really like, not how you imagine it is.

1.2. Common lifestyle mistakes that are easy to spot:

- poorly balanced diet,
- lack of regular physical activity,
- sleep deprivation,
- stress overload,
- irregular meals,
- too much time spent in front of screens,
- drinking too little water.

Non-obvious mistakes that often remain "invisible":

- lack of time for emotional recovery,
- living in a constant state of productivity,
- eating out of boredom, stress, or fatigue,
- working in an environment that fosters chaotic choices,
- pressures of perfectionism,
- lack of clear values behind change,
- expecting quick results and immediate motivation,
- starting with too many changes at once.

1.3. How to perform a lifestyle analysis?

The simplest way is to:

- write down for 7 days: what you eat, how much you sleep, how much you exercise, and what causes stress,
- mark the moments when automaticity is strongest (e.g., evening snacking),
- rate your energy level each day on a scale of 1-10,
- list situations in which you act habitually – on autopilot.

STEP TWO: Habit Journal

A journal is a tool for conscious change. It allows you to observe how your behaviors impact your physical and mental health. It serves as a bridge between intention and action.

What's worth writing down?

- waking and sleeping times,
- physical activity (time and intensity),

- meals and their quality,
- amount of water consumed,
- moods and emotions,
- moments of stress and stress reactions,
- a brief assessment of the day (1–10).

The most important thing: don't judge yourself. The journal is for observation, not criticism.

STEP THREE: Working with Values

Change must stem from values—otherwise, it will remain a temporary motivation.

General values supporting a healthy lifestyle:

- health and fitness,
- energy and well-being,
- relationships,
- personal development,
- balance,
- no disease,
- longevity and quality of life.

Judo Values and a Healthy Lifestyle: Judo as a martial art is based on two main principles: **Seiryoku Zen'yō** – maximum effectiveness, and **Jita Kyōei** – mutual respect and the common good.

These principles give rise to values that are extremely helpful in building health:

- Self-discipline – consistency in action.
- Patience – the process takes time.
- Humility – awareness that each stage is a learning experience.
- Respect – for oneself, one's body, and others.
- Perseverance – continuing despite difficulties.
- Mindfulness – observing the present moment and one's body's signals.

Integrating these values makes a healthy lifestyle not a set of commandments, but a path to character development.

STEP FOUR: Satisfaction Scale - A Progress Monitoring Tool

A simple tool that allows you to assess your level of satisfaction with:

- sleep,
- nutrition,
- activity,
- mental well-being,
- social relationships,
- work and recovery.

Enter your values on a 1-10 scale daily or weekly. The scale shows a trend, not a "good" or "bad day." It allows you to notice which areas require attention.

STEP FIVE: Building Body Awareness

Body awareness is the foundation of health. It helps you notice:

- muscle tension,
- hunger and fullness,
- fatigue,
- breathing,
- emotional reactions,
- signals of overload,
- the need for movement or rest.

Exercises to develop body awareness:

- short body scan (3–5 minutes),
- conscious breathing,
- yoga or stretching,
- pausing for 30 seconds several times a day and observing sensations.

STEP SIX: Teamwork

Although health is a personal journey, it's easier to walk it with others. Social support strengthens motivation and a sense of purpose.

Options:

- joint training sessions,
- support or community groups,
- consultations with a dietitian, trainer, or psychologist,
- accountability partner.

According to the philosophy of judo, we grow best together, not in isolation.

STEP SEVEN: Shu-Ha-Ri – a model for developing competencies for a healthy life

This Japanese model describes the stages of learning:

Shu (following principles). Initial stage: you follow simple, clear guidelines. Your role: to imitate, learn, and build foundations.

Examples:

- 10 minutes of exercise daily,
- 7 hours of sleep,
- one vegetable with each meal.

Ha (experimentation). You begin to understand the rules, so you modify them. You adapt the plan to your values, circadian rhythm, and preferences.

Ri (autonomy and integration). Habits are part of you. You don't need motivation—it's a lifestyle, not a task.

CHAPTER 8 How to encourage others who do not practice judo to lead a healthy lifestyle?

Challenge actions, ways to motivate yourself and the others, celebrating small successes.

Promoting a healthy lifestyle isn't just for athletes. While judo is a discipline that naturally teaches discipline, balance, respect, and mindfulness, the same principles can also inspire those who have never been involved in martial arts. The key is to present health not as an obligation, but as an opportunity—a path that provides energy, joy, and a sense of purpose.

The following chapter presents practical ways to encourage those "outside the judo world" to take care of themselves, embrace challenges, and celebrate their progress.

8.1. Start by building a positive image of a healthy lifestyle.

People who haven't exercised before often have associations like: "a healthy lifestyle is difficult," "it requires sacrifice," "it's for athletes," "I don't have enough willpower." Therefore, the first step is to dispel these beliefs. It's worth demonstrating that health is:

- small, achievable steps,
- consistency, not perfection,
- the ability to increase energy,
- a way to sleep better, improve relationships, and improve well-being,
- a method for reducing stress and regaining balance.

A healthy lifestyle should be presented as a journey, not a test. In judo, this is natural—everyone starts with a white belt and develops at their own pace.

Set the stage: change begins with imagery and language. People who haven't exercised often have the imagery of "sport = pain," "health = discipline = sacrifice." Instead, it's worth presenting health as a source of energy, better relationships, and better sleep. Judo offers excellent language here: honesty with yourself, gradual progress, partnership, and respect. Apply these metaphors to everyday life—"training" could mean a 10-minute walk, "partner" could be the person you're walking with, and "practicing technique" could mean a breathing pause before a meal.

Example message: Instead of "you need to start exercising," say, "do something today that will give you more energy—like a short walk after lunch." This kind of language lowers the barrier to entry.

8.2. Take on challenges – but in the right way, i.e. in a way that makes them achievable.

Challenges drive change. They work better when they are:

- small and precise (specific time/quantity),
- time-bound (e.g., 7 days),
- measurable,
- planned in advance.

When encouraging someone to adopt a healthy lifestyle, instead of saying, "Start exercising three times a week," it's better to suggest, "Take a 10-minute walk today."

In the world of judo, challenges are the foundation of learning—every exercise, every technique, every workout is a micro-challenge. A similar model can be applied to people who don't train:

- 7 days: drinking more water,
- 7 days: a 10-minute walk every day,
- 14 days: one extra vegetable with dinner,
- 21 days: no sugary drinks 2 days a week,
- 5-minute morning stretching,

- 1 healthy meal a day,
- 3 days: no sugary drinks,
- short meditation or breathing exercises.

Important: Challenges should be encouraging, not overwhelming.

The goal is to show that a healthy lifestyle is accessible to everyone.

How to implement it:

1. Write the challenge on your calendar (specific time),
2. Find a partner (friend, family, work colleague),
3. Connect the challenge to an existing habit ("I go for a walk after coffee")—this is called a trigger.

Important: The goal isn't to "complete the challenge perfectly," but to experience that small steps really work.

8.3. Motivate yourself and others – in the spirit of judo values

Picture 9: Generated with Gemini

People who haven't had any contact with judo often don't know its philosophy. And this philosophy can be a powerful impetus for change. Judo teaches: consistency, respect, mindfulness, self-improvement, community, and mutual support.

How can you use this philosophy to motivate others? In judo, a "partner" isn't a rival, but someone who helps you grow. This philosophy works great for motivating loved ones:



1. Be an example, not a preacher.

Nothing works better than seeing a calm, visible change in someone you love.

Showing the benefits ("I sleep better after these walks") is more powerful than a sermon.

2. Motivate through support, not criticism.

Instead of: "Didn't you go for a walk again?"

Better: "Maybe we can go for a walk together today?"

Use supportive language—questions like: "What do you want to do for yourself today?" instead of "Why aren't you exercising?"

1. Build an atmosphere of cooperation. In judo, there is no competition against each other—it's "together toward the goal." Create alliances, not competitions—meetings, preparing healthy meals together, and short exercise breaks at work.
2. Suggest shared micro-challenges—for example, "we'll take a 10-minute walk together at 7:00 PM for a week."
3. Talk about feelings, not results. Encourage by showing benefits: "I have more energy after morning exercise," "My sleep improved after short exercises."
4. Emphasize the value of process, not speed. Health isn't a sprint—it's a journey.

Important: support should be empathetic and non-judgmental – this increases the likelihood of maintaining changes.

8.4. Celebrate small successes - reward effort, not perfection

This is one of the most important, yet most neglected, elements of change.

Celebrating boosts motivation because it rewards the brain for effort. The brain learns through the association of reward → repetition. Celebrating small things strengthens the habit:

- Principle: for each day of the challenge completed—a badge, a checkmark on the calendar, a short favorite activity.
- What to celebrate: every walk completed, every healthy meal, every day without snacks after 9:00 PM.
- Forms of celebration: symbolic (sticker, journal entry), social (bragging in a group), practical (buying a small gift after 30 days).
- Don't confuse reward with compensation (e.g., "I lost weight → I can eat cake")—rewards that support health are better (a walking pass, a decorative water bottle, a health book).

Celebrating shifts the emotional tone of the process: from obligation to pleasure.

Why does it work?

- builds a sense of agency,
- helps you notice progress,
- changes the emotional tone of the change—from obligation to joy,

- increases the likelihood of repeating the behavior.

What can you celebrate?

- a 10-minute walk,
- choosing a healthier meal,
- a day without sweets,
- going to bed earlier,
- taking a breather,
- drinking water regularly,
- limiting screens before bed.

It's not the big breakthroughs that build health, but the small, everyday decisions.

In judo, every small improvement in technique is a success—and every coach recognizes this.

We should do the same in our daily lives.

8.5. Create a social space

People who don't practice judo may cringe at the mere thought of intense exercise. Therefore, it's worth demonstrating that a healthy lifestyle doesn't require:

- extreme fitness,
- "athletic talent,"
- a gym,
- special equipment.

The strongest incentive for change is a supportive, inspiring, and non-judgmental group.

How can we create such a space?

- Organize "family walks";
- Cook healthy meals together;
- Introduce challenges at school, at work, or in clubs;
- Suggest short activities (e.g., 5-minute exercise breaks);
- Lead a group of friends who motivate each other on instant messengers.

Judo teaches us that we grow together—and this principle is worth applying to encouraging people who don't participate in sports.

8.6. Show that a healthy lifestyle is a path available to everyone

Regardless of age, fitness, or previous experience, health is for everyone. It doesn't require a spectacular workout. You can start here and now: go for a walk, drink a glass of water, take a few deep breaths, eat one more vegetable, go to bed earlier, get 10 minutes of exercise.

In judo, everyone starts with a white belt – and everyone has the right to their own pace.

The same applies to a healthy lifestyle: the journey begins with the first step, not with talent.

8.7. Practical tools and a sample action plan

Tools:

- a simple journal (paper or app)—note your activity and well-being;
- a calendar with checkmarks (habit tracker);
- a partner/small support group;
- a list of small challenges (7-, 14-, 21-day);
- a "what to do when I'm having a bad day" plan (minimum rule: 2 minutes).

Sample 4-week plan for a "non-exercising" person:

- Week 1: 10-minute walk daily + 1 extra vegetable with dinner.
- Week 2: Add 2 minutes of brisk walking to your walk; 2 minutes of conscious breathing in the morning.
- Week 3: Add one 10-minute stretch in the evening; start keeping a simple energy journal.
- Week 4: Review, celebrate achievements; plan the next 21 days (e.g., 3 days of activity per week + healthy meals).

8.8. The most common obstacles and suggestions on how to avoid them

"I don't have time" — demonstrate that 10 minutes is realistic; build activity into existing routines.

Lack of energy — start with short activities right after waking up or after work (the minimum rule).

Fear of judgment — emphasize a "no-judgment" approach and a supportive community.

Perfectionism — teach that "progress > perfection"; every step has value.

Part IV - Conclusion

CHAPTER 9 Health as a Lifelong Path

The journey of a judoka extends far beyond the edges of the tatami. As this guide has emphasized, performance, well-being, and character development are built upon a 24/7 responsibility for health. This comprehensive view—encompassing movement, nutrition, hydration, and recovery—aligns perfectly with the core educational philosophy of Judo.

Health should be viewed not as a fixed state or a temporary project, but as a continuous educational process and a skill that is learned, practiced, and improved over time. The concept of 24/7 responsibility promotes the idea that health is shaped by everyday decisions, accumulating over time. Just like learning judo techniques, healthy habits require repetition, patience, feedback, and gradual progression. Mistakes are viewed not as failures, but as signals for necessary adjustments. A young judoka who learns to care for their health builds a foundation that supports them not only in sport but also in education, work, and relationships later in life. The pursuit of health and well-being is not about being perfect, but about maintaining regularity and consistency. The core principle of Seiryoku Zen'yō (maximum efficiency with minimum effort) applies directly to health, encouraging young people to train smart, recover properly, and choose nutrition that fuels rather than burdens the body. Significant long-term change is driven by small, achievable steps and consistency, not by temporary, extreme efforts. For instance, in nutrition, regularity is far more important than perfection. The Japanese Shu-Ha-Ri model of learning—starting by following simple rules (Shu), experimenting (Ha), and finally achieving autonomy (Ri)—provides a framework for developing competencies for a healthy life, recognizing that the process takes time.

Health is not a purely individual matter; it affects the entire ecosystem of the athlete: partners, teams, families, and communities. The principle of Jita Kyōei (mutual benefit) highlights that taking care of oneself is also a form of respect for others. Although personal, the health journey is easier to walk with others, as social support strengthens motivation and a sense of purpose. Coaches, parents, and caregivers play a crucial educational role in shaping attitudes toward nutrition and recovery through guidance and positive examples. For those outside the judo world, motivation is best achieved through support, not criticism, and by building an atmosphere of cooperation. Motivation is maintained by celebrating small successes (effort, not perfection), which helps build a sense of agency and shifts the emotional tone of change from obligation to pleasure. Health does not begin and end on the tatami. It is a reflection of the true spirit of judo: a path of continuous self-improvement, balance, and awareness.

Part V - References

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