

# Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy, Ph.D.

President, Power Living Enterprises Inc.

By Bevolyn Williams-Harold

**W**ith poor food and lifestyle choices and stress-filled lives far too common occurrences among them, Blacks, it seems, have relegated maintaining good health to the bottom of their priority list. In 2008, the American Heart Association reported that 79.6 percent of Black women and 67 percent of Black men over the age of 20 are overweight or obese.

Harvard-trained wellness and empowerment coach Dr. Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy knows firsthand the deadly effects of unhealthy living. In 1997, Kennedy almost died from Crohn's disease, a severe digestive disorder induced by the stressful life she led as a high-powered media executive at MTV Networks. "My work didn't cause the Crohn's because it was probably hereditary. However, my work style most likely brought it to the surface," she says.

Kennedy, a national spokesperson for the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Search Your Heart Program, is the founder and president of Power Living Enterprises Inc. in New York City and the founder of Ta Yoga. She teaches at the Institute of Integrative Nutrition in New York City; chair of the Board of Yoga Alliance, which sets standards for yoga teaching in the United States; and a member of the Education Working Group for the Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Healthcare, which is creating educational content and programs to promote integrative health care.

A self-proclaimed workaholic, Kennedy abandoned corporate America and embraced a holistic lifestyle. At Power Living Enterprises, she gets others on track for healthy living with the following principles:

Start where you are and take small steps. Choose one thing and make that a habit. For example, for one month

focus on actually chewing your food. This unconscious habit decreases the amount we eat while increasing our level of satisfaction.

Keep a lifestyle log. Track your habits around food (i.e. when, what and how much you eat as well as how you feel before and after you eat), to identify patterns and triggers that you can correct.

Anticipate obstacles. Avoid junk-food cravings by removing them from your home and bypassing them in the supermarket. Pack healthy foods when you're on the go and choose convenience options such as juice bars. "Plan for success," advises Kennedy.

Develop a reflective practice to set your goals for the day and review your progress at night.

Create a circle of support. Find a wellness buddy who has similar goals. Get your family involved in reading food labels, planning menus and shopping for healthy food. Distance toxic people and those who only want to socialize around food.

Kennedy remains symptom-free from Crohn's by following an anti-inflammatory diet based on probiotics (kefir or yogurt with live or active cultures), gluten-free whole grains, beans and lots of fruits and vegetables. She recommends adding the following "healing" foods to your diet:

- Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines and mackerel are packed with omega-3 fatty acids, which are known to reduce the risk for heart attack, hypertension and stroke;
- Nuts, such as walnuts and flaxseeds.

These heart-healthy sources of omega-3s are also loaded with anti-inflammatory phytochemicals and can help fight hypertension and lower "bad" LDL cholesterol;

- Whole grains, such as brown rice, bran and oats;
- Dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale and collard greens;
- Fresh spices, such as ginger, turmeric, chili, nutmeg and cinnamon. Ginger and turmeric are both potent antioxidants and have anti-inflammatory properties, which may prevent heart disease and cancer.

PHOTO: [unreadable]

