5 Ways to Overcome Dieting Depression

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Whenever you're dieting, there's only one positive thing that you're focused on - the pounds that get shed. Everything else suddenly feels burdensome and annoying.

You hate having to give up your favorite foods. You whimper at the idea of drastically reducing your portion sizes. You may even feel sluggish for awhile because your body was used to living off of sugar rushes and then crashing until you revved it up again.

Sometimes, even the pounds don't fall off - and you're left feeling desperate, sad and anxious about whether or not you'll ever get to where you want to be in terms of weight loss goals.

You can have the most perfect nutrition and exercise program imaginable - and implementing them day after day without fail. But without the right frame of mind, you'll eventually falter and this can be devastating.

There are certain things you can do to prevent a mental lapse where you cave in to your negative feelings. You have to be your own motivational coach - no one else can do this.

The Importance of Keeping Momentum

For most people, men and women alike, dieting is a ritual that they repeat year after year. It's not a daily or monthly commitment yet. It's simply a process they put themselves through to prove to themselves that they're trying.

Every time they fall off the wagon, it sets them up for a deep depression. They're a failure in their eyes, and let's be honest here - sometimes in the eyes of those who care about them.

Nobody wants to see you keep the weight on. Everyone's cheering you on. So the pressure mounts for you to succeed. You might start off on a whim on random day, or do like most people and make an obligatory New Year's Day decision to lose weight.

But it's short-lived because you're looking it at it like it's a challenge. You have to give your body time to get used to a new normal. It won't like the diet and exercise regimen that you've put it on.

There will days when it doesn't bother you, and days when you get so angry about your weight problem that you throw your hands up in the air and say, "I quit!"

Get Rid of Extremist Thoughts

Dieters are desperate. Whether you have 5 pounds to lose or 500, your mindset can be the same. And when you're desperate, you talk yourself into taking drastic measures to get the weight off.

You don't want to go that route. It's not good for you in any way. It never results in long-term weight loss. It simply causes you to fail repeatedly. You want to lose the weight and keep it off for good.

Healthy weight loss is slow weight loss. Nobody wants to hear that. They want to hear about how they can lose 15 pounds in a week and fit into that slinky little black dress for their high school reunion.

But when you lose more than 1-3 pounds a week, you're sending signals to your body that something's wrong. Your body is going to sense that you're starving it or overworking it with exercise - and it will hang on to the fat stores because it thinks it needs to help you survive.

Healthy nutrition feeds your body - it doesn't starve it. You can quell hunger by feeding your body an almost unlimited quantity of good food. You don't want to eliminate calories so much that you down to a deficit that's harmful to your body.

Instead, replace the foods you would normally stock up on with smarter choices. For example you might snack on raw broccoli and sugar snap peas or carrots instead of chips and snack cakes.

You can drink water to fill up your body. When you're allowing your body to eat enough, the pounds will come off - but they'll do it at a rate that's safe and also long-term.

Fad diets do real damage to your health. Be honest with yourself about how many fad diets you've tried that made you take extreme measures. For instance, the cabbage soup diet - nothing but cabbage soup day in, day out.

Or how about the diet where you eat nothing but protein - no carbs allowed! Or vice versa - all carbs and no protein. Any diet that makes you eliminate complete food groups is probably extreme.

You probably wouldn't try many of the shocking fad diets, but some people do! Some swallow tapeworms intentionally - or gelatin-soaked cotton balls to fill up their stomachs.

Don't get sucked into this world. Instead, repair your nutrition so that you're eating what expert recommend in terms of the right amount of calories for your body.

Make sure you get plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, and if you eat meat, make sure it's lean, healthy meat like chicken. Drink water and go light on the foods you enjoy that are less nutritious, but don't nix them altogether.

Take It One Day at a Time

Falling off the wagon is easy to do when you deprive yourself of what you love. For dieters who are on diets with restrictions, there's an actual grieving process over what you're giving up.

You don't want to have a specific splurge day, either. That still means you're restricting yourself six days a week. And it causes you to binge on the days when you're allowed to eat what you want.

Speaking of the word allow, don't get involved in a diet where you have to use words like "can't," "guilt," or "allowed." You're an adult. And you can learn to make healthier choices without having to set rules for yourself.

Learn to listen to your hunger cues rather than look at a list of foods that are off limits. This is better because you actually adopt better behaviors and those last you a lifetime.

Forget about the concept of failure when it comes to dieting. There's no such thing unless you quit now and gave up forever. But even then that's a choice, and you would always have the opposite choice to make good changes.

If a meal comes and you ordered more calories than you wanted to, you can make some sensible decisions at this point:

- Take a portion of the meal home so that you can have it as leftovers another time.

- Eat the meal and lighten up on other meals throughout the day.

- Calculate how many extra minutes of exercise you can do that week to work off the extra calorie influx.

Never beat yourself up - even if you have a down week and you suddenly realized you've stuffed yourself with sodas and sweets non stop for seven days. Shaming yourself does nothing to help you change your behavior.

If anything, self love and forgiveness can help you get at the root of the issue and nurture yourself back to a point where you're being more mindful of your nutrition and exercise regimen.

Don't Let Friends Influence Your Thoughts

For some reasons, we always think we need to announce it when we go on a diet or exercise program. People will announce the date they're starting, which program they're using, and how they feel about it.

They'll check in on Facebook when they're at restaurants "being bad" and check in at the gym when they're "being good" just to make sure everyone knows how it's going.

If you need an accountability partner, that's fine. You can get one of those. But you don't need to invite the world into your battle with the bulge. And if they come along for the ride uninvited, you need to know how to put boundaries in place to keep their influence out.

Co-workers are bad about forming these diet cliques in the workplace. Everyone generally goes on a diet together. The intentions are good - they're meant to motivate each other.

But what normally happens is, the non dieters will bring snacks for everyone or someone will go back to their old eating habits and it causes guilt and shame for those who are no longer part of the group.

Steer clear of office announcements regarding your diet. If you're changing habits, and someone offers you candy from the vending machine, just say, "No thanks!" No explanation is needed.

Wait staff can be pushy sometimes at certain restaurants. They can keep harping on the fact that you need to try one of their desserts or appetizers. The best way to combat this is to be firm right up front.

You don't even have to say that you're dieting. Just say, "I already know what I want. The grilled chicken salad with ranch on the side. And you can bring the check with that. Thank you!"

When they have to bring the check, it kills off any opportunity they have to tack on additional items for you. Be friendly, yet firm in your order so that they don't go through their add-on spiel.

Family members are bad about trying to sabotage your diet. Sometimes, when someone in a family starts dieting, it can cause others to feel resentment (even if they don't say so).

A spouse might worry about why you're trying to look better - is it for someone else? A parent might feel like it's an insult to their cooking abilities. A sibling might not want you to lose weight because then they'll be the fattest one in the family.

It's selfish, but it's a harsh truth. You have to learn how to deal with family members - and that includes not giving in when they pressure you to fill up your plate. They might think it's being funny or cute, but you have to be protective of yourself.

Friends, even though they're supposed to have your back, can be just as critical as your family. It can swing both ways, though. They might pressure you to get on their extreme fad diet, or they might try influencing you to break your own commitment.

No one likes to fail alone. These people don't celebrate your success - they envy it. They won't understand slow, steady weight loss because very few people take that path (the few who lose weight for the long haul).

With all of these groups, if someone tries to talk about dieting with you, just shut the conversation down in a friendly way. Say something like, "Oh who wants to gab about weight loss? Let's talk about your new job - how's that going?" Change the conversation and become empowered by doing it.

Set and Celebrate Realistic Success Goals

It's good to have goals. In fact, it can actually help you get ahead with your weight loss efforts. But when you start creating ridiculously hard goals like what you might see on The Biggest Loser on TV (25 pounds in a week), it will make you feel defeated every time you can't achieve that goal.

Set small goals to begin with so that you're celebrating constantly. Goals like "Eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day" or "lose 1 pound this week" set you up for success. Goals like, "lose 10 pounds this week" or "eat 800 calories a day" are a recipe for disaster.

You can also set exercise goals, but make sure they're doable. If you go beyond your goals, then GREAT! But it won't make you label yourself as a failure if you can't.

Dieting depression is a real problem, and it can happen to everyone if you're not careful. You can put yourself in that dark place if you allow outside influences - or if you beta yourself up for every single thing, so be aware of your mindset at all times.