

Women Who Lose Weight and Keep It Off

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The worst part of going on a diet is the fear that you won't succeed long-term. Most women can go on a diet for a short amount of time and see positive changes, but most of them yo yo the pounds right back on.

We need to look at those long-term success stories and try to emulate their regimen so that the odds of you having to label yourself a "diet failure" are slim to none.

What's important isn't the number of pounds you lose, because even if it's 1,000 pounds – that won't matter if the end result is that you continue engaging in bad habits that pile the weight back on.

Instead of celebrating your weight loss, it's time you started celebrating your commitment to implementing good habits in terms of nutrition and movement. Healthy eating and exercise can't be something you do for a month or a year – it has to be something you adopt long-term.

Because it's forever, and you don't want to live in misery, you need to learn more about moderation and let go of your guilty conscience when it comes to calling certain foods "bad" or deeming yourself a "failure."

Realistic Timelines

Most women who lose weight and keep it off for good don't set goals they know they won't be able to achieve. Saying you need to lose 70 pounds by next month isn't just unrealistic, but it's not healthy, either.

Your body wasn't meant to burn fat that fast. The harder you push it, such as limiting yourself to too small of a calorie count, the more stubborn your body will be in hanging onto the fat stores you have because it feels like it's in starvation mode.

Your metabolism could also be sluggish at first, especially if you've been sedentary for a long period of time. You need to give it time to get revved up so that it's burning fat for fuel at a faster pace, and that doesn't happen overnight.

You have to learn to be okay with slower weight loss because that's the kind that will stay gone for good. The tactics you'd have to employ to whittle away the pounds rapidly are the ones that drive you insane to the point of quitting your diet.

Awareness of Hunger Cues

Women who are able to lose weight permanently are those who stay aware of their mission. It's not about obsessing over dieting. Those are the ones who go on a program like Weight Watchers and suddenly their entire identity revolves around that diet plan and nothing more.

Women who are aware of their hunger cues learn how to adopt the great habit of not eating when they're not hungry. It's a prevalent problem with women who are overweight – eating out of boredom or for emotional reasons.

If you want to be aware of your hunger cues, create a scale that you can identify with like this:

0 = so miserably stuffed you almost feel sick

1 = full

2 = not hungry

3 = you could eat something

4 = stomach is growling

5 = starving and have gone way too long without food

You want to eat whenever you're between a 3 and a 4. You want to stop eating when you're at a 2 – no longer hungry.

Most women don't even know what hunger feels like anymore because they never truly let their bodies get to that point. They simply eat when it's time. They also eat whatever portion is served.

Part of being aware of your hunger cues is about knowing when to stop eating what's on your plate. You've probably heard that it takes 20 minutes for your brain to become aware of how full you are, so eat slowly or you'll go over without knowing it for awhile.

It's harder when you're eating out at a restaurant to quit eating because after all, you've just paid for that meal and it's more special than something you make at home (to some). Just get a to go box or be okay with the fact that you can have this food again some other time.

Moderation, Not Abstinence

The last sentence above is what this is all about. When many women go on a diet, they have an all or nothing mindset. Once you're on that diet wagon, it means any "cheating" is a diet failure.

What kind of language is that – this is life! There are many foods in the world and none of them should be banned if it's what you enjoy.

The key to losing weight long term is to take the moderation approach. Have cake and ice cream when you want it – but stick to your hunger cues. And with guilt out of the picture, you won't tend to binge on things you feel like you have to give up another day.

Listening to your hunger cues and making all foods okay gives you the freedom to lose weight over time without feeling deprived, without panicking and being upset when you "cheat," and without neglecting one of our favorite pastimes – eating.

Yes, many people will tell you that food should be for nourishment alone. That's all well and good – but we can't deny that we've grown up accustomed to making meals a part of our traditions.

We have special holiday meals, potluck dinners with friends, and comfort foods that we enjoy cooking for our own loved ones that are passed down in a family recipe book. And there's nothing wrong with that!

The minute you vow to give up your favorite foods for good is the minute you sign a death warrant for your diet success. You'll be concentrating on what you're giving up, not what you're gaining through better health habits.

Non Food Rewards

Women who lose weight and keep it off know how to reward themselves for all their hard work. They don't lose 5 pounds and then plan a trip to their favorite restaurant to celebrate!

That's a recipe for disaster because it enables you to binge during the meal instead of continue making progress with your positive habits.

Instead of meal rewards, find ways to appreciate your efforts that don't involve food. Sometimes it can cost money, but it doesn't always have to. Here are a few ideas for you to consider:

- Manicure/pedicure (or even a new polish at the store if funds are tight)
- New outfit (to match the pounds shed – or one new item if you're budgeting)
- New technology gadget (can be small or big)
- Day of rest and no work (no cleaning, cooking, etc.)
- New book (and a day spent browsing the shelves at Barnes and Noble)
- Go see a movie (new blockbuster or \$1 movie if funds are tight)
- New fitness toy (Kinect fitness game, for example)
- Something for a hobby (knitting, pottery, or maybe even a class for something)

Your rewards need to be a symbol of your own interests. Don't go see a movie your spouse wants to see (but you can't stand) if it's supposed to be your reward. Wait until you can see one that will be a pat on the back for all your hard work.

Ability to Ignore Influence

Sometimes, the ones we love most can be some of our biggest obstacles when it comes to losing weight. Friends and family mean well (you assume) – and most do! But not everybody goes about it the right way or has the best intentions at heart.

Reasons for the sabotage of your diet plans can be varied. Here are some of the most common ones:

- The loved one doesn't want to be left behind. They don't want to be overweight while you're continually losing.
- They feel they know better than you do. Your sensible plan of moderation and hunger cues isn't going to sit well with most family and friends who have been brainwashed into thinking hardcore deprivation is the only way to go.
- Think their harping is helping. The more they nag, in their minds, the better off you'll be and the less likely you'll be to "fall off the wagon."

Most of the time, they don't know they're sabotaging you. They offer you fat-laden candy and meals in a joking manner, not realizing it's hurtful to you that someone you care about would try to make you fail.

Just as you don't want others pressuring you to diet their way, don't do the reverse and turn into someone who does nothing but talk about how much weight she's losing. Don't lose the rest of your identity to become "the dieter."

There's more to you than what the scale says – and if you notice you've become obsessed with losing weight and can't find anything else to talk about, it's time to step back and find yourself again.

Don't harp on other people to begin the diet plan you're on. If they ask, feel free to share your success tips with them! But forcing it on someone is just as bad as those who sabotage you and try to get you to quit your diet.

Movement, Not Exercise

One of the worst parts about embarking on a weight loss plan (aside from making nutritional changes where we can't eat nothing but junk food) is that we have to start moving our bodies.

The key to long term weight loss success you experience will work better if you enjoy adding movement throughout your day. It shouldn't be something you dread and want to find excuses for.

Here are a few ideas to get you off the couch and into the world, burning calories while having fun:

- Kinect Video Games
- Ice or Roller Skating or Roller Blading
- Dancing
- Biking
- Sports (basketball, softball, boxing, running)
- Laser Tag
- Trampoline jumping
- Swimming

You can find combinations of these fun movements, too. For instance, Dance Central on Kinect has you dancing to your old favorites and new hits in the comfort of your living room – so inclement weather won't even affect you!

You want to prevent boredom whenever you add an exercise regimen to your weight loss efforts. Not many people enjoy the thought of hopping on a treadmill day after day, watching the same scenery.

It's much more fun (and better for your body) if you switch things up and change your routine so that it's anything but routine in your life.

Swim when it's warm and sunny, stay inside and dance when it's raining, hop on the trampoline with your kids sometimes or take them to laser tag and run around the fields or complex all day.

Losing weight for the long haul means it can't be something you don't enjoy. It's important that you be allowed to eat foods you love, that you're not chained to an exercise bike week after week, and that you celebrate your efforts and have fun so that you never even consider going back to your old ways.

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