

weight loss strategies

ten point plan for motivation and habit change

point no 1. set realistic goals

Rather than set idealistic expectations for your eating habits, take time to assess what is reasonable for you, taking into account your history, time demands, and current health. For example, deciding to lose 10 kilos for that wedding coming up in two weeks time will only set you up to fail while setting a realistic time frame, allowing 3-4 months is more likely to see you succeed. Breaking long-term goals into small achievable goals helps to keep you motivated with feelings of success along the way.

point no 2. keep a journal

This is a detailed written record of your daily eating habits and the only way to accurately identify your eating patterns, especially those that interfere with reaching your health goals. The most informative format for a journal includes a record of when, what and why you eat, feelings at the time of eating and other people or situations which influence your eating. Strategies can be developed using this information to assist you in lifestyle modification.

Things to consider:

- Write everything down while its fresh in your mind, preferably immediately after eating
- It is not a test with right or wrong answers, so be honest with yourself
- Although time consuming, your journal will prove to be one of the most important life-style management skills you will learn.
- It will help to ensure that regular meals are eaten and avoid skipping meals

point no 3. analyze your records

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I replace meals with coffee, teas, soft drinks or cigarettes?
- How much alcohol do I drink and how does it effect my eating lifestyle ?
- Do I eat more/less after exercise?
- How do my emotions and thoughts effect my eating ? Am I more likely to eat/not eat when bored, lonely, stressed or depressed?
- What schedules I commitments interfere with eating? E.g. shift work, overtime, study, living status etc.
- Do I eat according to hunger or time of day or sight and smell of food ?
- What regular social situations influence your eating e.g. Friday night drinks after work, Sunday brunch at your local cafe (eggs, bacon, latte etc).



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point no 4. develop a plan

Once you've set realistic goals and identified detrimental behaviours and associated triggers, its now time to develop new habits. Bad habits can be counteracted using three basic strategies.

1. Avoid or eliminate triggers, for example if you cannot resist eating icecream, lollies, chips etc. then remove them from your reach 1 sight, don't have them in your cupboard, skip those social drinks after work for a few weeks until new habits are established and you are better able to say no to old behaviours
2. Learn new habits for old situations. For example: don't watch TV while eating, put knife and fork down between each mouthful, consciously chew foods well, set alarm 30 mins earlier in morning to give you time to eat breakfast, walk, exercise etc. Pre-plan up and coming social events.
3. Create new situations for new habits. Examples, join a gym or walking club; purchase cooking books for new ideas and recipes rather than rely on old ways and habits of cooking; take pre-packed lunch to work; plan and shop at least 1, 2 or 3 days ahead of time.

point no 5. manage tough situations

Once risky situations are identified, make a plan for the next risky situation. Create an image in your mind of your new behaviour, and see yourself behaving exactly as you wish.

point no 6. develop support

Avoid people who are likely to sabotage your efforts and seek out those you can ask for help. Seek professional support if need be. Develop friendships / associations with like-minded people.

point no 7. practice, practice, practice

Habits are formed when we constantly repeat the behaviour and receive some kind of reward. Practice, commitment, patience and encouragement are essential for success. Improved health and appearance as well as feelings of well being will help to keep you motivated.

point no 8. reward your efforts

The most effective rewards occur during or immediately following a new habit and increase the likelihood of the new behaviour occurring again. Examples may include

- Comments from friends on how fantastic you look (although we cannot rely on these)
- Remember to congratulate yourself after saying no to a piece of cake etc
- Go to the movies (no junk food) as a reward for sticking to your eating plan for the past week or two
- For every kilo or centimeter you lose put money into a jar, as your success grows so does your \$\$ reward. It is important to include rewards for short and long term goals and modify the rewards if necessary. Example \$2 for every centimeter you lose to spend on short term goals and say \$10 for every kilo you lose to spend on long term goal



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point no 9. dealing with slip ups

Changing habits that have developed over a lifetime, takes time. Don't be hard on yourself when you slip up from time to time. Learn to recognise the old habit and use positive self-talk to get you back on track. Many people set themselves up to fail (negative self-talk) simply because of a minor slip up. Now is the time to review your goals (short & long term), records, strategies, motivational plan. Seek support of others if necessary.

point no 10. maintain it or lose it

Developing healthy new habits take time and practice. Your goal to lose weight 1 improve your image should not be thought of as a short term aim. Eating a healthy diet is a lifelong process and requires you to focus on maintaining your new habits.

(summary from Somer, 1993. Chapter four.. Nutrition for women. pp93 - 105)



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