

BEHAVIORS TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT



THE SIMPLE TRUTH

Let's just be real with each other and acknowledge that perhaps one of the hardest parts of staying healthy is watching what we eat!

We all like to indulge, enjoy nights out with friends, and eat yummy foods.

And guess what? That is *perfectly fine!* Just make sure to keep a balance of calories in - calories out. Follow along with these simple **7 steps** that I have found will help you to maintain your weight, enjoy food, and stay human!

The 7 Steps

1. SET THE RIGHT GOALS
2. NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS
3. REWARD SUCCESS
4. BALANCE YOUR FOOD CHECKBOOK
5. AVOID A CHAIN REACTION
6. GET THE MESSAGE
7. BACKSLIDING PHENOMENON



1. SET THE RIGHT GOALS

Setting the right goals is an important first step. Most people trying to lose weight focus just on weight loss. However, you'll be more successful if you focus on dietary and exercise changes that lead to long- term weight change. Successful weight managers select no more than **two or three goals** at a time.

Effective goals are (1) specific, (2) attainable, and (3) forgiving. "Exercise more" is a commendable ideal, but it's not specific. "Walk five miles every day" is specific and measurable, but is it attainable if you're just starting out? "Walk 30 minutes every day" is more attainable, but what happens if you're held up at work or there's a thunderstorm? "Walk 30 minutes, five days each week" is **specific, attainable, and forgiving**. In short, a great goal!

2. NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS

Select a series of **short-term goals** that get you closer and closer to the ultimate goal (for example, consider reducing the number of times you drink soda from 4 times a week, to three times, to twice, and then eventually to none).



This strategy employs two important behavioral principles: (1) consecutive goals that move you ahead in **small steps** are the best way to reach a distant point, and (2) consecutive rewards keep the overall effort invigorated.

3. REWARD SUCCESS (But not with food)

You're more likely to keep working toward your goal if you are rewarded—especially when goals are difficult to reach. An effective reward is something that is desirable, timely, and contingent on meeting your goal.

Your rewards may be tangible (for example, going to a movie or treating yourself to some shopping) or intangible (for example, an

DON'T MAKE IT COMPLICATED

"ONE OF THE HARDEST PARTS OF MAINTAINING A HEALTHY DIET IS KNOWING WHAT TO EAT. TO KEEP THINGS SIMPLE AND WHEN IN DOUBT - ALWAYS GO FOR NATURAL FOODS. AVOID PROCESSED FOODS FROM VENDING MACHINES AND FOODS WITH HIGH SUGAR CONTENTS THAT CAN ACTUALLY INCREASE FEELINGS OF HUNGER.

THINK LIKE A SQUIRREL! FRESH, SIMPLE, AND CLEAN! GIVE YOUR BODY WHAT IT WOULD WANT IF IT COULD SPEAK FOR ITSELF. YOU ARE A MACHINE IN CONSTANT NEED OF NUTRIENTS - RESPECT YOUR BODY!"



afternoon off from studying or 15 minutes of quiet time away from your daily demands).

As you meet small goals, give yourself numerous small rewards; **don't wait to meet your ultimate goal for a single reward**. The long, difficult effort might lead you to give up.

4. BALANCE YOUR (FOOD) CHECKBOOK

Keeping track of your behaviors such as calorie intake, exercise frequency and duration, or any other wellness behavior—can help you make changes to that behavior. By **self-monitoring**, you are more likely to make positive changes to undesirable decisions/actions. This also allows you to keep physical record of your progress (which is quite rewarding).

For example, a self-record of increasing exercise duration encourages you to keep up the good work! If the record shows little or no progress, you know that a change of strategy is needed. Some people find that specific self-monitoring forms make it easier, while others prefer to use their own recording system.

5. AVOID A CHAIN REACTION

Identify the social or environmental cues that seem to encourage undesirable eating, and then **change** those cues. For example, you may learn from self-reflection or self-monitoring that you're more likely to overeat while watching television, when treats are on display at work, or when you're around a certain friend.

You might then try to break the association between eating and the cue (don't eat while watching television), avoid or eliminate the cue (avoid sitting near the snack counter), or change the circumstances surrounding the cue (plan to meet with your friend in nonfood settings).

In general, visible and accessible food items often are cues for unplanned eating.

6. GET THE FULLNESS MESSAGE

Changing the way you go about eating can make it easier to eat less without feeling deprived. It takes **15 or more minutes** for your brain to get the message you've been fed. Slowing the rate of eating can allow satiation (fullness) signals to begin by the end of the meal.

Eating lots of vegetables also can make you feel fuller. Another trick is to use smaller plates so that moderate portions do not appear meager. Changing your eating schedule, or setting one, can be helpful, especially if you tend to skip or delay meals and overeat later.

7. THE BACKSLIDING PHENOMENON

You've just signed a contract with yourself to avoid high-fat desserts for one month when you're presented with an array of your favorite "to die for" desserts. You say to yourself, "just this once" and satisfy your craving. Most of us have experienced the "backsliding phenomenon" in which we have lost our resolve and slipped back into a former bad habit.

When it happens, **be prepared for it and move on with your resolve**. You're most apt to backslide when you're tempted by something unexpected and your self-control is threatened. You can remove high-fat snacks from your home, but not from other places you eat.

Imagine tempting situations in your mind's eye and practice coping with them successfully. If you do slip, **don't waste time with self-blame**. Learn from the experience and get back on track.