



SET YOURSELF **UP** FOR SUCCESS

New habits to lose weight today

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Advice on how to achieve or maintain a healthy body is fairly standard. Eat a variety of foods including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Eat foods that are low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. Use sugar, salt and alcohol in moderation. And, let's not forget, incorporate regular physical activity into daily routines.

Though the guidelines seem easy to follow, life's challenges frequently get in the way. Fortunately, weight loss studies have pinpointed some of the most successful principles and methods to help in overcoming these challenges. You may find it helpful to experiment with these principles to find the ones that work for you. Success in maintaining or losing weight can depend on your behaviors and responses to your environment. How are you reacting to everyday situations? Are your habits effective in helping achieve your goals? You can learn and practice new behaviors to respond in a different and healthier way to the external conditions affecting your life.



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Think of your shopping cart as your healthy eating sanctuary. In it, you hold the key to your success. Buy healthy food, eat it, and reap the rewards.

GROCERY SHOPPING

For instance, if you typically grocery shop when hungry, you may impulsively purchase more than needed including less healthy food that “looks good”. You might be drawn toward snacks and convenience foods which are high in calories and fat. Instead, **shop after eating a meal or snack so that your hunger doesn’t fill your cart.** Shopping without a list is also dangerous. Grocery stores place tempting, but not necessarily healthy items, where they are easy to impulsively grab. Decide on healthy meals and snacks for the next few days or week and then prepare a grocery list and stick to it. What are the healthy food choices? It is very important to take the time to learn the nutritional values of foods and correct portion sizes. **The typical American eats too much fat and not enough complex carbohydrates or vegetables.** Use resources such as the USDA food pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) to analyze your typical eating patterns and identify areas to improve.

In business, the biggest key to success is writing down your goals. The same holds true in your personal life. Aimlessly eating when you’re hungry and not holding yourself accountable is a sure fire way to fail and slip back to your old habits.



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PLANNING

As in every other aspect of your life, **planning can make the difference between success and failure.** How exactly are you going to reduce and improve what you are eating? Besides planning what to eat, you should plan to eat your meals and snacks at scheduled times. Eating at regular intervals keeps your blood sugar moderated and can help you avoid becoming famished and overeating. Is unnecessary snacking a problem for you? Consider other activities you could substitute. Instead of chips and candy in front of the TV, how about doing some crunches, lunges or stretches? Help eliminate mindless snacking by removing food from inappropriate areas of the house such as bedrooms. Designate one spot in the house, maybe the kitchen table, as the only place to eat snacks or meals.

It is important to **plan how you will avoid temptation in social situations such as cookouts or holidays.** Beforehand, eat a low-calorie snack while you decide your strategy during the event. For instance, you might decide to fill most of your plate with raw vegetables leaving only a quarter of it for high calorie treats. Practice polite ways to decline food that you don’t want or need. Drink fewer alcoholic beverages as they can erode your willpower and cause you to go off plan. **And don’t get discouraged by an occasional setback.** Life will always find a way to interfere with the best laid plans so plan to eat healthy most of the time instead of trying to be perfect all of the time. Physical activity can’t be ignored if you want to maintain or lose weight. What people often don’t realize is that both routine activity and a fitness program are important.



OUT OF SITE, OUT OF MIND

Seeing food can stimulate the appetite and cause you to eat even when you aren’t hungry. **Keeping snacks on the counter can be very tempting.** Even if it’s healthy food, it may be more calories than you need. Avoid this temptation by storing food out of sight. Do you eat too much at meal time? Prepare or portion out food into single servings and then present it on smaller dishes to give the impression of a larger meal. Avoid the enticement of “seconds” by not having the serving dishes on the table and don’t linger when you are done eating. **Have leftovers? If you don’t have a plan for them toss them.** Eating or saving the last two bites may seem economical but they aren’t doing you any favors if they end up as extra calories on your hips.

Eating too quickly is a big culprit in overeating because you have already eaten too much by the time your body realizes that you are full. Slow down by putting your fork down between mouthfuls, chewing thoroughly before swallowing and pausing in the middle of the meal. Are you a member of the “clean plate club”? **Break that habit.** You probably won’t miss those last couple of bites, but over time it can make a difference to your waistline. **Focus on your food while you are eating it.** Activities such as reading or watching television distract the mind and cause you to finish whatever is in front of you whether or not you are still hungry. Concentrate on the pleasure of eating and stop when you feel satisfied but not quite full.



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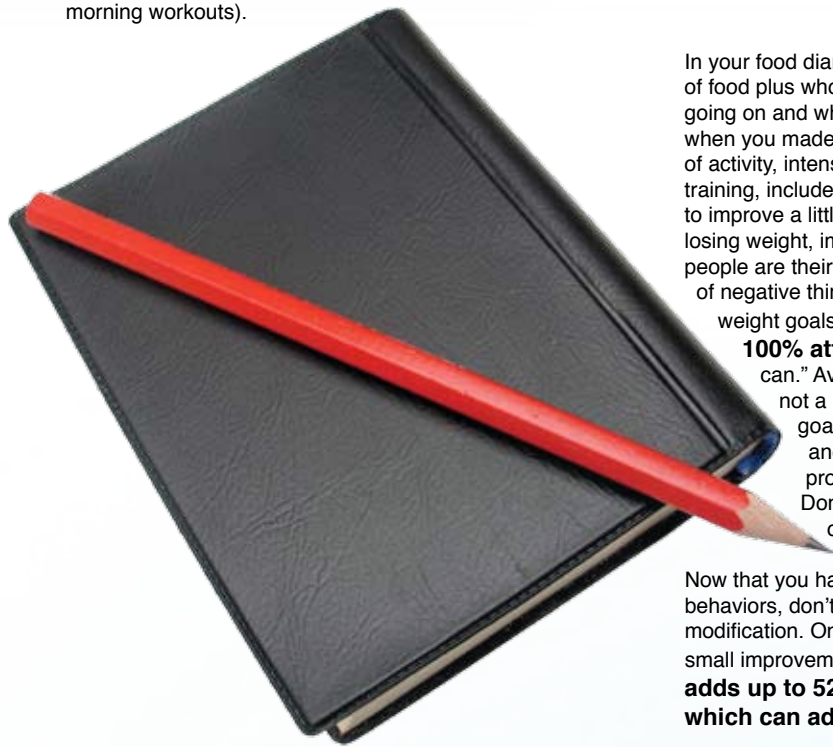
Portion control.
Planning ahead.
Cooking your own meals.
Simple keys to your healthy success.

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EVERY DAY ROUTINE

Routine activity includes everyday movements such as shopping, cleaning house, doing yard work and just about anything that gets you off the couch. Wear a pedometer to keep a record of the distance walked each day and then try to increase the number of steps to 10,000 on a consistent basis. Some ideas to increase activity include parking further away from a store, using the stairs, pacing while on the phone, taking your dog for a walk, or playing with the kids. **You should also have a fitness program which includes at least a half hour of exercise on most days of the week.** If you are new to exercise or haven't exercised in awhile, check with your physician to make sure it is safe for you to workout. Then begin with a mild program and increase the amount and intensity of the exercise very gradually.

Are you trying to go it alone? **Solicit help from family and friends.** Tell them what kind of support you want such as praise or material rewards like money or clothing. You can plan specific rewards for specific behaviors with behavioral contracts, weekly weigh-ins or food and exercise diaries. Keeping and reviewing food and exercise diaries can be a vital tool for monitoring your progress and identifying ways to improve. By completing exercise and food diaries, **you will feel responsible for your progress and experience a sense of empowerment.** Record keeping not only assures you that you are adhering to the program, but it helps you to learn about what works (e.g. eating six small meals keeps you full), and what does not (e.g. you have the tendency to skip morning workouts).



Be your own watchdog. Write it down, hold yourself accountable, and tell the world what you're doing. The more people looking out for you, the better.

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Consistency is key. It's far more beneficial to committ 30 minutes every day than an hour every second or third day. Vary your workouts to maximize the fat burning and muscle building potential. Once you get the ball rolling, keep it going! Big changes are just around the corner.

In your food diary, include the time and place of eating, type and amount of food plus who is present and how you feel. Look for patterns. What was going on and who were you with when you ate poorly versus situations when you made better choices. Your exercise diary should include the type of activity, intensity and amount of time spent on the activity. For resistance training, include each exercise, weight and reps. During every workout strive to improve a little bit over the last session. Many times, when it comes to losing weight, improving eating habits or instigating an exercise program, people are their own worst enemy. You can not underestimate the power of negative thinking in derailing the best laid plans. Set goals, especially weight goals, **but make sure that they are reasonable and 100% attainable.** You want to believe "I can" and not "I probably can." Avoid thinking in imperatives like "always" and "never." Life is not a pass/fail class and you don't have to be perfect to reach your goals. This means that you need to counter negative thoughts and perceived shortcomings with rational restatements about progress. So what if you had a chocolate chip cookie today. Don't downplay that you had a healthy breakfast and lunch and only ate one cookie instead of half the bag! That's a win!

Now that you have several ideas of how to improve your habits and behaviors, don't try to change everything at once. Start with one easy modification. Once you have succeeded at that challenge, move to another small improvement. **Making just one small healthy change a week adds up to 52 new healthy habits over the course of a year which can add up to big changes.**

Maintaining and losing weight can be complicated. Fortunately, many people have lost the weight and kept it off so we can learn from their experiences. Use these suggestions to find what works for you. Let every day be a bit healthier than the day before.