

3 Things You Must Do Before You Start Losing Weight

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Introduction

Contrary to what most people believe, weight loss is not easy even though it may seem that way for some people. Even with the numerous diet plans available in the market, losing weight is still hard for many people. That's because weight loss is more than just diet and exercise – it's a lifestyle.



Weight loss takes commitment to changes that are unique to you. In other words, you need to commit to the goal, personalize your goal and execute your goal by incorporating lifestyle changes.

Step 1 - Be committed

You need to be serious and committed to your weight loss goal. Following a fad diet and losing some pounds quickly is not what I call weight loss. These fads are geared towards a quick weight loss (which we all want) but never really achieve a long lasting weight loss. This lifetime weight loss is what you want. After all, why go through all the work and starvation of a fad diet if in a few months down the road you are right back where you started. Permanent weight loss is the goal and can only be achieved with commitment to life long changes. These changes include eating habits and your activity level.



So what methods can you use to commit to and stick to your weight loss goals? Saying it out loud is just one step, but it takes much more than saying the words. Here are some tips help you get “committed” to your goals.

Motivation Memos

Write down all the reasons you want to lose weight. These can be anything and everything like health reasons, looking good in that slightly too tight dress or showing up at the class reunion looking like you did in high school. Write each reason down on a separate sticky note. Then place them all around you at home and work. Re-read the reasons each day to help you stay committed and motivated to reach your goals.

Check List It

We make check lists for what to pack, the kid's school supplies, shopping lists and more. As we complete what we need to do or buy, we check it off. Add "to do's" to your lists. Use words like "eat a healthy breakfast" or "do 20 minutes of exercise" and even "no candy today". Then check it off as you have completed each of your weight loss steps you put on the list. These are great ways to remind us we are committed to reaching our goals.

Track It – Record It

One of the best ways to stay committed is to know where you stand. Track what you eat, when you exercise and even the inches or pounds lost. You can simply write these down on a sheet of paper or track it on the computer. Don't forget to add the "to do" of tracking and recording to your check lists.

Here are some online and offline [weight loss tools](#) to help you track and record your progress.

Step 2 - Personalize It!

Commitment is just one step. You have to know and understand what you are committing to in order to reach the finish line. This is where you need to make it a plan. And not just any plan, but your own personal weight loss plan.

Remember that each person is unique, so the amount of weight you lose and how fast you lose it will be different than your neighbor, spouse or co-workers. Don't let the rate at which you lose weight discourage you. Just come back to these 6 steps and refresh your memory and your motivation to reach your goals.

Companies create business plans all the time in order to make their yearly or quarterly objectives. You have probably created a plan or two yourself. Rather it is a vacation plan, home repairs or scheduling the kid's events.



Creating a weight loss plan is not much different. It's a matter of establishing the goal, establishing the time line, evaluate to ensure it's realistic, adjust where needed and of course execute the plan.

Here are some steps you can take to personalize your weight loss goal.

Know Your Objective

The first step in reaching any goal is to know the objective. If you don't know what to aim for you will never hit the target. This is no different for achieving weight loss success. You must know what the goal is in order to reach this goal.

Your goal can be in terms of pounds lost, inches lost, dress size or even as simple as looking better in the mirror. Although we tend to use the bathroom scale as our only measure of our progress, keep in mind that inches, fat loss and how you look are also great ways to help measure your success and keep us motivated along the way.

Set the Time Line

Once you know where you want to be now's the time to decide when you want to get there. Is there a certain event in which you want to be in a size 6 dress? Perhaps you want to be at your goal weight by your next birthday. Maybe the time is not important to you so it doesn't matter when you get there.

Even if the time is not important to you, it's important that you set a time in order to stay motivated to lose weight. Otherwise, you may tell yourself it's okay to eat another piece of cake because you don't have a set time. So set a time. Don't worry too much what date you pick here because we will reevaluate this time line in the next step.

Evaluate It

Now compare your goal to your date in step 2. If you set a date of 3 months and a goal of losing 60 pounds, this is unrealistic. Losing 20 pounds a month is probably not attainable and you will only discourage yourself.

Since you have probably tried to lose weight in the past, then you probably have a good idea of how much weight you can (realistically) lose in a given week or month. It's okay to make your goal and time line a stretch goal in order to push yourself, but don't make it impossible to reach. So now's the time to adjust either the goal or the time line – or even both if needed.

Set Milestones

Having a finish line is a great goal to reach for. But having smaller milestones to help measure your success along the way is a must. So take your weight loss plan and create some smaller goals along with dates you want to reach these goals.

Again your goals can be in terms of pounds, inches or fat loss or these smaller goals can even be in terms of changing current habits. For instance, perhaps your first small goal is to include exercising 3 times a week within the first month of your weight loss plan. Or you can set a smaller goal to include more veggies and fiber in your current meal plans.

Map It

Now it's time to map out your entire plan with the smaller goals and milestone dates. With the full time line listed out you can now start to add tasks in order to accomplish these goals. These tasks are the steps you will take to lose the weight.

For instance, one task may be to change your current 3 bigger meals a day to eating 5 to 6 smaller meals. Another task would be to add aerobic exercise twice a week and strength training twice a week. These may be the tasks that you define for the first month or two. As you move along, add more tasks that will help you stay on track.

Add more exercises, new healthier foods, drink more water, etc. You don't necessarily need to define each and every task for each and everyday, but have a good idea of what tasks you need to add in order to reach your large goal and the smaller milestones.

Execute It

Lastly it's time to execute the plan. Pick a day where you know you will be able to stick to your first set of tasks. If Monday is typically a day for running the kids to a soccer game, dance class, etc., this may not be the best day for you to start. Of course, if everyday is a crazy day, then you have to start somewhere.

Obviously if your days are hectic, then one task you need to add is to make some time for yourself (to exercise, prepare healthy meals and just to relieve stress and relax). Once you start, then there is no turning back. Just keep moving along your plan.

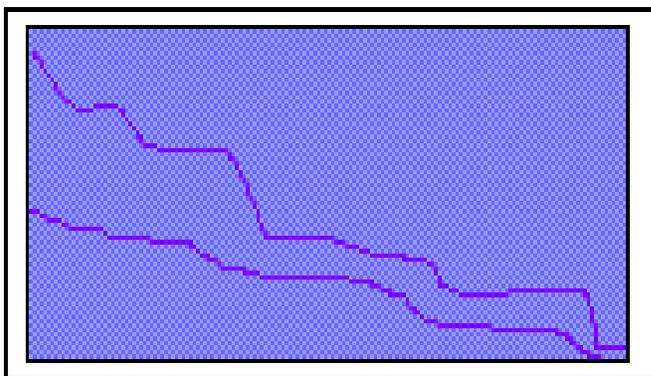
Remember to monitor your progress as you progress through your weight loss plan. It's okay to be a little off of a milestone goal or two, but remember, if you find that you are always off a bit, then it's time to adjust the time line, goal or tasks. This is your plan and as all good plans go, things will come up that will require adjustments to the plan.

However, you don't want to adjust just because you are not following the plan. If you do this, it just means you have no plan. You should only make changes due to roadblocks, unforeseen events, etc. that have created a bend in your road map to weight loss.

A good example would be an unexpected trip, say a business trip. Because you are on the road you may only be able to exercise a few times that week instead of the 5 times you had planned. Eating out while traveling can also alter your plan. Don't let these road blocks or forks in the road get you off track. Just adjust to the situation and then get back on your personalized weight loss plan.

Here are many useful tools to help you track and record the progress you are making on your personal weight loss plan.

MY WEIGHT LOSS CHART



Step 3 - Change It!

Now it's time to make the changes in your lifestyle in order to reach your goals. These are not just short term changes but rather a new way (healthier way) of living.

Don't think in terms of a “diet”. The word diet generally is associated with short term changes to lose weight. Although losing weight is your goal, keeping it off is the objective. So your changes are not short term – it's a lifestyle change.



The two major areas you want to focus on are your eating habits and your activity level. In addition to these areas you also need to take a look at other areas.

Take a look at the level of stress in your life, your sleeping habits and how you think and approach your life.

Change Eating Habits:

You may be thinking to yourself that you are hardly eating anything now so how can you possibly reduce what you eat even more. Well, the truth is it may not be the amount of food you eat that keep you from losing weight but rather the types of foods you eat. When losing weight you shouldn't have to “starve” to reach your goals. In fact, a good diet plan will keep you feeling full all day long – without going over your calorie limitations. Here is a list of foods you should focus on including in your daily meals.

Raw Foods:

You have probably seen many articles and recipes that talk about raw foods and how they offer tons of health benefits. Foods in their most natural form is when you benefit most from their nutrition. This is because Mother Nature is a great cook and she never adds unwanted processed fats and sugars. When adding fruits and veggies to your meals make them as natural as possible. Instead of a cup of apple juice, opt for the apple itself. Buy fresh veggies in season instead of canned and preserved. Although there are times you need to buy fruits or veggies prepackaged and processed, watch the labels and try to get them without added sugars or fat.

Whole Grain:

Another change in the food selections is in the breads, cereals and other items. Instead of white bread switch to whole grain. The whole grain breads are made with unprocessed flour so you get more nutritional value for the calories you consume. When you eat raw fruits and vegetables instead of fried, junk foods, you will consume fewer calories than now! When you consume fewer calories, you'll lose weight.

Low Fat:

Although fatty foods offer lots of flavor and can be very satisfying, they also come with lots of calories. So check the fats in the foods you eat. Switch to non-fat or low fat foods where you can. Dairy products like milk, cheeses and yogurts now offer low fat and fat free alternatives. The taste is still delightful for many of these products, although you may be able to tell the difference when you first switch.

Ease into some of the eating habit changes so that you can ensure these are life long changes. Try one area at a time and eventually you will have switch to more raw foods, higher volume of whole foods and less fat.

Changing your eating habits alone does not always guarantee weight loss and a healthy lifestyle. Another major lifestyle change you need to make is that of your physical activity level.

Here are more tips to [eating healthy](#).

I purchased an ebook call “Burn the Fat Feed the Muscle” several years ago before it even gained the popularity it has today. One of the best bonuses in this book is the A and B food guide. This gives you a method to grade the foods you eat. Just like in school, you want to get A's and B's in your food selections. However, unless you know what to look for (just like studying), you won't get a passing grade. Of course there's much more than just the food guide. You get way more. It's worth a look. Check it out [here](#).

Get Active

Exercises are good, but if you hate exercise, there are other ways to do it. You can lose weight by indulging in outdoor sports, swimming, dancing, running, etc; in fact, any activity that makes you move will burn calories and will help you lose weight. Of course, eventually you want to get to a structured workout routine. So what's the right exercises for you? Well, all exercises basically boil down to two areas; Strength Training and Aerobics (cardiovascular).

Strength Training

Strength training exercises help build lean muscles. For you ladies, this doesn't mean you will bulk up and look too muscular. Lean muscle mass helps to tighten and tone the muscles. Additionally, the more lean muscle you have the more calories you burn. This is because muscles are more metabolically demanding.

Strengthening exercises include weight lifting, resistance training (like with resistance bands or dumbbell weights), body weight exercises and even Pilates, yoga and stretching exercises help to tighten and tone muscles.

Your goal should be to incorporate some type of strength training 2 to 3 times a week working all the muscle groups. If you are just starting out, try doing just body weight exercises first. Then as you become stronger and more confident, add resistance with dumbbells or resistance bands. Include stretching exercises as well.

Here's more on [strength training](#) plus links to free fitness videos on how to perform several different types of strengthening exercises.

Aerobics

Aerobics are those exercises that get your heart pumping and your body sweating. Also known as cardiovascular exercises, these really burn calories and fat. Of course I don't expect you to go out for a 3 mile run, especially if you are just starting out, but you need some type of moving exercises.

If you are a little gun shy of beginning some form of aerobics, then start out with some fun, yet healthy activities. This could include dancing, cross country skiing and even brisk walks. Then as you get used to being more active, crank it up a notch and try new things. Go ahead and get your feet wet and do water aerobics. Visit a gym and try out the treadmill or elliptical machines. These are great aerobic workouts that you can do with a friend. Other options include buying exercise DVD's or your own home equipment. Even climbing your stairs will give your heart and body a great workout.

Here's more information on [aerobics](#) and all the types of exercises you can add to your weekly routine. From biking to walking, or circuit training to interval workouts, you can find the right exercise for you. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of aerobics 3 to 4 times a week.

Not ready yet for a structured aerobic workout? Then check out all these [fun activities](#) and the amount of calories you can burn.

Remember to stay committed to your weight loss, change your eating habits and get active. With these 3 elements you will lose the weight and keep it off!

Think and Live Healthy

Eating right and exercising go a long way to losing weight and looking great. But the lifestyle changes don't end here. You need to think healthy and live healthy. This includes reducing stress, getting a good night's sleep and staying fit and healthy.

Reduce Stress

Stress is one of the biggest causes for a multitude of illnesses and health problems. Of course eliminating all stress is not possible (although we would love a stress free life). However, minimizing stress plays a big role in being healthy and believe it or not, helping you lose weight.

The stress hormone, also known as cortisol, can play havoc on your health not to mention cause weight gain. This is because when cortisol is released into your body it causes an increased feeling of hunger and an increase in fat production.

One of the best ways to relieve stress is exercise. Try walking during lunch hours or doing some desk stretches. These stress relief exercises don't have to be a long drawn out sweaty process. Just get up and move until you feel your mind and body relax.

Other methods include breathing, relaxation therapy and even hypnosis. Try listening to some soft, gentle music, read a book or just kick back and watch the boob tube for awhile.

Get Rest

Don't dismiss this advice too lightly. Studies show that people who get less than 7 hours of restful sleep tend to be overweight. Your body needs rest in order to recoup and regenerate from the previous day's activities. Proper sleep can help your immune system preventing illness from flu or cold.

Sleep can also minimize risk of major health issues like cancer and heart disease. But the list of benefits of sleep doesn't stop there. It also reduces stress (and we know how stress can impact our fat production), it reduces inflammation, increases memory, keeps us more alert and even makes us smarter.

Proper sleep helps us make better food selections, exercise longer and harder and in general is a change to a healthier lifestyle. So go ahead and grab your pillow and blanket, snuggle up and get the rest you need and deserve.

Conclusion

There is no better time to start your new life. Reaching your weight loss goals is just a commitment away using your personalized weight loss plan to make permanent changes in your life. With these 3 elements you are well on your way to losing weight and looking great!

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