

Top 10 Weight Loss Mistakes **.....and how to overcome them**

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1. **Trying to do too much at once** – One of the biggest mistakes people make is to try to make too many changes at once. For instance, we tell ourselves we'll start working out 6 days a week, cut sugar from our diet, eat a salad daily for lunch AND go to bed by 9 pm every night, etc. This is a set-up for failure and discouragement.

The best way to achieve long term weight loss and lifestyle changes is to make small and gradual changes. It is important to set small realistic goals that you can achieve. I recently was working with a client and the first goal she made was to start eating a healthy breakfast at home. Just that one small start made a big difference for her.

2. **Thinking you can lose weight without exercising** – Many people will try to get around the need to exercise when working to lose weight. You may lose weight in the short term, but it is extremely difficult to maintain that weight loss AND to develop a healthy lifestyle without exercising.

Harvard's Nutrition Source recommends the following: *“A 30-minute brisk walk on five days of the week is all most people need. Or you can do 25 minutes of more vigorous activity—jogging, step aerobics, or singles tennis, for example—three days a week.”* You will want to start out slow and always check with your physician regarding your personal exercise recommendations.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/staying-active/>

3. **Expecting immediate and quick results** – Wouldn't it be great to lose that extra 25 pounds in a month? Most of us would love to have that quick of a change. Unfortunately, it is not realistic or healthy.

It takes time to lose weight. After all, you didn't put the weight on in a month, you are not going to lose it in a month. The general weight loss recommendation is ½ to 2 pounds per week. Slow and steady

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wins the race. You are working to make lifestyle changes, not just “lose weight”. Always check with your health care provider regarding their recommendation for your weight loss.

4. **Giving up too quickly** – “Ooops....I ate a bag of chips, that wasn’t on my nutrition plan....I blew it....might as well eat some more”. Sound familiar? Maybe you’ve been eating right and exercising and not losing the weight you hoped. As a result, perhaps you are thinking it is just not worth it.

There are a number of things to consider here. One is “black and white” thinking. It is either worth it or it’s not....I succeeded or I failed. Most of life is gray, not black and white. I encourage my clients to focus on becoming healthier and not get stuck on only the number on the scale. When you develop a healthier lifestyle you feel better, sleep better, enjoy life more, etc. Over time, you also lose weight!

5. **Thinking dieting works** – How many diets have you tried? The Grapefruit diet? the Liquid diet? the Cookie diet? Many people have lost the same 20 + pounds over and over again trying a variety of diets. Often times, they lose 20 pounds and then gain 30 pounds back.

Diets don’t work. Statistics suggest the 95% of diets “fail”. Lifestyle changes work. That means changing what and how much you eat, developing an exercise program, managing your stress and emotions, getting enough sleep and having a good support network.

6. **Not managing your stress** – During the past decade, I have given many presentations on stress management. One of my standard questions is to ask people about their current level of stress. The majority of people indicate that their stress level is moderate to severe!! As you know, many people overeat and choose unhealthy foods when they are stressed.

To achieve long term weight loss and a healthy lifestyle, it is important to manage stress. This may mean learning to say “no”, exercising, engaging in relaxation exercises, making sure you get enough sleep, etc.

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7. **Thinking weight loss means deprivation** – I recently conducted a Weight Loss class. One of the main complaints of the participants was that they thought that losing weight meant a life of deprivation – “but I like to eat, now that I’m trying to lose weight, I can never eat chocolate cake”.

Yes, in order to lose weight we can not keep up the habits that helped us gain weight! However, a healthy nutritional plan allows for variety and occasionally enjoying some of your favorite treats. The key here is “occasionally” and watching the portion size.

8. **Assuming that once you’ve lost weight you can go back to old ways** – Ahhh....you lost that 10 pounds you wanted to lose for your High School reunion....now, you can go back to the way you did things before, right?

Again, diets and short term fixes do not work, it is the healthy lifestyle changes that will help you maintain long term weight loss. That means a life long commitment to those positive changes. That takes time and we all make “mistakes” or fall back to old behaviors. The key is to quickly get back on the right track!

9. **Not writing down what you eat** – Many people will start writing down what they eat and then get tired of it. “It’s too much trouble”. “I forgot”. “I don’t want to”.

Research suggests that those successful with long term weight loss and healthy lifestyle changes, write down what they eat on a regular basis! A 2008 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* shows that keeping a "food diary" may *double* your weight loss efforts. The National Weight Control Registry—which is an ongoing research project tracking more than 3,000 people who’ve lost an average of 66 pounds and kept it off for five years—found that keeping a food journal is the one strategy used by the majority of successful dieters. In fact, “in a study of 1,685 dieters conducted by a health insurance company, the best predictor of weight loss throughout the first year was the number of food records kept per week.” There are MANY options to track your food intake. You can

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use good ole' pen and paper or you can use an online version. Here are some online options, many of which have phone options:

www.myfitnesspal.com

www.fitday.com

www.livestrong.com

www.personal-nutrition-guide.com/food-diary.html

10. Not changing your thoughts and beliefs – Maintaining the same thoughts and beliefs that lead to weight gain and unhealthy lifestyle habits will not help you to maintain your healthy lifestyle changes.

One of the areas that is often ignored or forgotten when developing a healthy nutrition plan and healthy lifestyle is addressing the way we think. Most of us have irrational, illogical, and unproductive thoughts that can decrease our success towards our goals. It is important to learn a healthy, more rational way of thinking to maintain your positive changes. That may also include developing more realistic and positive beliefs about ourselves.

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Leslie J. Hoy, MA is a Certified Cognitive Behavioral Therapist and a Certified Nutrition & Wellness Coach. She specializes in helping people lose weight and make healthy lifestyle changes using research-based cognitive and behavioral strategies.

She offers a variety of programs:

- *The Successful Link™ to Weight Loss and a Healthy Lifestyle e-Course (e-Course alone or with in-person or telephonic coaching)*
- *Gal Pal Weight Loss Groups*
- *The Successful Link™ to Weight Loss and a Healthy Lifestyle Classes*
- *Individual sessions*

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