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Successful, Healthy Weight Loss -- part 2

In the part 1 portion of this article we talked about your weight is a balancing act. We also indicated that essentially the weight loss equation is fairly simple: if you eat more calories than you burn, then you gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than you burn, you lose weight. We also mentioned that all too often, we make weight loss much more difficult than it needs to be.

If you choose extreme diets that leave us cranky and starving, unhealthy lifestyle choices that undermine our dieting efforts, and emotional eating habits that stop us before we get started- weight loss is difficult. It is important to know that there is a better way! Most of us can lose weight without feeling miserable. But we must begin by making smart choices every day, so we can develop new eating habits and preferences that will leave us feeling satisfied-as well as winning the battle of the bulge.

While there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution to permit healthy weight loss, I have found in my 39 plus years of clinical practice that there are basic fundamental guidelines that remain a great place to start. I would like to offer some of those in the remainder of this article.

One of the most important things that an individual must realize is that you have to start thinking lifestyle change, not short-term diet change. Permanent weight loss is not something that a “quick- fix” diet can achieve. Certainly, for most individuals this is not possible. Instead, think about weight loss as a permanent lifestyle change-a commitment to your long-term health and life. Many of the popular diets can help to jumpstart your weight loss, but long-term, permanent changes in your lifestyle and food choices are what will work for most individuals in the long run.

We also must reduce our emotional anxiety and continually remind yourself that slow and steady will win the race. If you aim to lose 1-2 pounds a week to ensure healthy weight loss-you will probably be successful. Losing weight too fast can take a toll on your mind and body, making you feel sluggish, drained, and feeling sick. Typically, when you do drop a lot of weight quickly, you’re actually losing mostly water and muscle, rather than fat. That long-term is simply not healthy!

It is also helpful to find what we would call a cheering section. Positive social support means a lot. Some of the more popular weight loss programs use group support to impact weight loss and lifelong healthy eating. Seek out your own support group-whether it is in the form of family, friends or formal support group-this way you can get the encouragement that you need when times get more difficult.

It is also important for you to have a weight loss destination/goal in mind to keep you motivated. Short-term goals, like when you want to fit into the bikini for the summer, usually does not work as well as goals like ones that make you feel more confident that you are becoming more healthier for your children’s sake. When frustration and temptation strikes, concentrate on the many benefits you will reap from being healthier and leaner. Vanity to some degree can be a motivator; but it’s typically short-term. Focusing on your long-term ability to be the caregiver you want-is a much stronger foundational basis for weight loss.

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I've also found with my patients that using tools to help keep you on track and monitor your progress is essential. Keeping a food journal and weighing yourself regularly, keeping track of each pound you lose and inches on your waist lost can be motivational. When you see the results in black and white, for many this is what will help them stay motivated.

Rarely does anyone find weight reduction simple. Yet, with a realistic goal in mind, positive support, and minimal yet effective lifestyle modifications-almost anyone can accomplish their weight loss goals. But weight loss is a participation sport. The effort you put forth is typically the amount of gain you will accomplish.

As a practicing physician I think it's incredibly important for you to realize one valuable point: getting healthier is markedly better than just losing weight. Losing weight alone does not imply that you becoming healthier. Human physiology dictates that the more functionally adequate you digest your food, pass your food and utilize/metabolize the food you're provided as energy-the more healthier you will be. Thus, small dietary changes "lifestyle changes", will be long-term more important for you not only to improve your health; but, for weight loss. Use any of your frustrations as motivation to accomplish your goal and enjoy your improved health! Step-by-step will win the race! Enjoy the journey!

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