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Weight Control: Operationalizing Your Plans

By Virginia Bola, PsyD

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We have such good weight loss intentions. We emotionally beat ourselves up for lack of self-discipline, weakness, cheating. We swear to change, to put looks and health ahead of comfort and self-indulgence. We promise to change. We want, more than almost anything else, to be the svelte, attractive individual we see in our own minds.

Before you run off, filled with enthusiasm for your latest, greatest, and final (you swear) weight control plans, slow down and take the time to operationalize your goals and the likelihood of your success will increase exponentially.

Here is one method:

"I'm going to lose 25 pounds before summer so I can feel comfortable in a bathing suit."

Take that dream and break it down into specific, limited steps:

1. Take at least a week to carefully select the diet, eating plan, or exercise routine you intend to follow.
2. Aim to adhere to your plan for at least 5 days per week for the loss of one pound.
3. If weight loss is less than a pound, determine to follow your plan for 7 days per week until you reach that one pound per week goal.
4. If you lose more than a pound, smile and enjoy.
5. Limit new or additional exercise routines to 10 minutes at a time, once per day, 3 days per week. You may easily want to do more but try to limit yourself. That will keep your desires strong and have you eagerly looking forward to the second month when you can expand your routines substantially.

"I'm going to let everyone know that this time is it – I am truly determined to reach my goal."

Before you share your intentions with everyone, pause and consider:

1. There are some advantages to having family and friends know about your plans. Not wanting to disappoint them or appear as a failure in their eyes may motivate you to bypass the inevitable

Weight Control: Operationalizing Your Plans

temptations that frequently arise. However, you do expose yourself to disapproval if your goals are not met or if you encounter the dreaded plateau which others often do not understand. 2. Determine who should know. If you have a history of failed weight control attempts, the response to your newest plan may be only a cynical shrug or, worse, the negative response of "Why is this time any different? You've never stuck to it before." If you suspect that you might hear something like that, don't say anything about your plans until you are well on your way. 3. Do family members or friends have a vested interest in seeing you remain overweight? Do your fat friends fear that your success will make them feel bad about themselves? When you diet, do you become cranky and difficult for your family to live with? Does your spouse or parent equate food with love and can't handle your rejection of their treats? 4. Don't be a diet bore. No one else (unless you belong to a weight control support group) is half as interested as you are (right now) in the number of calories, grams of fat and carbohydrates in everything on the table, nor why what they are eating is bad for them. 5. Consider not telling anyone

about your plans and make a game of it. Rather than saying "That looks good but I can't have any," fool everyone by stating "Sorry, but I just feel like having a salad . . . I just want a hamburger without that soggy bun . . . I have this recent craving for fish/vegetables." No one will second guess your decisions on what to eat when you make it clear that it is your choice, not an unpleasant necessity. When they notice that you have lost weight, pretend to be surprised and watch them roll their eyes in envy.

"I love this new eating plan because I can have so many tasty meals if I just make a few substitutions."

Ah, the so human desire to avoid pain is alive and well. Analyze your thoughts:

1. Face the fact squarely that dieting is not going to be a festive cruise through delicious and taste-tempting fodder. Yes, there are ways to make cottage cheese less chalky and spike vegetables with extra flavor. Later, when you reach your goal, you can start to indulge your epicurean creativity. For the initial, drastic steps, you are going to have to seek fun and satisfaction in other pursuits while acknowledging that, for now, food isn't very exciting. Grin and bear it: the less tempting your plate, the easier it is not to overeat. Remember that you are trying to fight temptation not encourage it. 2. Be honest with yourself and don't try to circumvent your plans by relying on claims you know are false. If you are pursuing low carb eating, candy bars which claim to be "low carb" are not something you want to devour with abandon. Whole grain bread is nutritious but consuming everything in the form of a sandwich will never result in reaching your goal. If your diet advises "Any amount from Column C," use your intelligence to see that it doesn't mean stuffing yourself completely, and often, even if your intake is limited to vegetables, protein, or whatever your plan allows. 3. While skipping meals can often cause problems, cutting out courses is usually totally beneficial. Who decreed that a meal should conclude with dessert? The goal is to curb that sweet tooth, not assuage it. Why mess with "low calorie" treats such as jello or fruit compote when you can skip dessert entirely and opt for a cup of freshly brewed coffee or green tea?

"This time, it's different. I really want to lose weight and look good in my clothes."

Have you ever heard yourself say that before? Consider a little personal introspection:

1. Why is this time different? When you tried to lose weight in the past, weren't you as equally determined? What about your life is different this time? Is the diet new and may work better than those you have tried in the past? Have you become increasingly worried about what overweight may mean to your health and longevity? Are you newly single and feel that appearance is suddenly more important than enjoying fine dining? 2. Has your attitude about food changed? If you continue to think about food, watch television cooking shows (just looking for low calorie recipes, of course), and plan meals with anticipation, you are doomed. As long as you remain tied to the American national infatuation with food, you will never really take control of your weight 3. Examine and modify your attitudes about food. Push eating into a non-dominant section of your overall lifestyle and maximize your pleasure in non-food pursuits. That is the secret to regaining control of your weight, your health, and your ability to live a life without the compulsions that have kept you a prisoner inside the bloated body you detest.

Complete analysis of how you are going to set your goals and how you will handle the requirements of "real life" is what can set your present effort apart from prior attempts, and prior failures. Successful long term weight control is more than what you eat, it is what you are.

Virginia Bola is a licensed psychologist and an admitted diet fanatic. She specializes in therapeutic reframing and the effects of attitudes and motivation on individual goals. The author of *The Wolf at the Door: An Unemployment Survival Manual*, and a free ezine, *The Worker's Edge*, she is currently working on a psychologically-based weight control book: *Diet with an Attitude*. She can be reached at <http://www.virginiabola.com>

Does Weight Loss Result In An Early Death?

By Gelfey Sterling

'Weight loss' is certainly the talk of the teenager, the adult and the elderly. It's hardly a surprise, why there are so many weight loss products, supplements, methods and drugs in the market to help you shed those extra pounds. But does weight loss result in an early death? The answer is yes and no.

It depends on your approach to weight loss. People who cherish the idea of looking good adopt immediate measures, which are very harmful to the body. The result. Adverse health issues towards the later part of your life that can even give you an early death. The 30-year long study undertaken by the Institute of Preventive Medicine at Copen Hagen University shows the same results. Out of the 2957 obese people studied, 268 of them died in 18 years.

Sudden weight loss methods are dangerous to the body. Stay away from plans and programs that offer immediate solutions. And it's unwise to follow heavy diet plans for a long time. Stick to short-term weight loss plans. It's safer as far as your health is concerned.

A word of caution goes out to the young generation who are recklessly out to lose the fat in their body. There are various routines, which you can follow to lose weight:

- Exercise regularly. There is no superior way to good health than work outs.

Weight Control: Operationalizing Your Plans

- Choose your diet wisely. More salads and fruits coupled with cereals and beans is healthy.
- Eat during regular intervals.
- Don't snack on oily food. Try low fat sandwiches for a change.
- Ask your family doctor about your body structure and he will guide you in deciding the right diet patterns for your body before you make any important decisions regarding your health, think about its pros and cons and decided if it's really worth a try.

Author is an experienced health and diet expert. For more visit:



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