

KEEPING IT OFF!

Lesson #1: Getting Started

Introduction

Why is it so hard to lose weight? Why is it almost impossible to keep it off? We certainly don't have all of the answers, but we are beginning to understand some of the problems and how they might be overcome. Much of this understanding has come from years of interacting with overweight people and noting when, where, and why they eat, and the role food assumes in their daily lifestyles. The results of such detailed studies suggest that lifestyle and behavior changes play critical roles in any weight loss program. Overweight people are unusually susceptible to the influence of their environment. It is not enough to simply be careful about what you eat; it is equally necessary to restructure your habits and lifestyle so that a new and permanent "thin" lifestyle will replace the old food-oriented way of living.

You may already be familiar with some of the things we will be discussing. However, there is a big difference between knowing the information and being able to put it into practice. The lessons have been broken down into a series of small steps for your benefit. Most people find it easy to make one small modification in eating habits with each lesson. Added together, these steps make it possible for you to both lose weight **and** keep it off.

Behavior modification concentrates on specific areas and offers suggestions about changing habits which may have locked you into a cycle of failures in the past. For example, almost anything can be a stimulus to eat; these multiple eating cues need to be removed before you can achieve successful control. Of course, this means it is first necessary to identify these cues and this in turn requires careful and accurate record keeping. It is here that "*behavior analysis*" begins. Learn to recognize your habits and emotions and how they relate to food. When do you eat, where, what is your emotional state, and what triggers your hunger?

Once you have analyzed some of your behaviors, you are ready to modify them. Again, careful record keeping, together with planned gradual behavior changes will produce a steady, permanent weight loss. You are both losing weight and beginning maintenance from the very onset. Once you are comfortable with record keeping, you will find this instant feedback an invaluable tool in your program.

Behavior modification also means other changes as well. Are you an "emotional eater?" Do you often eat in response to boredom, anxiety, or depression? What can you do to change these connections between emotions and eating? Often the answers require a good deal of effort and analysis on your part. Boredom-produced eating is not overcome by clenching your fists and yelling, "No, I won't eat!" Rather, it is the boredom which must be dealt with and not the eating. Similarly,

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depressive episodes for many people serve as cues to binge. How can you deal with such episodes? Are they serious enough to require professional help?

It should be clear to you, even from this short description, that behavior modification is a wide ranging approach to eating-related habits. The ability to lose weight and keep it off is a learned one. This ability results from persistence, a positive approach and a commitment to overcome even the largest obstacles. The priorities you set are strictly up to you.

In summary, behavior modification deals with the practical aspects of weight control. It is based on the premise that you can and must develop habits that assist in controlling your food intake and energy output. By changing only small bits of behavior at a time, you can achieve success in a consistent manner. The small changes made

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each week eventually add up to a healthier and more successful set of eating habits.

Your success in changing your habits depends to a great degree on your willingness to accept and *practice* the new techniques that will be presented and your efforts towards implementing them as a permanent part of your lifestyle. Be on the lookout for excuses or rationalizations in yourself and others. These invariably lead to a weakening of your motivation and in the effectiveness of your program. Statements like “It must be my metabolism,” or “I only cheated a little,” or “This is a great idea, but I don’t need it,” etc., are sure signs of a wavering commitment.

We would like you to finish the program not only a good deal slimmer, but also with the skills and understanding which will make you an independent, confident, weight-control manager. Behavior change is the most important requirement for significant, long-lasting weight loss. You can “cheat” all you want and no one will know. But if you give the program a realistic chance, you will be delighted that you started this adventure with us.

PREPARING FOR THE PROGRAM

1. Weighing yourself

Your worst enemy in any weight loss program is your scale. It lies to you all the time with due consequences. It also

reflects ancient history - it tells you (inaccurately) what you did yesterday and not how you performed today. **It tells you less about increase and decrease in fat storage than about the flow of water into and out of your body.**

For people who are sensitive to failure in weight control, your bathroom scale is guaranteed to discourage you even further.

Suppose you have a good day with regard to food and have calculated that you should have lost some weight because caloric output exceeded caloric input. You confidently get on the scale and much to your disappointment, no matter how you jiggle and kick it, the scale registers a slight gain. All that work for nothing? You knew that diet would not work for you! Meant to be fat forever?

What really happened is that you lost calories which would eventually show up as weight loss. But if you drank a lot that day or took in extra salt, you might show a *temporary* weight gain. This kind of discouragement has led many people to abandon reasonable weight loss programs out of frustration and depression. *Do not fall into this trap!*

Scales can also lead to a false sense of success. You have had a busy day, played some tennis or jogged, you come home, get on the scale and sweet surprise: a 5 pound weight loss! You should know better, of course, but with all that weight gone, a little extra at dinner won’t hurt, will it? I mean, the weight came off so easily after all.

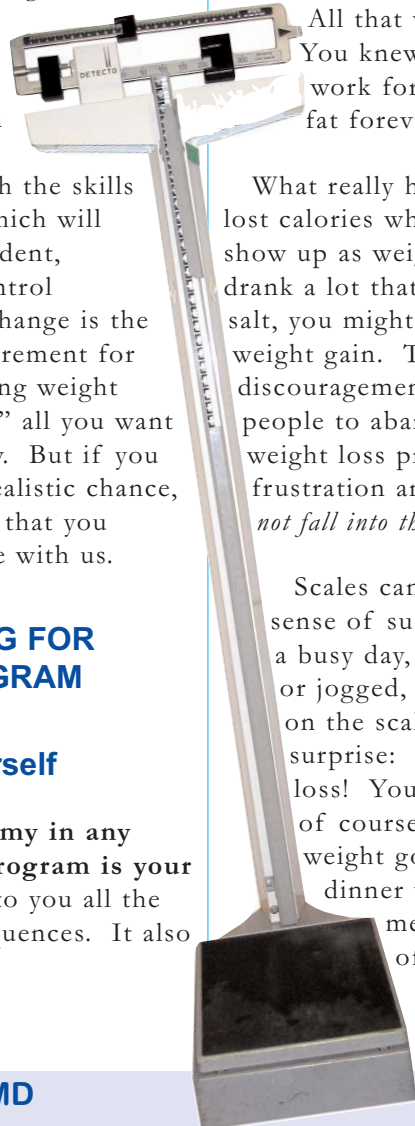
What really happened is that you lost a good deal of water when you were hot - water that your body needs and will eventually replace. When it does get this water back, that little extra you had at dinner will then become a weight gain. The weight comes on so easily, doesn’t it?

Without belaboring the point, you should weigh yourself infrequently; i.e., at long enough intervals so that water movement tends not to be such a major factor. Frequent weighing will not help you lose weight, and may discourage good behavior, because there are often plateaus in weight loss (usually due to temporary water retention). To avoid the scale, give it to a neighbor or put it in an inconvenient place and weigh yourself at most once a week.

2. Weighing food

Perhaps you resolved once before to use a food scale; you bought one with every intention of using it during one of your diets but it got to be a nuisance, and since sometimes it was not possible to weigh your food, you decided that estimating the amount by eye was accurate enough for your needs.

Let’s start again. It is very important that you learn the caloric content of the foods on your list and the relative quantities. Once this is accomplished you might occasionally estimate a quantity of foods on your list and the relative weight. But we must insist that you first do your homework and that means accurately weighing out all your food.



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Before weighing your food portion, guess the weight (or volume) of the food and the caloric content, then check to see how accurate you were. Do this for at least 3 weeks or until you feel you are correct in your estimates 95% of the time. We also suggest you purchase a small plastic change counter with 4 digits and keep a running total of your daily caloric intake. Each time you eat, add it on to your counter. Plan carefully and stop when you have reached the daily limit provided on your eating plan.

Knowing your caloric intake level at all times is an important way to monitor your progress and avoid unpleasant and discouraging weight surprises.

3. Planning Ahead

One of the most important keys to successful weight control is pre-planning. Do not fall into the trap of having excuses for eating the wrong things. Look ahead and make sure the right things will always be available to you. Have at least one week's supply of food on hand fulfilling your daily menu requirements. You do not want to be low on food supplies in case you are ill and cannot go shopping, or if you receive unexpected company and have to serve "your" food, or if you are unusually busy and cannot find time to shop. Having a week's food supply on



these, without providing yourself with an excuse to eat the wrong kinds of food.

CAUSES OF OBESITY

Obesity is a multi-faceted problem and it has many contributing factors. The obese individual may never be able to pinpoint the exact cause of the problem. In fact, for most overweight individuals, all the factors described below come into play. Being aware of these contributing factors can help to control and eliminate the problem.

Obesity is the number one nutritional problem in the United States. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of overweight individuals. One important reason for this is that our society has succeeded in creating an abundant food supply while our physical activity continues to decline. The desire to conform to the cultural mandate that slender is attractive, and in addition, increased awareness of the health risks associated with being overweight or obese, induce many people to attempt to lose weight.

Obesity is **invariably** caused by an intake of calories beyond the body's need for energy. Obesity implies neither a specific disturbance in physiological functioning, nor a specific physical abnormality; rather, it is a consequence of a variety of interrelated factors.

HINTS AND GUIDELINES

1. Eat only those foods on your diet list.
2. Eat only the *specified amounts* of foods on your diet.
3. Eat 3 meals a day at regular intervals. Do **not** skip meals.
4. Use standard 8 oz. measuring cups and/or measuring spoons to measure foods. Most foods should be measured without liquid after cooking.
5. Meats and poultry should be baked or roasted, broiled, charbroiled, microwaved, or braised in small amounts of water. Do not fry. Fish should be baked, broiled, steamed, poached, or microwaved. Fish may be "fried" in a non-stick pan with pan spray. **Remove all visible fat before eating.**
6. Follow our recommendations with regard to any individual needs.

The major factors resulting in obesity are:

1. Poor Eating Habits and Environment

Eating too much becomes a *habit* for some people. Sometimes this is the result of lack of knowledge of the caloric value of food. The amount of food at meals is not necessarily excessive, but it is often the extra foods that account for a gradual increase in weight. Do you remember a snack while watching television, that second roll, a rich dessert, etc.? These are examples of excessive calories.

The obese individual responds not only to physiological hunger but also is extremely sensitive to environmental food-related cues.

Do you associate eating with social events, television watching, specific rooms, and psychological wellbeing, as well as with actual physical hunger? You must learn to control and/or avoid these food cues in order to reduce and maintain desired weight.

Many obese individuals eat too rapidly. When you eat a meal in less than twenty minutes you will still feel hungry and probably request a “second helping.” If you consume a meal in less than twenty minutes, your stomach is full, but your brain has not yet received the message. Therefore, you may still feel hungry, even though you really do not need more food. **If you learn to slow down food intake and thus allow the message, “I am full,” to reach the brain, you will have learned a very helpful behavior modification for weight control.**

At one time it was thought that the eating habits of obese parents determined the food choices of their children. To some extent, there is probably some truth to this. A child who is taught to savor fatty foods may favor them in adulthood. We now think the eating habits taught by parents have more impact in terms of the *ways* in which foods are used, rather than the *kinds* of foods selected.

2. Physical Activity Patterns

The marked decrease in physical activity in affluent societies is a major factor in the rise of obesity

as a major health problem. Many people continue to gain weight throughout life because they fail to adjust their appetite to reduced energy requirements. Obesity is rare in most underdeveloped nations because of the high levels of physical activity necessary to survive.

Until recently, physical inactivity was considered to cause obesity primarily by its restriction of energy expenditure. Evidence now suggests that inactivity may also contribute to an increase in food intake. Food intake does not decrease proportionately when physical activity falls below a certain minimum level. Contrary to popular belief, when a sedentary individual increases physical activity on a regular basis, food intake unusually decreases. Conversely, restricting physical activity may actually increase food intake! These concepts will be further explored in later lessons.

3. Metabolic Disorders

Many people would like to believe their obesity is caused by an endocrine disorder. In actuality, only a very small percentage of obese individuals do have such problems. For example, deficiency of thyroid hormone may reduce metabolism so that obesity results more easily.

A series of studies has established that there are some differences in our body’s facilities for storing fat. Some of us tend to have more fat-storage cells than do others. Much of the multiplication

of these cells appears to take place during the first two years of life. This tendency seems to be exaggerated by overfeeding during infancy.



4. Genetic Factors

Did you know that only 10% of children with normal weight parents are obese? However, 40-50% of children with

one obese parent are obese, and *this number climbs to 80% when both parents are obese!* Innovative studies have shown some clear genetic basis for obesity. For example, records of identical twins brought up separately, in different environments with different parents, have shown a remarkable tendency toward similar fatness or thinness. The individual born with a genetic tendency to gain weight must keep constant watch of caloric intake in order to avoid gaining weight.

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