

Lesson #9: Enthusiastic Weight Control

The Importance of Positive Thinking

The Positive Thinker's Ten Steps To Enthusiastic Weight Control

1. Think Thin

The way you feel is controlled by the way you think. Use the principle of indirection by making smallstep lifestyle changes instead of a head-on collision course with diet only.

2. Nothing is Impossible

Take the "T" out of the word can't. Apply diligence and learn needed skills. Don't panic, but think in terms of the possible. Become a specialist in doing the impossible.

3. The Three Magic Words "It doesn't matter."

Don't waste your time on trivia. Adopt the "live and let live" attitude. Change the things you can change and stop worrying about the ones you can't.

4. Keep Enthusiasm Going and Going

Renew positive attitudes daily. Partake of daily inspiration as nourishment for the soul. Sharpen your positive attitude blade by accepting obstacles as new and exciting challenges.

5. Convert the 'Ifs' to 'Hows'

Eliminate "if only" and "what if" from your thoughts (they're negative). Instead, "dig within" for strength on "how to" do it. Fragment problems and use step-wise solutions.

6. The Magic of Believing

Believe that goals are possible before embarking. Review your reasons for wanting to be thin and healthy. Mistakes are positive; you learn from them. Use right words: e.g., terrific!

7. Tired? Astonish Yourself

Learn the self-discipline of positive thought control to overcome inertia. Take one day at a time. Relax, meditate to release your limitless inner energy. Positive thinking refreshes.

8. Extend the Fullness of Life

Don't be afraid of pleasure (other than food). Widen your horizons of interests and activities. Eliminate boredom by seizing the boundless opportunities for joyful experiences.

9. Recognize the Advantage of Hitting Bottom

There is only one way to go when you've hit bottom, and that's UP! Always think UP! Think victory, not defeat. Nothing can keep you down if you have faith in yourself.

10. You Can Deal with Any Problem

Contemplate success rather than failure. Cool it, relax, meditate! "Easy does it." Develop the "I-will-stick-with-it" attitude. Don't say "I'll try", but say "I'll DO it!"

(See text for details.)

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To be of practical value, a treatise on any subject must have a purpose or an objective. This one is intended to help solve a very common problem in the field of obesity, weight reduction, and weight maintenance.

The problem is that weight control is generally a negative experience. First of all, there is the need for a negative energy balance. That is, less energy is put into the body than is used up so that the deficit is supplied from excessive fat deposits. Secondly, the word DIET has by itself a negative connotation. It implies NOT eating certain foods. Furthermore, if you drop the letter “T” from the word diet, you are left with DIE! (something that describes the feeling of many obese persons when they look forward to starting the latest new diet). Is there anything more negative than death itself?

Next, consider the state of mind of most dieters. With past memories of repeated failures, the suffering of hunger pangs during previous attempts, and the remarks from friends and relatives: “What, are you going on another diet again?” it is a wonder that there is even enough positive motivation to get started. The initial motivation is usually quite strong, but it, too, is often negative: a fear of ill health or a possible medical catastrophe (e.g., heart attack or stroke), or just feeling so miserable (e.g., can’t tie shoelaces, walk up a flight of stairs without getting out of breath, etc.) that dieters make the choice out of desperation, finally, to do something about it. The positive reinforcement of initial weight loss (mostly water loss) is soon replaced by a plateau, in spite of a continued effort. This temporary standstill in

weight loss has a definite negative effect on the mental attitude.

Sooner or later, there follows the first mistake – the first episode of mis-eating (better term than cheating). Then comes the inevitable guilt feeling: “I just can’t do it, I’ll always be a failure.” Negative thinking only reinforces previous memory patterns of frustration and disappointment in weight reducing attempts. Even the solution to the “cheat” (“What will you do the next time you are in this situation?”) is invariably a negative one: “Oh, I WON’T eat it again!”

Those who have made it through all this negative thinking and reached normal weight, usually think: “I can hardly wait to get off this diet. I’m sure tired of only being able to eat this diet food.” – another negative speculation. Usually, the motivation fades (no more discomfort – a negative feeling): “Why should I continue to deprive myself of the pleasure of foods I like?” (deprivation: another negative experience). If you start eating in the same manner as before your weight reducing attempt began, weight is unavoidably regained (you may refuse professional help: “I can do it on my own from here on”), and you can become depressed over the inability to maintain the weight loss. Your initial enthusiasm for the weight control program will begin to sag and droop, and more negative thoughts will become apparent: “I’m just no good.” Guilt, low self-esteem and self-depreciation are the main beliefs occupying the conscious mind. All these are negative self-defeating reflections, make you feel worse than ever before, and can lead you to seek solace in more food. Every setback or problem acts as an

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additional negative drain on the spirit. These negative influences are probably the major cause of failure in all weight control attempts. We will address converting these negative mental attitudes to positive ones. Moreover, we will describe some very specific techniques to sustain a positive attitude throughout not only the weight loss phase, but also during an interval when it becomes even more critical, during weight maintenance. The maintenance period is characterized by an absence of the biologic reinforcement of weight loss. Therefore, the preservation of

positive thought processes becomes a primary concern.

The principle of indirection

Attacking the obesity problem head-on by diet alone is notorious for its ineffectiveness in the long-term. We need to approach this problem indirectly, by influencing the cerebral process. Negative, self-destructive thoughts must be converted to positive, creative ones.

Your self-appraisal has a great influence not only on what you do each day and how you respond to various stimuli, but also determines the type of person you eventually become. Therefore, how you imagine or picture yourself to be is of utmost consequence. If you equate yourself with depreciation, self-limitation, and self-doubt, you are inviting defeat. Negative thoughts tend to attract negative results.

If, on the other hand, you equate yourself with appreciation, unlimited growth potential, and belief in your untapped resources, you are striving for victory. Positive thoughts tend to activate the world around you in a positive fashion. You will attract positive results and, accordingly, generate optimism and creativity. By learning to think positively about your weight control effort, you will convert deterioration to growth and shift from self-limitation and failure to self-improvement and accomplishment.

You will learn to deal realistically with problems, be able to stand up to difficulties confidently and fearlessly, and come to realize that every obstacle to your weight control endeavor incorporates the

seeds of its own resolution.

When you use positive thinking during weight control, you do not react emotionally to difficulties, recognizing that the mind functions best when it is cool and under mental control, rather than when it is hot and emotionally disturbed.

To put it in a nutshell: As human beings, we can alter our lives by reconstructing our attitudes. A positive mental attitude will achieve positive results in your weight control effort. Conversely, a negative disposition will only produce defeat and failure.

Enough said! Now, let's get on with some specific methods of thinking positively during the weight control program.

Step One: Think thin!

We are certain you've heard that phrase before. Yet, do you really know what it means? We will explain. The most important concept you must learn is that *the way you feel is controlled by the way you think!* In other words, your emotions are controlled by your thoughts – not the other way around, as is commonly believed. Consequently, to feel good, you must have good (positive) thoughts. Bad (negative) thoughts will make you feel bad. If you intelligently organize and discipline your thinking (rationally and realistically), you will be able to live the most emotionally satisfying, creative, and self-fulfilling life. Let's expand on that a bit.

Negative thinking is a major cause of weight control efforts falling apart.

There are four basic processes essential to survival and happiness as a human being. They are as follows:

1. First, you perceive something, using your five senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing.
2. Next, you experience an emotion as a result of this perception. It may be pleasure, disgust, love, hate, anger, depression, guilt, etc.
3. As a result of the above two processes you may act. You may move, or be still, eat (the one we're most interested in), walk, run, climb, swim, etc.
4. Finally, thinking and reasoning enters the picture. You might come to some kind of conclusion, store a memory pattern, imagine, conjecture, theorize, or use logic to problem solve.

These four functions overlap and denote different portions of the act of living. Let's use an example to illustrate how these four basic modes relate to each other and actually follow each other.

Suppose you see a piece of your favorite kind of pie (perception). You experience a pleasurable feeling and a desire to eat it (emotion). You now make the necessary movements with your hands and mouth to ingest it (action). Finally, you might think to yourself: "Gee, that sure tasted good. But I really shouldn't have eaten it. It has too many calories. I feel guilty about having eaten it" (thinking). The next day, you might feel very depressed when you are up a pound on the scale

(emotion). You develop an ambivalent attitude towards the pie (you like it because it tastes good, but you hate it because of what it does to your weight control effort).

The main point of this example is to illustrate that the emotion (ambivalence) emerges as the main problem of living. Thus, it leads us to ask: How can we go about understanding our feelings (emotion), and how can we learn to control them better to serve our human needs?

Thoughts breed emotions

Throughout this handout, we will try to show you that you can literally create your feelings by controlling your thinking. To have appropriate feelings (those that have as a goal survival and happiness), you must also think appropriate thoughts (those that assist you to survive and achieve your goals). These types of thoughts, as you will learn, are positively oriented. Such thinking tends to minimize inner conflicts and turmoil. Such positive thinking will help you to observe your feelings more fully and openly, determine their appropriateness, and allow you to choose to feel the way you want to feel, and help you to get what you want out of life.

So, let's apply this concept to thinking thin. If you think positively, you will think thoughts such as these:

- It is possible to become thin.
- I can choose a food program and stay on it.
- I can remain slender after weight loss, if I continue to work on it.

- Sacrifices are an integral part of my weight control effort, but in the interest of good health and happiness I am willing to make these sacrifices.

- Change in eating habits has to become permanent. There is no going back to the kind of eating that caused my weight problem in the first place. But, it's worth it. Control over my behavior takes place more in my head than at the table. I will learn to think correct positive thoughts.

- My desire for weight control is stronger than my desire for food. I can increase my desire to be thin and decrease my desire for food.

This last statement expresses the crux of the problem. This is where the principle of *indirection* must be applied. Imagine that you are swimming in a strong current. The current represents your desire to eat inappropriately. If you try to swim against the current (your previous head-on diet methods), you'll never make it, no matter how strong a swimmer you are. The strong current will get you every time. The way to reach your goal is to swim with the current – at an angle – that will eventually lead away from it (principle of indirection). You will swim at an angle by working on modifying the way you think. No head-on collision here, but a very effective, steady progress of indirectly achieving your goal.

Step Two: Nothing is impossible

Impossible. This is probably the most destructive word in the English language because it puts a damper on enthusiasm. Over the past 25 years we have heard just

about every conceivable reason why people are not able to continue their weight control efforts. You name it, and we can tell you about an individual to whom it has happened. It ranges all the way from a son or daughter arrested for taking illegal drugs, to diagnosis of cancer in yourself or in a close friend or relative, a major car wreck, to one's entire home or business burning down to the ground. Catastrophes like these do not in themselves cause failure to our weight control efforts, but it is the negative thoughts they generate that are the source of the difficulty. Thoughts such as: "I just have too many problems. I just can't do it. I have so many worries right now, I need a vacation from my food plan. I can't keep my mind on following this weight control plan with all these matters dominating my thoughts."

The interesting point is that not everyone with major problems drops their weight control efforts. Many succeed in spite of these catastrophes. They are what we like to call "specialists in doing the impossible." Just as in taking the "T" out of the word diet, these people have taken the "T" out of the word can't. They have taken the "im" out of the word impossible. The main difference is that they used positive thinking. They were able to look at the positive side of their misfortunes.

Accentuate the positive

Eliminate the word *impossible* from your vocabulary. The word is loaded with doubt and disbelief, and generates failure. You can rise above that word mentally, look down on your problem, and it will look far less formidable. Only with

positive thinking will you be able to generate greater confidence in your ability to deal with it.

Every person experiences, at one time or another, sickness, sorrow, financial problems, frustration, personal hardships to a degree that may erode or even cause a collapse of built-in inspiration to succeed in his or her weight control effort. The solution to this problem is always positive thinking. Decide to not panic, to think positively, to keep the faith going strong. By keeping up the courage, eliminating the concept of impossibility, and sound rational thinking (in terms of the possible), you will be able to sustain the inspirational attitude necessary to overcome even the most devastating blow.

So, take a new look at the *impossible*. Specialize in doing things that you never thought you could do. If you keep a positive mental attitude, your goal of being a healthy, happy, normal-weight person is attainable.

Step Three: The three magic words

Never underestimate the power of words, especially when they are combined in a catchy phrase that says it all. This is particularly so in the weight reduction field. Remember such titles as: *Calories Don't Count? The Drinking Man's Diet? The Last Chance Diet? The Diet Revolution? The Doctor's Quick Weight Loss Diet?* They all have one thing in common: they imply that your wish of being able to lose weight fast, without effort, while eating all you want, has finally become true through some new magic the author describes in that book. It is, of course, a big lie –

there is no such magic. Yet, millions of copies of these books are sold to a gullible and unsuspecting public.

That, as well as any successful business, has been said by experts to rely on the magic of six words:

Find a need and fill it!

William Shakespeare's immortal words from Hamlet: *"To be or not to be, that is the question"* contain far-reaching and solemn thoughts about our own individual destinies.

Recognizing the power of words to influence and affect not only people but also situations, we would like to give you a three-word phrase, derived from the principles of positive thinking, that can influence your weight control effort more than any other, if you will only learn to affirm them often. The magic words are: **IT DOESN'T MATTER!**

If you master the profound thought in these three simple words, it will help you more than anything else in maintaining a positive mental attitude in the face of adversity or even disaster. Your need to seek solace in food (a most inappropriate and harmful use of that substance) will be reduced to nearly zero.

Don't waste your time on trivia

Obese people generally tend to overreact to trivial matters. At the moment it feels like an earthshaking tragedy; it feels as though it is going to ruin your life. Yet, look

back a moment. What was that thing that you got so upset and distressed about five years ago? Remember how overwrought you felt at the time? Well, how do you feel about it now? Seems like a minor issue, looking back on it five years later, doesn't it? You are still

here and alive? And that's really all that matters!

Nothing in life really carries any significance except life itself. Everything else is of little consequence and is insignificant. Death is beyond your control. There is nothing you can

do about it, because it is inevitable for all of us. So, concern yourself with living. Anything that does not affect your ability to subsist and keep breathing is inconsequential. That's the basis of the three magic words.

Next time something bothers you that you cannot change, use the magic words of the positive thinker: "It doesn't matter!" Keep saying it, even though your inner voice might argue: "Who are you trying to kid? It does bother you." Just keep saying the magic words, over and over again. If you say it often enough, you'll believe it. Why? Because you know you're right. It really doesn't matter – life will go on – you'll still be here five years from now, barring other unforeseen events. But this particular thing that's bugging you right now is not going to cause your demise – and it will seem trivial when you look back on it five years from now. Chances are, you might not even remember it then.

Next time something bothers you that you cannot change, use the words of the positive thinker: "It doesn't matter!"

The 'I don't care' attitude

Remember, the way you feel depends on what you think. We'll always come back to this basic premise. If you want to make yourself miserable, then worry about every little item that comes along. But if you can learn to accept the "live and let live" attitude, you'll feel much better for it; you'll be a much happier person. You can control your feelings by your thoughts. You can't control the event that you're worrying so much about. So exert your effort in an area where you have command, your thoughts. You can govern them, and they affect your emotions.

Not only is this "I could care less" attitude effective for petty emotional discomforts, the insignificant irritations of daily living, but it is also the quickest way to rid yourself of distressing thoughts, anger and fear with more serious problems. There is only one requirement for the use of this technique in your arsenal of thought control. That is, it must be used only in situations in which you have no control – where you can do nothing about it. If you've got a mate who is an alcoholic, a mother who has cancer, a child who is a drug addict, they need the care of a professional. Are you a minister, doctor or psychiatrist? Even if you were, you shouldn't be treating your own family. That's the first rule of professional conduct. So, since you can't do anything about it anyway, why make yourself sick about it? That's not going to help that person. Use the magic words: "It doesn't matter!" It will work for you much better than dropping your weight control effort and eating that pecan pie. That never cured cancer or an alcoholic mate. Keep things in their proper perspective.

Step Four: Keep enthusiasm going

As you become a positive thinker, your life will take on a new meaning. Not only will you be more successful in your weight control effort, your job, and your family relationships, but the enthusiasm spawned by a positive mental attitude will lift you to higher levels of achieving happiness. Things will flow towards you rather than away from you. In times of trouble, setbacks, and unforeseen difficulties, the positive viewpoint will serve to revitalize the enthusiasm needed to keep the most indispensable aspect of long-term weight control operative, namely, motivation. That's why we've titled this handout Enthusiastic Weight Control. The positive thinker has mastered the ability to renew his or her positive attitudes. Like nutrients, we know we must continue to partake of enthusiasm and inspiration in healthy daily doses. Otherwise, depression, lack of ambition, and exhaustion will soon manifest themselves. A positive attitude cannot be taken for granted. It must be reactivated and replenished daily, or it will decline in force for lack of nourishment. You must constantly keep it going, always going.

Keep your blade sharpened

One of the best methods of becoming stronger and realizing our full potential is by pitting against trouble and hardship. Without roadblocks to overcome, without challenges to meet, we cannot sharpen the blades of positive thinking. Life would be awfully dull if everything came easy. The thrill and excitement of overcoming a

tough situation (by having used a positive approach) is ample reward for the effort that is required. The main reason the authors of this booklet chose bariatrics (the medical treatment of obesity and allied disorders) as their specialty was that it presented a definite challenge. It was a difficult area with a very low success rate. Realizing that a complete overhaul of the obese person's thinking, attitudes, and lifestyle was needed, presented an almost impregnable task – one worthy of a real positive venture. As it turned out, it is more of an adventure. In partnership with our patients, we're enjoying every minute of it, as many of them are also. Sure, there are trials and tribulations. There are defeats and failures. But there are also victories and successes. The latter are the ones that make it all worthwhile – it revitalizes the positive mental attitude. As the enthusiasm is refurbished, the successes begin to outnumber the failures. Success builds upon success! Yet, to get there, you must replenish your positive thinking on a daily basis.

We even suggest you keep a log. It need not be anything fancy. Just a sheet of paper with each day's date. See if you can enter at least one item next to each date where you've used a positive mental attitude to help solve a problem or overcome a difficult situation. The written list will give you reinforcement, to keep it going and going.

Step Five: Convert the 'ifs' to 'hows'

If you think about it for a moment, you will realize that half of life is an “IF” – that is, it is made up of uncertainties. If you look at the four letter word LIFE, you will note that the middle half is “IF”. Most of us have managed to get in control of the certainties of our lives. We do fine with our weight control effort until the first uncertainty arises. At that moment we break down and give up the struggle.

First, you must realize that life is full of variables. It can suddenly trip you up, turn on you, literally throw the book at you. But being a positive thinker, you will also appreciate that hardship and struggle helps in the development of a strong and forceful character. You must be constantly on the alert for the “ifs” and be prepared to get control of the unpredictable as well as the predictable events. The positive principle entails conversion from an “if only” person to a “how can it be done” person. Instead of one dismal “if only” after another, positive thinkers never admit defeat or failure. Instead of becoming dependent on the whims of a failure pattern, they emphasize getting a new grip on themselves and say, “how can I move on and do it?” In taking this positive attitude, you will feel a sense of control over the “ifs” – the unexpected difficulties. It is the only method we know of that will eliminate discouragement. Sitting and brooding over the “ifs” only worsens matters.

You must accept responsibility

Wishful thinking (“if only I had a million dollars”) is a hallmark of emotional immaturity. It is a direct refusal to accept responsibility for solving your own problems. Cut out this dreamy-eyed deliberation and get back to reality. We can’t get what we want, merely by wishing for it. That’s negative thinking. You can’t become thin and stay that way, just by wishing it. Start with what you’ve got, and by intense positive thinking plan your avenue of attack. Then carry it out step by step, expending the necessary energy and effort. By doing so, you will have converted to a “how to” person. Yes, you can get what you want, using positive thinking, but in the process you must mobilize your untapped potential. It’s there, in all of us. When we accept a limited concept of ourselves and our abilities, we are thinking negatively. It is only through creative and positive thinking that we can bring out our full force and capacity. We’d like to propose a motto to help with this concept:

Dig within. Therein lies the potential. Dig within, and it will forever flow forth. We have strength we do not know we possess. It will emerge if you will “dig within.”

Beware of being a worry wart

There is another kind of “IF” that you should be mindful of. It’s the “worry” kind. It too is a form of negative thinking. It is expressed by the “what if” phrase. Whereas the “if only” slogan implies wishful thinking, the “what if” connotes

Keeping a “positive thinking log” can help to give you reinforcement.

trepidation and anxiety. “What if I get hungry on this diet?” “What if I get wrinkles from losing weight too fast?”

“What if I have to go to this party with all this food around?” “What if I gain all this weight back again?” What if... what if... what if...? ...

So what if? Big deal! If we are going to worry about every possibility that might arise, we would never get started with anything. Let’s cross our bridges when we get to them. This type of negative thinking can severely restrict your progress. Now, by this we do not mean to imply that you shouldn’t plan ahead for such eventualities – but only if they are fairly certain to occur. Wait until you come to the bridge. When you get close to it, then plan HOW you will handle the problem – in a positive manner. What can you DO at this point? That’s how you convert the “ifs” to the “hows.”

Step Six: The magic of believing

In the previous section we showed you how you can be what you want to be, not by wishing, but by figuring out how. In this section, we wish to emphasize that you must first believe that it is possible to achieve what you want to attain. The positive thinking concept recognizes the immense powers of the mind when it is directed into positive channels. This means that you must direct your mind at a specific goal. We are all goal oriented creatures. Drifting through life without goals is like the child lost in the forest. He just goes round and round and really

never gets anywhere. There are several steps involved in this goal striving process, or we are right back to the “wishful thinking” stance.

We take it for granted that you have already made the decision to do something about your weight problem. We also presume that you have made the commitment to do whatever is necessary to reach that goal; that you are willing to put in the time necessary to achieve this objective. Next, you must engender the belief that you can do it! That’s where positive thinking comes in. Understandably, with a memory of repeated past failures, you will have your doubts. Accordingly, you will need a method to achieve this proper state of mind. A list of “Reasons Why I Want to Be Thin” – one that is well thought out, and one that contains as much detail as possible, is of inestimable value in firmly implanting that goal in your mind. Make copies of this list. Carry one with you at all times. Read it before bedtime every night. Read it whenever you are tempted to eat a forbidden food – before you eat – not afterwards. There are many other techniques of mental programming that you can use.

A ‘one shot’ affair is useless

The main point we wish to emphasize here is that the magic of believing must consist of a continuous flow of self-repeating, enthusiastic phrases. A one-shot affair of “*I believe I can control my weight*” at the start of your program is not good enough. It must be continually reinforced until it

Wishing for things is negative thinking. Planning on how to act to get them is positive thinking!

literally overwhelms you. Otherwise, your belief will fizzle out; it will just go down the drain with the first few obstacles to your weight control effort that you come across.

What do you do when the first discouragement hits you? When you run out

of gas? When you hit a weight plateau? When your weight goes up a few pounds during maintenance for no apparent reason? That’s a very critical time, because at that moment you can easily revert from being a positive to a negative thinker.

The “secret” is a simple one: You must genuinely **get turned on** by your belief in your ability to succeed. And you must continually work at keeping this **turned on** feeling going.

Keep your cup filled with enthusiasm

The following are five common sense rules for staying “turned on”:

1. Look at the positive side of things. One of the first rules of the positive thinker is not to react emotionally, but rationally. When you feel that you’re getting involved emotionally (and you can’t think straight when you do), then step back a moment, and start using your brain – start thinking (positive, that is). If you look for it, you can find the good that is present in every bad circumstance. To every disadvantage, there is a corresponding advantage – if you will just search for it. It surely is present there. You need to take a

dispassionate, cool attitude and do some factual thinking. We are not suggesting you deny trouble. Merely, that you re-examine it. Meeting a roadblock is your chance to strengthen your character. When our patients make an error during their weight reduction, we are delighted. What a wonderful opportunity. Here is a mistake that will allow you to improve yourself. We learn from our mistakes. So, how can you learn anything if you don’t make any in the first place? When patients start getting enthusiastic over their goofs, then we know we’ve gotten our point across. We all have our ups and downs. The downs give us an opportunity to practice staying turned on. “Things are terrific.” That’s the attitude you must engender. They really are, if you are getting proficient in the “problem solving” technique. And how can you do that without problems?

2. The best medicine doesn’t come in a bottle. We are forever looking for a pill to make us happy. We have already alluded to the tremendous number of tranquilizer prescriptions being written in this country. The truth of the matter is that happiness does not come in a pill. Happiness is a concept in the mind. Start every morning by affirming your enthusiasm. “It’s great to be alive.” “Finally, I am doing something that is constructive about my weight problem.” “I wonder what obstacles to my effort I’ll be able to overcome today?” “Yesterday is over. Today is a brand new day, with new challenges and new victories (no matter how little) in my weight control effort.” That’s what charges up your battery, not a pill. Remember, what you think, is how you will feel. If you feel down in the dumps, stop feeling sorry for

yourself, and at least start THINKING about the brighter side. Surely as day follows night, the proper emotional response will ensue.

3. Take advantage of the power of words. The right word at the right time will often work like magic. We can apply the same principle to staying turned on. Start using words such as fantastic, wonderful, marvelous, amazing, fabulous, exhilarating, dynamic, exciting, delightful, great, superb, etc. If you say them often enough and long enough you will begin to think that way. Once you start thinking that way, you'll soon begin to feel that way – and that's what this handout is all about – feeling good!

4. Think of yourself in new categories. You must re-educate your thought pattern to one of exuberance instead of self-degradation and self-renunciation. Begin to think of yourself in terms of self-control, self-determination and self-esteem. If you put enthusiasm in the top-priority category, where it rightfully belongs, your mind will, in time, begin to accept the conviction of an undiminished supply of energy, your untapped resources. We are all capable of doing much greater things if we will only free ourselves from the artificial, self-imposed shackles of self-limitation. If you will think in the context of replenishment, reinvigoration, and renewal of your spirit, you will become a completely new person, more vigorous, vital and excited. As you paint your self-image, so you will become. If you program the right positive thoughts into your mind, feelings and actions will follow in their wake.

You can be what you want to be, not by wishing, but by figuring out how.

5. Use the “if” principle in a positive manner. The final method of staying “turned-on” is also one of the most effective ones. We refer you to our discussion of L(IF)E (page 12): half of life being an “IF.” In that discussion we underscored the negative aspects of the “ifs.” When you have that swamped feeling that tends to dampen your enthusiasm, you can use the “ifs” to your advantage. By changing one short word, you can convert the negative “if only” or “what if” into a positive “as if.” The “AS IF FORMULA” consists of your simply acting as you would like yourself to be. Merely by acting “as if” you were already this person, in due course, you will become such a person. We have described this principle in some detail in our handout on assertiveness training for the obese person: *It's Your Right To Be Thin*. The basis of becoming and feeling more assertive is to start by acting that way first. It is based on Professor William James' (the father of modern psychology) discovery that our self-image is based on the way we behave, not vice-versa. That is to say, the self-image does not come first, but it follows the action. So, if we want to change the way we feel about ourselves, we must start acting that way first. This is why an actor will occasionally begin to assume the role of the character he portrays. In the trade it's called *feeling the part*. The convincing actor actually feels like the person whom he portrays on the stage.

If a frightened person wants to become less fearful, he or she must begin to act more valiantly. Ultimately, this fear will diminish

and be replaced by courage. If you want to become more compassionate of your fellow person, you must stop being overly critical of everyone and start seeing the good connotations in others. As you do so, you will begin to feel more appreciative and feel a higher regard for those whom you previously criticized.

The “as if” tenet can also be applied towards increasing and sustaining your enthusiasm. Your initial efforts at being enthusiastic may appear ineffective, perhaps even hypocritical, since you don't really feel enthusiastic – not yet, anyway. Nevertheless, if you persevere, the “as if principle” will become operative, and unexpectedly you will note the first spark of enthusiasm rise within you. As you continue to act “as if” you were enthusiastic, your glum state of mind will make a remarkable conversion to one of enthusiastic, positive thinking. That is what we mean by “turned on” and “staying turned on” during your weight control effort. Without it, the likelihood of success is small indeed.

Step Seven: Tired? Astonish Yourself!

Probably the biggest enemy of any weight control program is a **feeling** of fatigue. Notice where we have placed the emphasis; it's on the word **FEELING**. If you think about it for a moment, you will agree that the sensation of fatigue is, in fact, an interpretation by your brain. And more often than not, that's exactly where it originates. If you have taken your prescribed nutrients, have adhered to the lifestyle activity program outline for you (see the

Keeping it off! Handout #5, *Lifestyle Activity* for details), and if there is no concurrent illness (e.g., flu, upper respiratory infection, etc. – easily checked by your physician), there is no physical cause for you to feel tired. But you still feel tired. No one is denying that. You are not being told that you are just making it up. On the other hand, let's not lose our sense of proportions. Let's agree with your statement that you FEEL tired. So, what are we going to do about it? Well, truthfully, WE can't do anything about it, but YOU can! You can control your feelings. If you don't, they'll control you. So, you say: "How do I control my feelings?" We're glad you asked. It allows us to repeat the basic premise of the positive thinker: *you can control your feelings by controlling your thoughts!* Sound familiar? We hope so. We've said it often enough in this handout.

Self-discipline is the key word

No one can do it for you. As long as you are convinced that your problem can be solved without effort, you'll continue to look for the non-existent magic formula. We can prescribe the cure, what needs to be done, but **you** must do it. The cure is self-control, or more specifically thought control. Nothing mysterious about that; nothing glamorous; but it works! Here is the formula:

First, let's change the word fatigue to INERTIA. Remember, we've already told you how important the right word is. INERTIA really better describes what your problem is. What it's due to is immaterial.

The "as if formula" consists of your simply acting as you would like yourself to be.

Maybe it's due to food deprivation. You are no longer allowed to indulge and gratify yourself with the only pleasure in life you've had up to now (see step eight: Extend the fullness of life). That's a tough blow to many people. They just can't handle it, and they react with inertia, manifested by symptoms (feeling) of fatigue. Yet there is a way out for you, if you are willing to become a positive thinker.

We'll ask a leading question at this point. Did you ever astonish yourself? If we did all the things that we are capable of, we would literally amaze and dumbfound ourselves. How can all this hidden energy, this stored vitality be released? It's there, no doubt about it. But how do we draw upon this vitality to counteract the inertia? We are going to use positive thinking.

Three steps to overcome inertia

First, let's get rid of any guilt feelings. Forget about any feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. You are going to change all that with positive thinking. The way you think is the way you feel! Yesterday is over and done with. You cannot change the past. Instead, concern yourself with the future. It will be a bright one, with the right thoughts. Forget about how tired you've been feeling. Tomorrow is another day, and you are going to **take one day at a time.** Let's concentrate on feeling better tomorrow.

Once you accept the concept that tomorrow can be a

fresh start and that all the energy you've expended (usually on trivial items) can be replaced by the tremendous vitality locked inside you, you're ready for step two. Relax, cool it, let's release some new energy and vitality. Relaxation and meditation are forerunners to renewed energy. As you let peace and quiet fill your mind, allow your physical body to be re-energized. It doesn't take long. While in this relaxed state let your mind entertain thoughts of renewed vigor and vitality. You'll arouse feeling refreshed and ready to go. It's a simple formula, but you must do it! That's where the self-discipline comes in.

Step three: Repeat daily. In our high-strung world of tensed-up people, spend some unhurried moments by meditating on the "life-force" within you; on the limitless reservoir of energy that only needs to be released. Think energy, strength, exuberance and vitality. If you think these positive thoughts, soon you'll feel them. Need more proof? You've been doing just the opposite, dwelling on how tired you feel. Can you now see how your thoughts have made you feel worse and worse all the time? You've been on a collision course with inertia. There is only one way to reverse that; empty your mind of unhealthy thoughts; affirm the value of health; with weight you've already lost your system can now respond with new vigor; revitalize your mind with positive thoughts. Before you know it, your weak feeling will pass and you'll get back the energy and vitality so characteristic of those who practice positive thinking for a refreshed body, mind and spirit.

Step Eight: Extend the fullness of life

In this section we are going to discuss pleasure, YOUR pleasure. That word often wrongfully arouses feelings of guilt and self-indulgence, especially in individuals who have been led to believe that enjoyment for its own sake is wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. An appreciation for the zest of life involves many delicious experiences for their own sake. Unfortunately, many obese people have become so restricted in their range of enjoyments that food remains the only pleasure they do not deny themselves – and then, of course, they feel guilty about it. The positive thinker realizes that it is diversity that adds bliss and happiness to living.

Afraid to let herself go, the obese person represses her emotional life to the point where her spirit is dried up and stunted. The fear of pleasure may actually become a pathological phobia causing a sheltered existence without ever realizing the contentment from happy experiences.

Pleasure is an essential ingredient in a good life. If it is absent, it is often replaced by inappropriate ingestion of food. It has been said that in our American culture today, food is probably the cheapest and most easily available pleasure. Not so! It can be very expensive, especially when it results in obesity and associated ill health. We hope to show you that there are many things that are not only less expensive, but also more readily available. They don't even require a trip to the market or restaurant. Now, we are not proposing that life should be nothing more than a

quest for one thrill after another. That would be self-defeating and would end in a very banal, unhappy existence.

Nevertheless, pleasure must be intimately interwoven with our goals so that they may be reinforced and enhanced. Most obese people are willing to undergo the rigors of a weight reduction program because the goal weight is intrinsically entwined with relief of multiple discomforts, the attainment of an attractive figure, and new dimensions of living. The error lies in the central theme that food occupies in the objective for happiness.

Widen your horizons

Accordingly, the obese positive thinker must be willing to add new dimensions to life, dimensions that are oriented away from food and eating. That means we must be receptive to the multiple flavors of life derived from other activities, persons, and things. We must be willing to widen our options to include physical, intellectual, perceptual, and spiritual experiences that give joy and gratification.

The positive approach starts with a preparedness to break out of previously defined boundaries and a cultivation of becoming receptive to a variety of rich adventures. To venture forth on this expansive road, the positive thinker must be willing to be curious, to take chances, so that he or she may enjoy these pleasures sensuously and vigorously.

There has been an unfortunate effort to categorize pleasures into two separate classes: the so-called lower pleasures (biological: touch, food, sex) and the higher ones (aesthetic, intellectual, spiritual). Such an artificial division of pleasure is a mistake since there are differences in the quality of experience with each of them and a balance needs to be established. Moderation in all things is still a good rule and allows us to avoid emphasizing any particular kind of pleasure to the exclusion of another.

The important point we wish to stress is that there is a need for a continuous path of development by which a person can learn to appreciate new areas of experience. By permitting a continual growth and expansion of our awareness of the whole range of pleasures available to us, we are permitted to develop our capacity to expand and unfold. Thus, we will never be bored. Boredom is an arch enemy of the obese person since it is most easily relieved, albeit only temporarily, by eating. The other enemy is stress, but we have dealt with that one in other portions of this work.

Boredom: symptom of the negative thinker

With numerous opportunities for pleasure in life, there are many who find their existence dull, monotonous and uninteresting. They invariably have a pessimistic, negative outlook on life. They are usually full of anxiety, feel depressed, are bored during the day, yet can't sleep at night. They hate

**Take one day
at a time.**

**Relax.
Repeat daily.**

getting up in the morning; hate having to face another dull day. They complain of lassitude and fatigue, and simultaneously complain of “not enough to do.” They blame their surroundings and people they associate with for their boredom. These negative thinkers reveal their limited appetites (except for food) for the many pleasurable satisfactions in life. They are only half alive and emotionally immature. Despite the boundless opportunities for joyful experiences in our modern day society, they categorically insist that the only pleasure in life they have left is food. Their negative thinking in regards to food is often expressed by: “You can’t take that away from me too!”

The positive thinker on the other hand makes a real determined effort to seek new experiences. We venture forth without guilt or fear and seize every opportunity to respond to new challenges. We are forever educating ourselves about the wonders of the world we live in. There are new things to uncover, new ideas to intrigue the intellect, new pleasures to enhance the richness of life and living. Positive thinkers keep alive their sense of curiosity. We pursue activities that develop our creative capacities. We never have enough time to assimilate new forms of knowledge. We never cease to wonder and be intrigued. There just isn’t enough time to be bored. The difference between the positive and negative thinker might best be summed up by the following dialogue:

Positive Thinker: Try it, you’ll like it!

Negative Thinker: No, I better not. I might not like it.

The best way for the negative thinker to start becoming positive is to develop a healthy curiosity. Here are a few areas to investigate (by no means complete).

The positive thinker’s: ‘Try it, you’ll like it!’ (To counteract the obese negative thinker’s: “No, I better not; I might not like it.”)

History of various cultures, how they developed into our modern society; products from various parts of our globe; interior decorating with all the various fabrics, colors and shades; collecting stamps, coins and similar hobbies; clothing and styles; music, playing instruments and listening to various kinds of music; sports (excellent one for the obese negative thinker); literature, poetry, plays and crafts; mysticism, cults, theology; languages; goods produced by our civilization, airplanes, cars, bicycles; toys and games. The list is absolutely endless, limited only by the imagination. Life need never be dull again. Such interests are much more fulfilling than the pursuit of trying every new restaurant with a special cuisine.

Step Nine: The advantage of hitting bottom

Probably the most profound statement that has ever been made about the person who has hit the bottom is that there is only one direction to go – and

THAT’S UP! Just think about that for a moment. What an advantage to have hit bottom. That’s really the best place to be.

Things can only get better. That’s an important concept to remember when you feel you have “just about had it.” Nevertheless, as in all the other steps mentioned in this handout, you must start with the mind – in your thinking. You must start thinking UP! If you do that, you will start the climb that will get you to the top. Always “look up” is the positive thinker’s motto. The way will clear as long as you

It is the little day-to-day irritations that you need to learn to cope with. As they pile up on you, you will eventually feel that you’ve hit bottom.

keep up the positive spirit. To believe that you are “down for good” is the negative thinker’s attitude. We have seen many obese individuals who expressed that “This is the last chance I have to lose this weight and keep it off.” Then they go on to recite a long history of failure. When one investigates the causes of previous breakdowns, there is always one element that comes through loud and clear. The individual reversed her initial enthusiastic, positive attitude to a negative one.

The precipitating event may have been a weight plateau, financial problems, or and emotional trauma. More often than not, however, it is not any single dramatic event that could be isolated and blamed for the failure. Usually, it was a series of little pesky frustrations that got the individual down. Most major challenges are often met with remarkable powers from within. That’s due to the endless reserve we

all possess. It seems that in the face of major tragedies, we are often able to mobilize these resources.

It is the little day-to-day irritations that you need to learn to cope with. As they pile up on you, you will eventually feel that you've hit bottom. One reason for this phenomenon is probably a time element. The big events are usually short-lived, and so is the negative thinking. On the other hand, when little things seem to hammer away on your spirits day after day, the initial enthusiasm, no matter how strong, seems to spring a leak and loses its force until it is replaced by negative thoughts. We might term this the "endurance principle." The difficulties of human existence can get pretty tough. Even though you might have put the weight control effort under priority category one, once you've achieved some loss, you no longer feel the discomforts that made you decide to lose weight in the first place and your priorities change. You then begin to rationalize that it's just too much work to keep going, that things have just gotten you down.

The solution is of course a reversal of this negative thinking. You must begin to think positively: *"Nothing can keep me down."* Entertain this thought: "Fundamentally, nothing can get me down, because the basic human quality deep within me resists defeat." The one force designed to meet and overcome even the most shattering series of crushing circumstances is the thought, *"Nothing, but nothing can get me down."* "As long as I have faith in myself I have the most powerful force operating in my favor." Never think down – always think UP. Never doubt, even when you feel you've hit bottom, there is only one way to

go, and THAT'S UP! Keep that positive thought going, and going, and going. It's your most effective weapon, and since it's in your mind, nobody can take it away from you.

Step Ten: You can deal with any problem

Every once in a while we come across an obese patient who may have progressed quite well initially, but then seems to come to a standstill. He seems to lose interest, ceases to do his homework, and begins to slide back into former habit patterns that looked almost as though they had been licked. When questioning such an individual as to why he apparently has lost his motivation, the invariable reply is: *"It's just too much work, I can't cope with it. It's getting me down."* What has happened? Having read this far, you should readily recognize typical negative thinking.

Even as children we soon learn that life is really a series of coping encounters. Some things we cope with quite well. Otherwise, we would have never made it into adulthood. If we could only apply the same thought processes we used for coping successfully in those situations with which we felt we couldn't cope, we would be able to convert our failures to successes.

It has been said that success is rarely attained by those who occupy their time contemplating failure. Notice how thoughts once again influence feelings and ultimately action. So, since thoughts are so important, why not aim your "thought-sights" as high as possible? Aim them right at the top!

The positive thinker, on the other hand, occupies his time by contemplating (thinking about) only success. He never disclaims the possibility of incredible achievements. He tenaciously holds on to the thought: *"I can cope with anything!"* Now, that is not as inconceivable a claim as it might appear to be. Yet, how is this extraordinary feat accomplished?

Let's review a few principles you should have already learned from studying this handout:

1. Principle of indirection
2. Specialist in doing the impossible
3. Convert the "ifs" to "hows"
4. Take one day at a time
5. The "as if" principle
6. The power of words
7. The endurance principle
8. "It doesn't matter"
9. Remain goal oriented
10. Learn to relax

The best procedure for handling a difficulty is to grab a hold of it and start to deal with it. Don't indecisively and vaguely fool around with it, but deal with it forthrightly and at once. Now, by this we do not mean to imply that you should meet the problem "head-on." Remember the principle of indirection, sneak up on it sideways. As a positive thinker you have already decided to take the "im" out of the word impossible. Instead of wishing "if only" I had such and such a talent, convert that to, "How, am I going to attack this problem?" Take it apart into its component sections and plan how you are going to deal with each of them ("one day at a time"). Smaller segments are much easier to handle than one big problem. Next, act "as if" you are already overcoming it. Use the "power of words": terrific, great challenge, fantastic problem, exciting experience, etc. Finally, the

endurance principle: Keep hammering away at it, “keep trying” until you overcome it. If at first you don’t succeed, “It doesn’t matter.” Keep only positive thoughts in your mind while you keep coming back with new approaches. Eventually you will succeed and you’ll have had a lot of fun trying – even more fun in overcoming it. Just think what it will do for your self-confidence. Even during the process of working on the problem, your self-esteem will ascend new heights. Why? Because, you’re actively coping now. You are DOING something about it. Before, you only negatively speculated: *“I can’t do it. I can’t cope with it.”* You’ve taken the “T” out of the word can’t.

Cultivate the qualities of a philosopher

It is crucial to remember that during this entire process of coping, you keep your cool. It is necessary to keep calm, meditate, relax. Your mind functions best when you can control it. Take things as they come and always remain mindful of the positive thinker’s motto, “I can be the master of anything that may happen to me.” This calmness of mind is vital to coping with difficulties. If you’re uptight and nervous you cannot grapple with a problem efficiently. When you get apprehensive or panic, you cannot function as an effective mature human being. Get your head on straight. THINK – and think positively!

The last part of the coping response is the endurance principle. The effort must be sustained. This is where you must harness the powers of your imagination. Keep

your goal in mind. We have already told you that we are all goal oriented beings. Never forget that. Sometimes the struggle is long and arduous, but if you can form a strong mental image of your goal (the long-range solution to the problem) the little steps you have to take to get there will be bearable. You are in the process of achieving. The hard toil of continued “trying” will be reinforced by the enthusiasm which will continue to build as you get closer to your goal. And, don’t forget the relaxation part. “Easy does it!” if the current strain seems to be breaking down your effort. Let up a bit. Relax! Meditate! You’ll come back refreshed, with renewed vigor, from your inner pool of endless resources. Then try again, but in a more constructive manner. That way you’ll never go stale. The inspiration is there, just let it come out. Meditate on something pleasant. Even better, go for a brisk walk while you meditate. The change of scenery and the physical activity will do wonders for the mind. Intense and laborious mental strain can sometimes stymie your best efforts. The technique of breaking the strain by diverting the mind to relaxation will tend to restore balance to your thoughts. You will be able to recapture your positive thinker’s disposition.

What do we mean by ‘trying’?

This is a word commonly misused, in fact, abused, by the obese negative thinker. On many occasions we have had lengthy conferences with patients about problems they have encountered during their weight control efforts. The most pressing ingredient during such a problem-solving session is for the patient to recover his or her positive thoughts. Quite often we will suggest a number of steps to

consider in overcoming the problem. Whenever the interview is concluded with the remark: “Okay, I’ll try,” we are always concerned. Experience has taught us that these types of affirmations are not good enough. On revisits, these patients rarely report even having started implementing the previously given suggestions. In fact, saying, “I’ll try” literally means, “I won’t do it.” It is a negative thinker’s response. The positive thinker affirms, *“I’ll DO it!”* If you want to become a genuine positive thinker, eliminate the word “try” from your vocabulary (and your thinking), and put in its place the phrase, *“I’ll do it.”* It has a much more authentic connotation of positive thinking than the phrase, “I’ll try it.”

Five coping recommendations

We would like to conclude this section by listing some specific and practical techniques of coping with difficulties that might arise during a weight control program. It will also serve to summarize, in a workable form, the positive thinker’s way of handling problems.

1. Keep a cool head. Do not let yourself become overwhelmed by difficulties. Don’t “dramatize” such situations. Be careful of the words you use to describe them (remember the power of words). In any event, don’t panic. Use your head and THINK, and always think positively about problems.

2. Fragment the problem into its components. Separate it into small manageable constituents. This is best done with paper and pencil to help clarify each element in your mind. Approach the solution in small steps.

3. Start with the present. Don't ruminate about your past failures in handling similar circumstances. Deal with the present and plan for the future. Nothing is impossible to solve, if you will think positively about it.

4. Use a step-wise approach. Never try a head-on collision course. Remember the principle of indirection. No problem is so big that it cannot be solved one step at a time. The important point is to keep your goal in mind as you work on each step.

5. Heed professional advice, positively. Your weight loss team at Clinical Nutrition Center is on YOUR side. Their suggestions are geared to allow you to solve your own problems. They cannot solve them for you. YOU can, if you keep believing, keep working, keep only positive thoughts in your mind – eliminate the negatives.

A philosophical postscript

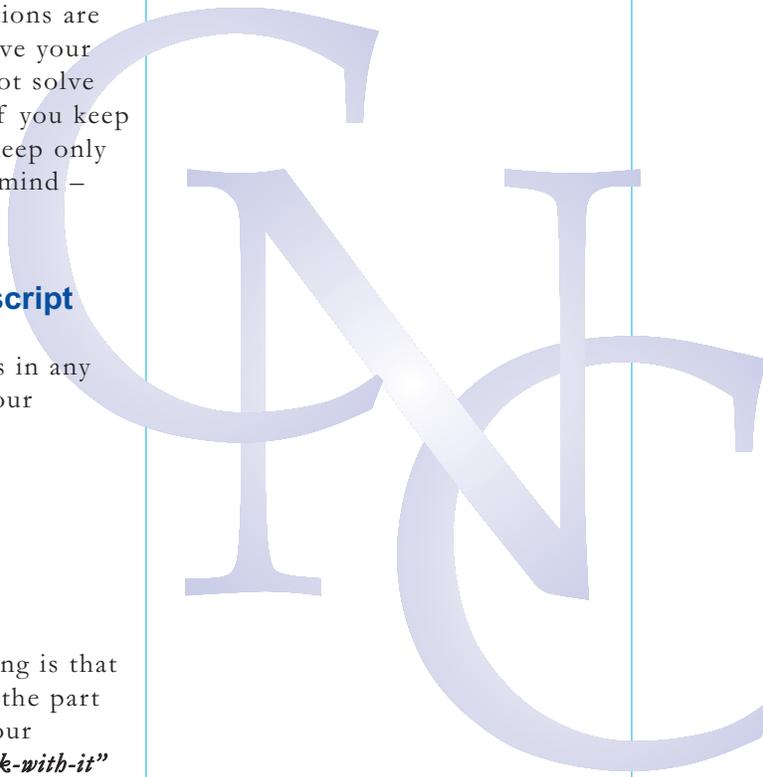
The formula for success in any endeavor is made up of four essential components:

1. Intelligence
2. Knowledge
3. Skills
4. Attitude

The most amazing finding is that in studies which analyzed the part played by each of these four ingredients, the *"I-will-stick-with-it"* attitude accounted for more than 90 percent of the success achieved. They are all important. Yet, you should be aware that without a positive mental attitude, brains and skill are useless. The will to succeed, coupled with a belief in oneself and a positively oriented

mentality far out-shadows all other requirements for success.

A comprehensive weight control program consists of many portions. It includes nutrition, exercise, education, stress management, behavioral control skills, and, of course, positive thinking. Here too, the last one is of greatest importance. We sincerely hope that these efforts will assist you in achieving a happier and more meaningful life. If you put into practice the principles we have discussed, we know that it WILL. How do you like that for positive thinking? Our best wishes for **YOUR SUCCESS!**



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