



How to be a Successful Loser (with Weight that is!)

by Leonore Salvia, BS, Director of Nutrition; InVite Health Forest Hills
Edited by Jerry Hickey, R.Ph., Scientific Director / InVite Health

Weight loss can be achieved and maintained through the use of diet, exercise, stress management, and other key factors. The National Weight Control Registry (1, 2) conducted one of the largest studies of individuals that were successful with weight loss and long-term maintenance. Data from this study indicated that successful dieters have the coping skills that enable them to respond to cravings or stressful situations.

There are several psychological aspects to weight loss that have been investigated, which reveal that millions of people are at risk for psychological and physiological effects of weight cycling. (Weight cycling- weight loss and regain within a 5-year period.) Carmody et al (3) infers that overeating may be related to repressed anger and may be a factor in weight control and maintenance of healthy lifestyle behaviors. Identify the strategies that work for you, whether it's drinking more water, taking a walk after dinner, or putting food away immediately so that you're less likely to go back for seconds. Also, identify the things that hinder your success, like waiting too long to have a meal, which can result in a binge, or eating in response to stress or boredom. Recognizing your "trigger" situations will help you avoid past mistakes and lead you directly to success.

External cues, such as TV, radio ads, fast food restaurants, and hectic lifestyles also contribute to damaging weight cycling. According to The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (4), preparing meals at home and eating less than one meal per week in fast food restaurants and fewer than 3 meals per week in non-fast food restaurants were contributing factors towards successful weight loss.

As a Clinical Dietician/Nutritionist, I have studied, counseled, investigated, and probed weight loss very closely from many different angles. For some individuals it can be one of the most difficult things to do or it can be as easy as following a recipe or a formula. In my experience, not only personal but from observing several people, the attempt for weight loss and maintenance can be achieved with the following formula:

- 1 State of Mind
- 2 Portion Control and Calories
- 3 Energy Expenditure
- 4 Stress Management
- 5 Nutraceuticals

In retrospect, when any one of these components was missing, the ability to become a successful loser was almost always unsuccessful.

Portion Control and Calories

This is the ability to control serving size and caloric intake, which can be difficult in "Super-size America," yet it can be done with careful planning. Our bodies, at rest, will burn a certain amount of calories. As we age, the amount we are able to burn decreases due to a decline in enzymes and hormones that are key

State of Mind

Ask yourself, "Am I ready to lose weight?" Take a look at the Trans-Theoretical Model introduced by Prochaska and Di Clementi in 1983 to assess what stage of change you are in.

The Trans Theoretical Model consists of 5 stages of change:

- 1 Pre-Contemplation - The person has no intention of changing their behavior for the foreseeable future.
- 2 Contemplation - The person is willing to consider the problem and the possibility of change.
- 3 Preparation - The person is intent upon taking action soon and often reports some steps in that direction.
- 4 Action - The person is aware that the problem exists and actively modifies their behavior. Commitment is clear.
- 5 Maintenance - The person has made a sustained change wherein a new pattern of behavior has replaced the old. Behavior is firmly established and the threat of relapse becomes less intense.

Weight loss has to be a conscious effort. It is a choice that must be made every day. Be mindful of the types of foods you are putting into your body and where and when you eat them. If you usually eat in front of the television, chances are you are not focusing on your meal and how much you are consuming, which can lead to overeating.

regulators of metabolic rate. In order to know how many calories you need to consume, you should have a Nutritionist or Dietician determine your BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) and your BMI (Body Mass Index). Your BMR tells you the amount of calories your body needs in order to maintain its systems' functions; that is, the amount of calories you need to live not including digestion or general physical activity. The BMI is an indicator of obesity and is based on a person's height and weight.

Self-monitoring includes counting calories, fat, and carbohydrate grams. Keep one nutritional fact in mind: 3,500 calories= 1lb. If you cut calories by 500 every day for 1 week, you could lose 1lb. If you're not into counting calories, regulate your portions by using smaller plates and try not to go back for seconds. Also, try loading up on vegetables. They're very low in calories and full of fiber, which slows the rate of digestion, therefore improving your feeling of satiation.

Energy Expenditure

This is the amount of calories that are burned or expended by the body. For the purpose of reducing body weight, The American College Of Sports Medicine (5) recommends a minimum weekly exercise goal of 1,000 calories expended. This recommendation is equivalent to three 45-minute exercise sessions, from moderate to high intensity, per week. A moderate intensity workout doesn't have to be grueling; it just

has to be performed at a set pace. In other words, walking at a rate of 15 to 25 minutes per mile qualifies as moderate intensity. Another extremely important factor with weight loss and exercise is finding your niche. Find a sport or activity that best suits you: dancing, aerobics, swimming, ball sports, walking, running, and hiking. Enlist a friend to join you and your success rate will increase. Regular physical activity can help to regulate the appetite, help overweight people lose fat, and help underweight people gain muscle.

Stress Management

There is mounting evidence that a high-stress environment causes abdominal weight gain. The stress hormone, cortisol, released during chronic stress, causes an accumulation of fat around the waist and on the abdomen. Cortisol may even cause a breakdown in your resistance to binge eating, which makes it likely that you will gobble up unhealthy, sugar-laden foods. In a recent study, researchers fed rats a diet of rat chow and sugar water. The difference between the two groups of rats in the study; one group of rats was exposed to a stressful environment part of the time and the other group wasn't. The stressed rats had higher cortisol levels and consumed more sugar water. As the stressed rats accumulated more belly fat, their cortisol (stress hormone) levels went back down. Apparently the physiological answer to this riddle is that release of the stress hormone turns on

the brains reward center causing some types of foods to taste better. By gaining belly fat this physiological activity is compensated for reducing stress hormone levels. Similar results are seen with other animals including our closest living relatives - monkeys. Research in human subjects show that binge eating at night is connected to high cortisol levels. The name for this condition is "night-eating syndrome." Additional research shows that women with higher amounts of abdominal fat also release higher levels of cortisol during stressful events. In other words, it seems that if stress isn't under control it may be harder to control your appetite and lose belly fat. And worse yet, you may gain more belly fat. Exercise, listening to relaxing music, and meditation are all ways to manage stress effectively.

Nutraceuticals

Nutraceuticals are natural supplements that are in a concentrated form. Nutraceuticals are what give you an edge or extra-added benefit when trying to accomplish your weight loss goals. Here are several that support weight management:

Hoodia Gordonii Cactus

For those people that have a hard time with portion control, appetite suppression, calorie counting, as well as late night eating, Hoodia Gordonii is probably the answer for you. Hoodia Cactus is a succulent from the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. The San people of Africa traditionally bring back the game from a hunt to share with their family. To ward off hunger while hunting, they munch on a piece of the Hoodia Gordonii Cactus. They also employ the Hoodia Cactus for overweight family members or to get themselves through long bouts of hunger usually due to drought. They are able to go days without eating food and still remain strong and energetic.

Hoodia helps decrease the desires associated with hormonal hunger. Hormonal hunger occurs when our insulin or blood sugar levels constantly rise and fall, causing us to crave more sweets and carbohydrates. Hoodia may improve ATP energy production in the brain, particularly in the hypothalamus (part of the brain that senses and controls the balance of body temperature, body pressure gradients, and caloric balance). ATP energy levels normally depend on food intake. When they are increased in the hypothalamus, nutrients are sensed more readily, which makes the brain think you have eaten enough.

Green Tea

Asians have been enjoying the benefits of green tea for over 4,000 years. Traditionally, green tea was used medicinally for its healing properties. Today, more and more studies are verifying the many health benefits of green tea.

There is growing supportive evidence that green tea may aid the body's ability to burn fat. During dieting, large volumes of fat are oxidized, which increases free radical levels. Green tea's most notable polyphenol/antioxidant, EGCG (Epigallocatechin Gallate), breaks the chain of free radical production. It also inhibits the maturation of immature fat cells into full-blown, fat-laden fat cells. One of the reasons most diets fail is that although the fat cells are depleted of fat, they are still present in the same number. When dieting is completed, these now fat-depleted cells release a hormone known as adiponectin that makes you gain fat-weight. This is a survival mechanism designed by the body in response to starvation, which causes you to eat more and regain the same amount or more weight than you initially lost. Once again, EGCG has come to the rescue. Not only does EGCG reduce the fat in existing fat cells, and also inhibit immature fat cells from converting to mature, fat-engorged cells, it also reduces the total number of fat cells. This is usually only achieved by long bouts of dieting in conjunction with fairly intense exercise. The fewer the total number of fat cells, the less area for fat to accumulate, hence a reduction in the amount of hormone released that causes you to eat extravagantly and gain weight again.

Additionally, EGCG slows and even modestly decreases the absorption of sugar from your meal. Recent research has found another reason to value Green Tea and EGCG. Fat cells release a hormone known as resistin. Resistin is involved with metabolic syndrome; a cluster of conditions that often occur together including abdominal obesity, high cholesterol, high blood sugar with decreasing insulin sensitivity, high blood pressure, and high triglycerides, which increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes. EGCG has been shown to decrease the release of resistin from fat cells.

According to several studies, green tea extract can burn up to an additional 266 calories per day by consuming 4 to 6 droppers full or the equivalent of 120 to 180 drops. This is a great adjunct for trying to get

closer to burning those 3,500 calories that make up one pound.

CLA

Conjugated Linoleic Acid is a fatty acid found in red meat and dairy that shows strong anti-cancer and fat inhibiting properties. CLA seems to be effective for body fat distribution and maintenance of lean muscle mass. In the normal process of weight loss, water is the first part to be lost and then muscle. CLA can help prevent muscle loss, which is not only important to maintain your muscle tone, but also important for the integrity of your inner organs. The amount required to let the body focus on stored fat is 4000 mg in two divided doses.

Carb Blockers

Carb blockers aid in controlling carbohydrate calories. Glucomanin, Phaseolus Vulgaris, Guar Gum, and Gugulipid extract are effective for expending about 200 extra calories per day. These carb blockers are even more effective when used in conjunction with green tea extract.

Meal Replacement

Meal replacements are excellent additions to aid in the quest for weight loss. They are high in protein, which helps to maintain muscle mass and balance blood sugar levels. They also provide the essential nutrients that a regular meal may be missing. A balance of a full spectrum of nutrients is of utmost importance for any diet plan.

L-Theanine

L-Theanine is a rare amino acid found in the immature green tea leaf before it is exposed to sunlight. Once L-Theanine is exposed to sunlight, it is transformed into the very protective and important polyphenol antioxidants such as EGCG. Amino acids usually join together to create a protein, but L-Theanine doesn't take part in the creation of protein. Instead, L-Theanine improves GABA activity in the brain. GABA is the major inhibitory amino acid in the brain that helps reduce stress and anxiety while calming or relaxing. Unfortunately, GABA does not efficiently cross the blood brain barrier and enter the brain to improve mood, so taking GABA has not been shown to be beneficial. Therefore, indirectly improving GABA activity is the desired way to benefit mood and state of mind.

L-Theanine also improves the level of Alpha waves generated in the brain. Alpha waves are associated with good mood, creativity, mild relaxation, and are in fact elevated during times of relaxation and meditation. Mildly improving GABA activity while generating more alpha waves decreases cortisol (stress hormone) levels, which is associated with improved dieting. Notably, L-Theanine may improve consciousness and reduce stress without shutting down the brain or causing sleepiness at a serving size of 100mg if used one to three times a day.

Rhodiola Rosea

Rhodiola Rosea is an adaptogen. An adaptogen is a substance that allows the body to adapt to stress and to control cortisol (stress hormone) levels while improving energy and endurance. There is a direct relationship between high cortisol levels and an increased risk of developing and maintaining abdominal fat. The improved level of energy and endurance will aid exercise capacity and help improve fitness.

Weight loss is a process that demands mental focus and physical energy. It is a challenge worth working hard to achieve. The benefits far outweigh the sacrifices. You will experience improved overall health, a more attractive appearance, and personal pride. Take it one day at a time. Forgive yourself often, because mistakes are bound to happen and nobody is perfect. Most importantly, reward yourself for a job well done.

For additional scientific references on many other health issues, please go to the nutritional library section of our web site.

References

- 1 Ferguson KJ, Brink PJ, Wood M, Koop PM. Characteristics of successful dieters as measured by guided interview responses and Restraint Scale scores. *J Am Diet Assoc* 1992;92:1119-21.
- 2 Kayman S, Bruvold W, Stern JS. Maintenance and relapse after weight loss in women: behavioral aspects. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1990;52:800-7.
- 3 Carmody TP, Brunner RB, St.Jeor ST. Hostility, dieting, and nutrition attitudes in overweight and weight cycling men and women. *The International Journal of Eating Disorders* 1999;26:37.
- 4 Klem ML, Wing RR, McGuire MT, Seagle HM, Hill JO. A descriptive study of individuals successful at long-term maintenance of substantial weight loss. *Amer J Clin Nutr* 1997;66:239-46.
- 5 American College of Sports Medicine. ACSM's guidelines for exercise testing and prescription. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1995.