

What motivates you to lose weight?

Odds are, you already have a pretty good idea of what you need to do to lose weight - eat less and move more. That's the basic equation of weight loss, right? But many of us struggle and are not successful. Why?

The most critical element of weight loss is your own personal drive to succeed. Your attitude can be the difference between success and failure.

The following are a few tips to help keep you motivated on your weight loss journey:

- 1. Write Down Your Reasons for Wanting to Lose Weight.**

Start by asking yourself this: "Why do I want to lose weight?" There may be several reasons - improved health, more energy, an upcoming beach vacation as well as many others. Make a list of what's important to you. Then under each item, write down specific reasons as to why it matters to you. Keep that list of motivators in front of you; especially at moments of decision (do I really want that candy bar?). It's a great way to help you find the strength to get through challenging moments.

- 2. Set Goals That Go Beyond the Scale.**

Make a list of things you plan to do to succeed. Remember to formulate your plan around the everyday things you can do (i.e. walk x 2 miles x 5 days each week or eat five servings of fruits/vegetables most days) versus a number on the scale. By focusing on the things that you do have control over, you will be less likely to want to throw in the towel when your weight loss slows.

- 3. Use Smartphone Apps.**

Research shows smartphone apps that track meal intake and exercise or send regular motivational messages help participants lose more weight than those who are not using them. For example, using an app that tracks food intake instantly increases your awareness of what, how much, why you eat and can help identify areas of improvement. And since most of us keep our smartphone's close by, it's much easier than keeping a notebook. There are many programs available to choose from to help keep you motivated. A few of my favorites include: MyFitnessPal, Lose It!, Calorie Counter PRO, Fitbit, Daily Burn, and Fitness Buddy.

4. Surround Yourself with Health.

Setting your environment up for success can help you stay on track, especially when you are tired or famished or going through a challenging time in your life. Keep your refrigerator stocked with healthy foods. Keep healthy snacks in your desk at work. Keep a bowl of fruit on your counter. Keep tempting foods out of the house and out of site. Create a meal plan for the week to help take the guesswork out of what to eat.

5. Don't Be a Perfectionist.

Nobody is perfect. Sometimes we eat more than we wanted to. It's ok. Don't be hard on yourself!! Overeating one day won't make or break your eating plan. It's what you do repeatedly that makes the difference. The key is to return to your usual eating plan and exercise routine the next meal or next day.

6. Be Patient.

Everyone is nervous about that dreaded "weight loss plateau." There may be some weeks when the pounds don't come off as fast as you want, which can damage your commitment and motivation to keep going. Be Patient. The weight didn't come on over night and it's going to take time to come off. Success is achieved and maintained by those who try and keep trying. Also, remember the other benefits of eating well and staying active besides the number on the scale.

7. Recommit Yourself Every Week.

Each new week, renew your commitment to yourself. Take time to think about the week before- what went well and where you can improve. If something isn't working, change your plan. By doing this, you'll be better apt to control your eating and exercise habits week by week, with a strategy that'll guarantee success.

8. Enlist Your Support Team.

Surrounding yourself with people, who are cheering you on is super important to reaching your long-term weight loss goals. Someone to watch the kids while you exercise, a shoulder to lean on when you feel discouraged or a friend who inspires you to keep going- they all provide extra motivation you need. Start enlisting people for your support team now!