

Can Positive Thinking Help with Weight Loss?

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Optimism may be the key to successful weight loss. According to Sally Squires of the Washington Post, positive thinking may be a better predictor of keeping weight off than eliminating something we're eating. There have been numerous studies showing that obese individuals who believed that they would successfully lose weight while adhering to a weight loss program lost more pounds than their less trusting, dieting counterparts. The basis of a positive attitude in a weight loss regime is the belief that no matter what, you **will** succeed. This is what supports positive behavior change and discourages negative habits.

Believing in what you are doing and your performance is the basis of self-fulfillment. In his book, Bobby Greene, a former 438 pound nineteen year old, tells how he lost 258 lbs by just changing his attitude. He was obsessed with available fast food until he stepped on an industrial scale and realized that he had to, and could do, something about his lifestyle. At age 35 Bobby reminds his audience that it was his dedication to living and belief that he could turn things around that helped him not only lose weight but also, indefinitely keep the weight off. Like Bobby, adopting a positive attitude can give you a clear road map to successful dieting.

We all recall the children's story of "The Little Engine That Could." So, if you think you can, you will get results and change your life forever.

Bandura, a Stanford University Behaviorist found that when people perceive or visualize what they want to accomplish, they are more able to reach their goal. Again, this speaks to the fact that positive thinking can lead to a more effective view of oneself and thus, the achievement of a healthier lifestyle.

Here are some tips for promoting a positive outlook and achieving sustained weight loss:

Begin With "Baby Steps." If you take off more than you can chew your goals can't be realized. Rather than planning to start an overzealous diet, start with substituting one food item at a time. For instance instead of drinking soda pop try alternating with water or low fat milk. Remember self-confidence begets success and success begets self-mastery which begets self-confidence.

Focus on behavior change, not on how much weight you are losing. Goals are reached when you focus on changing behavior not pounds lost. If your goal is to work out 2xs a week and eat less fast food, then you will see those pounds shed without having to tell yourself I will lose 5 lbs by the end of the month.

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Learn from your mistakes. Rarely do you achieve goals with your first attempt. The adage “try, try again” comes in handy when you want to rid yourself of bad habits and instill healthy new ones. The important thing is not to look at your relapses as failures but as helpful learning experiences that point out to you why something you have done did not work. By not personalizing your mistakes, you’ll end up believing you can do anything if you set your mind to it.

Find someone to follow. Behavior change is most successful when you find an inspired role model. This could be somebody like yourself who has met their weight loss goal. If you find someone who you can vicariously learn from, it can pump you up and boost your motivation to keep trying in the face of diversity.

Get lots of reinforcement. There is nothing like getting support from your friends, colleagues, relatives and of course, spouse. Recruiting someone who can say to you “tomorrow is another day, you’ll try again and make it,” is very empowering. This person knows you and shares your goal for fitness and healthy nutrition. Their constructive input and supportive coaching is what you need to stay on task.

Concentrate on changing patterns and not on someone else’s diet regime. When you feel restricted and deprived it is a natural reaction to rebel. It creates a greater tension between you and the food item making your craving even more intense than it was before you started dieting. It just like being told to do something as an adolescent and now the only way you will do it is from within your own spirit and desire to change otherwise you are set up to fail.

Reward yourself. It is never too late to remind yourself that you did a good job today. Verbal or actual pats on the back increase your motivation and help you feel strong in facing the next moment. There are numerous non-monetary rewards that can keep you going like playing an instrument, reading a book, listening to music or taking a bath. Regardless of what you decide for your reward, taking time out to celebrate your successes gives you a break and aids in the process of building a positive attitude.

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