

Making Changes

*“If you do what you’ve always done,
you’ll get what you’ve always got”. – anonymous*

Making permanent changes is necessary to permanently keep weight off.
Returning to old habits will cause the weight to return.

Tips for Making Changes:

1) **Give it time.**

Making Changes is hard. When you get frustrated, think about how long it took you to gain the weight. Think about how long you have been overweight. You need to give the new habits time to become automatic.

2) **Review your SMART Goal(s).**

Why are you making these changes? Are you making changes because *you want to* or because you *think you should* or because *someone else told you* that you should? Understanding WHY your goals are important to you are a stronger motivator to achieve them than doing them because you think you “should” or because someone else told you that you “should”.

*One activity that can be helpful is to write down advantages & disadvantages of both: making changes to habits & staying the same (i.e. not making changes).

3) **Realize that Making Changes is a series of conscious choices throughout each day.**

You have to continue to focus on making the right decisions to support your new goal until it becomes an automatic habit. Two things can help you make the right choices:

- a) Non-food Rewards: can help prevent you from returning to food as a reward.
- b) Journaling: (food, exercise, feelings, weight). Having the information to review can make you feel good on days you want to give up effort & can alert you to slipping back to old behaviors. ***It is especially helpful to acknowledge the times you were tempted to slide back into old behaviors & how you handled it to keep on track the next time.**

4) **Lapses**

Lapses are an inevitable part of making changes. Lapses occur when something triggers you to deviate from choices that support your goal to old, familiar behaviors. The goal is to learn from lapses & limit them. To learn from them, think of the situation as a chain of events. Write down what you were thinking/doing before the lapse, all the way to after the lapse. Then go back & think about ways you could do something different – i.e. “break the chain” of events – at each step.

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Example of a Lapse “Chain of Events”: Snacking on junk food

Bought snack (chips/cookies) – Left snack on counter –
Home alone – Got bored/tired –
Urge/craving to eat – Went to kitchen –
Ate snack (lapsed) – Felt guilty –
Felt like perfect day was blown –
Ate more. **10 steps!**

Alternatives to “break the chain” (for the example above):

Stick to meal plan approved grocery list –
Put snacks in high cabinet –
Have a list of activities that you can do when bored or lonely (see Managing Cues) –
When a craving hits, drink water & wait 20 minutes. If still hungry, have healthy snacks on hand that you can grab; OR you can leave the trigger environment altogether. –
If you lapse, instead of feeling guilty, focus on other positive decisions you’ve made today –
To prevent further eating, go do one of the activities you listed from the Managing Cues topic. It helps if you can leave the area where the trigger food is.

5) Relapses

If you find that you have allowed the triggered chain reaction to become a cycle of old habits & behaviors, know that you can begin immediately to get back on track. Don’t *choose* to wait until tomorrow or Monday or after vacation or “that” party. *Choose* to start now! Think about what decisions you will be making the rest of the day. What can you do now to eat better or be more active? Remember WHY you want to make the changes; review your positives & negatives of both changing & staying the same. Lean on your support system: Family, Friends, Dietitian, Personal trainer/group exercise instructor, Therapist.

Practice:

On the left side, write down the chain of events of a Lapse that you’ve had.
On the right side, list an alternative to each step.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Additional Information:

- <https://www.mindful.org/how-to-change-a-habit-for-good/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/anger-in-the-age-entitlement/201408/changing-habits>
- <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/the-secret-changing-habits-successfully.html>
- http://www.eatingwell.com/nutrition_health/weight_loss_diet_plans/the_eatingwell_diet/6_step_plan_for_preventing_diet_relapses
- <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/eating-disorders/binge-eating-disorder/features/binge-eating-relapse#1>