

Personal Responsibility

What is *Personal Responsibility*?

Personal Responsibility is taking responsibility for your own feelings, choices, & behaviors. It is the ability to not blame others or rely on others to make you feel happy or good about yourself.

“Life doesn’t come with a remote, get up and change it yourself”

Author unknown

Personal Responsibility can be the difference “between knowing what to do & actually doing it.” Using excuses or blaming others is distracting & can make you feel “powerless & out of control.”

Examples on how *not* having Personal Responsibility can hinder Weight Loss:

- a) A participant who has been following the meal plan goes to a July 4th cookout & loses control & ends up eating a large amount of high fat, high sugar, high calorie foods. This participant then blames the host/hostess for not supplying foods allowed on his/her meal plan.
- b) A woman who is in charge of cooking for her family, makes healthy changes to the family meals. Yet, hubby tries to “help” with the chore of cooking by bringing home fast food for everyone. She then blames her husband for her choice to not follow her meal plan.
- c) A guy starts an exercise program with his wife. As mileage increases, along with temperature changes (too hot/too cold), she stops joining him. He then blames her for his choice to not exercise.

For some, the habit has become so automatic that they are unaware they are doing it – unless it gets pointed out. If you find yourself saying: “Yes, but . . .”, or “If only . . .”, then it is time to think of alternative solutions. This may make you uncomfortable at first, but it can help you achieve weight loss.

Sometimes we are holding onto something we think we need despite it being unhealthy – such as using food to soothe a mood. How can a person overcome this? How can a person increase their Personal Responsibility? Step 1: **Self-Awareness**. To increase your self-awareness, make the following list: (use as many lines as you need to)

Pros to Weight Loss

Cons to Weight Loss

Pros to Staying the Same*

Cons to Staying the Same

**“pros to staying the same” is usually what you are holding onto – ask yourself: what is the need? Then find a healthier way to meet the need.*

Continued on next page

Step 2: **Remember that you have choices.** Go back to the examples. What could the person in the examples choose to do to improve the outcome next time? What reasons – or excuses do you make? What alternatives can you try to improve your outcome next time?

Step 3: **Be Assertive**

Being assertive allows you to voice your needs in a direct, but respectful way. You don't assume others know your needs & you don't get aggressive when they don't. You also don't expect others to have the same needs as you or get angry when they don't. Just as you have the right to eat more healthfully & increase your activity, your family & friends have the right *not* to. Let go of the need to feel responsible for other adults & their decisions & behaviors.

Tips for voicing your needs:

- Remain calm
- Use eye contact
- Use “I” statements

Step 4: **Take Control of your Time**

“I don't have time” is the most common “reason” people give for not changing habits. However, we are all given the same 24 hours. Think about people you know who seem to “have” the time to exercise & eat healthfully. Are they all people who don't have others (children, parents) to care for? Do they all work less hours than you? Probably not. Where does your time *really* go? Take some time to think about this. You can make a list of things you would like to spend time on & compare it to a list of what you actually spend time on. If there are big differences in the two lists, it is time to come up with a plan to manage your time differently. Once you know where your time is going, here are some tips to help:

- **Decrease time wasters:** one example is a long commute. Can you leave a little earlier or a little later? If you are unhappy with your job, look for a new one closer to home. If you love your job, can you move closer to it or seek to partially work at home?
- **Get Organized:** An hour planning your meals once a week could decrease time wasted making multiple trips to the store. Making a “to do” list can help you focus on what needs done & prevent getting distracted by other things.
- **Delegate:** If you currently do the majority of chores at home, ask for help from your family or roommates (see step 3). Or, consider hiring someone else to do the chores. If you feel like you are constantly running kids around to activities; seek out other parents to carpool with. (It really does “take a village” sometimes!)
- **Remember that no one is perfect!** Perfectionism has been referred to as a mirage. Trying to be perfect at work could cause you to needlessly work extra hours. Trying to be the perfect mom or wife/husband or dad could leave you with no time to yourself. Trying to have the perfectly clean house might prevent you from having fun with friends.
- **Balance your time:** Protect your schedule by saying “no” at times. Instead of finding extra time to exercise, can you do it on your lunch hour? Combine time with friends with exercise or create a workout around your chores. Balancing work, family, friends, & chores may not be easy, but it is worth it.

“ . . . you own this story, you get to write the ending” Brene Brown

References:

- Sonja Lingo, *Behaviorist for LHN & FWSW*
- *Optifast Lifestyle Education Series: Personal Responsibility*
- <http://feelhappiness.com/take-personal-responsibility-for-your-happiness/>