

LOVE YOUR BODY! LOVE YOUR LIFE!



GETTING HEALTHY FOR YOU!

How do you feel when you first wake up in the morning? Are you eager to get your day going because you're full of energy or do you grumble and hide your head under the pillow because you could use another 12 hours of hibernation?

Evaluating how you feel first thing in the morning is a good indicator of your overall health. Generally speaking, if you're maintaining a healthy weight and eating a good share of fruits and vegetables daily, you should be starting the day with a bang and not feeling sluggish.

On the other hand, if you live a sedentary life and rely on the closest fast food joint, then you will likely be the one who wants to go back to sleep, who needs 5 cups of coffee to conquer the day, or who grumbles about every little thing that might go wrong.

Quick Tip: Start your day with a smile. Your smile will be infectious and you'll improve someone else's mood as well as your own.

How you start your day has a direct impact on whether you see things positively or negatively and it can also affect the moods of your family members and coworkers.

WHY SHOULD I LOSE WEIGHT?

We've all heard the same news stories for years telling us to lose weight, eat healthy, and exercise more. But there are just as many people who believe you should just accept your body as it is and, so long as you're a good person and living a productive life, then that's all that matters.

Well, it's true that you shouldn't judge people strictly based on looks. And it's also true that losing weight for shallow or vain purposes will only be a temporary fix until the wedding, class reunion, or vacation passes, then it's back to your old, unhealthy habits.

The real reason to lose weight is that you love your body so much that you have a deep desire to be physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually healthy.

You already know about the life-threatening illnesses and problems you face due to excess weight. You already know your risks increase significantly as your weight increases. This shouldn't scare you because it's nothing you haven't heard already – and if you were *really* concerned about the risks, you probably would have taken action already!



Here's a refresher about a few risks relating to carrying extra pounds:

- * Heart Disease – high blood pressure and cholesterol
- * Type II Diabetes – high blood sugar levels
- * Sleep Apnea – snoring and breathing issues
- * Depression – severe sadness
- * Osteoarthritis – stiffness in weight-bearing joints

Studies have proven that lifestyle changes ultimately decrease the risk of weight-related illnesses. Whether you could stand to lose 10 pounds or 100, it's time to love your body and love your life!

Quick Tip: *Not sure how to start exercising? March in place during the commercial breaks of your favorite television shows. Sounds silly, but it works.*

BENEFITS OF LOSING WEIGHT

In addition to preventing the onset of these diseases, there are *many* benefits to losing weight! Here are just a few:

- * Increased self-esteem – you'll feel more confident and ready to tackle life
- * Increased happiness – the endorphins in your brain start to kick in when you make healthy choices and, in turn, improve your general mood
- * Improved relationships – you'll have deeper relationships with the people in your life

- * Decreased use of medications – countless numbers of overweight patients now need fewer medications after making simple lifestyle changes to lose even a small amount of weight.

REASONS FOR OBESITY

Many people concoct excuses to explain why they're overweight or obese. They range from bad family genes to thyroid problems, but rarely do they include the simple fact that people don't proactively take care of themselves. It boils down to this simple question:

Do I love myself enough to take care of my body?

If you do, then you can *choose* to deal with your problems with words, not spoons of ice cream. You can *choose* to make time for exercise instead of television. You can *choose* to take ownership of the weight, instead of externalizing the problem.

Part of human nature is looking for a scapegoat or someone else to blame. Taking care of our health is a huge undertaking and if we fail, it's difficult to admit our mistakes.

Quick Tip: *When grappling over a difficult decision, always ask yourself, "Do I love myself enough to take care of my body?"*



However, ***blaming a scapegoat for your own unhealthy lifestyle is becoming a victim in your own life story.*** When you blame outside sources for your problems it shows the world that you're not taking responsibility for your life; ***you're letting others dictate how you should look and feel.***

ESCAPING THE BLAME GAME

Rather than wasting time finding someone to blame for being overweight, **close your eyes and give praise for having a body that works.** Maybe it works a little slower than you'd like, but start being grateful that you're able to breathe and move.

Take joy in a sunrise. Take joy in the smell of a luscious garden. Take joy in a stroll through the park. Take joy in the fact that you are making the conscious decision to love yourself and your body!

Quick Tip: *Instead of flipping through magazines dreaming about who you wish you looked like, look at yourself in the mirror and say: "I love all of me, as I am. I deserve to be happy and healthy!"*

You need to break free of the negative thoughts that invade your head when it comes to loving and respecting your body. If you're so quick to notice the "perfect" parts of other people's bodies, then you should give praise to your strengths as well.

Instead of thinking, "I'd love to have her tight abs," **find something that you like about your own body.** Maybe you've got the curly hair that your friends envy or the shiny white teeth of a movie star. Learning to appreciate what you have may be a slow process, but it's the first step in recapturing control of your life.



LOSING WEIGHT IS A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Do you ever consider why you were given the body you have?

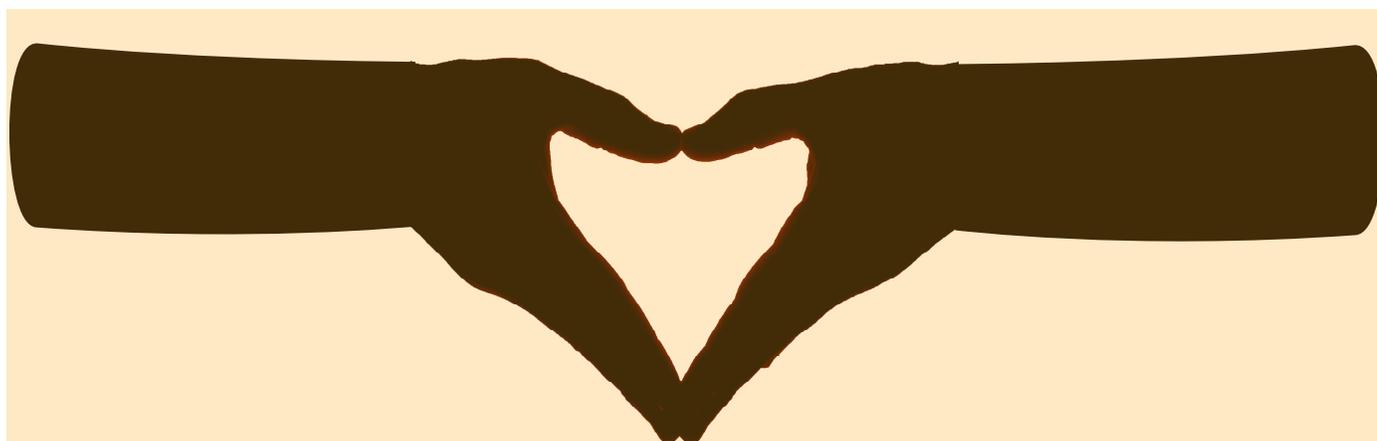
Whether or not you believe in God, tackling a large weight loss can seem overwhelming, even to the strongest and most positive person.

Incorporating prayer or meditation into your daily routine will calm your inner being, which will then help you believe in yourself.

If you don't believe in a higher being, you can still meditate and put forth positive thoughts and energy into the universe. This is the basis of the Law of Attraction, which holds that the more positive energy you give out, the more positive energy you'll attract into your life.

Quick Tip: Remember that your body is a gift. Honor your body and say to yourself, "My body is to be kept beautiful and healthy."

Visualizing what you want to achieve is an example of putting forth positive energy. Thanking God for all that is good in your life is acknowledging the positive and good in your life. If you firmly believe that you will lose weight and become a healthier person, then you're more likely to take the necessary steps to make it a reality.



CREATE AN INDIVIDUALIZED HEALTH PLAN

Most adults want to lose weight, but everyone's goals are unique. No matter how little or how much weight you have to lose, ***creating a plan that fits into your unique lifestyle is important.***

- * Determine your ideal weight (with the help of a doctor or nutritionist, if necessary)
- * Write specific ways of how you can get yourself moving everyday
- * Implement the dietary changes you need to make by removing temptation
- * Communicate with your family and friends about how they can best support you

Quick Tip: Fight negative, self-defeating thoughts by exercising. Don't think about it, just walk around the block or up and down your stairs until you regain your composure.

As you develop your health plan, write everything down in a notebook or an online journal. The practice of taking pen to paper makes the plan more real, as though it's a contract you've made with yourself to become healthier. On especially hectic days, having a written plan to look at quickly will also keep you from making poor food choices.

Keep in mind that your plan may change. Nothing is written in stone and as your lifestyle changes, so will your health plan. As you discover new exercise regimens or new foods, add those to your plan. You can also include your favorite healthy recipes and any quotes that you find especially encouraging or inspiring in your notebook.

Also, decide on a way to **hold yourself accountable for your choices.**

Group weight loss meetings have this accountability built-in by creating a supportive, friendly environment. Perhaps you can find a trusted friend who will promise to check in with you each week to keep track of your progress. Or better yet, get this friend to exercise with you during the week so you can stay motivated and discuss any potential problems that come up.



MAKE SMALL MEASURABLE GOALS

Of course, you need to choose a weight goal. It may be a certain number of pounds to lose each week, or perhaps it's a specific number on the scale, but whatever it is, **make sure your goal is specific, measurable, and attainable.**

Once you have your overall goal written down in your health plan, immediately **set smaller, more manageable goals you want to achieve on your journey to good health.** You didn't put on this weight overnight so don't expect it to just melt off instantly.

Quick Tip: *Brag about yourself! Be proud of your successes, no matter how small, and share them with your family and friends.*

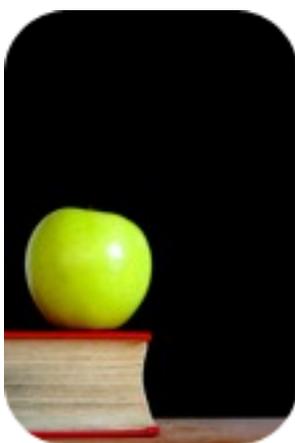
Your smaller, manageable goals don't even have to be related to losing a certain amount of weight each week. For example:

1. Set a goal to drink 8 glasses of water every day
2. Try a new, healthy recipe twice a week
3. Try buying five new vegetables at the grocery store to taste test
4. Set a goal of taking a 30-minute brisk walk four times this week

Before you know it, you'll start to see progress and you'll quickly form new healthy habits that will help you make life-long changes to your lifestyle.

Even though healthy weight loss may be a long process, we all need to see positive progress along the way. You can't realistically expect to lose 5 pounds a week, every week, but you *can* take note of your progress in your journal.

Keep track of your ups and downs for the week, as well as the positive outcomes that have arose from your new lifestyle.



If you started exercising last week, what difference do you notice in your body this week? Do you have more energy? Did someone compliment you on your progress? Have you been more productive at work? Whatever it is, document your progress! ***Charting this progress will keep you motivated, especially since it takes time to see the bigger changes in your body.***

Confucius says: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall."

SURVIVING SETBACKS



Even after you develop a well-crafted health plan, you're bound to experience setbacks along the way. It's inevitable that you'll face family stress, changes at work, or temptation during the holidays. This is when you need to take a breath, close your eyes, and **remember that you are doing what you do because you love and respect your body.**

First and foremost, think of how your body has already benefited from choosing to live a healthy lifestyle. Maybe you've already shed a few pounds, maybe you're less stiff in the mornings, maybe it's easier to walk up your stairs without getting winded. These are all remarkable signs that your body is honored and respected!

Take an inventory of all the things you like about your body now.

Perhaps you only noticed one positive aspect of your body at first, but as you go, you'll begin to see more things you like about yourself. This is improvement!

As you see progress, you'll start loving your body more, and self-sabotage won't even be an option because you'll never want to go down that dark path again.

When faced with stress, remember to pray or meditate to achieve a sense of calm. Visualize yourself living a healthy lifestyle. Visualize yourself making healthy choices. Take these few moments in prayer to center yourself, even if the world around you is in chaos.

Remember that you are in control of your body and how you nourish it. Show yourself the kind of love and respect you deserve.

Final Tip: Stop playing the victim. Only you can make your life better!
