

Getting the Weight Off and Keeping It Off

Effective Strategies for Weight Loss Maintenance

Joya Ransom MSN/ED, BSN, RN

Losing weight can be an especially daunting task considering the plethora of information and misinformation one must wade through to *obtain* and *maintain* desirable results. Although losing weight is an admirable pursuit the major goal should be maintaining weight loss not losing weight. This will help to avoid the start and stop weight loss cycle many of us have unfortunately become familiar with. Few of us have the time or desire to figure out what we need to do and how we need to do it to get the weight off and keep it off. For this reason, it makes sense to hire a professional who can assist you in understanding reliable weight loss trends rooted in science and not passing fads. Cost can be a factor when hiring a professional, but a short-term investment today can help to reduce health care costs in the future. As a professional nurse I know the costly financial and emotional effects of poor health. Working with a professional is a great way to stay on track and get results. But perhaps the biggest advantage is that it is a great way to help reduce the risk of injury or harm to yourself.

Many people choose to lose weight because they want to be healthier and are often misguided to believe that the more weight they lose the healthier they will be. There are guidelines to help you determine if your weight is too low or too high. BMI (body mass index) is one such guideline. It is not the only measurement tool, but it is the most widely used by both fitness and medical professionals. Keep in mind, as stated in a previous article I published that explored the use of BMI, some research has suggested 25% of persons categorized as obese and at risk for diseases such as diabetes and hypertension were essentially at a lower health risk than those categorized as normal weight. Remember, skinny does not always correlate with being healthy and being overweight does not always correlate with being unhealthy. For this reason,

you should make sure the amount of weight you want to lose is reasonable, beneficial and won't jeopardize your overall health and well-being. Always check first with your doctor or nurse practitioner before pursuing any weight loss regimen. Health status and life-style choices should be factored into your weight loss goals to get the best overall picture of how you're weighing in.

Once you've made the decision to pursue a weight-loss *maintenance* regimen and are clear about your goals, you may find following strategies useful and effective:

- Small Bite Size Steps

Most people I have come across don't consider losing weight in increments. For example, if they plan to lose 30 or 50lbs they just keep plugging away trying to reach the magic number. The most effective plan is to try breaking it down into small bitesize pieces. Try to lose 5lbs and maintain that 5lb weight loss for a month or so. Then shoot for another 5lbs trying again to maintain that for another month or so repeating the process until you can obtain and maintain your desired goal.

- Improve Your Choices

A Duke University study suggested that at least 45% of our behavior is habitual. In the context of a 24hr day, that's almost half of our waking hours we spend on auto pilot. If you want to make healthier life-style choices you need to start considering the people, places, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that trigger those choices. Keeping a journal and tracking log or taking time to reflect on triggers that influence our weight-loss tendencies makes us more aware of our choices and is the first step to making better choices.

- Quality over Quantity

Boston based nutritionist Brandon Ransom, recommends focusing on eating more quality foods over calorie counting. Quality foods can be defined as natural foods that are not processed and

are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. The American Diabetic Association is an excellent resource for learning how to incorporate quality foods into your diet (you don't have to be a diabetic to use the site). Another useful resource, cleaneatingmag.com, where you can find recipes that incorporate quality foods that are either inexpensive, quick to prepare, gluten-free, or vegetarian.

- Don't Resist Resistance Training

My favorite strategy for keeping the weight off is to add resistance training to the exercise regimen. This is especially crucial for women and older adults. First, for women this is crucial because compared to men we have a lower percentage of muscle mass and lose more bone density as we age. Second, as adults age, we tend to lose muscle strength, muscle endurance, and muscle mass. Increasing muscle mass, strength, and endurance will ultimately help us to burn calories more effectively. Additionally, it will help us to prevent injury and diseases like osteoporosis.

Check the table below based on calories lost during a moderate 30 minute workout:

Activity	130lbs of body weight	180lbs of body weight
Running at about 6miles/hr.	316 cal.	439 cal.
Cycling at about 10 miles/hr.	177 cal.	243 cal.
Swimming, fast crawl	276 cal.	378 cal.

- Conclusion

The National Weight Control Registry and the National Institute of Health have suggested that successful long-term weight loss *maintenance* is achievable, it gets easier over time. In other words, the longer you are able to maintain even a moderate weight loss, the more manageable weight loss maintenance becomes.

Short Bio:

Joya Ransom has over 25yrs education, training, and experience in the health and fitness industries. She is founder of Joya's New Creations a wellness consulting practice dedicated to the promotion of preventative health care through teaching and instruction.