

Successful Strategies For Permanent Weight Loss

By Karla Schmidt, (R.D, Nutritional Consultant)

Weight Loss - just seeing those two words on a page can send most into a guilty sweat accompanied by images of quick weight-loss plans that came but didn't conquer! Losing weight (and keeping it off) is, no doubt, one of the most challenging hurdles an individual encounters in their lives. And, to make matters worse, most people don't jump this hurdle only once. They keep trying to take the quick & easy route - only to return to face the same hurdle again and again. So...enough of the metaphors, here's some tried and true advice. The following strategies are proven to get your weight-loss program off to a realistic start, and help you maintain the loss for a lifetime.

1. Make a commitment

Permanent weight loss takes time and effort. Make sure that you're ready to make permanent changes and that you do so for the right reasons. No one else can make you lose weight. In fact, external pressure - often from people closest to you - may make matters worse. Announce your plans to make these changes to those closest to you. Ask that they fully support your efforts.

2. Get support

To succeed in losing weight permanently, an individual must take responsibility for your own behavior. But that doesn't mean that you have to do everything alone. Seek the expertise and support of a nutritionist who can educate you, evaluate your current eating patterns, develop a customized weigh-loss plan specific to your needs, and most importantly, coach & encourage you through the rough spots (such as plateaus).

3. Set a realistic goal

When you're considering what to expect from your new eating plan, be realistic. Over the long term, it's best to aim for losing 1 to 2 pounds a week, although initially your loss might be higher due to the significant changes in your diet. Statistically, individuals who lose 1 to 2 pounds per week have an 80% higher chance of keeping the weight off when compared to those on quick, non-health promoting weight loss plan. Think of how many times you've lost the same 10 pounds...but never permanently because your habits didn't change. When you're setting goals, think about process and outcome. "Eat smaller meals" is an example of a process goal, while "Lose 30 pounds" is an example of an outcome goal. Wanting to lose 30 pounds is great, but the process goals (i.e. eat smaller meals) is what changes habits - the key to weight loss.

4. Change your lifestyle

It's not enough to eat healthy foods and exercise for only a few weeks or months. You have to make them part of your lifestyle. Lifestyle changes start with taking an honest look at your eating habits and daily routine. The easiest way to keep yourself honest (and adopt new, healthier habits) is to *food diary*. Write down everything you have had to eat or drink throughout your day. You'll be surprised how many morsels pass your lips that have long been long forgotten by your next meal. It is also important to pay close attention to emotional, situational, or habitual triggers that have sabotaged your efforts in the past. For example, every time you go to a party hungry you tend to overeat. Pre-thinking this event would encourage you to eat a small, healthy snack before you go, thus avoiding the - *I'm starving, out-of-control - eating episode*. It's not enough just to recognize your triggers — you have to plan for how you'll deal with them if you're going to succeed in losing weight once and for all. Sure you're likely to have an occasional setback. But instead of giving up entirely, simply start fresh the next day. Remember that you're planning to change your life