

Behavioral Health Bariatric Group Handbook



Welcome to the Behavioral Health Bariatric Group!

Over the next few weeks, you'll be building new habits to help you prepare for bariatric surgery. In this group, you will learn the skills and strategies you need to be successful losing weight and keeping the weight off for years to come. Bariatric surgery is a powerful tool. This group will teach you how to use that tool to build a healthy life and achieve your goals.

The group is designed to be both a class and a support group. To get the most out of group, read this handbook and review it often. Each time we meet, you will be setting goals to work on before the next meeting. You will have the chance to get ideas and support from other group members, share your own ideas, and help others who are on the same journey.

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Rules and Expectations for the Group

- The program starts with four 2-hour sessions covering the material in this handbook. All four sessions are required. Plan to be present for the entire group meeting. If you arrive late or leave early, you will not get credit for the meeting.
- Set aside time for the group and give it your full attention. Please don't multi-task during the meetings.
- **Join the meeting from a private space. If other people, including children, are at home with you, please ask them not to enter the room while you are participating in the group. This rule protects the privacy of group members. If you join the visit from a public place, you will be removed from the meeting.**
- If you attend from your workplace, do not do it during work hours and don't work during the group.
- **Driving or riding in a moving vehicle are not permitted during the group. If you join the visit while driving, you will be removed from the meeting.**
- Please keep your video on for the entire group meeting. If your video is off without explanation, you will have to be removed from the group.
- Turn off your phone and other electronic devices (unless you are using them to attend the group meeting) and put them away during the group meetings.
- If using a phone, use the "Do not disturb" function to prevent incoming calls.
- If you are using a phone or other mobile device to attend the group, place it in a stable location and position it so we can see your face. Please be seated or standing and do not walk around during the group.
- Minimize background noise. Turn off TV, music, etc. in the background.

- Respect the privacy of other group members. Do not reveal personal information about other group members outside the group. Do not take any screenshots or photos or audio recordings of the session.
- Eating, smoking, and vaping are not permitted during the group. Drinking water is okay, but do not drink soda, coffee, or alcohol during the group.
- Do not attend the group under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or other substances.
- Dress as you would dress for an in-person group meeting. Please be fully dressed in appropriate clothing.
- Do not display political, sexually explicit, or potentially offensive materials (posters, banners, T-shirts, signs etc.) where there are visible to the group.
- The first session is mandatory. If you miss the first session or arrive significantly late or leave early, you will have to start over in an upcoming group.
- You are allowed one make-up if you miss one of sessions 2 through 4. If you miss more than one session, you will have to repeat the group in an upcoming cycle. **You are responsible for calling to schedule your make up session.**
- Once you have completed the 4-week class, you will meet with your group leader or another bariatric psychologist for an individual follow up visit.
- After you complete the 4-week group and the individual session, you may continue in a monthly support group if you like. The monthly group is not required.
- Please call Behavioral Health at 508-856-0732 or send a MyChart message in advance if you need to cancel. If you do not call to cancel, your visit may be marked as a no show and you will not be scheduled for the next meeting.
- Please be polite and respectful to other members.

Information on Bariatric Surgery

Bariatric surgery is a major commitment and will change your life in so many ways. Once you have completed Nutrition and Behavioral Health requirements, you will be scheduled to meet with a bariatric surgeon who will talk to you about your options and answer your questions. To get the most out of that visit, you should start learning as much as you can about bariatric surgery now.

Below are listings of several web sites that may help you increase your knowledge of bariatric surgery. Please read everything with the understanding that bariatric surgery affects everyone differently. Procedures offered in this program include **sleeve gastrectomy** and **roux-en-Y gastric bypass**.

<https://asmbs.org/>

The American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/bariatric-surgery/potential-candidates>

U. S. Government agency site reviewing obesity treatment options

<https://www.obesityhelp.com/>

A commercial, wide ranging site with chat rooms and recipes

Program Requirements

General

- Talk to your insurance company to make sure they will cover bariatric surgery.
- Schedule a height and weight check with your PCP or Nutrition. Plan on getting an in person weight check every 2-3 months while you are in the program.
- Be up-to-date on annual physical and screening tests such as colonoscopy, mammogram, Pap test, required lab tests.
- Have chronic medical conditions stabilized.
- Weight loss:
 - Weight loss prior to surgery is required by most insurance companies.
 - There is usually no specific number of pounds you are required to lose, but aim for a specific goal to help you stay on track (e.g. 5-10% of current weight).
 - **If you gain weight during the program, you will not be approved until you lose the weight you gained.**

Nutrition/Behavioral Health

- Attend the 8-Week BH/Nutrition class.
- Follow all recommendations taught in the class.
- Complete follow up BH and Nutrition evaluations

Nutrition

- Attend Nutrition pre-operative class.

Behavioral Health

- Attend additional individual appointments as required.
- Allow consultation with other mental or behavioral health providers.
- Behavioral health conditions must be stable.

Behavioral Health Requirements

Before Behavioral Health can approve you for surgery, we must see evidence of the following:

- Goal setting and tracking progress toward goals
- Keeping accurate food diaries
- Regular eating (3-5 times daily, 3-5 hours between meals/snacks)
- Ability and willingness to plan and prepare healthy meals and snacks
- Regular self weighing (preferably weekly) and keeping a record of weight
- Consistently practicing some form of exercise
- Elimination of the following:
 - Alcohol
 - Marijuana
 - Other addictive drugs
 - Nicotine
 - Smoking of any kind
 - Caffeine
 - Carbonated Beverages

Why do we require you to come to this group?

Bariatric surgery is a powerful tool to promote weight loss, but it is only a tool. Good tools do not guarantee success without knowledge and skills.

There is a honeymoon period after surgery when you may have no appetite and no interest in food. It is easy to become complacent and start thinking bariatric surgery will keep doing the work for you. Sadly, the honeymoon usually lasts no more than a year. Many patients gain back the weight because they don't continue to practice weight loss behaviors.

Behavior is a key predictor of success or failure after surgery.

What is the Best Way to Lose Weight?

From the Journal of the American Medical Association, 2021

Limit Daily Caloric Intake

- 1200 to 1500 calories per day for women
- 1500 to 1800 calories per day for men
- Choose a balanced diet (50% colorful vegetables and fruits, 25% whole grains, 25% healthy protein)
- Drink plenty of water and avoid sugary drinks (soda, punch, juice)

Increase Physical Activity

- At least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise like walking

Set Diet and Exercise Related Goals

SKILL #1: GOAL SETTING AND TRACKING

Everyone in this group shares at least one goal: to lose weight. To achieve that goal, you need to have a plan and specific behavior goals to reduce calorie intake and increase physical activity. Changing behavior is challenging! Setting behavior goals and tracking progress toward goals makes success much more likely. If you succeed at changing your behavior, you will succeed at losing weight. It is impossible to lose weight and keep it off without changing your behavior, even if you have bariatric surgery.

Every time we meet, you'll be asked to set behavior goals and make a commitment to following through on those goals. Your goals should be **SMART**.

Specific

- What exactly do I want to do?
- How, where, and when will I do it?
- What do I need before I can do it?
- What are the barriers?

Measurable

- How much?
- How many?
- How often?
- How will I know I've been successful?

Achievable but Ambitious

- Is it possible?
- Can I make this happen through my behavior?
- Is it challenging enough to be meaningful?

Relevant

- Why is this goal important?
- Is this goal consistent with my values and lifestyle?
- Is this the right time?
- Do I have the resources to achieve it (money, support, time)?

Time Bound

- When do I want or need to have this goal accomplished?
- What can I expect to achieve in 6 months? 6 weeks? 1 week? 1 day?
- What can I do right now to start working toward the goal?

There are two categories of goals:

Outcome Goals vs. Process Goals

- Outcome Goals: Your desired end result.
 - Examples include: lose 100 lbs, get my BMI below 30, control my diabetes without medication
- Process Goals: The voluntary behaviors, skills and strategies needed to achieve the outcome goal.
 - Examples include: eat around 1500 calories daily, walk for 30 minutes 5 times a week, eat 3 servings of vegetables daily

In this group, you'll be focusing on setting and tracking process goals, but your outcome goals will keep you motivated.

More Tips for Achieving Your Goals

- Write them down.
- Check in regularly
- Celebrate small wins along the way
- Remember your "Why?" Why are you doing this?
- Consider what you want now vs. what you want most.

How to Do It

Each week at the end of the group meeting, you will write down 3-4 goals you want to achieve before the next group meeting.

These goals should all be **Process Goals**.

They should **SMART**.

Write down your goals on a **Goal Tracking Sheet** like the one available on the Reliant Behavioral Health web site (illustrated on page 13).

At the end of each day, review your goals and assess your progress. Develop a system for tracking progress. For instance, you could enter a star for full success, a check mark for partial success, a minus sign or leave the box blank for no progress.

Goal Tracking Sheet

Outcome Goal : _____lose 4 lbs this month_____

My process goals For this Week are: Week of __/__/__	Goal 1: Write down everything I eat and drink every day this week.						
	Goal 2: Walk for 20 minutes four days this week (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday)						
	Goal 3: Drink 64 ounces of water daily						
	Goal 4:						
DAY	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Goal 1	100%	60%	100%	Forgot all day 😞	100%	100%	100%
Goal 2	Yes	NA	Yes	Yes	NA	Yes	NA
Goal 3	32 oz	64 oz	64 oz	64 oz	48 oz	100 oz!	60 oz.
Goal 4							

SKILL #2: FOOD DIARIES

Why Do It:

Studies show that keeping track of what you eat and how much is the most effective weight loss skill.

To reduce your caloric intake and get enough protein, fiber and other nutrients, you need to keep a record of what you eat and drink.

Writing down everything you eat and drink can change your behavior by making you more aware of your eating and discouraging mindless eating.

How to Do It:

Smart phone apps automatically enter calories and other nutrients when you enter a food and the amount. Most apps also help you track water intake. A notebook works better for some people and allows you to add customized notes. The key is finding a strategy you will use consistently.

Enter or write down everything you eat or drink that contains calories or nutrition, even if you have just a bite or sip. “If you bite it, write it. If you drink it, ink it.”

Get the equipment you need to measure portions and decrease portion sizes: dry and liquid measuring cups, measuring spoons, food scale, small plates and utensils.

Enter or write down your foods and drinks immediately after you eat or drink them.

Better yet, enter them before you eat, so you can relax and enjoy your meal or snack. If you forget to enter something, do it as soon as you remember. **Do not** wait until the end of the day, but if you forget the whole day, entering foods later is better than not entering them at all.

Some Popular Food Tracking Apps

- Baritastic
- MyNetDiary
- Lose It!
- MyFitnessPal
- MyFoodDiary
- Weight Watchers
- Lifesum

Sample Daily Food Record

Day/Date:

Time	Food and Drink Consumed	Amount	Nutrition Info	Thoughts/Feelings	Triggers
6:30 am	Oatmeal Banana Milk Hard boiled egg	½ cup Half 2 T 1 Lg	150 calories 100 calories 18 calories 90 calories	Hungry, looking forward to the day	It's time to eat
11:30 am	Birthday cake	1 large slice	400 calories	I can't resist!	Birthday party at work Forgot to eat my healthy snack at 10 so I was hungry
12:30 pm	Grilled chicken breast Lettuce Tomatoes Cucumbers Olive oil	3 ounces 2 cups 1 med. ½ small ½ T	126 calories 20 calories 26 calories 8 calories 60 calories	Too bad I ate that cake, but I'll eat healthy for the rest of the day. I'm not very hungry yet, but I need to get back on track.	It's time to eat.
3 pm	Peach Cottage cheese	1 med. ½ cup	38 calories 111 calories		Reminder on phone
6:30 pm	Baked salmon Steamed broccoli Brown rice Strawberries, sliced	3 ounces 1 cup ½ cup 1 cup	177 calories 31 calories 108 calories 54 calories	Happy to be eating with family.	Dinner time

Total Calories: 1517

SKILL #3: REGULAR EATING AND PORTION CONTROL

Why Do It:

Going too long without eating increases **ghrelin**, the hunger hormone. Ghrelin stimulates appetite, increases food intake and promotes fat storage. Ghrelin levels go up between meals and increase the longer we go without eating. People who skip meals often overeat when they do eat, because of increased ghrelin levels, and the calories are more likely to be stored as fat to protect against future starvation. This is why skipping meals makes it hard to lose weight.

Eating several times a day at 3-5 hour intervals will enhance calorie burning and prevent the build-up of ghrelin and hunger/deprivation.

Modern life disrupts the natural process of eating in response to hunger. We end up eating when we can or confusing other feelings (boredom, loneliness, joy, fatigue) with hunger. Frequent dieting and overeating disrupt hunger and fullness cues.

Early in your weight loss program and after bariatric surgery, you can't depend on hunger to tell you when to eat or not eat. Instead, you must set up an eating schedule. Eating by the clock reduces the power of other non-hunger cues for eating. Over time, normal hunger cues will be established or re-established.

How to Do It:

Eat 3 small meals and 2 snacks (or 5 mini-meals) every day.

Eat breakfast shortly after getting up. You don't have to eat traditional breakfast foods if you don't like them, but it's important to eat something and include protein if possible.

Eat at regular intervals, every 3 to 5 hours. Don't graze between meals and snacks.

SKILL #4: PLANNING AND PREPARING

Why Do It:

By planning and preparing meals and snacks in advance, you make sure you always have something healthy to eat. Planning can help you predict challenges and be ready for them.

Planning for exercise helps you figure out the best time to do it and avoid other things getting in the way.

How to Do It:

Shop with a list.

Plan ahead to fit new eating habits into your schedule.

Prepare meals and snacks in advance.

Combine meal planning with tracking. Enter all your planned meals in advance and commit yourself to eating what you tracked.

Pack meals and snacks for work or outings.

Pre-packing meals can improve portion control, even if you eat them at home.

Plan and schedule time to exercise.

Prepare for your workout by taking out your athletic clothes and sneakers in advance. If you go to the gym, pack your workout bag the night before.

Put exercise, shopping, and meal planning on your to-do list.

SKILL #5: WEIGH YOURSELF ONCE A WEEK

Why Do It:

Research shows people who successfully lose weight and keep it off weigh themselves regularly and keep track of their weight. Knowing how much you weigh allows you to know whether your weight loss strategies are working.

When losing weight, weighing yourself once a week works best for most people. Weighing in too frequently can be frustrating. Weighing in less frequently can prevent you from identifying successes or setbacks and increases weight related anxiety.

How to Do It:

If you don't own a scale, get one. Accurate scales in the \$20-\$30 range can be purchased at most department and discount stores, and usually provide accurate readings up to 300 or 400 lbs (check the package or listing). High capacity scales that can accurately read up to 700 lbs are available from Amazon and other vendors. They can be more expensive (\$75-\$100) but are a worthwhile investment for your health.

Pick a day of the week that works best for you, and always weigh yourself on that day.

Always weigh yourself shortly after you wake up and before you eat or drink anything.

Empty your bladder before you weigh in.

Wear similar clothing (or no clothing) whenever you weigh yourself.

Keep a record of your weekly weight in your food diary.

SKILL #6: MINDFUL EATING

Why Do It:

It takes about 20 minutes from the time you start eating for your brain to recognize that your stomach is full. That means if you eat quickly, you may want more food even after you've had enough to satisfy your physical hunger. Eating slowly allows you time to feel full sooner and therefore eat less.

If you have bariatric surgery, it is particularly important to eat slowly. If you eat too fast, you may eat too much. In the short term, you may feel sick. In the long term, people who eat too quickly are less successful losing weight and keeping it off after surgery.

Eating slowly and paying attention to your food can also increase your enjoyment. You may find you are getting the same amount of pleasure from a smaller quantity of food when you take the time to enjoy each bite.

How to Do It:

Before you eat anything, ask yourself, "Why am I eating?"

Give your food your full attention when you're eating. Turn off the TV. Eat at a table.

Give yourself enough time to eat slowly. Put your fork down between bites. See if you can take 20 minutes to eat a meal. As you get closer to surgery, your dietician will ask you to eat even more slowly.

Every so often, stop to notice feelings of hunger and fullness. If you feel full, stop eating.

While eating, experience the food with all your senses.

Become knowledgeable about the food you eat. Try different recipes. Experiment with new foods you haven't tried.

Don't judge yourself while eating. Every time you find yourself eating mindlessly or too quickly, just remind yourself to go back to mindful eating. It takes time and practice.

SKILL #7: EXERCISE

Why Do It:

The Weight Control Registry at Brown University surveys people who have successfully maintained weight loss for at least a year. The majority of people in the Registry exercise for 1 hour a day on average! While you may be able to lose weight without exercising much, your chance of keeping the weight off is lower without exercise. Patients who exercise regularly before bariatric surgery are likely to have fewer surgical complications and recover more quickly.

Exercise has other benefits, even if you don't lose weight. These include:

- Clearer thinking
- Improved mood
- Better sleep
- More energy
- Improved physical functioning
- Protection from illness
- Increased fun
- More discipline
- Slower aging
- Improved appearance

How to Do It:

First, just **show up for exercise**. Make a commitment to move daily and do it, even if you only have five minutes! Just do something physical. Once you start exercising, you'll gradually find yourself exercising more.

Once you have established the habit of moving daily, make it your goal to increase three kinds of exercise.

1. Moderate-intensity exercise equivalent to brisk walking (aim for at least 30 minutes a day, more if possible)
 - a. Burns calories

- b. Increase cardiovascular health and stamina
- 2. Resistance training (strength training, lifting weights, resistance bands, Pilates)
 - a. Increases strength
 - b. Reduces risk of physical injury
 - c. May increase base metabolism
- 3. Lifestyle physical activity (park at the far end of the parking lot and walk, take the stairs instead of the elevator, use the bathroom farthest from your office)
 - a. Maintains flexibility and stamina
 - b. Helps avoid risks associated with prolonged sitting
 - c. Burns additional calories
 - d. Builds healthy breaks into your day

SKILL #8: STRESS MANAGEMENT AND HEALTHY MINDSET

Why Do It:

Stress and emotions can cause us to overeat or get in the way of other activities that promote weight loss, such as exercise, meal planning, or food diaries. Having strategies for managing stress and emotions can increase your odds of successfully losing weight and keeping the weight off after surgery.

When we feel stress, it usually means we are facing a problem that needs to be solved. In moderate doses, mental stress is probably healthy, just like stressing a muscle makes it stronger. When stress gets overwhelming, however, it can lead to problems like overeating, eating unhealthy foods, or losing the ability to make progress toward goals. It is good to have a strategy for coping effectively with stress.

How to Do It:

See the 4-Step Approach to Stress Management and Problem Solving (page 24) and Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts (pages 25-27).

The Four Step Approach to Stress Management and Problem Solving

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. STOP | When you become aware of a stressful situation, say “Stop” to yourself. Simply saying “Stop” can interrupt a stress response. Try saying it out loud or picturing a Stop sign. |
| 2. BREATHE | After you “Stop”, breathe deeply a few times and release physical tension. |
| 3. REFLECT | Focus on the problem that is causing your stress. Ask yourself some questions: What can I do to improve this situation? What are my options? Can I change the situation or do I have to accept it? |
| 4. CHOOSE | Decide on the best way to handle your problem. |

FOUR STEP APPROACH LOG:

What happened when you tried The Four-Step Approach?

Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Situations

People, places, events, and things around you. People often think they feel certain moods or emotions or behave in a certain way *because* of what is happening around them, but this is only one part of the picture.

Thoughts

No situation affects you until you *interpret* it. How you think about what is happening has a powerful influence on how you feel about it and how you respond. Different thoughts or interpretations lead to different feelings and behaviors.

Feelings

Feelings may be emotions like feeling happy, excited, agitated, angry, upset, afraid, and so on. Feelings can also be physical sensations (e.g., rapid heartbeat, upset stomach).

Behaviors

These are the things we do. Our behaviors are guided by our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes it feels like we act automatically in response to situations, but in almost all cases, thoughts and/or feelings occur before behaviors.

Unhelpful Thoughts

The day started off badly, so the whole day is ruined.

I don't have time to go to the gym, so I can't exercise today.

I don't have any control over this situation.

I can't waste food, so I have to eat this.

This situation makes it impossible for me to lose weight.

Weighing myself makes me uncomfortable, so I shouldn't do it.

I have to finish this work today, so I can't find time to prepare my lunch for tomorrow.

What did I do to deserve this?

Being hungry and trying not to overeat will make the evening unbearable.

If I find it hard to keep food records every day, I may as well give up.

Challenge/Alternative Thoughts

One event doesn't ruin the whole day. I can get back on track right away.

Maybe not, but I can fit in a quick walk or dance to music for a few minutes.

I may not be able to control everything, but there are some things I can control.

If I eat food I don't need, I'm still wasting it.

I may not be able to follow all the recommendations, but there are a few I can continue even during a difficult situation.

Stepping outside my comfort zone will make me stronger and healthier.

No, I don't have to finish everything today. It's important to make time for my health.

I didn't do anything to deserve this. Sometimes bad things happen to good people.

If I can keep calm and focus on my Why, the evening will be ok. There are other ways to enjoy myself besides eating.

I have succeeded at learning new things before. Learning new habits takes time and practice.

Alternatives to Emotional Eating:

When you experience a negative feeling...

- Notice the feeling (“I feel sad.”)
- Allow the feeling (don’t try to avoid it)
- Describe the feeling (“It feels like my heart is heavy.”)
- Normalize the feeling (“It’s normal to feel sad about this loss.”)
- Do the right thing while having the feeling.

You can feel discomfort and unpleasant feelings AND do what is important to you.

SKILL #9: SELF CARE AND GOOD SLEEP HABITS

Why Do It:

Losing weight is good for you, but it's important to take care of yourself in other ways when trying to lose weight. Often losing weight involves giving up habits you used to find rewarding or adding some that aren't very rewarding. It's important to give yourself other rewards so you can stay motivated.

Sometimes people feel guilty taking care of themselves and feel they should put other people first. If you travel by airplane, the flight attendants always say to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others. Think of self-care as your oxygen mask.

Sleep is one of the most important forms of self care.

How to Do It:

Self Care

There are many ways to practice self-care. What works for one person may not work for someone else. The important thing is to make self-care a priority in your schedule. Here are some ideas for self-care:

Hobbies

Do something you love, whether that's hiking, art, crafting, dancing, reading for fun.

Friends

Take time to connect with a friend or a family member.

Solitude

Taking time to be alone with yourself and your thoughts can be rejuvenating.

Self-compassion

Treat yourself like you would treat your best friend. Be kind to yourself.

Mindfulness

Being in the present moment can help to reduce stress. Practice mindfulness by noticing your five senses; what do you see, hear, taste, feel, and smell right now?

Relaxation

Try listening to some recorded relaxation exercises.

Meditation

Research shows that meditation can improve your focus, immunity, and overall mental well-being.

Gratitude

Write down 3 things you're grateful for every day.

Prayer

Connect to your spiritual beliefs, express gratitude, ask for strength and guidance.

Unplug from Technology

Sometimes the best way to recharge is to turn off your phone and step away from the computer. Interact with the real world.

Journaling

Writing can help you process your feelings and stimulate creativity.

Nature

Step outside, go for a walk in the woods or in your neighborhood, notice the plants, trees and sky.

Spend Time with Pets

Pets can comfort us and bring us joy, fun, and laughter. Walking your dog is a good exercise for you and your pet.

Grooming and Pampering

Get a haircut, have your nails done, get a massage.

Improve Your Surroundings

Clean your house or car, decorate a room.

Good Sleep Habits

Don't **try** to sleep. If you can't sleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something else. When you start to feel sleepy go back to bed.

Stick to a regular sleep schedule. Start by getting up at the same time every day.

Find some time to relax at the end of the day before you go to bed. Don't work or do anything too stimulating in the hour before bedtime. Avoid using smart phone or computer too close to bedtime.

Eliminate caffeine, nicotine and alcohol.

Have a light snack shortly before bedtime.

Minimize fluid intake in the last few hours before bedtime. Plan ahead to make sure to drink enough water earlier in the day.

Use the bed only for sleep. Don't watch TV or look at your phone in bed.

Keep your bedroom cool and minimize light and noise in the bedroom. You may need to keep pets off the bed if they take up too much room or prevent you from moving naturally during sleep.

Avoid taking naps during the day.

Adjust your expectations. Not everyone needs 8 hours of sleep to feel rested.

SKILL #10: ASK FOR THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

Why Do It:

Family, friends and other important people in your life can make weight loss more or less challenging. When family members support your weight loss by joining you in healthy eating and exercise or giving you time you need to take care of yourself, you will likely find the process a lot easier. On the other hand, lack of support can be a barrier to weight loss. If family members insist on having high calorie foods or tempt you to overeat, your likelihood of success may go down. Often other people want to be supportive, but don't know how to help. Sometimes, unfortunately, other people can be selfish and unwilling to help you lose weight. It is important to ask for the support you need and set limits with people who are unsupportive.

How To Do It:

Talk to the important people in your life. Explain why losing weight is important to you. Be clear about what you would find helpful.

Once you agree on how others can be helpful, keep to the agreement yourself and express appreciation for the help.

Find ways to combine weight loss and good times with family and friends. Examples could be scheduling time to walk with your spouse or partner, teaching your kids to prepare healthy foods, or playing active games with grandchildren. When getting together with friends, suggest going for a walk together instead of catching up over drinks or snacks.

If you are the primary cook in the household, serve healthy foods without apology. It may turn out that people like them. Remember that you are helping loved ones when you serve them healthy foods. This is particularly important for children. Processed foods like chicken nuggets, hot dogs, or mac and cheese increase their risk for developing obesity and other health problems.

SKILL #11: STIMULUS CONTROL

Why Do It:

Stimulus control means shaping your environment so the healthy choices are easier and the unhealthy choices are harder. A stimulus is something that triggers a behavior. For instance, a favorite food can be a stimulus for overeating. If you control the stimulus, it won't control you.

How to Do It:

Notice your triggers:

- Social (friends or family, social gatherings)
- Environmental (danger foods in the home or at work)
- Emotional (lonely, sad, stressed, bored)
- Cognitive (thoughts like, "I deserve a treat," "Comfort food will make me feel better.")
- Physical (hungry, tired, nauseated)

Get rid of triggers or change them so they work for you:

- Remove dangerous foods from the home or store out of sight and in an inconvenient location.
- Put healthy foods in the front of the refrigerator at eye level. Discard unhealthy foods or put them at the back of the lowest shelf where you can't see them.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables and put them in the most visible part of the freezer.
- Shop with a list or order groceries for pick up.
- Suggest social activities that don't involve eating
- Have a small healthy snack before going out socially to reduce hunger
- Plan ahead for challenging situations (see pages 33-34 for suggestions)
- Distract yourself with enjoyable activities or call someone for support when you feel tempted to snack (see page 35 for examples)
- Lay out your exercise clothes or pack a gym bag in advance
- Keep exercise clothes and shoes in your car to be ready for opportunities
- Remind yourself of goals, put up signs or posters near fridge, TV, in your car

Dealing with Challenging Situations: Live your life fully without compromising your weight loss plan.

1. Restaurants

- a. Plan! Research the menu ahead of time and choose lower calorie options.
Have a general idea what you'll order in advance.
- b. Avoid buffets.
- c. Skip the bread basket.
- d. Skip appetizers (or make appetizers your entrée).
- e. Skip fried foods.
- f. Drink water 30 minutes ahead of dinner.
- g. Cut your entrée in half and have the other half wrapped up for a future meal. Or split a meal between two people.
- h. Salad dressing on the side. Dip your fork rather than pouring dressing.
- i. Say no to dessert or share with others at the table.
- j. Ask companions not to nag or tempt.

2. Weekends

- a. Plan! Lack of structure makes planning even more important on weekends.
You may need to have multiple alternative plans.
- b. Schedule in non-food rewards.
- c. Don't skip meals
 - i. Pack mini meals when you run errands
 - ii. Have breakfast soon after getting up

3. Vacations/Holidays

- a. Include non-food pleasures.
 - i. Picture the vacation, what do you want to remember?
 - ii. Outings/activities
- b. Include family/friends in discussion of goals and vacation plans.
 - i. How can this vacation be different?

- ii. How can **we** make healthy food choices?
 - iii. What would you like them to do or say to be supportive?
- c. Plan, but be realistic and expect plans to change
 - i. Continue food logs.
 - ii. Weigh weekly.
 - iii. Eat something special in moderation
 - iv. Focus on maintenance rather than loss
- d. Avoid alcohol and drugs
 - i. Impairs self-control
 - ii. Alcohol adds calories
- e. Be active
- f. Prepare for comments
 - i. Family and friends who haven't seen you in a while may comment on your weight loss.
 - ii. Some comments may be negative. Some may be positive but intrusive. How can you minimize the stress caused by insensitive comments?

A Menu of Possibly Pleasurable Activities

- Take a drive to see something new.
- Relax and read a newspaper or magazine.
- Help your child with homework.
- Plant something to watch it grow.
- Go for a walk.
- Take a nap.
- Build something from wood.
- Feed the birds or ducks.
- Hang a hummingbird feeder.
- Go for a jog or run.
- Get up early to watch the sunrise.
- Walk a dog.
- Play frisbee,
- Sew something.
- Play golf.
- Read poetry.
- Start a memory box.
- Call a friend who makes you laugh.
- Enjoy the quiet of an early morning.
- Grow (or shave off) a beard or mustache.
- Search for healthy recipes.
- Compliment someone
- Make arts and crafts.
- Put on makeup or polish nails.
- Ride a motorcycle.
- Hum or sing.
- Add an item to your collection.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Read a book you've heard about.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Lie on the grass.
- Cook a favorite healthy meal.
- Visit an old friend.
- Pray.
- Walk along the water.
- Walk or ride on a bicycle path.
- Shop online
- Find a place for a moment of solitude.
- Play a card or board game.
- Wash and wax your car.
- Take a class online.
- Play a musical instrument (or learn to).
- Look at maps for places to visit.
- Meditate.
- Send a care package to a student.
- Call someone special in your family.
- Write to an old friend.
- Enter a contest.
- Paint a room.
- Research your family history.
- Lie under a tree and watch the sky.

SKILL #12: LAPSE/RELAPSE MANAGEMENT

Why Do It:

Even the most successful person fails from time to time. Failing sometimes is part of being human. The key to long-term success is getting up and trying again every time you fail. In fact, trying again whenever you fail may be the most important skill of all.

Relapse happens when you stop working toward a goal. In weight loss, it could mean a return to overeating, eating unhealthy foods, giving up on an exercise program, or giving up on keeping food diaries. A lapse is smaller, more temporary, or the first step in a relapse. If you get back on track quickly after a lapse, it's unlikely to take you too far away from your goals. An example of a lapse would be having an unplanned dessert, skipping a workout, or not keeping food diaries for a day. Some lapses are longer than others, but what sets them apart from relapses, is that you keep your eye on your goal and eventually go back to pursuing it. A relapse usually involves giving up on your goal, at least for a while.

How To Do It:

Do

- Acknowledge what happened.
- Ask yourself: What caused this lapse? (Examples: stress, being too hungry, boredom, being busy)
- Remember: this happens to everyone. No one is perfect. You have tools to move on from this. You can come back from a lapse or even a relapse.
- Write down what happened.
- Forgive yourself.
- Take a moment to re-evaluate your goals and recommit to them.
- If weight loss is still your goal, get back on track right away.

Don't

- Don't pretend it didn't happen
- Don't engage in negative self-talk or put yourself down. Don't blame others.
- Don't tell yourself: "This day is shot, I'll start again tomorrow."
- Don't wait a week, a day, or even an hour to start over.

A Final Thought: Everyone feels a lack of motivation sometimes. Successful people keep going even when they don't feel motivated.