



TAKE TEN

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SHAREABLE RESOURCE

by James A. Peterson, Ph.D., FACSM

Ten Assumptions That Individuals Trying to Lose Weight Shouldn't Make

1 THAT CARBOHYDRATES ARE THE ENEMY. Individuals who want to eat a healthy diet should not forego consuming carbs. In fact, quality carbohydrate-rich foods, e.g., fruits, whole grains, and vegetables (such as beans and peas), are a critical fuel source and the foundation of healthy eating patterns.

2 THAT EATING FAT WILL MAKE A PERSON FAT. Avoiding fat will not necessarily result in weight loss. Rather, it can actually lead to weight gain if the individuals who cut fat from their diet replace those calories with added sugar and refined grains (which they often do). Instead, they should focus on smaller portions of healthy fats that have been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties.

3 THAT EATING LESS AND EXERCISING MORE IS THE ONLY STRATEGY NEEDED TO LOSE WEIGHT. Although individuals who lose weight tend to successfully change their eating habits, as well as increase their level of exercise, there are other issues that can contribute to a person's weight that also should be considered. For example, attention should be paid to the overall composition and eating patterns of an individual's diet. As such, a person should focus on eating healthier foods while avoiding highly processed foods that often have lots of added sugar.

4 THAT SNACKING SHOULD BE AVOIDED. On the contrary, snacking can actually be good. Paying attention to what the body is telling someone (for example, a sense of hunger) can be helpful in preventing a person from overeating at a later meal. In reality, individuals don't have to get used to feeling hungry. What matters is what a person snacks on. In that regard, the focus should be on consuming a healthy, portion-controlled snack, e.g., an ounce of nuts, carrots with hummus, etc.

5 THAT ALL CALORIES ARE EQUAL. As such, there are high-quality calories (i.e., those with nutrients and fiber) and low-quality calories (i.e., processed foods, sugary snacks, and refined starches). In other words, what a person eats can be just as important as how much they eat. The focus should be on eating whole foods of high quality (e.g., fruits, vegetables, lean minimally processed protein) and avoiding processed foods (e.g., crackers, cookies, white bread, and fast-food meats).

6 THAT CONSUMING LOW-FAT FOODS CAN LEAD TO WEIGHT LOSS. Maybe, maybe not. In reality, a number of low-fat foods (as well as reduced-fat and fat-free foods) have just as many calories as the full-fat versions, given that they often contain more sugar and

taste-enhancing additives. As such, consuming fat in certain forms (e.g., olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds, etc.) can provide a person with a variety of health-related benefits, such as reducing appetite, reducing inflammation, and helping absorb essential nutrients from the diet.

7 THAT EXERCISE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WATCHING WHAT THEY EAT. In reality, the amount of calories a person can burn from exercise is often modest, particularly when compared with the number of calories that can be eliminated by changing their diet. The key factor is to develop healthy habits that involve both nutrition and exercise.

8 THAT WEIGHT LOSS WILL BE QUICK AND EASY. The truth is that the human body is complicated. Every person has a different set of hormones, encounters different environmental factors, potentially has different underlying health issues, and has different genetics—all of which can impact how much and how fast weight is lost. As such, over and above adhering to a healthy lifestyle, the key is to have patience. The weight wasn't gained in a day, and won't be lost in a day either.

9 THAT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT HAVE SLOWER METABOLIC RATES. Research indicates that little difference exists in the resting energy expenditure level between overweight people and lean people. What is normally different between the two groups is their lifestyle. One tends to be stationary and have poor eating habits, whereas the other typically has good eating practices and is physically active on a regular basis.

10 THAT A SINGLE BEST DIET EXISTS. Research shows that individuals can successfully lose weight using a variety of methods. In that regard, the concept of one *perfect* diet that works for everyone is a myth. In reality, a person's diet should conform to the individual's specific set of needs and circumstances, not the other way around.

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