FITNESS FOCUS

SHAREABLE RESOURCE

Weight Management: Rewire, Prepare and Control

by Fredrick Peters, Ph.D. and Grace T. DeSimone, B.A.

slow, steady weight reduction of 1 to 2 lbs per week is the recommended way to lose and sustain a healthy weight. We are overwrought with misleading information on weight loss and fitness programs that lead us to believe exercise is grueling work and nutrition is deprivation. No wonder we are amidst an obesity epidemic! People tend to believe that eating healthy is expensive; but it doesn't need to be. According to research from the Harvard School of Public Health, the healthiest diets only cost about \$1.50 more per day than the least healthy diets (1). To lose weight and maintain weight, a simple, systematic, multifaceted approach is necessary: attitude rewiring, physical preparation, and emotional control.

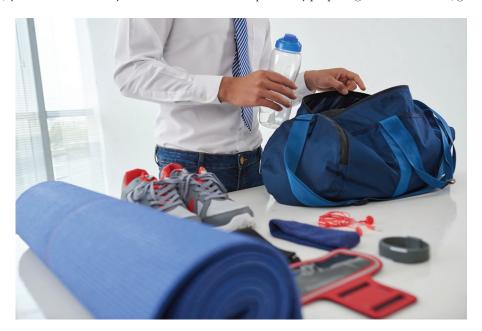
REWIRE YOUR ATTITUDE

Think about health and fitness in a positive way. Often, people think of fitness as a difficult, time-consuming, expensive endeavor. However, physical activity can be as simple as finding time each day to walk the dog. To create and maintain healthy habits for a lifetime, you need to rewire your behavior. Once

you rewire your attitude, you will approach tasks differently and begin to make changes. Making small changes at first, then gradually introducing more and more "good habits," is the key to success. Consider exercising after work. If you go home after work, you feel "done" for the evening. Bring exercise clothes to work and leave them in the car. This "cue" is one of the best ways to create a new habit. The cue leads to the desired response (going straight to the gym from work). The desired response then leads to the "reward," which is the wonderful feeling you get after a great workout. The feeling you get from the reward response then becomes something you desire and seek to obtain daily.

PREPARE PHYSICALLY

To ensure adherence, it is imperative to take initiative each day to prepare for your fit lifestyle. This preparation can be accomplished by preparing meals in advance, gathering gym shoes and



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clothes each morning, and plotting out your day to include at least 30 minutes of physical activity.

CONTROL EMOTIONS

Emotional control is the most important aspect of this threepronged approach. People tend to consume "comfort food" in times of distress. This type of behavior can completely sabotage an otherwise fit day. It is very important to recognize a stressful situation and take the proper measures to ensure you are not eating for comfort.

FIRST STEPS

Few people can lose weight without cutting the calories they consume. As the saying goes, "You can't exercise your way out of a poor diet." A 500 kcal per day deficit is associated with a weight loss of about 1 lb a week (2). Cutting calories can be challenging and may leave you quite hungry. Choosing unrefined carbohydrates with a low glycemic index may help to curb your appetite. For those trying to lose weight, strict portion control of energy-dense foods is essential. Learning to avoid so-called supersize options and choosing mini or snack-size varieties can be a useful strategy.

MAINTENANCE

To be successful in the long-term, you need to be able to identify high-risk situations (when you may be likely to overeat) and to develop practical coping strategies. A mental dilemma occurs when you regress to old habits. To avoid this pitfall, new habits must be formed. Good habits can include learning how to shop for groceries or finding new cooking methods. This knowledge also is fundamental when eating at a restaurant or cooking on a budget and is vital for long-term weight loss maintenance.

Here are some quick tips:

- Eat vegetables to help you feel full.
- Drink plenty of water.

- Get tempting foods out of your home.
- Stay busy you don't want to eat just because you're bored.
- Eat only from a plate, while seated at a table. No grazing in front of the 'fridge.
- · Don't skip meals.
- Keep a food journal.

Remember, motivation is what gets you started; habit keeps you going!

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