



# WEIGHT ★ NO ★ MORE DIET CENTER<sup>SM</sup>



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## NEW YEAR, NEW YOU? IT'S MORE THAN A COMMITMENT TO LOSE WEIGHT.

"I looked bad and felt fat."

"The scale kept climbing, no matter what I did on my own. It was time, and I had had it"

"My mind was made up."

"Wait a minute," I've asked many of my clients who've successfully completed our Stabilization and Maintenance programs, "Didn't you want to look better and feel better all those other times you lost weight on diets? Wasn't your mind made up with just as much determination? Weren't you sick and tired of being heavy before?"

In speaking with one client after another who has achieved, and is maintaining a goal weight, I began to realize that much more had taken place in their lives than just making a commitment to lose weight. Other critical changes in their lives had taken place—some deliberate, others incidental—that kept them going after they had made the decision to do something about their weight.

It's not just that something "clicks." Several factors take place in the final attempt to lose weight, and it's different for each person. But most people who are successful at keeping weight off have worked at some imperative things that help them live thin in the world. They may have learned how to solve their problems more effectively. If, for example, they haven't before exercised because of a hectic work schedule, they find a way to do it: they come in earlier and take a longer lunch hour to work out; or, instead of using the elevator, they use the stairs.

Indeed, the more I talk with successful weight "losers," it becomes clear that many made multiple changes in their lives either before or while they were losing the weight. It isn't just motivation that last time that made the difference, it was making changes in their lives to sustain their weight loss. For instance, someone who had worked for years in a bakery, where he was exposed to constant temptation, finally changed jobs. Also, I find that readiness to lose weight often relates to changes in life situations, personal maturity or growth, changes in values or some combination of these.

One of my clients, with a history of dieting on weekdays and binge eating all weekend, literally woke up one Monday morning and said, "I'm never going on another diet." That was almost two years ago, and she honored her pledge. Taking her comment at face value, it would appear that the change in attitude was some sort of awakening—the "click" that people describe. But when she reflected about what else had gone on in her life, she admitted that many aspects of her life had changed so that she was finally ready to give up her compulsive dieting. I remember her telling me, "Over the course of the last several years I learned to like myself better. I had the confidence to change careers and, therefore, became much happier in my work. I also became involved in a supportive rather than a destructive relationship with a man, and by doing so, realized I had grown to know the difference between the two. Part of it, too, was that I had matured and I could accept imperfections about my body; I realized that I was so much more than my weight."

In order to be a successful "loser," you first have to figure out or accept some things about yourself.

1. **Put yourself first.** You need to get stubborn and develop a kind of selfishness about yourself and your weight. Get stubborn. Figure out what it takes to care of yourself and do *that*. If you have to carry around sacks-ful of apples in your car so you always have something healthy handy, then do *that*. Stop being concerned about what it looks like to others.
2. **Get in touch with what your weight is doing for you.** Ask yourself what you're getting out of *not* losing weight. Many people hide behind their weight, allowing it to help them avoid challenges or escape intimacy. I recall another client telling me her weight had something to do with her family's pressure to achieve; she thought that if she were heavy, people would expect less of her.
3. **Prepare for the hardship of being thin.** What could possibly be hard about being thin? The world treats you differently at 210, at 185, at 160 and 135. Some of the changes will be positive, others negative— at least initially. People may have different expectations of you. You'll have to deal with buying new kinds and sizes of clothing, and people of both sexes may treat you very differently. The praise you get may start to irritate you after a while. You may have trouble accepting yourself as thin. Heavy friends and relatives may resent your success and try to sabotage your efforts. It's important to realize, too, that after you lose weight, you'll still have problems: you'll probably still argue with your husband, have a rebellious teenager to deal with and worry about money. In fact, for some people, certain problems become more acute, particularly if they were hiding behind their weight. Your relationships may change as well. Being aware may help you better handle what's ahead.
4. **Look forward to what you'll gain.** Every single successful weight-loser reports more favorable changes in their lives than negative ones. "It is so wonderful to buy clothes in a 'normal' store and not have to deal with all the discrimination, insensitive comments and other humiliations," I remember one client saying. "I met my husband right after my weight loss," said another. "I've enjoyed the compliments and disbelief regarding my weight loss and improved appearance." "My energy level is better. I'm more active, outgoing and self-assured." "I'm sleeping so much better." These are all comments from successful, and happy, weight-losers. Note, however, that although losing weight will not make your other problems evaporate, you may feel more confident about solving some of them.
5. **Accept that it's not easy, it's not always fair.** Losing weight and keeping it off may be one of the hardest things you ever do. But it does get easier with time. It's just something you have to do. Accept it, and care enough about yourself to do something about it. It's OK to feel that it is unfair to have a weight problem, but get tired of it and get rid of it!
6. **Your motivation for weight control will ebb and flow.** Sometimes it's just plain harder than at other times to keep a handle on your weight. It's especially difficult when people stop noticing the "new" you. Losing weight is exciting: your waist gets smaller, and everyone notices. But maintenance is tough for some people because there's no change. And "no change" is about as exciting as watching paint dry! Although it's important to be prepared for this, note that successful weight-losers have not let it get in their way. I'm always impressed by the enthusiasm and excitement many of them have about their success long after they'd lost their weight. They seem to develop their own internal incentives, rather than looking to others for praise. Along those lines, one particular client, currently maintaining a 40-pound loss, comes to mind who told me, "I try to think thin and visualize myself in a gorgeous dress at a social event. I imagine people noticing me and my feeling good about their reactions. This keeps me from binge eating and helps me stay focused on my weight goals." Although this may seem to be looking to others, she is really engaging in self-praise.
7. **Give yourself permission to fail.** You will make mistakes from time to time. Successful weight-losers learn how not to let a lapse become a relapse. They've learned how to pick themselves up after a spill, dust themselves off and start again. You must learn to forgive yourself. If you mess up, start again tomorrow. You're not going to change overnight.
8. **Don't feel you have to rush.** You've probably heard the saying, "You didn't gain it overnight; you won't lose it overnight either." It's true. You're on your way to becoming slim for life. Many habits leading to overweight can be changed permanently but over a period of time. That's the weight you can keep off.

How we begin the New Year is usually the key to everything else that follows. Resolve to get yours off to a good start.