

Weight Loss Coaching - Step 1

Welcome to Step 1.

Step 1 topics include:

- Why diets don't work
- Triggers
- Danger times and situations
- Formulating new strategies
- Your new self-image
- Making your home and work environments safe
- Tracking your progress
- Clean out your wardrobe.

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Why Diets Don't Work

As you begin reading these notes for Step 1, I suggest you take a few deep, relaxing breaths. Gathering up and letting go of any tension. Letting go of any past regrets and releasing any worries for the future.

Just let your whole body relax.

At this moment in time there is nowhere else you need to be, and nothing else you need to be doing. Allow the outside world to fade gently into the background as you focus on being right here in this moment.

Obviously you have decided that you need and want to establish healthier eating patterns and be at your ideal weight. No doubt this is something that you have tried to do in the past and may have found difficult to do or to maintain but things will be very different for you this time.

This is the right time for you to change those old habits for good and to learn why it is that you have been relying on food to fill a void in your life.

You have too much respect for yourself and for your body to continue on with those old outdated patterns. You are ready to make a change. You are ready to do something good for yourself, which will benefit you for the rest of your long and healthy life.

You have total control over your actions and you will, from this moment forward, give your body the nutrition that it needs and give yourself the love and respect that you truly deserve.

This program has been created to help you make real and valuable changes to your life - changes you can maintain for the long term.

The reason diets don't work long term is because they don't address the issues behind your overeating, emotional eating and comfort eating. As long as that need is there, all the diets in the world won't help. Not until you start getting real.

Diets may treat the symptoms but they do *not* treat the cause.

You start a new diet feeling motivated and full of enthusiasm because this time you are really going to do it and lose the weight once and for all.

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During the first few weeks the weight comes off and your motivation stays relatively high but gradually the weight loss slows down, your enthusiasm starts to wane and things stagnate.

Those old habits are calling you back and before you know it, the diet is abandoned and you have eaten that entire packet of chocolate biscuits all by yourself.

The weight goes back on - along with a few extra kilograms - and your feelings of unhappiness, stress and lack of confidence expand once again.

You begin telling yourself you are weak, useless, hopeless. Your self-esteem takes yet another battering.

Sound familiar?

When you are constantly battling your weight you can easily become depressed, irritable, feel isolated, and helpless. To cope with feeling this way, you turn to food for comfort.

Later, having had that moment of comfort, you realise what you have done and as a result those negative feelings return even more powerfully than before and your self-esteem plummets even further.

Today is the day you break this cycle. Today!

The real reason you couldn't maintain that diet long term is not because you are weak or useless, it's because your attitudes about food didn't change.

Outwardly you blame the diet - it didn't work - and to a certain extent, that is fair.

The diet didn't work and that's because it didn't address your underlying lifestyle issues. Your attitudes about food didn't change and even though you were depriving yourself of all the foods you love, you never got to the bottom of why you eat the foods you do and what needs those high fat foods were filling for you.

But all of that changes today.

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Throughout this program I will ask you some challenging and confronting questions. The reason for doing this is that in order for you to achieve long-term, sustainable changes, you need to get real about what you are doing and why.

It is time to acknowledge your emotions and your learnt behaviours.

It takes a lot of courage to do this but know that the rewards will be there for you for taking this brave step.

The answers you give to those challenging questions are for your eyes only. And you may as well be honest with yourself because let's face it, deep down inside, you already know why you do the things you do.

Are you ready to get real?

Realise that it took time, possibly years, for you to develop these current patterns of behaviour and it will take time to replace them with more positive behaviours. But in time, these changes will become a natural part of your daily life and you will win this battle with your weight. You will end this yo-yo cycle once and for all.

The main purpose of this program is to help you identify and acknowledge why you are overweight and look at strategies you can put in place, to turn this situation around.

Has your weight gain resulted from eating the wrong foods, eating too much food, or eating at the wrong times? Is it a symptom of a lifestyle that is out of control?

What is your relationship with food? Do you use it to celebrate and commiserate? Do all of your social activities revolve around food?

Are you eating to make yourself feel better? Is it loneliness, helplessness, dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem that are leading you to overeat?

Are your needs to be loved, respected and appreciated being filled by your internal and external environments? What needs do you have that you are fulfilling with food?

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Whatever your special situation is and however it began, you have now created a lifestyle that supports you being overweight. Your lifestyle has to support it, otherwise you wouldn't be in this situation right now.

Being overweight is not a natural occurrence, it's something you have to work at and you are overweight for a reason. It's a choice you are making and it is serving some kind of purpose for you.

That last sentence might be hard for you to accept and to understand.

You might be asking why on earth would I say you are choosing this when you are miserable being overweight and keep trying different diets in order to lose the weight. But the fact remains that something in your life is out of balance and you are feeding that need with food.

Until you recognise how and why this has happened, no diet is ever going to provide you with a long-term manageable solution.

You cannot diet for the rest of your life but you can establish a new life plan that supports you being at the weight you choose to be.

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Triggers

So how did it all begin?

As children, most of us were rewarded with lollies and other yummy things when we were good, or to take away the pain of a scraped knee or a disappointment. At birthday parties and other family celebrations we were surrounded by food and happy faces.

Think back to your childhood. Was food a major part of your family celebrations? Was it there to welcome you home from school and there to comfort you when you'd had a bad day?

As adults we celebrate or cheer ourselves up by going to a lovely restaurant and having friends over for a dinner party. All of the big occasions in our lives revolve around food.

It's no wonder that food and emotions become paired in our minds.

I would like you now to think back to when you first started to gain weight. What was going on in your life at that time?

If this happened during adulthood there might have been a big life changing event such as starting a new job or ending a relationship, or something less dramatic but ongoing such as being unhappy at work or in your relationships.

If you were overweight as a child, was it tension at home or unhappiness at school that initially led to your weight gain? Or perhaps your parents were overweight and their food choices became yours too. Perhaps you were given the label of being a "fat kid" so you continued to live up to that expectation.

What was your initial trigger?

If your life has been an ongoing story of gaining and losing weight, examine what was happening in your life each time you experienced a major weight gain. Do you see a pattern forming here?

Once you have identified your initial trigger, ask yourself this question, "Is it that initial trigger which has maintained my weight or has something else intervened?"

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There are three possibilities here:

1. The original need that started you overeating still exists and you are continuing to satisfy it with food.
2. The initial need has now been fulfilled but another unfulfilled need has taken its place and it is this new unfulfilled need that is now at the heart of the problem.
3. The original need no longer exists and overeating has just become a habit.

Which of those three options sums up your situation?

Workbook Activity

On page 1 of your workbook make a note of your age when you began gaining weight; your life circumstances at that time; your initial trigger; and which of the three options above relate to your situation.

Now that you have identified your initial trigger, ask yourself the following question, "What are my current personal triggers that send an automatic message to my brain to overeat or eat the wrong foods?"

For many people that automatic trigger hits when they are lonely, depressed and feeling inadequate about themselves, and their learned behaviour in this situation is to console themselves with food.

Being on your own could act as a trigger or perhaps it's being around certain people and the social aspect of food or the need to be a "good host/hostess" that becomes a trigger for you.

Has eating become a way of avoiding other activities, either at home or at work that you don't want to deal with?

Workbook Activity

On page 2 of your workbook make a note of your personal triggers.

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In the past, you have programmed yourself to eat for the wrong reasons and at the wrong times. Every time you ate because you were feeling lonely, stressed or bored, you were building a conditioned response to a trigger.

Perhaps you have taught your brain to have an urge for comfort food whenever you get stressed or angry or whenever you drink a cup of coffee or meet with friends.

You can now change this trigger-response reaction. Once you have recognized it, you can change it.

Whatever situations have been connected with comfort eating in your past can now be completely revised. All of those old connections can be broken and new healthy connections can now be made.

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Danger Times And Situations

Are you aware of your danger times?

Danger times refer to those times when you are most likely to over indulge.

It could be a certain time of day. Some people have no problem eating properly during the day but it's when they get home from work and flop in front of the TV that they pig out on junk food.

Maybe it's when the kids are finally in bed and you have some time to yourself that you turn to food.

These danger times occur when you are looking for something and that something is missing in your life. Your learnt behaviour in that instance is to turn to food.

You need to identify your personal danger times and situations, so you can plan to work around them. Your current plan isn't working so it's time to put a new plan in place.

Workbook Activity

So what are your personal danger times and situations? Make a note of them on page 3 of your workbook.

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Formulating New Strategies

Once you have identified your danger times you need to put strategies in place to combat them.

By being prepared for the danger times, by knowing what triggers them, and knowing how to deal with them, you can get yourself out of that situation before you automatically give in and start overeating.

In order to break an old habit you need to replace it with a new behaviour. It's not going to work to just say, "When I get home from work tonight I'm not going to sit in front of the TV and eat." If this is a behaviour that you have been doing repeatedly for years, it would be very hard to just stop it and declare you are not going to do that anymore.

It is far more effective to consciously replace that old behaviour with a new, healthy behaviour, and then allow that new behaviour to become a habit.

So rather than sitting in front of the TV and eating, you may decide you are going to write a letter to an old friend, or you are going to play a game of tennis, or you are going to rekindle an old hobby, or you are going to search for a better job.

Pick an alternative that works for you and plan it in advance. And this planning stage is very important. Know ahead of time what you are going to do to avoid the situation, otherwise the pull of the usual routine will drag you back to your old behaviours and before you know it, you will be flopped in front of the TV having polished off that bag of potato chips.

Pick a number of strategies that will work for you and fulfil your own unique needs. Think about what brings you joy and what things you really enjoy doing.

What hobbies did you have when you were a child, that maybe you could take up again?

You might decide to do something pampering like a bubble bath or manicure, or something creative like painting or sewing, or maybe you need something that gets you out of the house and mixing with other people.

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The possibilities are endless and there are no right or wrong answers about what you should do. Just choose alternatives that will work for you.

Athletes spend as much time practicing their sport in their minds, as they do out on the field or on the court or in the pool. They see the game or race unfold in their minds. They see themselves with the perfect swing and out playing their opponents.

This type of mental rehearsal is very powerful and you can use this to your advantage too. See yourself being faced with one of your triggers but rather than giving in to it, see yourself taking charge and choosing a new behaviour. Notice the confident way you face this situation and how easily you make the new choice. Notice your proud posture and the look of determination upon your face. Practice this scenario over and over again until it becomes second nature.

Workbook Activity

On page 4 of your workbook make a list of possible strategies to put in place to get you through your danger times and situations.

You can also formulate strategies that will help you in relation to buying and eating food.

Consider the following:

To lessen the temptation of eating the wrong foods try planning your meals a week in advance, and be disciplined enough to follow the plan.

Make a list of what groceries you need and when you are shopping, do *not* deviate from that list.

Never go grocery shopping or do a meal plan when you are hungry.

Don't go down the supermarket aisles where they have snack foods, lollies, biscuits or whatever your particular weakness is. The healthy foods your body needs are not found in these particular aisles so avoid them altogether and limit the risk of temptation.

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At meal times turn the TV off, concentrate on eating slowly and enjoying every mouthful. Take the time to savour the meal instead of eating on the run. Focus on what you are doing and notice when you feel full.

When you get a craving for chocolate, a biscuit or cake, ask yourself, "Am I really hungry or is something else going on here? Am I looking for an excuse to take a break from work? Am I wanting to make myself feel better?" If you really are hungry, then what about eating an apple or muesli bar instead?

Something else you can do when you get a craving is to tell yourself, "I can have it if I want it, but do I really need it?" Then make your choice – keeping in mind the consequences of that choice.

Another option when you have a food craving is to tell yourself to wait ten minutes and after the allotted time, if you still want it, you can have it. Then during that ten minutes distract yourself and get busy with an activity that takes your focus away from food. If you find yourself constantly giving in to the craving after ten minutes, gradually increase the time you force yourself to wait.

Workbook Activity

On page 5 of your workbook make a list of possible strategies to put in place to ensure you are buying and eating the correct types of foods, and strategies for controlling cravings.

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Your New Self-Image

Please read through the following visualization exercise, then gently close your eyes and run through it again in your mind.

I would like you now to visualize a photo of yourself as a healthy and vibrant person, with the body image that you desire to have. The slim and healthy person that you want to be and soon will be.

Take a moment now to get a very clear image of that photo in your mind, looking just as you want to be.

Imagine that you are already at your ideal, healthiest body weight. You love how you look and feel. See yourself standing in front of a mirror, seeing a reflection of yourself at your desired weight, wearing the size clothes you choose to wear.

The clothes look good and they feel good and they fit you well.

Notice how healthy you are. Notice the confidence you have in yourself.

Imagine doing something you totally enjoy doing at your ideal weight.

Just be there in your mind and enjoy that image. Then when you are ready, open your eyes and bring yourself back to this present moment.

Workbook Activity

Page 6 of your workbook is to be devoted to your new self-image. There are a number of things you can include on this page. You might like to list key words such as: fit, healthy, size 14, alive, confident, choices, walking everyday etc. Use any words that remind you of your new self-image.

On that page you can also insert a photo of yourself from when you were at a healthy, normal weight, and this will act as a reminder that you have been that size before and you will be again.

You may like to insert photos of clothes and bathing suits you will buy once you are at your target weight.

Use this page in any way you desire, to inspire you to keep moving towards your new self-image.

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You will now find that as you begin to talk and behave like a slim and healthy person, you will soon become one.

You have made a conscious decision to achieve a healthy, natural weight and body image and you can feel really good about that decision. You know that you are able to achieve anything you put your mind to.

Hold on to that photo of yourself as the healthy and energetic person you now choose to be. Hold that image very clearly in your mind.

This image is what you are now working towards.

The wonderful and powerful changes that you are now embarking on will see you making wise and considered food choices and perhaps for the first time coming to recognize and understand the effect emotional eating is having upon you.

You are now taking steps to change those old and automatic behaviours and these brave changes are taking you along the new path that you now choose to follow - the path that is leading you to ultimate health.

You are now becoming that image that you are clearly holding in your mind.

You can do it. You will do it. It is your time and it *is* your turn.

That image you visualized of yourself, is what you need to work towards. Rather than making your focus about moving *away* from food, make it about moving *towards* that healthy image.

Every morning before you get out of bed, spend a few moments focused on that image, see it clearly in your mind and then carry it with you all day.

When you are faced with one of your triggers to overeat and you are tempted to give into it, again recall that image in your mind, to remind yourself what you are working towards and why you are making these changes.

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Making Your Home And Work Environments Safe

How do you make your home and work environments safe? By going through the pantry and fridge at home, and going through your desk drawers at work and clearing out the junk food. All of the junk food.

How many times have you automatically gone to the pantry or opened that desk drawer and pulled out a chocolate bar and have eaten half of it before you even realise what you are doing? You won't fall into that trap if that chocolate bar isn't there waiting for you.

If you have a partner and children to consider at home, and don't want to throw out all of the fun foods then begin to store those foods in a different spot. Pick a cupboard you rarely go into. The kids won't mind looking somewhere else to find their junk food and it won't be staring you in the face every time you open the pantry.

However, this is a good time to assess how much junk food your kids are eating and what kind of lessons your behaviour has taught them about food. There's no need to deprive your kids of the fun of being a kid but a lesson about everyday foods versus sometimes foods, could be a healthy lesson for them to learn and wouldn't it be great if you could help them avoid ending up right where you are now?

Workbook Activity

On page 7 of your workbook make a note of the steps you took to clear temptation out of your environment.

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Tracking Your Progress

On page 8 of your workbook you will find a measurement chart. Here you can record your chest, waist, hips and upper thigh measurements.

Losing centimetres from these areas is just as valid a reward as losing kilograms on the scales.

Workbook Activity

Measure yourself today and at one-month intervals from here. Remember that these measurements are for your eyes only so there's no need to cheat!

On page 9 of your workbook is a measurement table to track your weight and there is also a column for comments where you can acknowledge and congratulate yourself on your success.

Workbook Activity

Note today's date and your weight and any comments you would like to make.

While we are on the subject of tracking your progress, please don't weigh yourself more than once a week. Make it the same day and about the same time each week, but **only** once a week.

Your weight will vary each day and throughout each day and to weigh yourself constantly serves no purpose, and is more than likely to frustrate you and eat away at your motivation. Once a week is often enough.

If you have had a really disciplined week, been eating well and exercised every day, yet you don't see any movement on the scales, please try not to be discouraged as it is often two weeks later that your discipline pays off on the scales. The same theory applies to an indulgent week where any weight gain may not show on the scales until two weeks later.

Remember too that hormones and muscle tone influence the number on the scales and even if your number doesn't budge, it doesn't mean the results aren't there for you.

When the scales don't show the results you feel you deserve, turn your focus to how you feel. How are your clothes fitting? Do you feel fitter and trimmer? Have you lost centimetres around your waist or thighs?

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Clean Out Your Wardrobe

There is one last activity to complete for Step 1 and that is to go through your drawers and wardrobe and get rid of any clothes that are too big for you.

By hanging on to those big clothes you are saying to yourself that you are going to go back to that size someday, and will need those clothes again.

That is basically giving yourself permission to put on more weight.

Make a commitment to yourself right now that you are not getting any bigger than you are right now. No way, not gonna happen. You won't allow it to happen.

And as you continue to work through this program and lose the excess weight, continue to clear out all clothes that are too big for you – and celebrate being able to do that.

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This brings us to the end of Step 1.

If you haven't completed the exercises in your workbook, either complete them now or set aside a specific time in the next day or two, to complete them.

Now that you have identified your personal triggers and danger times and have developed strategies to combat these danger times, you are ready to put these new strategies into action.

To help remind you of these strategies and your new way of behaving, you may wish to print out the appropriate pages of your workbook and stick them up in a prominent place.

For some people, these changes instantly become their new way of being, and for other people it takes time to adapt and some days are easier than others. If you fall into the first category, then congratulations as you are already well on your way to changing your lifestyle and taking back control of your actions. If you are in the second group, know that in time you will reach this place of change and in the meantime if you do go off the rails, acknowledge it, learn from it, then move on. Be disciplined but gentle with yourself, and be persistent.

Good luck!

What's Next?

Coming up in Step 2 we will look at:

- Body Mass Index
- The importance of exercise
- The importance of water

Have a wonderful week, keep working on those strategies to combat your triggers and danger times and keep focusing on your new self-image.