

Weight Loss Coaching - Step 5

Welcome to Step 5.

Step 5 topics include:

- Negative self-talk
- Replacing negatives with positives
- Thinking patterns, behaviours and responses

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Negative Self-Talk

Negative self-talk can become so ingrained and automatic that we may not even realise how frequently we are doing it and just how debilitating that negative self-talk is.

For somebody who has spent years fighting their weight and constantly losing the battle of the bulge, it is easy to indulge in negative self-talk. Statements such as:

I am never going to lose this weight so why bother trying?

I am absolutely hopeless when it comes to dieting.

I am a chocoholic and I have no willpower so there's nothing I can do.

I have always been overweight and I always will be.

And so on.

When you constantly repeat these negative statements to yourself, they become limiting self-beliefs. That type of thinking leads to feelings of helplessness, frustration and isolation, all of which will prevent you reaching your fullest potential.

If you are saying to yourself that you can't cope, then you won't cope. If you are saying to yourself that you are never going to lose the weight, then you won't lose it. It is as simple as that. Negative self-talk can only lead to negative results.

How much time do you spend each day indulging in negative self-talk? Over the next few days and weeks, begin to monitor your self-talk and take notice of what you are saying to yourself.

Do you constantly criticise yourself and put yourself down? Do you talk yourself out of trying new things and stretching your boundaries because you just *know* you're going to fail? Do you congratulate yourself for the successes that you have and for the kind deeds that you do?

If you discover that negative self-talk is dominating your internal dialogue, this needs to be addressed so that you can consciously break your old pattern.

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Replacing Negatives With Positives

Your thoughts are under your control and you consciously choose how you are going to react to any situation. It isn't reality that shapes your behaviour, it is your perception and your internal dialogue that will determine how you feel and respond. The great thing about this is, once you understand this principle, you can use it to your advantage. Tell yourself that you are wonderful and amazing and feel great and love life and that will become your reality.

When you are having a really bad day and you don't feel like you can cope, there are two things you can say to yourself:
One goes along the lines of - there is no way I can cope with this. I'm not smart enough or brave enough or skinny enough. It's all too hard and I give up.
Or you could say - wow, this feels really bad right now but I've dealt with situations like this before and I can do it again. I'll take it one step at a time and it will be ok.

By choosing the first response you are guaranteeing your day will get even worse and you will feel helpless and useless. But how differently would you feel if you had chosen the second response? If you had acknowledged this situation isn't as you wanted it to be but you were taking whatever steps you could to turn it around. And perhaps by the end of the day you could sit back and congratulate yourself for not letting a bad situation get worse and for taking back some control. The situation is still the same, but it is your response to it that shapes how it affects you. And the response you choose is entirely up to you.

You create your own experience. You create it by the things you think and say to yourself. What thoughts and beliefs are you holding onto, which actually sabotage your efforts to lose weight and keep it off?

Consider the following questions:

Is there a part of you that actually wants the diet to fail because deep down inside you don't know how to be any other way but overweight?

Are you scared of what you will be like without the extra weight?

Is your weight a handy excuse to hide behind? Does it let you avoid certain situations at home or at work?

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If you lose the weight, are you afraid you will lose your excuse to continue watching life from the sidelines?

Do you not feel worthy of love, respect, and admiration?

Would you ever judge a friend as harshly as you judge yourself?

Do you give yourself the loving support, praise, forgiveness and tolerance that you grant to family and friends? If not, why not?

Are you focussing more on your strengths or your weaknesses?

Are you constantly reminding yourself of all the reasons you believe you are not good enough and listing all the things that you haven't accomplished?

Do you use your weight as a measure of your value?

Do you judge yourself solely on your appearance and fail to acknowledge your kindness, your generosity, your caring spirit and all those other wonderful attributes that make you, you?

Workbook Activity

On page 1 of your workbook is a space to list five things that you are proud of about yourself (and please feel free to make a much longer list). If you need some help to get started on your list, then consider the following possibilities:

Do you have a giving, generous nature?

Are you kind to animals and strangers?

Do you have a friendly smile?

Do you have excellent organizational skills?

Do you excel at painting, knitting, cooking, etc?

Do you volunteer your time to an organisation or charity?

Are you eternally patient when dealing with your kids?

Are you proud of the home you have created for your family?

Are you proud of the values you choose to live by?

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Think about the many wonderful characteristics you have – and you do have them, even if you rarely acknowledge them.

Over the next few days and weeks it would be great if you kept adding to that list of things you are proud of about yourself. When you have completed your list stick it up somewhere prominent like the bathroom mirror or on the fridge, just to remind yourself of all your good qualities. And each day take a few moments to appreciate yourself for who you are and how special you are.

When things feel out of control, turn your focus to all the times you have coped rather than the times you didn't. Focus on what you have achieved and the things you can do rather than the things you think you can't do.

Workbook Activity

On page 2 of your workbook is an activity to complete on negative self-talk. Write down five negative statements that you repeatedly say to yourself. You may already be consciously aware of what these statements are, in which case you can complete this activity right now. If you are not yet aware, then over the coming days, as you begin to take note of your self-talk, begin to recognise what those negative statements are, and then note them down.

You will, from this moment forward, become more aware of the things that you say to yourself and recognising your negative self-talk and turning those statements around into positive self-talk, will get easier and will become a habit.

By changing your self-talk you will find an enormous change in the way you feel and behave.

Use only positive statements when talking to yourself.

Understand that you can make this lifestyle change process easy or hard, simply by the things you say to yourself. Remind yourself that this process of taking control of your weight, health and life is easy for you and it gets easier and easier with every passing day, as you feel better and better each day.

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Over the coming days and weeks, any time you catch yourself thinking or saying something negative to yourself, immediately stop, recognise what you have just done and re-phrase that negative statement into a positive one.

For example, if you have the thought, "I'm a failure at everything." Stop and say to yourself something along the lines of, "I am constantly facing new challenges and learning from each new experience."

You determine your success and happiness, or lack of success and happiness, by the things you say to yourself. So whenever you catch yourself indulging in negative self-talk, stop and turn that negative statement into a positive statement.

Workbook Activity

On page 3 of your workbook write down a positive statement that you will now use to replace that old, out-dated, negative statement that you identified in the previous activity.

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Thinking Patterns, Behaviours And Responses

There are thinking patterns, behaviours and responses that people often resort to when they are looking to justify or shift responsibility for being overweight.

Each one of these patterns, behaviours and responses is explained below and as you read each one ask yourself and answer honestly, if it applies to you, in terms of your weight or any other aspect of your life.

There is a page in your workbook for each of these topics, where you can make notes on how it relates to you.

Blaming (workbook page 4):

Blaming - either blaming yourself or making someone or something else responsible for your situation, is a common problem. Blaming gets you nowhere. By blaming circumstances or other people you are giving control of your life over to these people and events. You are responsible for yourself and your choices. If blaming is an issue for you, try repeating the following statement to yourself:

"I accept full responsibility for where I am and full responsibility for where I now choose to go."

Should, must and ought (workbook page 5):

Do you use should, must, and ought type sentences, such as:

I *should* be able to cope perfectly with every situation.

I *must* keep up with all my responsibilities.

I *ought* to be in complete control at all times.

When you are using should, must and ought, you may be placing unreasonable expectations on yourself. When you find yourself using those types of words, replace them with preferences, for example, I would prefer it if....

Polarized thinking (workbook page 6):

With polarized thinking you see everything as black or white, good or bad and there is no middle ground. An example of polarized thinking would be to say: That exercise plan didn't work for me so no exercise plan ever will.

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Imagining the worst possible outcome (workbook page 7):

Another common occurrence is to imagine the worst possible outcome for every scenario. When you do this, you are creating a reality where the worst possible outcome seems bound to happen and you are just a helpless victim. This type of thinking leads to panic and thoughts such as, "What if I keep putting on more and more weight and I reach the point where I can't even leave the house." In this instance you need to ask yourself what proof you have that those things will happen. Make a realistic assessment of how likely it is. Also remember that what you focus on is usually what you get. If you continue to focus on the outcome you don't want, you may in fact make that your reality.

External control (workbook page 8):

Do you insist on taking full responsibility for everything without letting anyone else help carry the load? Do you make statements such as, "Everyone depends on me and the world will fall apart if I don't keep control of it all." The fact is, we can't control every aspect of our external environment. This type of over compensation of the external world may be a sign of your internal world being out of control and requiring some attention.

Emotional reasoning (workbook page 9):

Emotional reasoning is where you let your feelings rule your reasoning and you assume that whatever you feel must be true. So when you're feeling frightened and scared that you will never take control of your weight, you convince yourself that that is fact, whereas if you were thinking rationally you would know that although your life may be out of balance at this precise moment, you are taking steps to remedy this and you can and you will manage this situation.

Filtering (workbook page 10):

Filtering is where you completely focus on all the negative things happening in your life and you ignore any positives. You dismiss all the times when you have coped with a difficult situation and achieved something you could be proud of and refuse to identify the fact that you have skills and resources you can use. Filtering may be such a habit for you that it is done subconsciously without you even realising. To change this, first you have to identify your negative focus and then consciously turn those negatives into positives.

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Entitlement (workbook page 11):

Another reaction commonly seen is to do with entitlement. Some people who are overweight feel cheated because they are not living the healthy, slim bodied life they feel they are entitled to. But the fact is, they created their situation themselves. They worked hard to create a lifestyle that supported them being overweight. If entitlement is an issue for you, then it's time to take responsibility for your actions and your choices. No one is going to hand good health and happiness over to you – you need to work at it and make it happen for yourself.

Anger (workbook page 12):

The last behaviour I want to mention is anger. Do you often find yourself feeling angry about your situation? Do you feel that circumstance in your life have been unfair and your family and friends don't truly understand what you are going through? It's okay to be angry sometimes as that anger can be fuel to get you moving and fix the situation that is upsetting you but it is really energy sapping to carry that anger around with you all the time. Even if you are angry at someone else, the truth of the matter is that your anger only hurts you. We all have control over our own emotions and we decide how we are going to react to any given situation. If you're getting angry a lot of the time it's worth sitting down and asking yourself what is really going on. What is that anger really about? Usually anger comes out when we are feeling afraid and powerless and we use anger to hide from the real emotional pain. When you feel anger boiling up ask yourself what's really going on. What are you frightened of? What is your anger covering up?

Do any of those thinking patterns, behaviours and responses sound familiar to you? If so, what can you now do to alter this situation?

Be on the lookout for those reactions and responses and when you notice yourself behaving that way, stop, acknowledge what you are doing and think about changes you can make then and there, to turn that behaviour around. It will be worth it.

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What's Next?

Coming up in Step 6 we will look at:

- Positive Affirmations

Using positive affirmations is a wonderful way to replace those negative self-statements. Over the next week really focus on your self-talk and notice the effect it has on your thinking and behaviour. Have a great week.