

The Dieting Dilemma

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Introduction

Diets that promise quick amazing results are prevalent in today's society. Consumers are looking for fast results with minimal work. Statistics show that 95% of all diets fail (Freedhoff, 2014). Read further to examine a few reasons dieting can be unsuccessful and may actually be counterproductive to sustained weight loss. Also, discover some healthy strategies that can replace dieting.

Sustainability

Dieting, changing eating behaviors, and/or limiting certain foods and calorie intake, can be challenging for an extended amount of time. The Psychology of Eating explains that our behaviors, beliefs, and patterns highly influence our eating habits. This makes lasting change difficult when we only concentrate on changing the type of food we eat. Research indicates that 95% of people who diet and lose weight, will gain all of the weight back, and more, within a year after stopping the diet (Institute for the Psychology of Eating, 2014).

Deprivation

Weight loss occurs when we consume less calories than our bodies burn. Many diets encourage the elimination of certain foods or food groups in an effort to eliminate unneeded calories. This may cause your body to not only be deprived of essential vitamins and nutrients, but also of the amount of food that is healthy for our body, and the types of food that we really want to eat. Doing this, may make you crave those foods even more, and can lead to overeating. When we deprive our bodies of certain foods, or restrict our eating, this may cause

us to dislike the nutritious or healthy foods that we are forcing ourselves to eat (Cecil, 2014).

Lower Metabolism

Diets may recommend that you eat fewer calories than you need to maintain normal body functions. When you do not eat enough food, your body gets the signal that it is starving, and automatically begins to slow your metabolism to maintain life (Busch, 2017). When your body is in starvation mode, it tends to store extra fat as a survival method, instead of allowing you to lose the fat you are trying so hard to get rid of. The lower metabolic rate continues even after you stop dieting, making it once again, harder to maintain and/or lose weight.

Stress

Often, dieting is not fun, while eating the foods you enjoy is fun. The constant challenge of monitoring what you eat, eliminating foods you enjoy, and having feelings of hunger, can cause you to feel stress. This may compound the problem of losing weight. "Stress causes a rise in cortisol and adrenalin, which diminishes our calorie burning potential. So we're creating the exact conditions that make losing weight difficult" (Institute for the Psychology of Eating, 2014, p. 2).

Instead of dieting, try the following suggestions to lose weight and improve your wellness:

1. Investigate Intuitive Eating

Young children listen to their bodies to figure out when they are hungry, and follow their hunger and fullness cues when they eat. As they

grow, those cues may be dulled when forced to eat when not hungry, or finish food they do not want or need. Intuitive eating as adults, can help you to relearn and listen to hunger and fullness cues and allows you to rely on internal body cues instead of external cues.

2. Focus on Wellness, Not Weight

Being healthy has many facets. How much you weigh is only one small piece of the wellness puzzle. Instead of dieting, focus on living a healthy lifestyle, enjoying what you eat, what you do, and what makes you feel better, like eating healthy foods and exercising. Creating healthy habits can lead to positive health changes.

3. Cultivate Body Respect

Body image is not just about how much you weigh. It is important to make changes from a place of proper body respect and acceptance. Learning to love yourself and your body, no matter your weight will allow you to treat yourself better and find satisfaction in who you are and what you look like.

4. Say “No” to Weight Stigma

Weight stigma, known as weight bias or discrimination can be harmful. Many people who experience weight stigma have an increase in body dissatisfaction and may experience psychological and physical health problems. People may binge eat or eat more foods with higher calories because they feel unaccepted. Respect, compassion, and acceptance for everyone, no matter the body size, can benefit others as well as ourselves as we work to reduce weight stigma (Dennett, 2018).

Conclusion

Dieting proponents, advertising, and social media promise amazing dieting/weight loss, results, often with little effort. The reality is that dieting takes

effort and discipline and can often result in disappointment and feelings of failure. Now is the time to stop the dieting cycle and strive to create a healthy lifestyle. People who want to lose weight, and keep it off, will need to make permanent life changes. Losing weight is not just something that you can do for a couple weeks, it is a lifestyle that you must be willing and able to keep and work hard at to be successful (Michigan Health and Wellness).

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