

Weight Loss Winners



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

People who manage to keep weight off do so because they change their whole lifestyles. Huge changes don't work if you only manage to implement them for a short amount of time before continuing with unhealthy habits that led you to the initial weight gain. Instead, look at your whole life and make sure all changes are sustainable.

"Weight loss probably has more to do with personal psychology than diet," says registered nutritionist, Ani Kowal. Ani also trained as an Eating Disorders and Obesity Master Practitioner with the National Centre for Eating Disorders. "The National Weight Control Registry in the USA looked at 15,000 individuals who had successfully maintained their weight loss for over two years (which is rare) having lost over 10% of their initial starting weight. The average weight loss for the group was 66lb. They lost weight in a variety of ways but the skills they used to maintain their weight loss were consistent [see next page]."

Rosemary Conley lost 2 ½ stone when she started eating a low fat diet in the mid '80s. She has been helping people get fit, active and healthy ever since. "Don't go back to the habits that made you overweight in the first place," she says. "Cut back on alcohol, watch your portions and become more active. As I've got older, my appetite has reduced so I find it reasonably easy to maintain my weight."

"Think of maintaining in the same way as losing, just with slightly more allowed calories," says Richard. He lost more than 4 stone with Nutracheck.co.uk. "If you have changed your eating habits from those that caused you to put on weight in the first place, it will be simple to increase your portion sizes without risking slipping into old fat-increasing habits.

"When changing from a fat loss regime to maintenance, do not panic if the figure you see on your scales increases slightly. It will. This is just due to an increase of food volume and associated

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water. Your weight should stabilise quite quickly as your body adjusts to the new levels of food it is processing.

"Set yourself an upper (and lower) weight figure on your scales, half a stone either side of a weight you are happy with. Stick with maintenance until either of these figures are breached, and then review your eating regime. If you are sure that your weight change is not due to gaining (or losing) muscle mass, adjust your calorie intake appropriately, up or down."

Cheryl's 9 stone 3 lb weight loss after battling cervical cancer led to her training in a new career as an exercise instructor. Overweight from childhood, bullying encouraged more comfort eating.

"Anytime I felt low or worried, I'd graze and binge on food but never really felt full," says Cheryl. The cancer diagnosis made her take stock. "If my life was going to be shortened, I wanted to make sure I spent the rest of it healthy, fit, slim and happy, rather than unhealthy, unfit, fat and miserable."

After getting the all clear health-wise, she went from a size 28/30 to a 10/12 with the help of Rosemary Conley Diet and Fitness Clubs. "Everyone at the class was so friendly – we were all there for the same reason. I made new friends and, week by week as my weight went



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Strategies that work for weight loss (and maintenance)

The National Weight Control Registry in the USA recommends, “Planning, problem solving, small changes, Having no specific weight goal, breakfast, lifestyle / exercise and high nutrients”:

Planning – Use your NLP to help you create a well formed outcome. Why do you want this? You know yourself best. What will motivate you? How will you know you’re on track? What might get you off track?

Problem solving – Future pace it. What problems might you come up against? By thinking about potential obstacles in advance, when they do crop up, you’ll already be better equipped to handle them.

Small changes – Making small changes into long term habits is far more effective than going too fast, overwhelming yourself and giving up.

Having NO specific weight goal – Forget some mythical magic number. Instead, check in with how you feel (naked and in clothes). Notice your increased fitness and the way that favourite pair of jeans now fits better.

Ani suggests tracking changes in your blood pressure or even monitoring how long it takes to walk a certain distance.

Breakfast – Studies consistently show that eating breakfast aids weight loss and maintenance. If you’re really not a morning person, make it easy on yourself by doing what you can to prepare it the night before.

Lifestyle/exercise – Schedule in exercise sessions as you would other important meetings. And get more active every day. Walk or cycle where possible. Walk up that escalator. Arrange to walk with a friend instead of sitting in a coffee shop or pub. By making changes fun, you’re more likely to stick with your new lifestyle.

High nutrition – “Aim for a nutrient dense diet and minimise empty calories from refined foods,” says Ani. “It’s important to balance blood sugar levels since this impacts mood and cravings. A healthful diet is rich in a variety of vegetables, fruits, wholegrains, unprocessed protein (with every meal) and healthy fats.”



down, my mood went up. I began to feel in charge of my body for the very first time.” Her reflection still surprises her. “I’m a whole new woman.”

“I used to be 16 and a half stone, 42 inch waist, until, aged 25, I took up weight training and sensible eating,” says Michael. He blames, “Several years at university, and then living on my own. I used to eat out because I couldn’t cook. When I say ‘eat out’ I mean takeaways and similar junk food. I also used to down about six pints of lager a night, which didn’t do my figure much good.

“I went to my usual kebab house one night to pick up a doner and a soft drink. The guy behind

the counter suggested I take a Diet Coke, rather than the usual, because he reckoned I was looking a bit porky.

“I had a personal trainer who was also a very good dietician. So as well as taking me through the weight training routines, she gave me a diet sheet which she insisted that I adhere to. Perhaps unsurprisingly, pork pies, doner kebabs, fish and chips, and burgers didn’t figure heavily on it. Fish and leans meats did, however. She also included recipes, which meant that I had to start cooking for myself and seeking out the healthier ingredients in the supermarkets.”

Soon, Michael was “going to the gym at least three times a week, religiously, switching from lager to wine, and buying decent (and, therefore, comparatively expensive) clothes. When I got down to a 32 inch waist, which I still am, the thought of having to fork out more money for larger sizes were I ever to put on weight again was a major disincentive to do so.

“Forget about weighing yourself regularly. It just makes you depressed because weight fluctuates naturally over any given period of time, anyway, due to water retention and other factors. In any case, when you start any form of exercise, initially, ►

“ A mind shift is needed. It's about believing that you are changing your eating habits to be kinder to your body - it's a lifestyle change ” - Rachel Hartley

Rachel's tips for maintaining a healthy weight

- It's quite normal that your weight will fluctuate. A great rule for maintenance is to set yourself a 'ceiling weight' that you don't exceed - usually 3 - 4lbs above your goal weight. Once you hit this upper limit, it's an immediate trigger to take extra care. If you watch the pounds, the stones will take care of themselves.
- The odd treat, glass of wine or takeaway is perfectly okay, but remember it's all about balance. Think of it as 'off-setting' the calorific with something not calorific. For example, if you fancy a special coffee with cream, skip the cake. If you'd love a cake, have it but choose a simple filter coffee instead. If you're going out for a meal in the evening, choose a lighter breakfast and lunch. If you're on holiday and eating a bit more, then add in some extra exercise each day, say a lovely walk.
- For special times of year still stick to the rule of balance. If you overdo it one day, make a point to actively cut back the next. Our bodies will try and tell us if we listen. Notice how you feel after a day of indulgence. Not as hungry as usual? Then don't be a slave to meal times. Your body will naturally regulate how much energy it needs, so if it says "go easy", listen to your stomach and opt for something light and healthy.
- Try our service. There's a free trial so no commitment or credit card is needed. See if this method could work for you. Members have even said it doesn't actually feel like a diet as you can still eat food you like.



▶ you'll actually put on weight because lean tissue weighs more than fat. The best thing to do is to study not your weight, but your shape in the mirror. Also, if you can, invest in one of those bathroom scales, such as those by Tanita, that measure your fat percentage. It gives a fairly accurate digital readout of the main thing you're trying to get off: the fat. But don't get obsessive about it. And don't try to take things too quickly. If it took you several years to look like Orson Welles, it's going to take you some time to achieve a more slimline look. It isn't a diet you're embarking on, it's an entire lifestyle change."

"I heard this guy on Radio 4 who had nearly 20 stone to lose. I thought I'd got fat," says Sadie. "It felt like a huge mountain. He said, 'I just aimed at 1lb a week, that's 52lbs a year.' I told the radio, scornfully, 'Well that's nothing. Anyone can do that.' Then I thought, well if anyone can do it, do it yourself. So I did."

Sadie is ready to start exercising again now but

has lost the weight so far just by changing the way she eats: "I cut out bread completely. I'd been told that lots of people have a yeast intolerance which sends the brain messages about hunger even when their stomachs have food in them. I know if I have a slice of toast in the morning, I end up grazing all day but if I start with beans, veggie sausages or egg, I'm OK.

"Apart from that, the only change I've made is no longer eating rubbish. But I went to a dinner party last night and there were eight desserts. I tried four of them. If you tell yourself you can't have something, you want it more.

"It's changed my whole way of eating. It's not a 'diet'. I just lose 1lb a week. Some weeks I lose 1 ½ lbs and others, I lose ½ lb."

"You would only be looking to lose weight at a rate of 1 - 2lbs per week - this is safe and sustainable," agrees Rachel Hartley from www.nutracheck.co.uk. "As our medical advisor, Dr Ian Campbell says, 'All diets work while you're

doing them'. If you are eating substantially less than you were - even if it's just cabbage soup - you're going to lose weight. The key is how long you can realistically keep it going for.

"You have to break the thought process about 'going on a diet' because that implies you'll be coming off it at some point and returning to eating 'normally' which is what led to the weight gain in the first place. A mind shift is needed. It's about believing that you are changing your eating habits to be kinder to your body - it's a lifestyle change.

"Our food and exercise diary system shows members the simple maths behind weight loss (calorie deficit needed to lose) and then explains how to balance food intake with more activity to lose weight and then maintain it. People who are successful in losing weight really 'get this'. They see how calorie choices impact on what their body needs - and how balancing this means you can eat anything, just in moderation (smaller portions and not every day)." ■