

# A weight on your mind?

## Lighten your load with NLP

As Spring approaches, it may be that New Year's resolutions have been forgotten. Eve Menezes Cunningham investigates strategies for year round health and fitness

**M**ost of us have an emotional connection to food and weight. When your healthy eating and exercise plans are going well, it's easy to stay motivated and on track. And when things go a bit pear, apple or even gateaux-shaped, NLP can mean the difference between a small lapse and a major binge...

### **1. Does a little voice in your head tell you that your efforts are pointless? That you're fat / lazy / worthless?**

Stop whatever you're doing and examine that voice. Who does it sound like? A critical parent? PE teacher from school? You, but really angry? Most of us have, at some point (often as children), internalised a critical voice. Because we hear it so often, we believe it. Change the voice you hear. Instead of a strict and authoritative voice, play around with it. Do you believe the words when they sound like Bart Simpson or your pet? This simple but effective technique works because it helps you to take a step back and assess whether what you are telling yourself is true or helpful.

### **2. Are you "too busy"?**

Log your time over a few weeks to see where you can make time savings. Schedule in cooking and shopping time as well as exercise (whether it's a class or appointment with yourself). As well as helping you fit everything in, your self-esteem will grow as you get into the habit of keeping the promises you make to yourself.

### **3. Does one doughnut / packet of crisps / biscuit always seem to turn into more?**

Do you reach for the whole packet or accept your lapse and resolve to do better the next day? Stop everything you're doing and enjoy every mouthful!

By fully savouring and appreciating it, you'll benefit much more than if you immediately let guilt and shame take over. You'll also avoid the need to binge as you'll already be feeling better.

### **4. You can't imagine your life (or figure) any other way?**

Spend a few moments believing you can and will achieve your health and fitness goals. Let that feeling of success settle. What will you look like in that amazing new outfit / holding an advanced

yogic asana / completing the marathon? What

admiring sounds will you hear? How fantastic will you feel? Putting as much detail into this daydream as you can, on a daily basis, will keep you fired up to stay on track. It also sends a message to your unconscious that you're making it happen.

### **5. Do you keep making excuses for eating the wrong foods / not exercising?**

Letting go of any judgement, be honest with yourself. What benefits are you getting from

your unhealthy eating / lack of exercise? It may be that you associate eating a packet of biscuits with pure indulgence and comfort. By recognising this, you can plan healthier ways to indulge and comfort yourself. Time in the steam room after your swim? Seeing a frivolous film with a good friend? Every behaviour has a positive intention. Even if you're directly sabotaging your best efforts, identifying this positive intention will help you make much more progress.

### **6. You didn't think your health and fitness goals through?**

It's not too late to do it now. Give yourself a timeframe and make the goal positive. If you say, "I want to lose weight" your heart may sink at the very idea. Reframing it as "I want

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to be fit, healthy and happy with my figure by December 2007" has an energising effect and will keep you motivated. Studies continually prove that people who write down and review their goals reach them. It only takes a few minutes to tip the scales in your favour. You can also time travel in your mind. Imagine you're exactly as you want to be in December 2007, work back and list all the things you now need to do to get there.



## **7. When are you least likely to exercise / eat well?**

Log your food and drink intake and exercise over a month. What triggers the giving up stage (hormonal changes? low energy?). Anticipate future lapses by making a note of them in your diary. Schedule in a bit of flexibility around these times (deadlines at work? Certain times of the month?) and you'll avoid the full downward spiral. Studying your log as evidence will help you become more objective and able to make lasting positive changes.

## **8. Do you appreciate your body for all the amazing things it does?**

Notice the things you take for granted. If you're still carrying extra baby weight, remind

yourself that your amazing body brought a baby into the world. If you're worried about the size of your thighs, remember that they allow you to lift heavy loads. If you constantly attack yourself mentally, you'll cling to those unhealthy habits more tightly. Accepting what you have shifts energy so you can make healthier choices more easily.

## **9. Are you regularly too tired to exercise?**

Think about why this keeps happening. At what point do you usually realise you're too tired? What can you do differently? It may mean waking up earlier, insisting on a lunch break or going for a daily walk. Or you might put some simple and gentle exercises together

to do before bed. Remembering that you always have choices empowers you to look at things differently.

## **10. Do you keep putting your diet and exercise plans off?**

Remember the last time you had a great workout. Recalling how brilliant you felt afterwards will help motivate you to make it a bigger priority. Never enjoyed exercising or eating well? There are other areas of your life which you handle with grace, confidence and discipline. What is your strongest area? Reminding yourself that you excel in other areas allows you to become more objective and empowered when it comes to your weight. ●

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## Do you need help finding your Happyweight?



Judy Price, Nutritionist and Master Practitioner and Trainer of NLP, started Happyweight after many years of yoyo dieting. The system helped her lose 50 lbs of fat without deprivation or dieting. Judy is now happy with her body and has a much healthier relationship with food.

The catalyst for Judy's Happyweight programme was the realisation that diets not only don't work but they damage self-esteem. Being filled with self loathing about your body shape is hardly the most resourceful state from which to change things.

So Judy started to model naturally slim people to figure out their strategies for success. They didn't diet, they simply ate when they were hungry and stopped when they were no longer hungry. They didn't eat because they felt lonely, angry, upset or as a reward.

Judy encourages people to listen to their bodies. "Change your mind," she says, "and the body changes naturally". Mindful eating is recommended to help you notice how you feel as you eat and not to eat beyond your appetite because you're distracted by the TV. Future pacing and trusting your own intuition also feature in the Happyweight plan. They sound simple but are valuable steps to help you regain trust in your own appetite.

Mandy Smith decided to try it. A week after starting the programme, she said, "The liberating feeling of not being on a diet is great. You're not meant to weigh yourself but I have, just to see, and I've already lost 1kg."

And a few weeks on, Mandy says, "I still feel great and very positive although I did have a slight set back when I fell back into a couple of bad habits. However, I am now aware why this happened and so can address and deal with this as it occurs, which is major step forward. Although I have been exercising regularly for the past 18 months I also decided to try a new aerobics class, which was of a higher level than I was used to. Although I felt I was going to melt by the end of the class, I found I really enjoyed it and wanted to go to this class regularly as the challenge of being able to do the routines is something I really want to achieve. It is early days still but something has changed and it's definitely for the better!"

For more information about Happyweight, phone 01424 434606, email [enquiries@happyweight.com](mailto:enquiries@happyweight.com) or visit [www.HappyWeight.com](http://www.HappyWeight.com)

**Martha Beck's "The Joy Diet: 10 steps to a happier life" (2003, Piatkus, ISBN 0749924411) can also help you to improve your eating habits and increase your appetite for joy, too.**

