



This Year's Health Goal? Learn To Love Your Body

By Laura Cipullo, RD, CDE, CEDRD / January 9, 2014

Forget obsessing over numbers on a scale: They're not what matter.

It's a brand new year. Typically, we start January with ambitious new year's resolutions that we may or may not have real success with. This year I ask you to step out of the traditional box and resolve to forgo the gimmicky "I will's." Instead, I urge you to join a new movement for better health ... and it's not spinning or yoga. This year, commit yourself to the principles of the **Health At Every Size (HAES) approach**. You *can* do this because HAES is about self care; not self sabotage. Here's how:

To help you get acquainted with this unique approach, HAES has five basic principles.

Health At Every Size® Basic Principles

1. Accepting and respecting the diversity of body shapes and sizes.
2. Recognizing that health and well-being are multi-dimensional and that they include physical, social, spiritual, occupational, emotional, and intellectual aspects.
3. Promoting all aspects of health and well-being for people of all sizes.
4. Promoting eating in a manner which balances individual nutritional needs, hunger, satiety, appetite, and pleasure.
5. Promoting individually appropriate, enjoyable, life-enhancing physical activity, rather than exercise that is focused on a goal of weight loss.

A direct summary of HAES is described by Dr. Jonathan Robison, PhD, MS, a public figure advocating HAES and a Holistic Health Care professor at Western Michigan University, as well as adjunct assistant professor at Michigan State University. He says: "An appropriate, healthy weight for an individual cannot be determined by the numbers on a scale, by a height/weight chart, or by calculating body-mass-index or body fat percentages. Rather, HAES defines a 'healthy weight' as the weight at which a person settles as they move toward a more fulfilling and meaningful lifestyle."

This does not mean eat whatever, whenever and to never exercise. Rather, the number on the scale is not a determinate of ideal health. Even football players and gymnasts can have high weights and subsequently high body-mass-index (BMI) totals. Does this mean they are not healthy? No, they are just muscular! The same is true for skinny people. Just because they are thin — and within a universally

acceptable weight range on the scale—doesn't mean they are healthy. They could be smoking cigarettes rather than eating!

So, let's throw away the judgments, throw away the scales and turn this year's focus to honoring our bodies through self care. Say goodbye to calorie counting, skipping meals, dieting and/or juice fasting. And now, we're talking about "gentle nutrition" as coined by Evelyn Tribole, RD and Elyse Resch, RD, authors of *Principles of Intuitive Eating*.

Think about your personal nutrition needs, but use internal regulation — listening to your physical cues such as hunger and fullness — to determine portions and even how to eat all foods. I liken this concept to eating nutrient dense foods the majority of the time — about 75 percent of the time — and less nutrient dense foods some of the time (about 25 percent of the time). This is "flexible eating"; it actually allows you to respond to a craving without guilt. This also means there is no cheating; rather, there are just choices!

Please understand that this is not a free pass to do "anything you want". It's all about you honoring the needs of your body. HAES folks like to say: "Everybody isn't at a weight that's healthy for them." However, they also note that this "movement toward a healthier lifestyle over time will produce a healthy weight for that person." And I completely agree. Now think about your movement. And do think of it as movement rather than exercise. For many, this connotes burning calories to lose weight. Instead, think about how you can move your body to make it feel good, energized and strong. What allows you to work with your body in its physical state *now*? Is it swimming, doing yoga in the privacy of your own home, or perhaps walking a few extra blocks three days a week?

Your focus this year should begin with accepting your weight where it is now and then making small but realistic goals to honor your body by initiating healthy self care behaviors. Your success will now be reflected in your behaviors — not a number on your scale or your BMI. Remember, there is no expectation to be "perfect." The new perfect in 2014 is being "imperfect." This means that if you should lose focus, overeat, or just can't meet your movement goals, simply refocus and continue on your personal journey to be healthy.

Start loving yourself! Stop wanting to change or deconstruct yourself! Empower your body and mind in 2014. I just can't emphasize this enough. And if this sounds empowering, I encourage you to join the almost 7,000 other individuals, including me, and take the pledge at the [HAES website](#).

Get started with these recommendations for gathering more information or purchasing these books to actually start honoring the new you! The new 2014 model! **Forget obsessing over numbers on a scale: They're not what matter.**

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