



10 Ways to Shift Your Mindset for Better Weight Loss

Research shows that if you get your mind right, results will follow.

By [K. Aleisha Fetters](#), Contributor Sept. 19, 2016, at 11:19 a.m.

EVERY [diet](#) and weight-loss strategy has its pros and cons, but for any one to really work, you've got to get your mind right.

"Shifting your mindset about how to lose weight is the biggest factor in losing weight," says NYC-based therapist Kathryn Smerling. "We can't shift our weight from the outside without realizing the correct inner resolve and intention."

And most people try to lose weight with the worst state of mind possible: wanting to "fix" themselves. They jump into [diets and exercise plans](#) out of self-deprecation, all the while pinching their "trouble" spots, calling themselves "fat" and feeling altogether less-than. They get obsessed with results, focus on quick fixes and lose sight of sustainability and even health.

"This type of thinking can be destructive," says board-certified North Carolina internal medicine physician [Dr. Kevin Campbell](#). "Rather than focusing on the good that can come of weight loss – such as better health, a longer life, more enjoyment in everyday activities and the prevention of diabetes and heart disease – these folks focus on negative thoughts. Ultimately, a negative mindset leads to failure."

Yes, shifting your attitude around weight loss isn't just about feel-goodery; it's about results. In fact, research from Syracuse University shows that the more dissatisfied women are with their bodies, the more likely they are to avoid exercise. And simply thinking that you're overweight predicts future weight gain, according to 2015 research published in the International Journal of Obesity.

While psychologists stress that how you see yourself and your core identity predicts your actions (see yourself as overweight, averse to exercise or unworthy, and you'll act accordingly), biology may also play a role. Research published in Psychosomatic Medicine even show that the stress hormone cortisol, which your adrenal glands secrete every time you get down on yourself or worry about how you measure up on the scale, increases distribution of [fat around the abdomen](#).

[See: [11 Simple, Proven Ways to Optimize Your Mental Health](#).]

1. Change Your Goals

Losing weight might be a result, but it shouldn't be the goal. Rather, your goals should small, sustainable things over which you have full control, says NYC-based therapist Paul Hokemeyer. Did you eat five servings of fruits and veggies today? There's one goal met. What about [eight hours of sleep](#); did you get them in? If so, you can check another goal off of your list.

2. Gravitate to Positivity

"Surround yourself with positive people," Smerling says. Doing so provides you an encouraging, emotionally healthy environment in which to invest in yourself. "Don't be afraid to ask for help or support," says Chicago-based Nike NTC master trainer and run coach Emily Hutchins.

3. Rethink Rewards and Punishments

"Keep in mind that making healthy choices is a way of practicing self-care," says registered dietitian Laura Cipullo, author of "Women's Health Body Clock Diet." Food is not a reward, and exercise is not a punishment. They are both ways of caring for your body and helping you feel your best. You deserve both.

[See: [The 38 Easiest Diets to Follow: in Pictures.](#)]

4. Take a Breath

Taking a few minutes at the beginning of your workout, or even at the beginning of your day, to slow down and [simply focus on the act of breathing](#) can help you set your intentions, connect with your body and even lower your body's stress response, Hutchins says. Lie on your back with your legs extended and place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Breathe in through your nose for four seconds, hold for two and then exhale through your mouth for six, she says. With each breath, the hand placed on your stomach should be the only one to rise or fall.

5. Throw Out the Calendar

"Patience is also important when you are losing weight in a healthy and sustainable matter," Cipullo says. Plus, if you focus on meeting truly actionable goals, like [taking 10,000 steps](#) each and every day, there's no need to get wrapped up in a timeline of goals ahead. Every 24 hours comes with new successes; focus on those.

6. Identify Your 'Trouble Thoughts'

"Identify the thoughts that get you into trouble and work to stop and change them," Hokemeyer says. Maybe it's your internal dialogue when you look into the mirror. Or cravings when you get stressed. "Consciously make them stop by saying 'stop' out loud," she says. It might sound silly, but that simple action will break your chain of thought and allow yourself the opportunity to introduce a new, healthier one. "The best way to do this is to count from one to 100 as many times as you need until the destructive thoughts subside," he says.

7. Don't Step on the Scale

While [the scale isn't intrinsically bad](#), a lot of us have learned to associate it with self-destructive thoughts and actions. If that's you, don't even bother stepping on the scale until you get to a place in which the number on the scale doesn't define your worth, Hokemeyer says.

[See: [How to Weigh Yourself the Right Way.](#)]

8. Talk to Yourself Like You Would a Friend

"When it comes to ideals of beauty and body image, we are incredibly hard on ourselves. The standards we adopt for ourselves are punishing," he says. And we'd never hold our friends or loved ones to many of those standards. You deserve the same respect and compassion as anyone else; treat yourself like it.

9. Forget the Whole 'Foods Are Good or Bad' Mentality

Somewhere along the line, we've learned to feel either proud or guilty about every food choice we make. But it's just food, and you shouldn't have to feel guilty about wanting the occasional cookie. "Give yourself permission to have a glass wine or a piece of chocolate cake," Cipullo says. "Remember, all foods fit."

10. Focus on the Attainable

"If you have never stepped into a gym before, your goal shouldn't be doing 30 minutes on the elliptical on day one. A better goal may be to go for a 20-minute walk," she says. "If you want to cook more, but have little experience with healthy recipes or are strapped for time, don't expect yourself to craft new healthy recipes every night after work. Maybe consider using a delivery service such as HelloFresh or Blue Apron in which pre-portioned ingredients and recipes are sent to your door, helping you to get acquainted with new ingredients, try out new recipes and build fundamental cooking skills." Start where you are and build from there.

