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Ways to get to *and* stay at a healthy weight

We usually know *why* we want to lose weight, or stay at a certain weight. It's the *how* that gives us some trouble.

Here are some tips that weight-loss experts agree can help you succeed.

Figure out your motivation

In general, internal factors can lead to more long-term success. These include things like getting healthier or feeling better.

External motivation — like fitting into new clothes — can work. But the success is often short-lived.

Get support

Pairing up with someone is helpful. A buddy can encourage you when you need a boost. Some research also suggests that regular contact with a professional — like a doctor or weight-loss counselor — can work in keeping off weight.

Set goals

Make them realistic and measurable. “Losing weight” sounds indefinite and a little hard. “Losing two pounds a month for a year” seems manageable.

Plan to exercise

You can lose weight with regular exercise. The key is to exercise long and hard enough so that your body burns more calories each week than those you've eaten.

And it helps to schedule exercise in advance. This lets you make time in your daily routine — and stick with it.

Before starting an exercise program, please talk with your doctor.

Eat smaller meals

And eat more frequently. This helps you avoid feeling starved, which can lead to binge eating.

So keep healthy foods handy. Stash dried fruits and oatmeal packets in a desk drawer. Take bags of cut vegetables or string cheese for snacks on the go. And avoid vending machines.

Track your progress

A food and exercise diary can also help. Writing down everything you eat each day, and what you do to exercise, can keep you motivated. It can also help you see where you need to make improvements.¹

There are many mobile apps you can use to keep track. Or pen and paper work well, too.

¹Harvard Health Publications. 7 habits to help you lose weight and keep it off. HEALTHbeat e-newsletter. April 19, 2011. Available at: www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/7-habits-to-help-you-lose-weight-and-keep-it-off. Accessed May 18, 2015.

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