

Is Permanent Weight Loss Possible? Probable?

We all know that weight loss is possible-if you are reading this newsletter you may have tried and successfully lost weight before. Someone can lose weight on a “Twinkie Diet! Let’s be clear, I am not recommending that!

<https://www.cnn.com/2010/HEALTH/11/08/twinkie.diet.professor/index.html>

Really doing ANYTHING that changes eating habits, particularly away from eating a lot of high fat, highly processed and refined foods or decreases total caloric intake (can you say RESTRICTION) will result in weight loss. Sometimes this weight loss is accompanied by improvements in health markers, like blood pressure or blood sugar. This is why weight loss itself is recommended (vs. eating an excellent diet, exercises, addressing **all areas of health**) to improve health or prevent illness. <https://www.eat-learn-live.com/truth-a-recipe-for-good-health/>

But the “unicorn” of weight loss is KEEPING the weight off, isn’t it?! Did you know that up to 98% of dieters regain lost weight. Sometimes they regain past their original starting point! The best statistic I saw was 65%! If this has happened to you, especially if it’s happened over and over again, you have probably thought:

- “What is wrong with me?!”
- I have no willpower.
- I must love donuts more than I want to be healthy-I’m hopeless!
- I am so ashamed of myself!

Or some other version of hopelessness or self-bashing.

Well, listen my dear. The truth is your biology is working against you!

We are all biologically adapted to defend our weight-even if it is higher than it “should” be or if it is higher than we want it to be. I have done a lot of research around this, and it is a point I feel passionate about, making sure people understand this and stop beating themselves up losing their self-confidence because they can’t seem to keep the weight off. (I believe that there is so much more to what makes a person valuable and successful and deserving of all goodness!) But I also recognize the desire many of us have to be thinner, to be smaller, and more importantly to feel in control of our body.

When you restrict intake, when there is LESS you-the brainbody (they are one thing not two separate things), thinks: “Oh my goodness, there is not enough food! This human is going to starve to death! Alert! Alert!

The brain-body is ALWAYS working FOR you, for your survival. It is actually a beautiful thing, though with this weight thing it can feel so frustrating). It’s why man has survived and evolved through famines, catastrophes, illnesses-we are designed to survive. (it is awe inspiring when you think about how we are created!)

So when the body perceives a threat of starvation-it pulls out all the stops.

- Metabolism and energy usage will sloooooow down. It does not want a single calorie used unnecessarily. (ever not want to exercise when/after you are dieting?)

- The hunger and fullness hormones will make you feel less full and more hunger. (looking for food, eating a lot)
- Your brain will get more excited at the sight of calorically dense foods (sweets, high fat foods)
- It will be harder for your body to burn fat, and will use other fuel sources for energy, so more fat will get stored on your body and in your body)
- This can lead to depleting your glycogen stores (carbohydrate stores found in your liver and muscles) and resorting to using protein from your muscles. (less muscle=less calorie burn!)

This response of the brainbody leads to the regaining of weight, often setting the stage for “weight cycling”. You know, the next round of dieting, followed by regain, repeat, repeat, repeat. This weight cycling, more than high weight, is linked to increased morbidity and mortality (sickness and death) risk. (I’ll talk more about the evidence for that connection in the next issue)

So, back to the original question. Does all this mean that weight loss MAINTENANCE is impossible? We all probably know at least ONE person who has found that unicorn of long-term weight loss. One thing that gets kind of glossed over (usually because the focus is on marketing what the person did to initially lose weight) is that long term weight loss requires “cognitive restraint”. That means thinking about it long term, and continuing to make choices that maintain the weight loss. It’s about maintaining and utilizing the routines and structures that make it possible to do the things necessary to prevent weight regain.

It begs the question, should someone even try to lose weight in the first place? Many people without health symptoms or complaints still want to lose weight, they want to be thinner. (Weight bias and stigma are topics I will cover in the future!)

And the only promise that can be made about ANY weight loss program or attempt is this:

One of three things will happen with this program:

- You will lose weight.
- You will gain weight.
- Your weight will stay the same.

(quote from Jon Robison, a national Health at Every Size Leader and Wellness Expert, here’s his website <https://www.consciouscapitalism.org/people/dr-jon-robison>)

Weight is complex-and I believe is more of a “surrogate marker” for health than a true measure. High weight is a sign that may indicate increased risk for illness or difficulties. It is a sign that one should take inventory of one’s self-care, their state of wellness (our culture accepts a lot of “common” health complaints as “normal”.) Just because something is common does NOT mean its normal.

And of course: Mindset Matters Most.

I invite you to use what you may have learned here to create an opportunity for yourself. An opportunity to SHIFT your mindset to set about striving not for optimal weight, or for a certain size but to strive for optimal wellbeing, optimal health, exquisite self-care. When you feed and move

your body and move through the world in a way that creates the environment for you to enjoy your very best state of being (when you OPTIMIZE your health), you will optimize your weight.

<https://www.eat-learn-live.com/truth-a-recipe-for-good-health/>

When you continue to do those things, your weight will OPTIMIZE as well, and stay there without much fluctuation, and without a weight focused effort on your part. This is a concept of “set point weight” which I will talk about in the next issue.

Fun Exercise #3-What in YOUR health mindset?

The best first step when we are talking about mindset is becoming AWARE.

Check in here-what are your thoughts about the discussion above? What emotions do they generate?