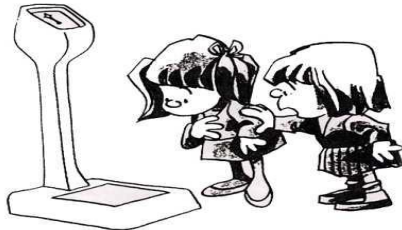


WHY WEIGHT WATCHING IS YOUR DOWNFALL!



"Don't step on it... it makes you cry."

by Linda Fiveson

Using weight loss as motivation and reward for sticking to a diet is the worst possible method of attempting to change your eating habits from a long term standpoint and almost **GUARANTEES FAILURE**. Weight Watching can be your most **DREADFUL ENEMY!**

These may sound like strange words to you, but if you have ever lost weight before you have probably regained it with a few extra pounds added on as soon as the diet was "ended." What you may not be aware of, however, is that your concentration on weight loss is the very thing that made you regain your weight over a longer period of time. The reason for this should become clear as we expand upon this subject.

When someone has dieted there are always two questions that are asked: "How much did you lose?" and "How long did it take you?" Furthermore, in case someone asks you in more general terms "How are you doing?" your response is invariably: "I lost a pound" or "I gained a pound." In other words you gauge your success by using the **SCALE** as the final authority. The scale then becomes your master and you its slave. It can make you happy or depressed by some minute change in its reading. In no way does the scale indicate to you how much real progress you are making because it does not tell you whether you have overcome a specific bad habit or not. It doesn't tell you that you are making progress in your nibbling or your habit of eating ice cream while watching television. The emphasis on the scale becomes the guiding light to your behavior. This emphasis is **COMPLETELY MISPLACED**.

The worst example of such misplaced emphasis is illustrated by your going on a crash diet during which you attempt to lose the greatest number of pounds during the shortest period of time without killing yourself. If you are successful in this endeavor, the scale will **REWARD** you with a lowered reading and you become quite pleased

with yourself. As a result you not only have accomplished nothing whatsoever from the standpoint of changing the habits that got you fat in the first place, but you now have the undesirable memory of the pleasant feeling of having been successful with a crash diet.

After the inevitable regaining of weight you repeat the whole procedure since you "did great" with that type of diet before. Your life then becomes a series of "starving or stuffing" seesaw weight fluctuations and you are forever in search of that new magic formula which will remove weight the quickest and most painless way to experience the pleasant but only so brief reward of a lowered scale reading. With each attempt it becomes progressively more difficult to lose the same weight over again, and each time you usually end up a few pounds higher than when you started the crash program. As you gradually keep inching up in weight, you begin to realize that whereas before you were only slightly overweight, you are now becoming grossly obese, extremely unhappy and desperate.

What has gone wrong with this method? It may sound paradoxical to you, but the best way to achieve permanent reduction to normal size is to completely forget about your weight **AND THE SCALE**.

The answer is simple once you analyze it. We are certain that you will agree that for long term success you must change habits or behavior.

LOSING WEIGHT IS NOT A BEHAVIOR! Therefore, you cannot **DIRECTLY** control your weight loss. When you are intent on seeing a numerical change in body weight, the scale controls you – whether you admit it or not! What you **CAN** control, however, is a change in your eating behavior. If you achieve such a change, weight loss becomes automatic and you **CONTROL** the scale.

The next problem arises when you allow the scale to **REINFORCE** your behavior. In that instance everything you do is guided by the readings on that scale. Unfortunately, this often leads to reinforcing and rewarding the wrong behavior.

Suppose you have been on a diet for a week. You have stuck to it perfectly, except 2 days previously you had ingested a large helping of cheesecake. Suppose also that at the end of that week you had lost 3 pounds. The lowered scale reading not only reinforces the cheating behavior. It teaches you to cheat because you "got away with it." As a result you deviate a little here and a little there. As long as the scale reinforces and rewards your behavior by showing a loss you continue to cheat.

In fact you now become "addicted to the scale." You may get on it several times a day to make sure you are still getting away with it. Each

time you breathe a sigh of relief and you continue right on with the harmful behavior.

On the other hand, suppose you had not cheated even a tiny bit during that week. If your master (the scale) tells the numbers are getting lower you are inclined to think: "That's great! A little bit of this ice cream won't hurt. It will never show!" You really have not learned anything about changing habits and when eventually, the scale readings go in the wrong direction, you are in trouble.

It works the other way also. Suppose you have followed your diet religiously for one week and the scale shows a slight gain in weight. A critical decision must be by you at this point and it is usually the following: "What's the use of depriving myself -- if I am going to gain anyway I might as well enjoy myself." – and there goes the whole program with all your good intentions.

In the last instance, correct behavior was **NEGATIVELY** reinforced and you thus destroyed any chance of it becoming permanently established. All the time you completely ignored the fact that weight fluctuations can be due to multiple factors – such as how much time has elapsed since you had your last bowel movement. If you had 2 cups of coffee during the last hour a one pound weight gain can easily register on the scale. (Two 8 ounce cups weigh 1 pound)

Another disadvantage of becoming addicted to the scale becomes evident when you reach your maintenance weight. If you had placed undue emphasis on weight loss during the dieting period it was the sole compensating and motivating factor in making you stick to it. You are now due for a tremendous **LETDOWN**. You will suddenly be faced with finding a substitution to reinforce your correct behavior.

The excitement of the continual reduction in scale readings is no longer present. It is true that initially your feeling of well being, the nice clothes you are able to wear and the compliments of your friends will act as a temporary substitute prize. Nonetheless, the novelty of this wears off quickly.

Besides, you can stuff yourself considerably and revert to your old overeating habits for quite some time before it begins to show in your clothes and your friends begin to ask if you haven't put a few pounds back on. By that time your destructive behavior has been well reinforced ("you are getting away with it") and you have backslid too far for any permanent habit change to have been established.

Weighing yourself regularly during maintenance, even if you stay the same for a while does not have quite the same "kick to it" as losing weight rapidly. Besides, you can revert to quite a few destructive eating habits before you exceed the weight limits you have set for yourself during weight stabilization. Once the scale begins to move up you are already in more trouble than you can handle.

We hope that by now you are convinced that **ADDITION TO THE SCALE** is a two-edged sword and can actually be very harmful to the permanent establishment of correct eating habits. The only answer, then, is to forget about your weight and the scale, and start to work on identifying the real problem areas in your eating responses. How to do that and how to solve these problems is something you need professional help with. Together with your doctor – as a team – you can learn to be successful in changing your eating habits permanently.

Τιμη φορ α χηανγε ιν ψουρ ηαβιτσ. Φοργετ της
σχαλε — ιτ αιλλ τακε χαρε οφ ιτσελφ!



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