

## **Diet Mentality: Do You Have One?**

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Many of us are either “on” or “off” a diet at any given time. We may spend years, even decades struggling with the same 10, 20, 50 or more pounds to lose. Many of us have even lost the weight...many times, only to regain it with an additional bonus of a few extra pounds. Of course we want to lose the weight. But with each diet attempt, it becomes apparent that the only thing we’re really losing is our belief that we can find a way to take the weight off for good.

Do you have a diet mentality? One way to know is if you exhibit the typical diet “black or white behavior.” Here’s where you’re either on or off, good or bad. The problem with this type of thinking is that when you’re on a strict diet, you leave no room for imperfection. If you haven’t worked through how you’ll handle things like weekends, parties, vacations, even unmanaged stress, you may be at a loss as to what to do when those types of situations arise.

Another way to tell if you have a diet mentality is if you’ve bought into the idea that weight loss means deprivation and the only way to lose weight is by either: eating fewer calories than you need to fuel your body, excluding an entire food group in order to lose weight or choosing food plans requiring limited choices or excessive preparation. You may even feel that in order to lose weight, you’ll need to put up with uncomfortable body issues such as dizziness, light headedness, bad breath, gas, bloating, fatigue or nausea.

Another way to tell if you have a diet mentality is by looking at what you do when you fall off track. For most of us, indulging in dessert or an extra portion every so often is both normal and expected. We try to contain the slip to the meal, event or situation and then do our best get back on track. Being hard on ourselves serves no purpose so we do our best to put an end to the overindulging and move on.

For someone with a diet mentality, the slip often leads to a series of slips (“I ate this, may as well eat that...”) a tumble and then often leads to falling right off the mountain. So, instead of dealing with the possibility of a half or one pound weight gain from the slip, we may as well go back to our old style of eating and gain back the entire amount. Does this make any sense?

Yet another way to know if you have a diet mentality is if dieting has become a way of life. Many dieters have gone from one diet to the next for so long that they can’t imagine life any other way. Bouncing between the unhappiness of food restriction to the frustration of inevitable weight gain seems to be the only eating style and behavior they understand. Food is rarely a delicious form of fuel but is something good/bad, allowed/forbidden. Think there’s got to be a better way? There is and it’s in the form of slow, steady and gradual lifestyle changes.

With gradual lifestyle changes as opposed to drastic dieting, habits which initially caused the weight gain are replaced with habits ensuring weight loss and weight maintenance. While this may not produce significant weight loss immediately, slow and steady wins the race and pounds lost are pounds, which typically aren’t regained. Old, destructive habits, which were difficult to change, are slowly replaced with healthy habits, which support a

healthy lifestyle. While these old habits may be difficult to change, these small changes add up and result in thousands of calories saved, pounds lost and self-esteem spared.

Just as we learn how to diet, we can learn to eat in a way, which supports, nourishes and fuels a healthy body and mind. Although it may be challenging, ridding yourself of the diet mentality can give you the reward of feeling, looking and living better...once and for all.



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