

The Who, What, When, Where, How and Why of Weight Loss

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One of the most common reasons why many of us struggle with weight loss and weight maintenance is because we fail to look at the: who, what, when, where, how and why we actually gained the weight in the first place. Once we're able to ask ourselves these questions and come up with some insightful answers, we can understand how to finally create a weight loss plan that actually works. The first place to start is with the **who** of weight loss.

1. **Who** triggers you to overeat? It can be a boss who triggers us to grab foods to calm or relax us after a stressful day at the office. It can be a friend or partner who encourages us to overeat because they want a "food buddy." It can be someone who shows their love for you through the food they've prepared and we eat to avoid hurting their feelings.

2. **What** types of foods you are eating? Are you having a problem with your food choices, eating too much junk food, takeout, prepared or fast food? Are the foods you're choosing high in fat and sugar? Are your portions too big and you're finding yourself "economy sizing", "super sizing" or "value sizing?" Are you choosing foods that don't satisfy or fill you adequately? Are you taking in too many liquid calories?

3. **When** are you overeating? For many people, weight issues stem from over eating the same foods at the same time. For example, many moms find they over eat their children's snack foods, between 3-4pm. Others find that late night snacking while watching TV is the place where they're taking in too much.

4. **Where** are you doing most of your overeating? Many people find that they overeat at the kitchen counter while preparing food and snacks for others. Others find that the living room couch after a long day is where the damage is done and still others can blame weight gain on the Saturday night breadbasket at their favorite restaurant.

5. **How** you're over eating? You can be eating socially, mindlessly, binge eating or eating emotionally. With social eating you're not hungry, but you're simply eating to be a part of the group or the experience. You may be concerned about being judged, criticized or questioned if you don't eat what everyone else is eating so you use the opportunity to eat foods you'd normally limit or avoid. With mindless eating, you take in extra food as you're passing it to others, when you grab something as you see it on the counter or someone's desk, eating while preparing food or eating

while reading, watching TV or doing anything else that takes your attention away from concentrating on what you're eating. Poor food choices or eating to improve our feelings or mood are the most common reasons for binge eating. For example, a diet high in sugar often encourages binge-eating behavior because the sugar provides a quick energy surge followed by an energy crash. That crash encourages a high sugar binge in order to regain that energy so quickly gained and lost. With an emotional eating binge, we overeat to calm, numb or relax. It's used as a means to self soothe and self medicate. It's a technique we've employed to deal with our stress, fears, anger, frustration or hurt and we eat to encourage a boost of serotonin, one of the body's "feel good" chemicals.

6. **Why** are you overeating? Questioning yourself after a binge is one of the best times to ask that question. With compassion and without judgment, simply ask yourself "what do I really need?" or "what was I really looking for?" Rarely is it food and more likely it's compassion, security, sleep, friendship, a fulfilling project, satisfying relationship, enriching and meaningful job, more confidence or simply a call for a better way to handle your stress.

The more we understand the: who, what, when, where, how and why of weight loss, the better we can create a plan that works for us...not against us. While it may take some effort to come up with the answers, every answer you find brings you one step closer to gradual yet lasting weight loss.



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