

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Impact Of Mindset In Weight Loss

Many individuals focus on diet and exercise for weight loss. While these healthy habits are crucial, they often overlook one critical component for long-term success: mindset.

Research suggests that the right mindset plays a significant role in achieving and maintaining weight loss. Without a strong mindset, you may get stuck in a cycle of yo-yo dieting, restriction, binge eating, and over-exercising. This leads to feeling overwhelmed and frustrated that you aren't meeting your weight loss goals.

Understanding The Dieting Mindset

Many of the individuals we help lose weight report a history of failure to sustain weight loss achieved through a restrictive dieting mindset. This diet plan mindset often involves viewing certain foods as "good" or "bad" and monitoring and restricting calorie intake. This approach focuses on achieving rapid weight loss instead of focusing on healthy eating. While this approach may yield short-term results, it can be counterproductive in losing weight in the long run. It also does not help you learn healthy eating patterns or capture your intrinsic motivation for why you want to lose weight.

Research has shown that restrictive dieting can slow metabolism and disrupt the hormonal balance that regulates hunger and fullness cues. I have seen these effects in most of the fad diets our clients have tried. When metabolic and hormonal disruption occurs, it affects whether you reach your weight loss goals. This is because the body may compensate for periods of undereating by storing more calories when overeating. This leads to difficulty losing weight and may also support regaining the weight you've lost.

Shifting Your Perspective On Dieting

Cultivating a positive mindset, integrating sustainable habits, and giving yourself grace and freedom to experiment with what works best for your body are essential to break free from the dieting mindset. Here are some positive changes and strategies to reset your mindset for weight loss and create achievable goals:

Focus on the feeling not the label

Instead of labelling foods as "good" or "bad," focus on how they make your body feel after consuming certain foods. Consider energy levels, satiety, mood, and whether you have other symptoms such as headaches, joint pain, or difficulty concentrating. This approach allows flexibility and moderation while still prioritizing nutrient-dense choices. For example, opt for a smaller portion of your favourite ice cream rather than eliminating it.

Emphasize addition, not subtraction

Rather than fixating on restriction and deprivation to eat less, add foods that nourish your body and make you feel well. Add more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins to your meals. These food groups provide essential nutrients and promote satiety and satisfaction. By focusing your energy on adding, you don't focus on restriction. This creates an essential mindset shift from one of scarcity to one of abundance.

Challenge Negative self-talk

Recognize and challenge negative thoughts and self-talk related to food choices and body image; instead of criticizing yourself for indulging in a treat, practice self-compassion and remind yourself that one option does not define your worth or progress. Keep a journal about positive daily changes, such as drinking more water, eating healthy meals, or engaging in physical activity. Celebrate these achievements and focus on your small steps towards a healthier lifestyle.

The power of self-efficacy and self-regulation

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish specific behaviours. It is crucial to weight loss success. Those who do not believe they can succeed often behave in their conscious and unconscious behaviours and habits in a way that will prove their predicted outcome. For the same reason, individuals with high exercise self-efficacy are more likely to lose weight, sustain weight loss, and engage in health-promoting habits and activities.

Self-regulation, or self-monitoring, is critical for maintaining weight loss. By tracking your behaviours, activities, and habits, you become more aware of your habits and can make necessary adjustments in real time. This allows you to have healthier habits and identify cues and triggers for unhealthy habits and behaviours. For example, many individuals respond to stress by using food to self-soothe. This emotional eating is a changeable habit for the individual who takes the time to develop strategies to overcome it.



Harnessing the power of a growth mindset

When their weight loss efforts are faced with setbacks or plateaus, those with a growth mindset often persevere despite the challenges. This is because they are more likely to seek alternative strategies. Regarding weight loss, someone with a growth mindset will take the perspective that weight loss is a journey.

Remember, some days will be better than others. There will be ups and downs, and nothing has gone wrong when this happens. Individuals with a growth mindset view each experience as providing valuable insights and helping them obtain their goals.

The role of support and accountability

While mindset is a personal journey, seeking support and accountability can enhance your chances of success. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals. Those who share similar goals to you can provide encouragement and motivation. In contrast, those who are pessimistic and don't believe sustainable change is possible will deter their progress. Consider joining a weight loss support group. Interacting with others who can share your experience and empathize during challenging moments can help you maintain momentum.

The Hunger-Satiety Scale

Use this Hunger-Satiety Scale to get in touch with your hunger and satiety cues. Aim to stay within the blue zone, 4-7, as much as possible.

- 10 -- Extremely stuffed, nauseous
- 9 -- Stuffed, very uncomfortable
- 8 -- Overfull, somewhat uncomfortable
- 7 -- Full but not uncomfortable
- 6 -- Satisfied, but could eat a little more
- 5 -- Starting to feel hungry
- 4 -- Hungry, stomach growling
- 3 -- Uncomfortably hungry, distracted, irritable
- 2 -- Very hungry, low energy, weak and dizzy
- 1 -- Starving, no energy, very weak

When you reach 3 or 4...

Aim to start eating when you reach a 3-4. By not waiting too long, it may make it easier to thoughtfully choose what you'd like to eat and eat until you are satisfied, rather than overly stuffed. Keeping nutritious snacks available, especially while running errands, can help tide you over until your next meal if necessary. Some tasty snack ideas include whole fruit, nuts, hard-boiled eggs, veggies and hummus, or plain yogurt with fruit.

When you reach 6 or 7...

Once you reach a 6, you would be just about satisfied. Within 15-20 minutes, you will likely be at a 7, full but not uncomfortable. To make this a bit easier, check in with your hunger cues before and/or during meals and snacks, keep serving dishes on the counter rather than on the dinner table, and take your time while eating by engaging all of your senses.

Improving Our Mental Health

Get Moving!

Being active releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good - boosting your self-esteem and helping you concentrate as well as sleep well and feel better. Not bad for something many of us can do for free!

Physical activity has lots of benefits for our mental and physical wellbeing. It can help with things like:

- Managing stress
- Improving sleep
- Improving your mood
- Improving confidence
- Connecting with nature
- Socialising and meeting new people.
- Managing symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Memory and brain functioning
- Heart, muscle, and bone health
- Reducing the risk of developing some long-term health conditions, such as heart disease

Food And Drink – How It Can Help Our Mental Health

Some studies suggest that what we eat, and drink can affect how we feel. But it can be difficult to know what to eat, especially when healthier foods can be more expensive. And it can be hard to think about our diet when we're struggling with our mental wellbeing.

We all react differently to the things in our diet. But there are some foods and drinks that may affect how we feel, in different ways. This section talks about food and drink that might affect how you feel, and has some ideas for how to manage this.

These tips may help some of us think about what to eat and drink. But they are only a guide. Some of us may find them less helpful or achievable, especially when we're feeling unwell – and that's ok.

Blood Sugar Levels

If your blood sugar is lower than usual, you might feel tired, irritable or depressed. Eating regularly, and eating foods that release energy slowly, can help to keep your sugar levels steady.

Different people may have different reactions to the same foods. But generally, foods that release energy more slowly include:

- Wholegrain bread and cereal
- Nuts and seeds
- Brown pasta
- Brown rice

This is compared to foods like white bread, crisps, white pasta and white rice, which release energy less slowly.

If you have diabetes, speak to your GP or another healthcare professional before making any changes to your diet that could affect your blood sugar levels.

Drinking Fluids

If you live with a mental health problem, you may not have the energy or motivation to drink lots of fluids. But if you become dehydrated, this can make it harder to concentrate or think clearly.

Water, tea, coffee, juices and smoothies can all help you feel hydrated. But some of these may also contain caffeine or sugar, which could affect how you feel for different reasons.

Fruits And Vegetables

Eating different fruits and vegetables can add a good range of nutrients to your diet. These nutrients help to keep us mentally and physically healthy.

Fresh fruit and vegetables can sometimes be expensive and more difficult to prepare. Frozen, tinned, dried and juiced fruits and vegetables all count towards your 5 a day too, if you want a cheaper or easier alternative.

Protein

Diets higher in protein can support your mental health. Protein contains chemicals called amino acids, which your brain needs to produce chemicals called neurotransmitters. These help to regulate your thoughts and feelings.

You can find protein in foods like:

- Legumes (peas, beans and lentils)
- Nuts and seeds
- Milk
- Fish
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Lean meat
- Soya products

If you're finding it difficult to get enough protein in your diet, you could try adding some grated cheese to a meal or having a glass of milk. Or you could eat a packet of nuts or seeds.

Healthy fats

Your brain needs certain fatty acids, such as omega-3 and omega-6, to keep it working well. You can find these healthy fats in:

- Nuts and seeds
- Avocados
- Oily fish, such as sardines and mackerel (these are often cheaper if you buy them tinned)

We know that some of these healthier fats can be more expensive. And that it can be challenging to eat well when you're feeling low. So if these changes don't feel possible right now, that's ok.

Foods For Good Gut Health

Sometimes your gut can reflect your mood. If you're stressed or anxious this can make your gut slow down or speed up. This can lead to problems with digestion, such as feeling bloated or constipated. Or you may not feel as hungry as usual.

If you're feeling stressed and you think it is affecting your gut, you could try some relaxation techniques or breathing exercises.

You can also try eating more foods that support healthy digestion. For example, fruits, vegetables, and wholegrains. Or pulses, such as tinned or dried beans, peas and lentils. Probiotics, such as live yoghurt, tempeh, and kimchi, are also good for gut health.