

Title: Best psychology tips for weight loss - therapy for weight loss

Best psychology tips for weight loss

It can be a struggle to lose weight and keep it off. When losing weight, we tend to focus on our bodies – the things we eat, how much we eat, how much we move, how much we sleep, and so on. But there's one crucial thing we forget – our mind. A weight loss journey can be an emotional rollercoaster, with highs when things work and with lows when they plateau. The psychology of losing weight is a complicated matter that science is trying to uncover.

Weight management programs have limited long-term success, and [research suggests](#) that our healthcare providers and professionals don't offer the support that's necessary for effective weight management. When we set ourselves on a path to weight loss, we often forget about our mental health and neglect the psychology behind weight loss. What ways of thinking and psychological habits set apart those that lose weight and keep it off, and those that regain it? And most importantly, how can we use psychology to lose weight?

Social pressure, guilt, and excess weight

Those trying to shed pounds may not [receive adequate mental](#) support from their healthcare providers, neglecting the psychology of weight loss. Participants who were overweight suggest that they felt out of control around food, with a cycle of preoccupation about it and then subsequent eating. This caused feelings of [shame and distress](#), which they coped with using food, creating a cycle of overeating and other habits.

The [added stigma](#) over excess weight that is prevalent in our society doesn't help – it is shamed, frowned upon, and trivialized. None of these things are helpful in reaching weight loss goals.

However, there are certain people that manage to lose weight and to keep it off for good. What sets them apart, and what can we learn from their behavioral psychology during weight loss? What habits and ways of thinking do they have that we can use in our own weight loss journeys?

Why do we overeat?

When we try to lose weight, we are challenging our long-ingrained habits, trying to replace them with new ones. Impulses, cravings, and feeling stuck in a particular lifestyle are associated with weight regain. We may be [tempted to eat](#) under certain circumstances without even noticing it. We're trying to unwire the psychology of weight gain.

Another important factor to [consider is unmet needs](#). Often, unhealthy eating or eating too much is used as a strategy to help regulate emotions or stress, relieve boredom and get pleasure. Understanding what the root cause of overeating or unhealthy eating is as important as learning the ways to manage it.

Understanding how weight is affected by [personal attitudes](#), emotions, needs, other people and external circumstances helps those that maintain weight loss to have breakthroughs in their attitudes or approach to weight management. Reflective learning together with successful outcomes has been proposed to increase motivation, improve self-image, and make further efforts to maintain or lose weight easier over time.

Reclaiming your power – positive self-talk

An observation [made by a meta-analysis](#) suggested that those that have trouble preventing weight regain felt like weight loss was a torturous, all-or-nothing affair constricted by rules, and that as soon as they would achieve the desired loss, they wouldn't have to endure it any more.

This made them feel deprived, negative, and resentful towards the process. Catastrophic thinking about failure and hopelessness in times of lapses or mistakes was also common in those who regained weight. This decreased belief in positive outcomes and may have become a self-fulfilling script.

On the other hand, those who maintained weight loss tended to [view weight management](#) as a long-term lifestyle change and regarded lapses as events to learn and move on from. Positive psychology and weight loss were connected. Long-term weight management was also [accompanied by changes](#) in the way individuals see themselves, with them feeling like a new person, feeling more in control and liberated.

Growth in [self-esteem](#) and self-confidence accompanied this; positive body image was also associated with maintenance as individuals became less preoccupied with weight and shape.

[Optimism and positive emotions](#) go hand-in-hand with healthier eating, increased feelings of perceived control, accomplishment, better social regulation, and increased self-regulation and motivation in people with metabolic syndrome.

Keeping weight off is not only about discipline or self-control – a positive outlook and self-compassion can really set you up for success.

Making a change and sticking to it

One of the key things that [scientific literature](#) seems to highlight is that making an active change is essential for weight loss. And the earlier that change happens, the better the outcome.

A study from the [California Polytechnic State University](#) compared weight loss in two groups of people who followed a commercial or a self-led weight loss plan, monitoring their body mass, eating behavior and physical activity over a period of 14 weeks. They found that the biggest predictor of weight loss was whether participants made helpful changes early in the trial (by the third week). They [included eating](#) less energy dense foods and moving slightly, but significantly more than they did at the start of the trial.

[Self-regulation](#) also seems to be important – setting targets and goals, self-monitoring, having backup plans for if things go wrong have all been highlighted as key for maintaining weight loss.

Setting boundaries is equally important – deciding on acceptable weight variation allows those that maintain weight loss to spot signs of lapses and return to their path. Flexibility may be key for these situations – where eating and physical activity can be flexible but become more rigid if warning signs of weight regain are observed.

On the other hand, those [that tended to regain](#) weight used less self-monitoring strategies like weigh-ins because they may receive unwelcome news, or boundaries were ignored or reset when crossed to avoid the perception of failure.

Therefore, using psychology to lose weight is about using the right tools, like boundary setting and self-regulation.

Weight loss = problem solving?

The way we think, [solve and cope](#) with problems may have an impact on whether we lose weight. Successful weight loss and weight maintenance are associated with good planning and problem-solving skills, as they can make it easier to stick to healthy habits. Repeated healthy habits can be built over time, and unhealthy habits can be eroded over time, albeit with a lot of work.

The way that those people that lose weight problem [solve also differs from ones](#) who regain. Those that successfully keep weight off are likelier to approach problems directly and use strategies like goal setting, self-monitoring, evaluation, and changing their environment. They also planned meals, tracked calories and their weight more.

On the other hand, [“black and white” thinking](#), where people tend to see in the extremes, and emotion-focused coping strategies prevail in those people who regain weight.

When experiencing setbacks, those that maintained weight loss tended to identify the reason why they stumbled and [work their way around it](#). The ones that regained tended to think it was only due to lack of willpower; they did not reflect or adjust their habits. Those that maintained also did not think as badly about themselves after making mistakes compared to those that regained.

The importance of support and motivation

A group in the [University of Southampton](#) designed an online tool with optional integrated face-to-face support. It was supposed to help people lose weight and keep it off. Those that only used the online tool lost 2 kg on average, while the ones with the nurse support lost 4 kg over a period of 6 months.

However, those that had [regular nurse support](#) (7 sessions in 6 months), tended to regain weight after the nurse support ended. On the other hand, those that had basic nurse support (3 sessions in 6 months), kept on losing weight. This study highlighted that while social support is important, there is a risk of social support becoming an external motivator, which may decrease weight loss efficiency.

Therefore, it's important to remember that weight loss comes from your own motivation. Looking to others for support is fine, but you should pay attention and ensure that their help does not become the only thing that is motivating you on your journey.

Part of the psychology behind weight loss programs is the ability to get support from the participants in the program. However, relying on them to motivate you through your journey may not provide the results you want.

What may also play a role in successful weight loss is the motivation to undergo weight loss at the start. A study suggests that losing weight for the sake of better appearance was the only reason that was [negatively associated](#) with weight maintenance, as most people involved in the study with that motivation regained weight.

New habits - key for weight maintenance

Restricting foods can cause food cravings short-term. But did you know that they can be thought of as a learned response, and therefore unlearned? Sticking to restriction in the long-term [results in a reduction](#) of food cravings in adults.

Keeping weight off may be a constant struggle for most. However, there are strategies that can be used to reduce the struggle and the effort it takes. Those that are successful at weight maintenance or weight loss seem to develop automated habits that they rely on. This takes away the [cognitive burden](#) of constantly thinking about weight management and may require less motivation.

Changing habits is one [of the key strategies](#) employed by those who maintain their weight. In situations when unhelpful habits occurred, maintainers used self-talk, distraction, or other techniques to challenge the habit and establish an alternative, healthier one.

Another technique is [using cues or reminders](#) to associate new habits with a particular context or time of day. For example, by putting running shoes by the bed in the morning. This piggybacking on existing habits allowed us to easily create new ones – the only thing that was necessary was to stick with them until they became automated.

Developing ways to meet needs in a healthier way is also prevalent for those that maintain weight loss. This may look like [using exercise](#) to deal with stress, instead of eating it away, or simply distract yourself from emotional eating if you're prone to it. For these strategies to work, they must fit in with your lifestyle and work for you personally.