

Resolved to Lose Weight?

A Better Resolution Than Weight Loss

By Charlene Pierce

We've all done it. We've all started a new year, or a new month, or week, or day, thinking,

"This time, I'm going to do it. I'm going to lose weight and get healthy!" The sheer number of times we've done this just goes to show that attaining this goal is much harder than setting it. We hear about someone who completed their first marathon in their 50s and think, "Wow! I would love to do that." But would we? Really? I don't know about you, but the thought of getting up at 5:00 in the morning to train for a marathon does not sound fun.

There's good news for those of us who are neither runners nor morning people: You don't have to be able to run a marathon to be healthy. We don't have to get up before dawn. Actually, a good night's sleep is an important aspect of good health. So is a positive mindset, self-care, healthy relationships, and work-life balance. Taking care of our health starts with proper nutrition and exercise and leads to many more benefits than just a lower number on the scale.

That said, maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall wellness. Being underweight can lead to malnutrition, which causes osteoporosis, a compromised immune system, decreased muscle strength, and more. Obesity, on the other hand, can cause diabetes, heart disease, breathing problems, certain cancers, and other diseases.

What is a healthy weight? The CDC considers a body mass index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9 to be a healthy weight. You can calculate your BMI by dividing your weight by your height squared, then multiplying by 703 (or find a BMI calculator online). While this is a helpful guide, it isn't a perfect approach. Athletes, for example, may have a BMI outside the healthy range and still be in prime physical condition. Your doctor is your best source for knowing if you are in a healthy weight range.

When trying to lose weight, many people go from one intensive diet to another and never find one they can stick with. To maintain a healthy weight, a diet must be sustainable. A nutritionist can be the perfect resource.

Dietitians and certified nutritionists are experts in healthy eating. They help their clients find a balance between their lifestyle and proper nutrition. In other words, they develop sustainable diets for their clients. Dietitians and nutritionists understand how diseases are affected by nutrition and counsel their patients on appropriate foods to help with heart conditions, diabetes, and many other health issues. You can find qualified experts through the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at eatright.org.

A proper diet gives your body the nutrients it needs to prevent disease. It improves your energy, your mood, and your productivity. The same is true for exercise. Doing some type of physical activity every day improves the health of your brain, bones, and muscles.

As with diet, sustainability is the key to successful exercise. The type of fitness tools you choose aren't as important as how regularly you put them to work. For some people,

home gyms are the most convenient option. Others need the accountability or social activity they get from a fitness center. Consistency is the goal, whether your exercise routine is a daily walk in your neighborhood or an hour in a spinning class.

We hear a lot of talk about how goals need to be measurable, but they also need to be realistic. For example, a goal to lose 20 pounds in a month is certainly measurable, but it's not going to happen. A healthy, realistic, measurable weight loss goal is one

to two pounds per week. To do this, you need to burn 500 to 1,000 more calories than you consume daily. There are plenty of apps to track calories consumed in a day, though it can be time-consuming to enter all the data.

Try making a resolution about healthy choices. Focus on choosing lean protein and fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables instead of processed foods and those high in sugar and fat. Try drinking more water and less caffeine and getting some form of exercise every day.

Exercise relieves stress. Taking care of ourselves boosts our confidence. Mental clarity, energy, and performance levels are heightened with proper diet and exercise. When we feel better, we can do more of the activities that bring us joy. This should be our resolution—being healthy enough to do what brings us joy. Health isn't just about the number on the scale. It is about having a higher quality of life because we feel good about ourselves. **WE**

Sources for this article included: cdc.gov, eatright.org, and mayclinic.org.

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