



THE PLAIN DEALER

NUTRI NEWS

How not to fail at losing weight

Wednesday, January 25, 2006

Cinda Williams Chima
University of Akron

Health clubs have been packed during the cold, dark days of January, and diet books have flown off the shelves. We've traded our fruitcakes and truffles for Slimfast and green tea, bought stationary bikes and free weights and workout clothes that are forgiving enough to hide the pounds we've long meant to take off.

Yet by May, most New Year's self-improvement resolutions have been shrugged off, displaced by warm-weather dreams - that is, assuming you haven't already abandoned your mission.

How does this happen? I humbly submit my "Top 10 Ways to Fail at Weight Loss."

10. Don't tell anyone you're trying to lose weight. That includes your doctor. After all, it's nobody's business but your own. Wait until they notice how skinny you're getting. And if your best friend brings over a French silk pie, you'd better eat some, because otherwise, you'll blow your cover.
9. Buy the latest weight-loss diet book. After all, your co-worker's brother's neighbor lost 40 pounds on it. Then spend \$300 at the grocery buying foods you've never heard of. Start packing your lunch, because there's nothing in the cafeteria that works. Carry a calculator to restaurants. Listen to your family complain at supertime. Begin cooking two separate meals - one for you and one for your family.
8. Spend \$150 on the dietary supplements recommended in the diet book, which happen to be available at the author's own Web site. Sit back, relax and listen for the sizzle as your fat begins to burn.
7. Count only carbs. The rest will take care of itself.
6. Count only fat grams. The rest will take care of itself.
5. Skip breakfast. You're not that hungry when you get up, anyway. In fact, lately, it always seems like you're hungriest right before you go to bed. Go ahead, heat up those nachos. After all, you didn't eat your Raisin Bran this morning.
4. Don't exercise. The diet book you bought said you don't have to. Plus, you heard somewhere you have to bike for three hours to work off a cream puff. Besides, it's cold outside.
3. If you're exercising, don't worry about what you eat. The weight training you're doing will reveal those washboard abs one day soon.
2. Set goals for yourself. Use celebrities as a standard. In order to meet your target weight by swimsuit season, you figure you have to lose 10 to 15 pounds a week. If you don't make it - you guessed it - you're a failure.

And the No. 1 way to fail at weight loss: Look forward to the time you can go off your diet and resume your usual eating habits and sedentary lifestyle.

Rethinking

the resolution

Perhaps the problem is the entire concept of New Year's resolutions, the idea that changing your life is like catching a wave. Once it's past, you have to wait for the next one.

Yet I'm reassured by the idea that we can reinvent ourselves. Maybe you are, too. And the annual self-examination that occurs at the turning of the year is a start.

Through the coming year, we'll discuss strategies for achieving a permanent change in eating and exercise habits. Remember, you're not in a hurry. The focus is process.

In the meantime:

Talk to your doctor about weight loss and exercise and get the go-ahead before you start.

Find someone to partner with.

If your home is still littered with holiday excess, clear those problem foods out of the house. Bring in teenagers, throw a party or donate the offending items to a food bank.

Cinda Williams Chima is a registered dietitian on the faculty of University of Akron. Her column runs on alternating weeks in Taste. E-mail nutrition and weight-control questions, labeled "Nutri-News," to food@plaind.com.

© 2006 The Plain Dealer

© 2006 cleveland.com All Rights Reserved.