

Losing Weight and Motivating Others

The editors of *AFP* welcome submissions for Close-ups. Guidelines for contributing to this feature can be found in the Authors' Guide at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/authors>.

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A collection of Close-ups published in *AFP* is available at <http://www.aafp.org/afp/closeups>.

I'd spent a lifetime losing and regaining weight. In 2009, when my life's circumstances filled me with great sadness, I became overwhelmed. To drown my feelings, I began to overeat rather than face my illness and financial obligations.

After a kidney infection put me back in the hospital for a few days, I told my doctor I'd had enough. She sat down with me, and we had a long conversation about my diet, my daily routine, and exercises that I could do. She gave me detailed instructions that included visiting a nutritionist. I promised to exercise for 10 minutes on the treadmill each day and keep a food diary.

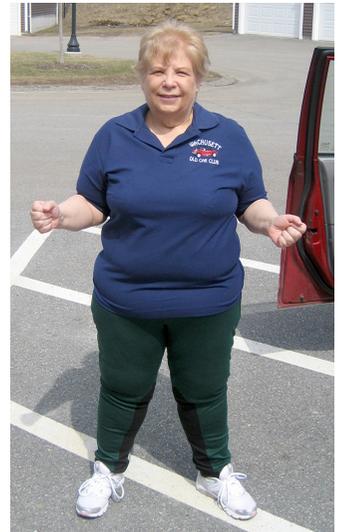
I began to change my perspective and let go of all the things that caused my sadness. I saw a counselor every week who let me cry and express my emotions. My rabbi, my family, and my friends offered me their support and made me feel like I was on a team. Once I felt better, I started focusing on my health.

I now shop for healthy foods and read the nutrition label on everything I buy, each time I shop, in case ingredients change. I avoid sodium, saturated fats, and high-cholesterol foods. I started at 244 lb, and I'm down to 185 lb after about a year.

Here are some of my tips to share with patients who are on a similar journey:

- Clear out the junk food in your kitchen and restock with healthy foods.
- Shop for fresh fruits and vegetables that have already been cut up. If buying whole produce, after arriving home, chop and store it in containers in an easy-to-reach place.
- Mix up your activities. For example, use exercise equipment, walk outside or at the mall, or go dancing with friends. To save money, check out fitness DVDs from a local library.
- Bake, broil, or poach meat, poultry, and fish. Steam vegetables or eat them raw. If fresh produce is not available, look for frozen vegetables.
- Eat from small dishes that will limit portion sizes. I use only the cake plates in my set.
- Find a role model who motivates you and whose strength you admire. Taking that person's photo to the gym or on walks can keep you from feeling alone. The television personality trainer I look to has an ear-to-ear grin that keeps me on point.

Another recommendation is do a good deed, no matter how small, every day. Nothing will taste as good as it feels to watch another person appreciate your mitzvah. —A.G.



COMMENTARY

Family physicians play a crucial role in bringing back hope and optimism to patients who are seeking to lose weight. A.G. and I discussed supervised weight loss treatment during an office visit. Knowing A.G. for years made it easier for me to set realistic goals with her. We have used dietitians, support groups, and other resources during the process. I applied motivational interviewing techniques during her follow-up visits. The resulting success has produced a virtuous cycle of healthy living and weight loss.

APEKSHA TRIPATHI, MD, MPH

RESOURCES

American Obesity Treatment Association
<http://www.americanobesity.org/treatment.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/index.html>

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/obe/treatment.html>